

Justice in Sabbath Rest: Genesis 1:1 – 2:3

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Text: Genesis 1:1-2:3 <http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=307296056>

We live in a world that is go-go-go. Our lives are busy and we are constantly running from one thing to the next. It is not just our personal lives that have gotten busier but also our work lives. According to a 2014 Gallup poll, the average full-time worker works 47 hours a week.¹ We are continually connected to work, even when we are off, through cellphones and email.

The idea of people being overworked becomes even more clear when we realize that the lowest income workers, those who work minimum wage, must work many more than 40 hours just to afford basic living expenses. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition's Housing Wage Calculator, a minimum wage worker in Wisconsin must work 95 hours a week in order to afford a two-bedroom apartment at \$900 a month.

It is clear that as a nation we are overworked, and this overwork hits our lowest paid employees the hardest. It is easy to be caught up in this cycle of working all the time, yet when we examine the Bible we realize that this is not what God calls us to.

When we read the story of creation in Genesis we learn of a God who worked 6 days and on the 7th rested. We are told that work is good. After each day of hard work creating the world we lived in, God proclaimed, "It was Good." Yet after all that work, God took time for Sabbath and rest. It was important that God stop and spend some time in renewal.

We are told on the 6th day of creation that God created men and women in the image of God. As beings created in God's image, we are called to follow in God's footsteps, and one of those acts that we are called to do is to rest and practice Sabbath. When Moses was given the 10 Commandments in the book of Exodus, one of those commandments was to practice Sabbath. We are called to refrain from working and spend time resting and renewing. We are called to follow the actions of the Creator who loves us and to practice Sabbath.

In our current reality of overworking, it is difficult to take days of Sabbath. When people are barely able to earn enough to cover their living expenses, they are forced to choose between rest and eating or making rent. This choice is not a true choice and thus many are robbed of their time for rest and renewal.

We are called to create a world where all people are allowed to practice Sabbath and enjoy times of rest and renewal. We must create a wage system that allows people to earn enough to cover their living expenses in a 40-hour work week. We must create work environments where people are allowed to turn off their cellphones and email and truly rest.

¹ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/175286/hour-workweek-actually-longer-seven-hours.aspx>

God of Rest and Renewal,

You created us in your image and we are called to follow your example. Help us to stop and to rest in your love. Renew us in these moments so that we may work to create a just society where all may practice Sabbath. We pray for those who must continually work just to live. Help us to create a world where all are allowed to rest and say, "It is Good." Amen.

Questions for Discussion

- How many hours do you work each week? Do you practice Sabbath?
- In WI the minimum wage is \$7.25 per hour (as is the Federal minimum). Considering your own monthly budget, how many hours of work would it take to cover your rent/mortgage? Food? Other necessities and recreation?
- What does Sabbath look like? In words, images, or actions?
- How could you work to practice Sabbath in your life?