The Rest of God

Title: ***The Rest Of God: Restoring Your Soul be Experiencing Sabbath***

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Book Summary:

Most of us feel utterly ransacked. We are waylaid by endless demands and stifling routines. Even our vacations have a panicky, task- like edge to them. “If I only had more time,” is the mantra of our age. But is this the real problem?

Widely acclaimed author Mark Buchanan states that what we’ve really lost is “the rest of God- - the rest God bestows and, with it, that part of himself we can know only through stillness.” The gift of Sabbath is essential to our full humanity and faith. God, knowing that, and knowing how easily we might neglect it, made it a command. We’ve neglected it anyhow. We’ve lost the rest of God.

This book seeks to change that- - to help us receive anew the gift of Sabbath, this day of rest and play and replenishment. Sabbath allows us to live more fully into our status as free people, people released from the grueling, incessant demands of taskmasters. And in the sweet shadow of Sabbath, we anticipate the ultimate rest- - heaven.

Book Notes:

God made us from dust. We’re never too far from our origins. The apostle Paul says we’re only clay pots- - dust mixed with water, passed through fire. Hard, yes, but brittle too. Knowing this, God gave us the gift of Sabbath- - not just as a day, but as an orientation, a way of seeing and knowing. Sabbath- keeping is a form of mending. It’s mortar in the joints. Keep Sabbath, or else break too easily, and over soon. Keep it, otherwise our dustiness consumes us, becomes us, and we end up able to hold exactly nothing. - Highlight Loc. 119- 22

Sabbath is both a day and an attitude to nurture such stillness. It is both time on a calendar and a disposition of the heart. It is a day we enter, but just as much a way we see. Sabbath imparts the rest of God- - actual physical, mental, spiritual rest, but also the rest of God- - the things of God’s nature and presence we miss in our busyness. - Highlight Loc. 124- 26

I want to convince you, in part, that setting apart an entire day, one out of seven, for feasting and resting and worship and play is a gift and not a burden, and neglecting the gift too long will make your soul, like soil never left fallow, hard and dry and spent. - Highlight Loc. 137- 38

You will never enter the Sabbath day without a Sabbath heart. - Highlight Loc. 141

Before we understand God’s rest, we must understand the Lord’s work. - Highlight Loc. 282

Under God’s economy, nothing really changes until our minds do. Transformation is the fruit of a changed

outlook. First our minds are renewed, and then we are transformed, and then everything is different. - Highlight Loc. 437- 39

A Sabbath heart sanctifies time. This is not a ritual. It's a perspective. And it's not a shift in circumstances- -- you still have the same job tomorrow, the same problems with your aging parents or wayward children, the same battle looming in the church. But you make a deliberate choice to shift point of view, to come at your circumstances from a fresh angle and with greater depth of field. You choose to see your life otherwise, through a different lens, from a different standpoint, with a different mind- set. – Highlight Loc. 445- 48

We become more ourselves in the presence of Sabbath: more vulnerable, less afraid. More ready to confess, to be silent, to be small, to be valiant. - Highlight Loc. 466- 67

Chronos is the presiding deity of the driven. The second Greek word is kairos. This is time as gift, as opportunity, as season. It is time pregnant with purpose. - Highlight Loc. 482

This is a gift of God: to experience the sacred amidst the commonplace- - to taste heaven in our daily bread, a new heaven and new earth in a mouthful of wine, joy in the ache of our muscles or the sweat of our brows. - Highlight Loc. 494- 96

I've been in a hurry most of my life. Always rushing to get from where I am to where I'm going. Always cocking my arm to check my watch, doing that habitually, mechanically, mindlessly. Always leaning heavy on the gas, in the passing lane, angry that the driver in front of me doesn't share my sense of urgency, that she's in no particular hurry and can't seem to imagine a world where anybody would be. Always fuming over having to wait in bank lines and grocery checkouts and road construction zones. - Highlight Loc. 551- 54

The Chinese join two characters to form a single pictograph for busyness: heart and killing. That is stunningly incisive. The heart is the place the busy life exacts its steepest toll. - Highlight Loc. 569- 70

And something dies in us. Too much work, the British used to say, makes Jack a dull boy. But it's worse than that. It numbs Jack, parches Jack, hardens Jack. It kills his heart. When we get too busy, everything becomes either a trudge or a scramble, the doldrums or sheer mayhem. We get bored with the familiar, threatened by the unfamiliar. Our capacity for both steadfastness and adventure shrivels. - Highlight Loc. 591- 93

One measure for whether or not you're rested enough- - besides falling asleep in board meetings- - is to ask yourself this: How much do I care about the things I care about? When we lose concern for people, both the lost and the found, for the bride of Christ, for friendship, for truth and beauty and goodness; when we cease to laugh when our children laugh (and instead yell at them to quiet down) or weep when our spouses weep (and instead wish they didn't get so emotional); when we hear news of trouble among our neighbors and our first thought is that we hope it isn't going to involve us- - when we stop caring about the things we care about- - that's a signal we're too busy. We have let ourselves be consumed by the things that feed the ego but starve the soul. Busyness kills the heart. - Highlight Loc. 594- 98

But other facets of God we discover only through stillness. "Be still," the psalm instructs, "and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10). Only Mary, Martha's sister, sitting wide- eyed and open- eared, truly hosts Christ in her home. Only those who wait on the Lord renew their strength. Only those who are quiet and watchful find God's mercy that is new every morning. Only those who join him in his love for the contrite and broken in spirit recognize him hidden among "the least of these" (Matt. 25:40). - Highlight Loc. 607- 10

This theme, indeed, often forms a subplot of comedy in the Bible: God or Jesus or an angelic messenger shows up, and those who should know better, who should be paying attention- - priests, lawyers, teachers, apostles- - typically miss it, while those least "deserving"- - shepherds, children, beggars, whores- --

typically grasp it, and immediately. It turns out, numskulls are numb every day, and seekers of grace awake nearly always. - Highlight Loc. 631- 33

Have you ever written a poem? Poetry is the first art form, the primal, almost instinctual way humans try to reflect and make sense of the world's bigness and wildness and danger and beauty. Failing that, our next reflex is just to box up the world, to categorize and file it. One writer was asked when he first became a poet, and he answered something like this: "I think we are all born with a natural desire to discover and create. We're all born poets. The real question is, when did you stop being one?" - Highlight Loc. 688- 91

Sabbath living orients us toward that which, apart from rest, we will always miss. - Highlight Loc. 715

The tricky thing about Sabbath, though, is it's a form of rest unlike sleep. Sleep is so needed that, defied too long, our bodies inevitably, even violently, force the issue. Sleep eventually waylays all fugitives. It catches you and has its way with you. Sabbath won't do that. Resisted, it backs off. Spurned, it flees. It's easy to skirt or defy Sabbath, to manufacture cheap substitutes in its place- - and to do all that, initially, without noticeable damage, and sometimes, briefly, with admirable results. It's easy, in other words, to spend most of your life breaking Sabbath and never figure out that this is part of the reason your work's unsatisfying, your friendships patchy, your leisure threadbare, your vacations exhausting. - Highlight Loc. 731- 35

Sabbath- keeping requires two orientations. One is Godward. The other is timeward. To keep Sabbath well- - as both a day and an attitude- - we have to think clearly about God and freshly about time. We likely, at some level, need to change our minds about both. Unless we trust God's sovereignty, we won't dare risk Sabbath. And unless we receive time as abundance and gift, not as ration and burden, we'll never develop a capacity to savor Sabbath. - Highlight Loc. 738- 40

That's a perfect description of those who train themselves in God's goodness and sovereignty: every year you grow, you find him bigger. - Highlight Loc. 794- 95

You cannot practice thankfulness on a biblical scale without its altering the way you see. And the more you do it, the more you find cause for doing it. Inherent in a life of thanksgiving is an ongoing discovery of God's sufficiency, his generosity, his fatherly affection and warrior protection. - Highlight Loc. 800- 802

Pride usurps God. Pride inverts the universe's deepest truth: that we need and serve God. Pride gets this exactly backward. Pride is the delusion that God, if he exists, is awfully lucky I've shown up and should mind his p's and q's lest I change my mind. - Highlight Loc. 845- 46

The twin of pride is despair. It is to collapse into a sense that not even God is good enough or big enough or smart enough to sort out the mess I've made or stumbled upon. In despair, we are consumed by the lie that God, if he exists, is too inept or distracted or apathetic to even notice us, let alone come to our aid. - Highlight Loc. 846- 49

This is God's time- management technique. There's a right way to tally up days. There's an arithmetic of timekeeping, and God must tutor us in it. Wisdom is not the precondition for learning this arithmetic. It's the fruit of it. Wisdom comes from learning to number our days aright. You don't need to be wise to sign up for God's school. But if you're diligent, attentive, inquisitive in his classes, you'll emerge that way. - Highlight Loc. 883- 85

The truly purposeful have an ironic secret: they manage time less and pay attention more. - Highlight Loc. 902- 3

To live on purpose means to go and do likewise. Purposefulness requires paying attention, and paying

attention means- - almost by definition- - that we make room for surprise. We become hospitable to interruption. I doubt we can notice for long without this hospitality. And to sustain it we need theological touchstones for it- - a conviction in our bones that God is Lord of our days and years, and that his purposes and his presence often come disguised as detours, messes, defeats. - Highlight Loc. 926- 28

The span between life as we intend it and life as we receive it is vast. Our true purpose is worked out in that gap. It is fashioned in the crucible of interruptions. - Highlight Loc. 932- 33

Hoarding is only wasting. Keeping turns into losing. And so the world of the stingy shrinks. Skinflints, locked into a mind- set of scarcity, find that the world dwindles down to meet their withered expectations. Because they are convinced there isn't enough, there never is. - Highlight Loc. 961- 63

There is, of course, a place for wise management of our days and weeks and years. But management can quickly turn into rigidity. We hold time so tight we crush it, like a flower closed in the fist. We thought we were protecting it, but all we did was destroy it. - Highlight Loc. 965- 66

Acknowledge that every moment you receive is God's sheer gift. Resolve never to turn it into possession. What you receive as gift you must be willing to impart as gift. - Highlight Loc. 970- 71

In God's economy, to redeem time, you might just have to waste some. - Highlight Loc. 976

The Exodus command, with its call to imitation, plays on a hidden irony: we mimic God in order to remember we're not God. In fact, that is a good definition of Sabbath: imitating God so that we stop trying to be God. We mirror divine behavior only to freshly discover our human limitations. - Highlight Loc. 1003- 5

To refuse Sabbath is in effect to spurn the gift of freedom. It is to resume willingly what we once cried out for God to deliver us from. It is choosing what once we shunned. Slaves don't rest. Slaves can't rest. Slaves, by definition, have no freedom to rest. Rest, it turns out, is a condition of liberty. God calls us to live in the freedom that he won for us with his own outstretched arm. Sabbath is a refusal to go back to Egypt. - Highlight Loc. 1032- 35

But thank God that God could care less about our rights. What God cares about, and deeply, is our needs. And it's this simple: you and I have an inescapable need for rest. The lie the taskmasters want you to swallow is that you cannot rest until your work's all done, and done better than you're currently doing it. But the truth is, the work's never done, and never done quite right. It's always more than you can finish and less than you had hoped for. - Highlight Loc. 1070- 73

Sabbath is not the break we're allotted at the tail end of completing all our tasks and chores, the fulfillment of all our obligations. It's the rest we take smack- dab in the middle of them, without apology, without guilt, and for no better reason than God told us we could. - Highlight Loc. 1074- 76

You don't need to be big enough to kill taskmasters or tear down enemy walls. You just need to trust in the God big enough to remove them. - Highlight Loc. 1148- 49

I used to think the spiritual life was mostly about finding and using our gifts for God's glory- - my utmost for his highest. More and more, I think it is not this, not first, not most. At root, the spiritual life consists in choosing the way of littleness. I become less so that Jesus might become greater. Its essence is No- No to ourselves, our impulses and cravings, our acts of self- promotion and self- vindication, our use of power for its own sake. It calls us to deny ourselves possessions, rights, conquests that we're tempted to claim just because we can. It is growing, day by day, into the same attitude that Christ had, and by exactly the same means: emptying ourselves, giving ourselves. It is refusing to grasp what we think is owed us and instead

embracing what we think is beneath us. - Highlight Loc. 1162- 67

Life is meant to be much different- - fuller, richer, deeper, slower- - from what it is. You know this. You've always known it. You've just been missing it your whole life. - Highlight Loc. 1201- 2

The law of Sabbath is not legalistic. It is a command given to save us from ourselves. If anything, the Sabbath command breaks us out of the prison of our own selfishness: it undoes our legalistic bent to go our own way. -- Highlight Loc. 1331- 32

To approach Sabbath with synecdochic imagination, and to free Sabbath- keeping from the demands of the other days of the week, one thing is indispensable: to cease from that which is necessary. This is Sabbath's golden rule, the one rule to which all other rules distill. Stop doing what you ought to do. - Highlight Loc. 1440- 42

Sabbath is that one day. It is a reprieve from what you ought to do, even though the list of oughts is infinitely long and never done. Oughts are tyrants, noisy and surly, chronically dissatisfied. Sabbath is the day you trade places with them: they go in the salt mine, and you go out dancing. It's the one day when the only thing you must do is to not do the things you must. You are given permission- - issued a command, to be blunt- -- to turn your back on all those oughts. - Highlight Loc. 1443- 45

And that touches on Sabbath's second golden rule, or the other half of the first golden rule: to embrace that which gives life. - Highlight Loc. 1460

So I submit this as Sabbath's golden rule: Cease from what is necessary. Embrace that which gives life. And then do whatever you want. - Highlight Loc. 1483

And in his quietness, Brother Lawrence discovered one of life's deep secrets, and he was happy to tell others about it for the asking: God is everywhere. God hovers in the air just behind you. God slips in, furtive and alert, among your comings and your goings. God listens, and watches, and- - yes- - speaks. Only, you need to slow down enough to notice. But so often we, like Martha, become distracted by many things and miss Jesus sitting right there in our kitchen. - Highlight Loc. 1487- 90

And this also is what happens when we keep Sabbath. Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel says, is a foretaste and a heralding of eternity. Its joy is precisely this: it rehearses heaven. This, too, is what the writer of Hebrews says- - in a passage we'll look at closely in a later chapter: the rest we experience in Sabbath is only preliminary. It is an anticipation, as shadow is of reality, of a rest that never ends. - Highlight Loc. 1616- 19

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "highlight location" is provided after each entry.