

# Success In Spite of Ourselves: Violation of Sabbath-Rest in Contemporary Culture

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**ABSTRACT:** In today's culture, many people believe success is linked to good behavior. Likewise, the Pharisees viewed righteousness as the path to success, and they regarded rule-keeping, including rules of the Sabbath, as the outward manifestation of righteousness. We postulate their strict adherence to rules may have, in fact, precluded them from experiencing the true blessings God associated with keeping the Sabbath holy. We explore the intended meaning of Sabbath-keeping and its benefits while discussing opposing views of Sabbath violation in contemporary culture. We highlight the consequences of failing to uphold the Sabbath and suggest that any success encountered in doing so is likely temporary and in spite of our behavior rather than due to it.

**Key words:** Sabbath, business, success, rest, recovery

## INTRODUCTION

### The Superstition: Rewards Come From Good Behavior

In his popular best-selling book, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Marshall Goldsmith (2007) provides success-striving business people with an overview of detrimental pitfalls that hinder success. One of these behaviors, he suggests, is being successful in spite of yourself. He explains that due to our psychological understanding of positive reinforcement, in which good behaviors or acts are rewarded, we begin to believe in a reality where all rewards are linked to good behavior. As young children, we are taught to eat our vegetables to receive a dessert. We learn similar lessons in adolescence, such as studying hard will produce good grades. In the workplace, we have experiences that continue to reinforce these beliefs — exceeding sales goals lead to vacation rewards or bonuses, and working hard is followed by promotions and luxurious lifestyles.

While this may often be true, it is not always reality. Goldsmith (2007) writes, "One of the greatest mistakes of successful people is the assumption, 'I behave this way, and I achieve results. Therefore, I must be achieving results because I behave this way'" (p. 26). He suggests we become superstitious in our beliefs, as we begin to expect

unnatural linkages between events and behaviors. He writes of a brilliant business man who repeatedly achieved great results, despite not listening to those around him. This man concluded he was successful because he did not consider others' input. In reality, his success more likely resulted from good fortune, and it occurred in spite of his insistence on not listening to others rather than because of it. Gary Keller (2012) corroborates this idea while reflecting on his personal success in real estate. He writes, "...we usually succeed *in spite* of most of what we do, not *because* of it" (Keller & Papasan, 2012, p. 100).

In comparing this notion to the Pharisees, we suggest a common "superstition" of belief that one's behavior yields success. One example of Pharisaical rule-keeping is their strict adherence to the Sabbath. The fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments states:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maid-servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD

blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11; NIV)

As a commandment set by God, we are to honor the Sabbath by refraining from work one day each week in obedience to his command. The religious leaders found comfort in following the Sabbath in order to please God and be seen as righteous. Not only did they refrain from work on the Sabbath, there are even records describing activities deemed permissible and not permissible for completion on the Sabbath beyond God's commandment (e.g., *Damascus Document*; Hicks, 1984). Ironically, the Pharisees established a detailed set of rules to instruct people on how to do nothing properly. Although the prohibitions were first implemented to help people think deeply about Sabbath observance, over time they became a set of rules that transformed a day of grace into a day of law, a day given as a gift from God designed for rest, recreation, renewal and worship into a day of oppressive and taxing rules which were required to be followed rigidly in order to please God.

We suggest the Pharisees allowed the rules of the Sabbath to become an object that bogged them down and hindered them from experiencing the blessings God intended. Yet, because they attributed their success to strictly following the rules for achieving righteousness, it became almost impossible for them to get past the rules to know the heart of God's intention. In this paper, we explore God's intended blessing of the Sabbath, examine the place of Sabbath-keeping in the contemporary workplace, and discuss whether violating the Sabbath debunks superstitious beliefs that a day of rest results in the success to which we, in our contemporary U.S. culture, have grown accustomed, or whether this success has come in spite of our blatant disregard of the Sabbath and its intended meaning.

While success can be defined in various ways, for our purposes we define success in terms of economic success, organizational growth, and individual advancement. For example, at an organizational level, Nordstrom rewards employees for violating Sabbath in order to better serve its customers. In addition to being accessible to customers seven days a week, Nordstrom employees are encouraged to come in early, stay late, and offer services arguably at the expense of profit in order to maintain the values of its brand (Spector & McCarthy, 1995). As a result of this commitment, Nordstrom consistently finds itself at the top of "Best Of" consumer lists such as "the most popular luxury retail chain" and "the best department store" (Luxury Institute, 2013; Orange County Register, 2014). Does this success come from or in spite of Nordstrom's violation of the Sabbath?

This question becomes even more interesting when consulting Scripture, as there are occasions when Jesus himself violated Sabbath rules. One such example is an account of the disciples picking heads of grain with Jesus on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-27). When the Pharisees questioned this and accused the disciples of breaking Sabbath rules, Jesus responded with another example of broken rules and declared his authority over the Sabbath. He replied,

Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread — which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath, the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:3-8; NIV)

Likewise, he violated established rules by healing on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11). Jesus entered the synagogue, and when encountering a man with a shriveled hand, he healed him. When he was questioned, Jesus responded as accounted in Mark 3:4 (NIV), "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?"

In regard to the Sabbath, Jesus often found himself in direct confrontation with the Pharisees. However, the dispute was not over whether one should keep Sabbath but on whether their legalistic Sabbath practices were robbing the Sabbath of its grace-filled purpose. The Pharisees bought into the superstition of rigid rule-keeping as a pathway to success and advancement. Jesus, however, viewed them as allowing rules to distract from God's mission to bless the world. In examining the instance of the disciples plucking and eating grain, neither action was a violation according to the Torah; rather they violated oral rabbinic tradition and understanding (Hicks, 1984). Hicks (1984) further suggests that the Pharisees' accusation was based on misunderstanding the true intention of the Law. Specifically, God's true desire was mercy *not* sacrifice, as seen in Matthew 12:7-8 (originally quoted from Hosea 6:6). In fact, Jesus, as the one "greater than the temple," is the Lord over the Sabbath and the one who interprets its purpose (Hicks, 1984). Jesus reminds the Pharisees that mercy and compassion are the tangible expression of faith in obedience and love for God. Thus,

in healing on the Sabbath, Jesus blessed the sick man, thus offering God's grace, which in essence upheld the spirit, if not the rule, of the Sabbath.

In today's world, full of opportunity for good, can we break Sabbath to achieve success? Or have we achieved success in spite of our disregard for God's command? We seek to introduce these questions to the literature and consider possible answers through exploration of the historical context of the Sabbath as well as more contemporary explanations of the meaning and benefit of Sabbath. We suggest this may help us better understand the consequences of Sabbath-breaking in our contemporary culture.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF SABBATH-KEEPING

Scripture first introduces us to the principle of Sabbath in the opening chapters of Genesis where Sabbath is central to the creation narrative. Here we are told that Yahweh, a God of great power, spoke the world into existence in six days. The creation narrative establishes order out of chaos and reveals a God who systematically creates: light and dark, sky and sea, ground and vegetation and then places creatures in each to rule over them. Then after putting in six days of creative, good work, the author tells us about Yahweh's actions on the seventh day of creation in Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV):

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

By day seven, God had completed his work, and he rested. The day on which God did nothing except rest and reflect upon his creation carries the added weight of being declared "holy" by God. Only at Sinai through Moses did Yahweh begin to explicitly command that his people follow by keeping Sabbath (previously stated in Exodus 20:8-11). The people understood that Yahweh had created order through creation, and that he then set apart Sabbath as a key aspect of maintaining order within creation. Sabbath-keeping was tied to the nature of God, and it was established that the holiest day of the week in Israel would be the day Israel did nothing except reflect upon what God had done for them and worship him.

Later in his message, Moses expanded Israel's understanding of Sabbath by giving additional reasoning behind God's fourth commandment. Deuteronomy 5:13-15 (NIV) states:

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Moses expands Israel's understanding of Sabbath to see it as a gift from God that leaves time and space for rest. Here Sabbath is seen as a moment for "re-creation" to occur just as it did for Israel in God's deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus. Even more, Moses stipulates that this time and space for rest and recreation should be made available to those who may not know God (e.g., animals and servants) as well as those who do.

Sabbath occurred every seven days regardless of lunar cycles, establishing Yahweh as Lord over time and nature. A gracious God carved into the week a day of rest, recreation, worship, and contemplation of the mighty workings of God on each person's behalf. This understanding of Sabbath became so important to Israel that the Rabbis were famous to say, "More than Israel has guarded the Sabbath, the Sabbath has guarded Israel" (Plaut, 1981, p. 549).

Other scholars have expanded on the purpose of Sabbath. Bass (2005) suggests, "Christian practices bear the embodied wisdom of God's people living in ways that reflect and respond to God's love for the whole world" (p. 27). She suggests the commandment in Exodus to "remember" the Sabbath is to remind us of the creation story. She posits the commandment of "observing" the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 is for those recently freed from slavery. As slaves, they were unable to take a day off, but once liberated, their freedom allowed for Sabbath observance. Therefore, Sabbath was about remembering creation and allowing God's people to rest in freedom from captivity (Bass, 2005). Rest is not the only purpose of the Sabbath, but it is central to Sabbath observance.

Recall when Jesus' disciples plucked grain to eat, and Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath (Mat. 12:1-4). The focus of resting on the Sabbath allows us to see the placement of this story, immediately following Jesus' invitation to join him in restfulness, is purposeful. This invitation to

rest should be included in our understanding of Sabbath. In Matthew 11:28-29 (NIV), Jesus says,

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Bass states, “What time-stressed contemporary people most need is not more time but time of different quality, time that is beyond price, time that has shape and substance, time that need not be wrestled with each day as if it were an enemy, time that is the habitation of blessing” (p. 35). We believe Jesus’ invitation to rest in him is linked to his clarification of the true intention of Sabbath-keeping.

Beyond Jesus’ references to rest found in the Gospel, the Hebrew writer specifically addresses the importance of Sabbath-rest and its promise for God’s people (Hebrews 4:1-11). Chapter four of Hebrews begins, “Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it” (verse 1). In this passage, the author references that the generation in Exodus was offered the promise of rest in Moses’ day but did not receive it due to their unbelief as they turned away from the promised land. He goes on to write:

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:9-11; NIV).

Sabbath-rest, found in verse 8, is described as the rest where God’s presence dwells, the place where God is at rest (Kaiser, 1973). Bruce (1990) suggests that in this place people receive “blissful rest in unbroken fellowship with God,” in which the ultimate goal is to achieve “final perfection which has been prepared for them by their heavenly high Priest” (p.110). The engagement in Sabbath-rest represents the promise of eternal rest in the place God is preparing for us.

There are other connections between the need for rest and the restfulness provided by God’s intended Sabbath. At the time of Exodus when God spoke the commandment of Sabbath, he also reminded the people he had brought them out of slavery and first commanded that they have “no other gods” before him (Exodus 20:3; NIV). Brueggeman (2014) suggests this context and first commandment (which was followed by the fourth

commandment of Sabbath-keeping) is important when interpreting the meaning of Sabbath. When taken within the context of the Exodus story, we can see “the God who rests is the God who emancipates *from slavery* and consequently *from the work system of Egypt* and *from the gods of Egypt* who require and legitimate that work system” (Brueggeman, 2014, p. 2, emphasis in original). Pharaoh constantly demanded more production to acquire more supply. His appetite for more was insatiable, creating restlessness in him and among his people. God in his infinite wisdom knows rest is necessary, and as we have seen, he modeled rest in his creation story. Likewise, he commanded his people a day of restfulness as opposed to the restlessness to which they had grown accustomed. Therefore, God’s true intention and blessing of Sabbath was the gift of the freedom from the insatiable restlessness of the world.

## THE SABBATH AND THE CONTEMPORARY WORKPLACE

### Contemporary Incentives for Violating the Sabbath

The similarities between the overwhelming demands and pressure God’s people were experiencing in Egypt and overwhelming demands and pressure felt in contemporary society are remarkable. The burden to produce and provide is endless, and the rewards are equally enticing. As seen in the previous Nordstrom example, as well as in the everyday realities of living in a wealth- and consumer-driven culture, the incentives for violating the Sabbath are pervasive and powerful. They occur at both micro (individual) and macro (business and societal) levels, and ostensibly provide benefits that reinforce the behavior. Alternately, there may be negative economic or psychological consequences (i.e., punishment) for those individuals or businesses that insist on maintaining the Sabbath as holy time rather than additional opportunity for conducting business.

A company that chooses to remain closed one day per week to honor the Sabbath is sacrificing 14% (i.e., one seventh) of its potential operational and sales hours. By closing on Sunday, a day when most consumers have a day off, the effects may be magnified. For instance, within some industries (e.g., retail), experts have estimated that 20% to 30% of all sales occur on Sunday (Gunther, 2001). Contemporary consumers are accustomed to being able to purchase goods and services at times convenient to them. When faced with a “closed” sign, rather than

waiting until Monday, consumers likely go to a nearby competitor or order online. Thus, Sabbath-keeping business owners may be disadvantaged relative to competitors who remain open.

At an even broader level, seven-days-a-week retail sales have been shown to benefit the national economy and its workforce. France has strict prohibitions on Sunday trading driven by both secular (e.g., unions support a 35-hour work week) and religious (e.g., highly Catholic population) forces. Such restrictions are often pursued in the name of employee welfare, but economically such regulations have been criticized for depressing employment growth, harming prospective workers who have non-traditional schedules, and increasing market inefficiencies which ultimately harm consumers (Reddy, 2012; Wenzel, 2010). In 2007, after analyzing data from the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands, where prohibitions on Sunday commerce have been loosened, France's Council of Economic Analysis advocated loosening the country's strict Sunday prohibitions because, in the three countries analyzed, Sunday commerce had created 3% to 10% more jobs in retail (Huet, 2013).

For employees, the forces that encourage dishonoring the Sabbath are just as powerful. American workers already work more hours per week than do their counterparts in other industrialized nations, and the greatest proportion of these additional hours can be attributed to a lack of federally mandated vacation time, fewer paid holidays, and a 40-hour work-week compared to a standard of 35-hour weeks (Ray, Sanes & Schmitt, 2013). However, for employees there are also economic and psychological incentives for putting in long hours at the office and being willing to break the Sabbath by working seven days a week. Employees who work extra hours may gain a reputation among colleagues as being ambitious and productive or may earn bonuses, receive raises or promotions, acquire extra skills, or even secure a higher position with another firm (Bell & Freeman, 2001; Kuhn & Lozano, 2005; Wallace, 1997). In many cases, the opportunity costs of forgoing work in exchange for leisure activities or rest are too great (Brett & Stroh, 2003).

Beyond economic benefits, research has identified psychological incentives for Sabbath violation. These include intrinsic motivation from doing meaningful work in which one sees social value as well as social contagion effects based upon prevailing organizational norms or competitiveness among employees (Wallace, 1997; Brett & Stroh, 2003). In terms of doing work that contributes social value, many Christians may even feel compelled

to do so based on the words of Christ. In explaining why he healed on the Sabbath, Jesus said, "[I]t is lawful to do good on the Sabbath," (Matthew 12:12, NIV). Thus, many Christians who understand the necessity of Sabbath-keeping, may convince themselves that their work precludes honoring the Lord's day. Any reinforcement received for doing so, whether recognition from superiors or a deep sense of accomplishment, contributes to continuing such behavior in the future.

Social contagion effects are just as strong but assert their influence in different ways. Technology has created a culture of perpetual "on call" for employees where work bleeds into non-work hours and work roles become omnipresent aspects of their lives (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006). Within organizations in which being accessible at all times is the prevailing norm, social contagion effects are magnified such that employees who wish to succeed are forced to emulate the behaviors of colleagues or risk being seen as less committed. Thus, sacred time with God is often eschewed in order to adhere to organizational norms; those who conform are more likely to progress in their careers while those who resist may find their careers stymied. While organizational and personal success may come from violating the Sabbath, do these rewards come in spite of violation of the Sabbath or due to violation of the Sabbath? Furthermore, are the rewards worth the consequences that undoubtedly follow them?

### **Contemporary Consequences of Violating the Sabbath**

A popular view of the person-work interface known as the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model holds that the responsibilities of jobs consist of various personal demands (e.g., physical, cognitive, and emotional) that employees must be capable of fulfilling to perform their work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Moreover, the process of fulfilling these demands is associated with psychological and physiological costs that result in stress and strain. Undoubtedly, as workers are expected to work more days and longer hours, their available resources will be continually drained, and workers will begin to experience work-related stress. This may impact not only their work, but potentially their family and non-work lives. As the process of resource depletion continues, employees experience symptoms, such as fatigue related directly to their jobs, or holistically, they may begin to display low positive affect across many facets of their lives (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Sonnentag, 2003). These consequences also have financial implications as U.S. companies spend

approximately \$300 billion annually on workplace stress-related outcomes (Thomas & Lankau, 2009). Of the activities causing stress, approximately two-thirds of the experienced stress is the result of activities which could be ameliorated by the implementation of a day for rest or Sabbath-keeping: juggling work/personal issues (20%) and workload (46%) (American Institute of Stress, 2014). Ironically, these consequences are not restricted to secular industries. Church staff, as well as employees of other faith-based organizations, feel pressure to violate the Sabbath to advance the mission of Christ central to their professions. Studies show that pastors often find difficulty taking respite from ministry and are at high risk for burnout (Grosch & Olsen, 2000).

Recent research on work attitudes and performance reveals that rest and recovery are vital components of employees' time away from work and are necessary to replenish the personal resources necessary for maintaining productive, engaged employees who display positive affect toward their jobs and toward others in the organization (e.g., Fritz & Sonnentag, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003; Sonnentag, Kuttler & Fritz, 2010). In these studies, *recovery* refers to processes that operate opposite to strain processes and occur during times when no job-related demands are placed on employees. During these times of relaxation and psychological detachment from work, feelings of vigor, control, and positive affect are increased, while stress reactions are reduced (Sonnentag et al., 2008). Furthermore, the effort-recovery hypothesis suggests if individuals do not receive an opportunity for recovery, greater levels of stress, strain, and conflict are likely to be experienced, even if the demands placed on the individual remain constant (Meijman & Mulder, 1998). Thus, even if workload and stressors remain constant, strain and burnout will increase unless regular recovery is experienced.

Although the recovery studies were secular in nature, we feel comfortable extrapolating the implications of those studies into the domain of Sabbath-keeping. At its essence, Sabbath is less about a specific day of the week and more about sacred time spent with God (Heschel, 1951; Tsevat, 1972), intentionally set apart to "restore equilibrium to the mind, spirit, and body" through communing with God (Diddams, Surdyk & Daniels, 2004, p. 4). Additionally, "Sabbath becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest" (Brueggeman, 2014, p. 10). By maintaining restfulness as a central component of one's life, Sabbath-keeping parallels the resource recovery process that has been identified as vital to maintaining healthy and productive employees.

### **Cognitive Dissonance: A Psychological Toll of Violating the Sabbath**

An additional consequence for the psychological well-being of workers involves recognizing that workers, whose religious beliefs encourage them toward Sabbath-keeping, may experience a particular form of cognitive and psychological strain when forced to work schedules that prohibit them from setting aside sacred time with God. In particular, it is likely these employees will experience an uncomfortable level of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) brought about as a result of their behaviors which are in direct conflict with their attitudes and beliefs about the sacred nature of keeping the Sabbath holy (e.g., not being able to reserve sacred Sabbath time due to work schedules).

Festinger (1957) holds that individuals who experience high levels of dissonance address the accompanying discomfort through one of two avenues: changing their behaviors to match their beliefs (which could include removing oneself from a situation that is causing aberrant behaviors) or changing their attitudes to match their behaviors. For employees who are required to work on a day their religion identifies as holy, neither of these options is especially viable. Facing a lack of alternate job possibilities, and knowing that forgoing their Sabbath in order to work is a requirement of keeping their current job, the option of changing behaviors is unrealistic. Alternately, though, while attitudes toward certain objects may be malleable, strongly held beliefs and values are more resistant to change (Eagly & Chaiken, 1995; Kolman, 1938). It is unlikely, then, that deeply spiritual individuals will amend their view of the reverence and importance of Sabbath-keeping to conform to work-related behaviors that prevent them from honoring a sacred time with God. In short, remedies for dissonance experienced through failure to observe the Sabbath are limited.

Extended exposure to even low levels of dissonance can result in psychological discomfort and may lead to the same forms of stress and strain associated with lack of recovery previously described. These ideas have been empirically tested beginning with a study of Sunday shoppers. Dunford and Kunz (1973) found that self-categorized religious individuals used a variety of neutralization techniques to reduce their experience of dissonance. These techniques ranged from denial (of responsibility) to rationalization (i.e., other religious people, even church leaders, do it) to justification (i.e., shopping for the good of my family, etc.). Subsequently, Yousaf and Goubet (2013) used a cognitive dissonance framework

to investigate attitudinal and emotional consequences of religious hypocrisy in relation to individuals voicing support for various religious practices (e.g., praying, Scripture reading, attending worship, obeying commandments to include Sabbath-keeping, etc.), yet failing to uphold them. Their results indicated that these individuals experienced various levels of psychological strain ranging from general discomfort to guilt and shame. While neither of these studies directly addressed the issue of employees who were not afforded Sabbath time, the general conclusions across the studies were very similar and as such, we believe are likely to yield similar results if tested in the context of Sabbath-keeping. While faith-based dissonance at various levels can be neutralized, such neutralization techniques require the use, and subsequent depletion, of limited psychological and cognitive resources. Thus, there are still resource-related costs that impact the psychological and physical well-being of the employee.

### RECONCILING COMPETING PERSPECTIVES

What then do we take away from these conflicting perspectives? It appears that ample reinforcing factors exist that encourage business owners and individuals to forego honoring the Sabbath. At the same time, while career and monetary rewards may accrue for pursuing the path of commerce over the path of respecting sacred time with God, we have also noted that there are numerous detrimental effects that impact the long-term health and well-being of those who fail to observe a time of Sabbath. One other question we should consider along these lines is whether failure to keep the Sabbath for the short-term has different consequences from long-term violation of the Sabbath.

#### Is Success Time Dependent? Short- versus Long-term Perspectives

In recent years, a debate in business contexts has emerged whether what is best for the short-term is the same as what is best in the long-term for an organization. While this discussion is beyond the scope of this paper, regulations such as Sarbanes-Oxley have been implemented in part to help ensure decisions made for short-term success, most often financial, are not at the expense of the long-term sustainability of the business (e.g., Coates, 2007).

Likewise, we raise the question as to whether short-term gains from violating the Sabbath eventually result in a burden unlikely to overcome. It is clear from the

Sabbath literature that keeping Sabbath is more than the simple appearance of resting; we suggest it is impossible to honor Sabbath without physically and mentally breaking from seemingly unending demands of work. This incompatibility of roles is consistent with the teachings of Jesus: “No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money” (Matthew 6:24, NIV). Jesus’ teaching here parallels the first “serve no other gods” commandment previously discussed and is illustrated in a contemporary incompatibility. Brueggemann (2014) suggests that when taking time off while continuing to mentally plan for work, one’s heart is divided and the mental strategy of self-promotion is taking precedence over the restfulness gained through true Sabbath.

At a physical level, individuals may succeed in the short-term in spite of themselves as they work long hours or forgo vacation in order to achieve long-term outcomes of workplace success (e.g., promotion) or better care for their family (e.g., pay off debt or provide better education for their children). However, these good things may be at the risk of long-term physiological harm (e.g., burnout) and are likely at the expense of spiritual blessing. A physiological example is the man who does not “have the time” to exercise regularly because he feels he is needed at work, but then is forced to miss work for months because he suffers a heart attack or stroke.

At a spiritual level, individuals may be sacrificing time with the Lord necessary to renew themselves and their commitment to his principles. Without taking time for renewal, individuals are at risk for depleting resources needed to overcome the obstacles that present themselves at work or home. From a secular perspective, the literature is clear that a lack of rest can be detrimental. For example, cognitive depletion results in slower thinking and inability to solve problems that are generally easily solved (e.g., Melamed, Shirom, Toker, Berlinger, & Shapira, 2006). Knowing the spiritual intention and benefits of Sabbath-keeping, how much more detrimental is missing time set aside as sacred with our Creator? “Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes. It is the pause that transforms” (Brueggemann, 2014, p. 45).

We recognize the purpose of Sabbath is a constant re-centering and re-aligning oneself with the restfulness of God. While it is possible that the consequences of violating Sabbath can be time-dependent, the purpose of Sabbath is knowing more fully the God who creates and the God who loves so that others can be loved more

fully. Time without Sabbath, great or small, is depriving oneself of the depth of restfulness that comes solely from the freedom of endless pursuit of production, from the knowledge that one has done enough and can take a break to reflect in God's completion of work. "Keeping Sabbath, Christian practitioners come to know in their bones that creation is God's gift, that God does not intend that anyone should work without respite, and that God has conquered death in the resurrection of Christ" (Bass, 2005, p. 36).

From our perspective, it is apparent that for people of faith in God the Creator, the benefits of honoring the Sabbath far exceed the success that may come in spite of disregarding time set aside for holy Sabbath. Whether or not this worldly success is dependent upon a day of rest, or in spite of a disregard of Sabbath-keeping in our culture, we suggest faith-based managers should consider the importance of Sabbath for their employees and themselves.

### **PRACTICAL & MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Now, more than ever, Sabbath time is a necessity for healthy workers and for abundant living. To accept this conclusion, one must understand that the benefits we have discussed, those rewards that, in essence, allow us to succeed in spite of ourselves, are primarily beneficial to individuals in a short-term timeframe, while the detrimental effects of working at a frenetic pace and never disconnecting from work are long-term in nature. Moreover, one of the more ironic aspects that connects Sabbath-keeping to the current stream of recovery literature is that employees who take time to rest and recover are typically more productive, make fewer errors, are absent less often, and are better representatives of their companies than their colleagues who are not deliberate about creating separate time for recovery (Meijman & Mulder, 1998; Sonnentag & Bayer, 2005). By extension, those who succeed while not finding time for renewal and recovery, are succeeding *in spite* of their behavior, rather than because of it.

One could argue, then, that business owners stand to benefit from ensuring that their employees' work schedules allow them autonomy to carve out Sabbath time. Writing from a spiritual perspective, we consider these times of respite and work detachment to correspond to opportunities for honoring the Sabbath, but allowing that detachment from work is just as important from a secular perspective, with the primary difference being the focus of that time, whether it is devoted to sacred or leisure activities.

In terms of the competitive business environment, the question of how honoring the Sabbath impacts financial success is less clear. Sabbath-keeping has been recognized as an emerging issue among human resources practitioners even in secular publications (Lucas & Deery, 2004), especially for workers within fields such as hospitality and tourism where 24-hour, 7-days-a-week service is an essential practice (Huntley & Barnes-Reid, 2003). Yet, the application of Sabbath-friendly policies is a daunting task. When facing competitors whose businesses remain open seven days a week and whose employees are required to work on Sunday, business owners are faced with a struggle as to how to proceed. The downsides of closing shop on a day when one's competitors are doing business seem overwhelming. How then do we encourage business owners to adopt business practices that would adhere to the idea of Sabbath-keeping? As believers, we are given numerous admonitions about honoring the Sabbath, and we are also promised bountiful living for keeping this commandment. Take for instance this passage from Isaiah 58: 13 – 14a (NIV):

If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.

If one is looking for reassurance related to this passage, there is mounting evidence of its veracity. In New York City, it is well known that many retail and jewelry stores are closed on Saturday because their owners are honoring the Jewish Sabbath (Celashi, 2012). Saturday is one of the biggest shopping days of the week, and yet these business owners insist on Sabbath-keeping, and in the process have established very successful businesses.

Going even further, when integrated as part of a business strategy, honoring the Sabbath and allowing one's workers that same freedom can be financially beneficial. One needs look no further than the experience of David Green, founder and CEO of Hobby Lobby, which was open for business on Sundays during its first 26 years of operation. The decision to close on Sundays was likely tough for Green and his board as until then, Sunday had been the company's highest sales-per-hour day (Dawson, 2012). However, Hobby Lobby has remained profitable, has continued to expand, and has gained a reputation as a



socially responsible firm that adheres to a moral code not dictated by profit alone. Chick-fil-A is another faith-based business that remains closed on Sunday, a profitable day for restaurants. The Cathy family (its founders) has never shied from professing that the Sunday policy is deeply grounded in faith, and this has won a very loyal and devoted clientele (Chick-fil-A, n.d.).

Similarly, Utah-based R. C. Willey, founded by a devout Mormon, has also made part of its corporate identity to remain closed on Sundays. The decision to remain closed on Sunday was a faith-based decision; however, company president Jeff Child recently stated that the policy has been beneficial in finding high-quality employees (Celashi, 2012). The Sunday closing policy was challenged by Warren Buffett, when his holding company Berkshire Hathaway was in negotiations to acquire and expand the chain. Buffett was opposed to the idea of being closed on Sunday and cited data indicating that 23% of home furnishing sales are transacted on Sunday. After much debate, the Sunday policy was retained and new stores have been successful, even in areas where Sunday shopping is prevalent (Benson, 2012). While these are businesses which have benefited from a Sabbath closure, we suggest the motivation for decisions of believers should be one of faith and obedience not financial gain, even at the expense of profit.

Other companies, such as car dealerships, have a tradition of being closed on Sundays for reasons other than Sabbath-keeping and have remained profitable. We agree with Willimon (2010) who suggested that Sabbath-keeping is not prescribed for everyone but is what Christians and Jews are *compelled to do* because of a love for God who first loved us. Business owners who make a business decision to close their doors for reasons other than Sabbath-keeping are making a secular business decision. Analyzing business decisions and their consequences outside of the Sabbath context is beyond the scope of this paper; however, we suggest providing employees with time off regardless of the reason can provide benefits as described in the stress-related literature previously reviewed (e.g., JD-R, Effort-Recovery hypothesis).

Furthermore, the commandment to honor the Sabbath has particular importance for Christian and Jewish business owners. It is one thing to purposely adhere to a schedule allowing oneself to keep the Sabbath, but what about one's faith-oriented employees? The commandment to honor the Sabbath carries with it an expectation that business or property owners would allow those under their control to have a time of rest "so that [they] may rest

as you do" (Deuteronomy 5:14, NIV). In the same way, it is not enough for present-day Christian business owners to set aside personal time for Sabbath. They should also be mindful of their employees and foster opportunities for them to celebrate their own Sabbath time with God. Consider the implications of Christian business owners who set aside time for their own Sabbath retreat with God, but do not do the same for their employees. Such a policy sends a message that employees' Sabbath time was less important than the owners'. Going further, it implies that although the owners want to uphold God's law in their own lives, they are willing to place those under their control in a position of breaking God's commandment in order to serve as an employee of the company. In doing so, the manager violates the intention of freedom found in Sabbath.

## CONCLUSION

"Our practice of the faith is something that God does for us, often despite us" (Willimon, 2010, p. 25). While some individuals are likely to subscribe to the notion that success is due to a particular practice, such as Sabbath-keeping, we explored an alternative position that success experienced in contemporary culture is found in spite of our disregard of keeping Sabbath the way God intended as an experience of restfulness, freedom, realignment with God, worship, and transformation. We discussed consequences of violating Sabbath in a contemporary context in addition to benefits to honoring Sabbath-keeping. In the end, we conclude the true experience of Sabbath yields a different result than that expected — one of true rest and freedom from the restless pursuit of the insatiable things of this world.

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