



SO HERE I SIT, doing only a little bit more than nothing at all, meandering around an Iowa lake in a small roofless boat.

Sharing this diminutive yet seaworthy universe is my good wife and her parents—all three old hands at the fine art of snaring innocent piscatorial victims.

For my part, in this situation I am, as it were, like a fish out of water. My role, while my stalwart companions try to reel in dinner, is to stay out of everyone else's way at the far end of the boat, reading, snoozing, valiantly struggling to keep the hot sun out of my eyes and off my back.

It is true that there are moments of serene pleasure—especially when we first go out,

when there still lingers an early-morning coolness on the water. The sun is still low on the horizon, its heat and brilliance hiding behind the lake's encircling trees, leaving a tender, misty chill across the shaded water. After that, however, the day gets hotter, the breeze diminishes, and my bottom gets sore from all the sitting.

My reflexive lack of enthusiasm for an activity that others find so pleasurable stems less from the discomfort and boredom it inflicts than the fact that it takes me away from my work. It certainly *is* pleasurable to spend

Reflections  
by the Pond

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*Allured into the desert,  
With God alone, apart,  
There spirit meeteth spirit,  
There speaketh heart to heart.  
Far, far on that untrodden shore,  
God's secret place I find;  
Alone I pass the golden door,  
The dearest left behind.*

*There God and I—none other;  
Oh far from men to be!  
Nay, midst the crowd and tumult,  
Still, Lord, alone with Thee.  
Still folded close upon Thy breast,  
In field, and mart, and street,  
Untroubled in that perfect rest,  
That isolation sweet.*

*Stilled by that wondrous Presence,  
That tenderest embrace,  
The years of longing over,  
Do we behold Thy Face;  
We seek no more than Thou hast given,  
We ask no vision fair,  
Thy precious Blood has opened Heaven,  
And we have found Thee there.*

*O weary souls, draw near Him;  
To you I can but bring  
One drop of that great ocean,  
One blossom of that spring;  
Sealed with His kiss, my lips are dumb,  
My soul with awe is still;  
Let him that is athirst but come,  
And freely drink his fill.*

Gerhard Tersteegen

time with my wife and her mom and dad in the company of God's creation. But the seemingly restorative benefits of a day upon the lake have always escaped me. For my part in the experience, I would place it in the same category as lolling about on a beach in Acapulco. Were I to magically find myself in that southern paradise (for only if I were tragically insane would I ever go there intentionally), I would spend every minute bemoaning all the things *not* getting done while I laze about on the sand.

For life is short—and the Lord has granted me only one.

And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment...

Hebrews 9:27

If, however, one is to use God's word to rationalize one's guilt over taking a day off, one is also duty-bound to discover what it says on the *merits* of same.

In point of fact, it is far easier to back up the philosophy of periodic rest by Scripture, than to validate that of nose-to-the-grindstone, unrelieved work. God Himself established the over-arching principle six days into creation, and handed it down to His chosen people, Israel.

"Six days you are to do your work, but on the seventh day you shall cease from labor so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female slave, as well as your stranger, may refresh themselves."

Exodus 23:12

And if we say we long to live as our Master, to behave as He, to learn from His ways, then we should realize that even the Lord Jesus—Creator, eternal High Priest, Sovereign Lord, member of the triune Godhead—grew weary from time to time during His brief sojourn in flesh. The relentless crush of those pleading for His touch and His words bore down upon Him and He sought relief and physical restoration away from the press of people and their demands.

Jesus understood the value of time off—even from a job of so brief a lifespan as His, and so important it was ordained by the

Godhead from before there was time. More than that, He also taught the lesson to His disciples.

The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

Mark 6:30-32

And even someone as diligent as the apostle Paul knew the value of a time of recuperative rest.

Now I urge you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be rescued from those who are disobedient in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may prove acceptable to the saints; so that I may come to you in joy by the will of God and find refreshing rest in your company.

Romans 15:30-32

I don't suppose there will ever come a day when there will be stars in my eyes over spending the day at the lake, or the beach, or sipping iced tea while lolling beneath the cooling umbrella of a shade tree. My level of guilt over recreational leisure is hard-wired. It is in my DNA.

But I have learned never to discount the extent of God's grace, and His willingness to change me for the better. My opinion (or even DNA) doesn't really matter. If it was good enough for Paul, good enough for Jesus, and good enough for Father God to take a break once in a while, then it is certainly good enough for me.

*But, Lord, let me never take a break from You.*

