



The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath

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Most of us feel utterly ransacked: we're 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." Stillness as a virtue is a foreign concept in our society, but there is wisdom in God's own rhythm of work and rest. Sabbath is elixir and antidote. It is a gift for our sanity and wholeness--to prolong our lives, to enrich our relationships, to increase our fruitfulness, to make our joy complete. Jesus practiced Sabbath among those who had turned it into a dismal thing, a day for murmuring and finger-wagging, and he reminded them of the day's true purpose: *liberation*--to heal, to feed, to rescue, to celebrate, to lavish and relish life abundant.

The gift of Sabbath is essential to our full humanity and faith, says Buchanan. Far from being some starved and dour day only to be endured, Sabbath is a day wide and bright, brimming with laughter, enough to lend beauty to all our other days. Readers will be changed forever by this pivotal book.

"It seems very unsabbath-like to describe a book about Sabbath with the adverb 'urgently'--but we urgently need this book. Mark Buchanan shows us that our busyness is killing us--killin us--and that Sabbath is our best cure, our best path for rest and reverence and discipleship."--LAUREN WINNER, Best-selling author of *Girl Meets God* and *Mudhouse Sabbath*

"With the easiness of long intimacy and a very deft hand, Buchanan here braids together into one gracious and sustaining strand the beauty of Sabbath, the wisdom of its keeping, and the generosity of God in gifting us with it. These pages are not just a blessing, they are a psalm that cries out to be joyfully engaged."--PHYLLIS TICKLE, Religion editor (ret.) Publishers Weekly and compiler of *The Divine Hours*

The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath Details

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Shannon says

This is a wonderful book that gives great insight into the Sabbath - why God created it, how he uses it to shape and nurture us and why he commands us to keep it. I love the way Buchanan shares how to start incorporating rest into your life at the end of each chapter. It's a very readable book - although if you are like me, you may need to read it periodically to remind yourself WHY you should resist our culture's tendency to over-schedule, over-commit and in most every way avoid resting. I've read this book twice and should probably re-read it soon!

Charlotte says

I have been slowly reading, applying, and working through this book. The liturgical sections at the end of each chapter have been slowly implemented into my regular rhythms of quiet and devotion. Since starting this book last summer I have seen the concepts he breaks down within each chapter have changed my "mode" of living. At times I feel a story may drag on as he tries to make a point or draw you into imagination about an idea. For me, rereading and going back to the sabbath practices described in this book have made this book so worth it.

John says

After reading a couple good reviews of Mark Buchanan's work a year or so ago I bought a couple of his books. Upon receiving the books, though, they quickly languished on my shelves. They looked too "pop-culturey" to me to rouse me to read.

I'm glad they finally made it into my hands.

"The Rest of God" is an excellent book. Buchanan is a bit like an evangelical, male version of Annie Dillard. There is a stillness and a slowness-even a choppiness- in the way he writes.

"The Rest of God" is really a magical book. In it Buchanan manages to weaves wonderfully imaginative exposition (without being fanciful or nonbiblical) with delightful storytelling and clear, but gentle exhortation.

I left the book with a clearer and more poetic biblical understanding of the Sabbath while also have a much deeper desire for Sabbath rest in my own life AND (wonder of wonders) some very helpful practical ways to incorporate this rest into my life.

Thank you, Mr. Buchanan... forgive me for thinking myself better than your writing!

Kevan says

Sabbatical. Rest. Recovery. Crucial and restorative themes are defended in this work. Buchanan's thick and pretty prose surprised me; his Canadian storytelling, his spiritual musings, they have a more defined voice than I would have expected in this genre. It's a fabulous and important read.

Leslie says

This book is one pastor's interpretation and application of the Sabbath.

Not a bad book. Not earth-shattering, but not bad. I found the author had some helpful insights. I also think he's as confused as the rest of us.

There are some contradictions in his ideas. For example, he states that since God rested from creating on the 7th day, so should we. No creating. Just enjoy what already exists. OK, makes sense. Then he equates his sabbatical to a year-long sabbath. OK. Then he mentions that he's writing this book--creating this book--on his sabbatical. Hmmm.

One chapter deals with the idea of fasting and feasting. His example is his habit of eating cold cereal for breakfast all week. Then he really appreciates his eggs-and-bacon feast on Sunday. So he recommends eating simply all week, and having a feast on the Sabbath. Pete thought that made sense. I (and all my female friends) immediately wanted to know, who cooks and cleans up for this feast?

Still, I recommend this book, if for no other reason than it makes you think. It's an easy read. You can pretty much start anywhere, and read one chapter at a time as you are interested in each topic. And, as I mentioned at the beginning, he really does have good insights into the meaning and practice of an often forgotten part of the Ten Commandments.

In this day of being overbooked, overloaded, and overwhelmed, with books on being purpose driven and constantly focused on wise use of time, it's very nice to receive Biblical permission--a command--to stop, play, and nap.

Matthew Armstrong says

I would highly recommend this book to every believer. Whatever your revelation of Sabbath is, this book will surely increase it. I came away with a greater respect and desire for Sabbath as well as mindsets which might have taken me many years and much pain to form.

Though I wanted to read this book quickly because of how much I enjoyed it, I only allowed myself to read one chapter every Saturday (my Sabbath day right now) so that i could have the week to let the revelation sink in. I'm glad I did that.

Thanks, Mark!

BDC says

Loved, loved, loved this book. The topic of Sabbath keeping and a Sabbath lifestyle is sorely needed these days and I've found myself grappling with best ways to implement Sabbath for the past few years (young kids so rhythms change a lot). The author give some good insights and good Scriptural backing for those insights, but the real joy of this book is his beautiful prose. It was restful and pleasant just to read his words and stories. Highly recommended! (If you read a book and think 'just get to the point,' you will be bothered by his prose and story telling.)

Jane says

The concept of Sabbath has always put me off a little bit. I guess I have been feeling as if I have too many important things to do to give up a whole day to "do nothing." Sheepish grin. This book has changed all of that. Mr. Buchanan writes in a very readable way about very deep things. He brings the reader face to face with the idea that not practicing Sabbath is, in a sense, telling God that (1) He's not as important as all those things on our To Do lists, and (2) we don't trust Him enough to entrust a day of each week into His Hands. Mr. Buchanan differentiates between just resting for rest's sake and taking time out of our go-go-go lifestyle to quietly and restfully seek after God Himself. He starts the book with a look at our theology of work, so that he can rightly discuss not working. Read this if you want more of the Father. It'll lead you there if you're willing to go!

Garland Vance says

My wife and I set a goal a few months ago to begin living life at a slower pace in order to better be aware of God's presence and to live in a way that values relationships, not just productivity. As part of this journey, we determined to beginning intentionally practicing a Sabbath. So we needed to learn more about it. This is why I began reading *The Rest of God*.

This book was incredible for several reasons. First, Mark Buchanan writes more like a poet than a writer of spiritual works. He uses beautiful language, wonderful stories and draws you into his narratives before bringing out the major point he wants to make. Second, the book is divided into fourteen chapters which start with the "theoretical" side of the Sabbath (those it is not written like theory but like poetry) and then moves to the practical side of Sabbath keeping. Each chapter gives specific ways in which to keep the Sabbath. Third, Buchanan maintains a balanced view of Sabbath keeping. He reminds his readers constantly that Sabbath keeping must not become a form of legalism lest we become like the Pharisees. Instead, Sabbath keeping should embody the freedom that Christians have in Christ.

For me, this book has been revolutionary. I have practiced some form of Sabbath keeping before but never as intentionally--and joyfully--as Buchanan sets forth. But don't read this book if all you're interested in is a Bible study on the Sabbath. This book is meant to be practiced. Read it only if you believe that your life is moving at too fast a pace, that life is meant to be lived at a speed in which we can hear the Holy Spirit and respond to him, that life is meant to be lived in meaningful relationships. If you think those things are true--and want to build space in your life for these things to take place--then this is a great book to read through slowly.

Bethany says

This book was lovely. It was convicting without being legalistic. It focused on the heart, not externals. It gave direction without being prescriptive. I look forward to reading it again.

Janie says

I read this in short snatches over the last five months, so it seems like it has taken me forever to finish. Even though I've got three dozen flags marking quotes, I'm not really firm on what I think about Buchanan's book. Many things I agree with, many things have given me fodder to think about, and a few things I disagree with.

Some quotes to ponder:

“Any deep change in how we live begins with a deep change in how we think.”

“So I changed my mind about liturgy. It certainly can become dull and rote, but so can anything . . . Just as often, though, maybe more so, liturgy can enrich these things . . . It helps us give concrete expression to deepest convictions. It gives us choreography for things unseen and allows us to brush heaven among the shades of earth.”

“Liturgy is bridge building. It is to construct something that spans separate worlds and provides an efficient means of crossing from one to the other.”

“Sin makes the earth prickly. It entangles its beauty in brambles.”

“A typical response to threat and burden is to want to flee it. . . . But what we find is that flight becomes captivity; once we begin to flee the things that threaten and burden us, there is no end to fleeing.”

“The opposite of a slave is not a free man. It's a worshiper. The one who is most free is the one who turns the work of his hands into sacrament, into offering.”

“The twin of pride is despair. . . . 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.”

“Are you in the midst of a situation where, as you pray, you find yourself putting the problem first? if so, you're starting where you should end. You're rehearsing the problem, making it seem larger than it is, where what you need to do is rehearse God's greatness and bigness. Then the problem shrinks to its right portions.”

“Sabbath-keeping is . . . where we think with holy imagination about how the arc of our moments and hours and days intersects with eternity.”

“Exodus grounds Sabbath in creation. Deuteronomy grounds it in liberation. Exodus remembers Eden, Deuteronomy Egypt. In Exodus, Sabbath-keeping is about imitating divine example and receiving divine blessing. In Deuteronomy, it is about taking hold of divine deliverance and observing divine command. Exodus looks up. Deuteronomy looks back. Exodus gives theological rationale for rest, and Deuteronomy historical justification for it. One evokes God's character, the other his redemption. One calls us to holy mimicry—be like God; the other to holy defiance—never be slaves again. One reminds us that we are God's children, the work of his hands, the other we are no one's chattel . . . One is invitation. The other is warning.”

"[T]he Ten Commandments are synecdochic. Each command means more than itself. Each is a tiny part that stands for a vast whole."

Nice description of birch trees through the seasons: "The trees there were a lacework of greens in summer, a quiltwork of yellows in fall, a bonework of whites in winter."

"[W]e can be very busy for God and still not know him."

"To remember is, literally, to put broken pieces back together, to re-member. It is to create an original wholeness out of what has become scattered fragments."

"Lauren Winner, in her book *Mudhouse Sabbath*, remarks on the different wording that Exodus and Deuteronomy use in prescribing the fourth commandment. Exodus calls us to *remember* the Sabbath, Deuteronomy to *observe* it. . . . the three days that follow Sabbath are to be spent in reflection upon--*remembering* the one just past, and the three days leading up to Sabbath are to be spent in preparation for--*observing*--the one approaching."

Bryon says

I've never read a book about Sabbath before; about rest. And I'm not very good at it. I took about three months to read this book. Mark Buchanan is one of my favorite writers and he only comes out with a book about once a year, so I don't like to finish the book too quickly.

His writings are like Philip Yancey's. If you like Yancey, you'll like Buchanan. His books make you think about where you are with the Lord.

God's rest is provided for us to revive, rejuvenate, and give up control. If you want to get better at these things, read this book.

Quotes from the book:

Quiet yourself. Reflect on the day. When were you most alive? What were you doing then, thinking, saying, seeing? When were you most empty? What was going on at that moment? When did it seem God was close, and when did he seem he was far away? Practice that each day.

This is something I'm trying to implement daily in my journaling and quiet time...

A well-kept Sabbath is a dress rehearsal for things above. In finding the rest of God now, we prepare for the fullness of God one day. In Sabbath, we anticipate forever.

"Faith," the writer of Hebrews says, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is clarity about that. It is a tenacious conviction that this world is not enough and was never intended to be. It is a steadfast refusal to seek ultimate things -- ultimate understanding -- where God has not laid them. Not one ultimate thing is stored down here.

Community is fragile, and even amid close friends we feel a little lonely.

<http://www.amazon.com/Rest-God-Restor...>

Josh Miller says

Mark Buchanan is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors. Not only was the content of the book life-changing, it personally spoke to me at length. The message of the book is one that is glossed over by most Bible-believers and Buchanan deftly describes in an opening chapter what the book is about..."The argument of this book is that we uniquely take up his invitation by keeping Sabbath, both as a day and as an attitude."

I found myself musing deeply on the thoughts presented throughout the book while laughing heartily at many of the personal illustrations.

One will not find a list of "do's & don'ts" in this book. That has been the crux of many fundamental, Bible-believing Pharisees for far too long. I know...I have been one of them. It is easy to have a list of what we do and don't (usually garnered from some person or some movement), but it is much harder to live in the spirit of Christ. Jesus upended the list of do's and don'ts that the Pharisees had. He wasn't much concerned at the list of rules that they had - many of the lists followed to a 'T' the Old Testament law. He wasn't concerned with what others thought - only what His Father thought.

Every chapter had morsel upon morsel of real meat upon which to meditate. Not only did the author base his thesis upon scriptural principles, he wove them with stories that illustrated beautifully the truth of the topic at hand.

I loved the overall emphasis on slowing down in life. For far too long, I have gone at breakneck speed. The "movers & shakers" of fundamentalism have hailed as heroes those who go non-stop in their quest to "reach the world" for Christ. I have never been to a conference whose theme is "Be still & know that I am God." I am not certain the reason why but I have a few guesses.

The book has been marked up, starred, underlined, and notated all the way through. Let me share a few of my favorite here:

"The root idea of Sabbath is simple as rain falling, basic as breathing. It's that all living things - and many nonliving things too - thrive only by an ample measure of stillness. A bird flying, never nesting, is soon plummeting. Grass trampled, day after day, scalps down to the hard bone of earth. Fruit constantly inspected bruises, blights. This is true of other things as well: a saw used without relenting-its teeth never filed, its blade never cooled-grows dull and brittle; a motor never shut off gums with residue or fatigues from thinness of oil - it sputters, it stalls, it seizes."

"We simply haven't taken time. We've not been still long enough, often enough, to know ourselves, our friends, our family. Our God. Indeed, the worst hallucination busyness conjures is the conviction that I am God. All depends on me. How will the right things happen at the right time if I'm not pushing and pulling and watching and worrying?"

"A common characteristic of driven people is that, at some point, they forget the purpose...their original inspiration may be noble. But driven too hard, it gets supplanted by greed for more, or dread of setback, or force of habit. Drivenness erodes purposefulness. The difference between living on purpose and being driven surfaces most clearly in what we do with time."

"Those who guard every minute, resent every interruption, ration every moment, never have enough. They're

always late, always behind, always scrambling, always driven. 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."

"We think we're the exception, the one for whom busyness will translate into fruitfulness. We think, because we've figured ways to build impossibly tall, lithe buildings and dig immensely deep, broad holes, to spy on babies in the womb, to tease out strands of DNA, to send whole computer files from New York to Nairobi in a split second - we think because our industry and ingenuity seem boundless, we can also figure out a way around our God-imposed need for stillness. We can't. The need is not conjured away by medication, technology, discipline, cleverness, sheer willfulness. It always comes back to take its due."

"Life is meant to be much different - fuller, richer, deeper, slower - from what it is."

"For certain, there has not been enough silence in my life. Silence is the condition for true listening. But I have too little of it. Silence came visiting and found me already occupied."

"Jesus's Sabbath-keeping always looked, to his enemies, like Sabbath breaking."

Matt Moran says

"Sabbath-keeping requires two orientations. One is Godward. The other is timeward"

There are some gems here. I would recommend it as a good book to read about the Sabbath, but I wouldn't make this the only book or the first one.

This is not theological at all. It is meant to provoke the imagination. Because of that I wish the author used fewer Biblical stories, because his creative interpretations of the stories often have no relation to authorial intent.

I've seen some people compare Mark Buchanan to Phillip Yancey. I get the comparison - they are both the rare evangelical writer with an aesthetic sensibility. But wouldn't go that far - Yancey is a GOOD writer. Much of this book is overwritten and excessive and Buchanan tells stories that seem to take days to get to the point.

Nancy Peifer says

Best book I've read recently, but maybe because I need Sabbath rest... Buchanan is not only a Bible scholar but a poet and a very real and humble man. His wisdom has not come easily but is shared freely and expressed beautifully. If you are weary this is a must read, but it is not a 5 easy steps to rest type book--thankfully. Readers are challenged to take an honest look at what Sabbath is, an honest look at their own life, and then decide what they need to do to obey the Sabbath command and find " the rest of God".

Paul says

This book was recommended to me and was the first chance I have had to read Buchanan. There are certain books which give you a glimpse of an author's state of mind when writing, for me this was one of those books. Buchanan's words are rich and inviting like a good cup of coffee on a cold winters day. It is the tenor of these words as much as the content which invites you to a place of contemplation and reflection, into as he says *The Rest of God*. Sabbath is something I have been pondering for some time. It was never practiced in my home yet in the back of my mind there is a deep need for a day of rest, but not the rule bound rest of the Pharisee's. Here Buchanan offers simple advice for finding the rest of God summing it in a single poetic sentence "cease from what is necessary and embrace what gives life." Sage wisdom for a culture obsessed with staying busy.

Kelsey Glenn says

Everything I needed and so much more. This book has easily entered my top 5 favorite Christian living books. It's written in such a great way that the reader not only enjoys the take away points but also simply enjoys the process of reading about them. Well done, I'm already telling all my close friends and family to pick up a copy

Adam Parker says

This book was recommended to me by a friend, and I am glad that it was. Western Followers would do well to read this one. Though the writing style is a bit overly descriptive at times (in my opinion) which tends to distract from what he is trying to emphasize, the point still comes across well. There are a few times that the author seems to start down rabbit trails as well, but regardless, the message/theme ends up shining by the end of each chapter. I particularly liked the practical-liturgy follow up pages at the end of each chapter; they functioned as "how-to's" and helped make the concepts a bit more concrete.

All in all, I walked away from this book a bit more at peace in my soul, and with a plan moving forward on how to remain in that peace; all because this author, in his unique style, helped reiterate and reshape my understanding on Sabbath. We often talk about concepts of joy and peace, but without any practical ways of obtaining them. Who would have thought that the prescription was laid out in scripture for us since the beginning?! : p

Chad says

I just finished reading *The Rest of God* for the third time. I'm sure I'll read it again.

Yes, Buchanan is a fantastic writer (his syntax and diction are well-chosen and compelling), but what what brings me back to *The Rest of God* is the importance of rest (or struggle with rest) in my own life. One of the book's strengths is that it addresses the importance of rest on the Sabbath as well as throughout the week; it's about more than just what we should do on Sunday (or Saturday).

I found myself reading many of the chapters "devotionally," spending the day mulling over the author's

perspective of our cycle of work and rest. I originally bought *The Rest of God* to learn more about the Sabbath, but reading it became a deeply personal and reflective experience. It was more than an informational text; it became a vehicle for contemplation and change. (A great example of this is Chapter Five. I've never read something that describes my thought process so precisely and eloquently).

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My one complaint is that the book really drops off after chapter nine. I think Buchanan could have scrapped the last third of the book without losing much. In fact, I think cutting the "fluff" would really strengthen what's left. (this is the only reason it received 4/5 stars rather than 5/5)

Kari says

very thought provoking. Loved it.
