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Sabbath As Resistance:



Synopsis

Discussions about the Sabbath often center around moralistic laws and arguments over whether a person should be able to play cards or purchase liquor on Sundays. In this volume, popular author Walter Brueggemann writes that the Sabbath is not simply about keeping rules but rather about becoming a whole person and restoring a whole society. Importantly, Brueggemann speaks to a 24/7 society of consumption, a society in which we live to achieve, accomplish, perform, and possess. We want more, own more, use more, eat more, and drink more. Keeping the Sabbath allows us to break this restless cycle and focus on what is truly important: God, other people, all life. Brueggemann offers a transformative vision of the wholeness God intends, giving world-weary Christians a glimpse of a more fulfilling and simpler life through Sabbath observance.

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Customer Reviews

Almost no one talks about it anymore. Once it used to be a significant issue, especially in the Christian Church in England, Scotland and North America. But the whole subject of Sabbath has fallen to the wayside in all the rush for prominence, peace and prosperity. Nevertheless the matter

of the Sabbath has significant implications for Church and society. Walter Brueggemann has taken up the topic in his newest 108 page paperback, “Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now” • and takes the reader in an unexpected, but substantive, direction. “Sabbath as Resistance” • is written to be grasped, comprehended and reflected on by both clergy and laity. Brueggemann spends the first two chapters unpacking the Ten Commandments, showing how they were given by Israel’s God as a way of being a people who can enjoy rest. Pharaoh and his production-affirming gods, were confiscatory, demanding a endless produce and who authorize endless systems of production that are, in principle, insatiable • (2). In contrast, Israel’s God “is on a collision course with the gods of insatiable productivity” • (Ibid.). Into this conflict God steps in and delivers his people from the restless, anxiety-ridden world of Pharaoh. He brings them to Sinai and gives them his Ten Commandments. As Brueggemann works it out, the first three commandments are about exclusive devotion to YHWH and the last six are about loving our neighbor. The hub of these commandments is found in the one commandment that is the longest and most detailed: The Sabbath. It’s here, in the place of rest, that Israel finds it can breathe. And in being able to finally have room to breathe, Israel can love God (exclusively) and actually begin to love their neighbor.

We live in world that never stops moving. There are more options than ever for activities to spend our time. We have access to seemingly unlimited activities, many of which are harmless or even in some way good. Our jobs seem to claim more and more of our lives each week. The special effort for a big project begins to be the every week demand because we, and our employer, has realized if we can make the sacrifice sometimes we can make it all the time. The endless stream of entertainments and opportunities has led many cultural critics to describe Westerners as exhausted, bored, and overworked. Sabbath as Resistance has a brief preface followed by six studies on different aspects of the Sabbath. Brueggemann considers the Sabbath in relation to the first Commandment, and the Sabbath as resistance to a series of modern vices, namely anxiety, coercion, exclusivism, and multitasking. The book concludes with a discussion of Sabbath and the Tenth Commandment. Each of these topics is important and potentially helpful to Christians in a frantic world. For Brueggemann, Sabbath is much less doxological and much more economic. He certainly has a point here. When the original practice of Sabbath is considered, it largely differentiated Israel from the surrounding nations on an economic basis. It is easy to find support in Scripture for the argument that resting from economic activity on the Sabbath reflects a trust in God which has a doxological element. Unfortunately, this book never really makes such an argument.

Sabbath as Resistance is much more a diatribe against market economics than it is a theological argument for worshipful rest.

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