

Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives

Paul Heintzman

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Heintzman's scholarly excellence reveals a manageable method of bringing a Christian understanding of leisure into busy modern life.

Leisure, perhaps surprisingly, is a complicated, controversial topic. Modern workers put in fewer hours than their counterparts in past centuries, and yet the refrain “I’m just so busy” seems to ring loudly. While most people long for the clear benefits of leisure, desire doesn’t transfer into priorities and schedules. Meanwhile, Christians are taught to avoid hedonism and narcissism, and often to work hard at being moral; but the Bible talks about the necessity of entering God’s rest. Paul Heintzman deftly tackles these ideas and more, presenting the topic through the three lenses of the subtitle. *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* is a comprehensive, freeing look at an oft-ignored topic.

Heintzman’s work springs from his observations of rest in contemporary life and reaches back to history to deconstruct those reflections, finding ultimate fulfillment in the spiritual perspective. While he relishes research and the complexity of the topic, his goal from the beginning is to bring freedom—not by throwing off any moral or lifestyle structure, but by going back to the true intent and purpose of leisure. The culmination of the book is, in the author’s words, a “concise theology of leisure” based on “Sabbath-keeping, rest, and a balanced rhythm of work and leisure.”

This is wholly an academic book, filled with deep research, pages of notes, and an intelligent tone. The seeming juxtaposition of leisure and insight maybe off-putting for a moment, but it’s the most refreshing part of the book. In modern life and religion, it seems that study leads to more study, work leads to more work; but Heintzman shows that study can lead to rest—relaxation is not at odds with excelling. While Heintzman’s work is thorough and academic, it is far from verbose or pedantic. The book is well paced, delving into each idea but bringing the ideas solidly back to the surface, where they have practical impact on everyday life.

This book will be transformative for Christians exhausted by extremes of the so-called Christian work ethic. The wisdom and research of this book empowers ministers, church leaders, and spiritual directors to bring rest and refreshment to those they serve.

MELISSA WUSKE (Winter 2015)

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