

Giving Up This One Simple Thing Got My Whole Life in Order



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Nobody could touch my time, so what my friend was about to suggest didn't fall on deaf ears, it fell on defensive ears.

“So Shaun, what are you doing later today?”

“Probably going to empty out the garage, clean it, and wash the cars, too.”

“Don't you want to do those later in the week and enjoy your Sunday?”

“Well, I'd love that, but I have work to do during the week. My schedule is seriously full and I feel like to never get any time to do things like this until the weekend.”

“More important than your schedule, God wants you to leave this day for His purpose, which is rest.”

Argument started. *But isn't that a bit legalistic? How am I supposed to do absolutely NO work?*

We went through just about every objection and counter-argument I could supply us with. We went on for about 30 or 45 minutes. Our wives... our poor wives. My poor wife! We're sitting here having this great lunch, laughing, telling stories, sharing fun, and I'm just arguing away. *No way is someone going to tell me what to do with my time, when I'm using my time for God! Right?!* That's the way I saw it. I was blogging, writing, sponsoring in RCIA, earning a Masters' in Theology, trying to make a difference in the world—and I couldn't clean my garage on a Sunday? Was that justice? Didn't my work earlier in the week somehow earn me some time to keep my house clean? Really, though, doesn't the work I do for my home fall into some sort of 'good works' category?

I had every excuse in the book, and I just wouldn't hear my friend. Then he sort of reshaped his approach.

“Shaun, don't you want the day off? If you could work all day or rest, reflect, and just have down time with your family, wouldn't you do it?”

“Well... yeah”

“Then why don't you?”

I gave him the only real and honest answer in me. “Because I have work to do and I'm afraid that if I fall behind in any of it, it will just pile up.”

Fact is, I was much more concerned with getting things done than attempting to remain obedient to a commandment which seemed to have no place in the Bible. I told him I would think about it and I did. For an hour.

That day, I didn't clean my garage. *Was I really breaking one of the Ten Commandments?* Playing it safe, I decided to give his advice a shot just for that day and check out every other Catholic resource I could to see exactly what church leaders had to say on the subject. I found this in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The first precept ("You shall attend Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation and rest from servile labor") requires the faithful to sanctify the day commemorating the Resurrection of the Lord as well as the principal liturgical feasts honoring the mysteries of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints; in the first place, by participating in the Eucharistic celebration, in which the Christian community is gathered, and by resting from those works and activities which could impede such a sanctification of these days. (#2042)

This seems clear, that there is some rest involved with our Sundays, but what about the activities we were to avoid? The "...which could impede such sanctification of these days" seemed to be key but I still did not understand it. Looking around some more, I found resources that confirmed and agreed with my friend's explanation. I developed a short checklist of questions to bump my desired "work" with:

Was [insert work here] completely necessary?

Does [insert work here] contribute to the sanctification of Sunday?

Is [insert work here] something I would ordinarily do on another day of the week?

No. No. Yes.

My cleaning the garage was totally unnecessary, didn't sanctify Sunday, and was not unique to Sunday.

As much as I didn't want to think it, if I were to proceed working on Sundays I would be seriously defying my own conscience. But what was seriously at stake was the looming question: was I really breaking one of the Ten Commandments?

Indeed I was, and my gosh, look where it is placed. It's the *third* commandment, wedged right between taking God's name in vain and honoring our father and mother. And all of these were higher on the list than commandments involving MURDER, ADULTERY, THEFT, LYING, and COVETING....

...Shocked at what I had found, I began to feel tremendous sorrow for my offense, confessed, and have worked to avoid that sin and share my lesson with those around me.

As scared as I was that I would suddenly fall behind on the work I was responsible for, the exact opposite happened. It was like a ZIP drive: nobody really knows how it works, but it does. The same happened with my time. I didn't get more of it, but I seemed to take on more during the week. Many people ask me questions about my time and how many activities I'm involved with. I always tell them the same thing: I try as hard as I can, and I rest on Sundays....