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## AND GOD RESTED

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A mother finds her daughter smoking a cigarette and says, “How many times have I told you not to do that?”

The daughter says, “But Mom, you smoke all the time!”

How does Mom respond? “*Do as I say, not as I do!*”

You’ve all seen exchanges like that. Maybe your parents said such things to you; maybe you’ve said such things to your own children. At some point you’ve probably had a boss at work or some other authority figure who has taken privileges that he (or she) would not allow anyone else to take part in--long lunches, extended smoke breaks, or the like. Certainly we’ve known of politicians and pastors who have denounced certain behaviors while indulging in those behaviors themselves. Perhaps the name Ted Hagard rings a bell (soliciting a male prostitute), or Mark Sanford (using government funds to travel to his girlfriend), or Tom Daschle (evading taxes). The list could go on and on, and the reason is that humans have a tendency to abuse authority. French Enlightenment thinker Voltaire is attributed with the saying, “Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

God’s Word teaches us a better way--leadership through *example* and *service*. God is the example of what He demands of us. He says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.” Jesus told His disciples that the greatest among them would be the servant of all; and Jesus showed this by His own example, most notably displayed when He washed His disciples’ feet. Yes, God’s leadership is leadership not by dictate but by example.

We get a glimpse of this important aspect of God’s leadership in the opening verses of Genesis chapter 2:

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*

*And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.*

*And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*

*These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created (Genesis 2:1-4a).*

There are three reasons, and possibly others, but certainly three main reasons that God tells us that He rested on the seventh day. God doesn’t tire like we do. He could continue working non-stop forever; but He rested as a means of instruction for us. First, He set an example for us; second, He used His example to show us that the days of creation were literal twenty-four hour days; and third, He was showing us that He was completely finished with the acts of creation.

In resting, God set a pattern and an example for us. Our bodies are designed in such a way that we need to take time to rest. We don't necessarily realize our own limitation in this regard until it all catches up to us. We work and work and work and work because there's so much to do; but you have to realize that your body has limitations which you exceed at your own risk.

Look at Exodus 20:8-11 for just a moment:

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*

*Six days shalt thou labour; and do all thy work:*

*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:*

*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

God gives us His own example in the keeping of this commandment. He rested so that man would have an example of rest, because man needs to rest. God doesn't need to rest, but He knows that we do.

Jesus sheds more light on this aspect of the seventh day. The Jews had developed all sorts of micro-regulations for the sabbath day by the time Jesus walked on earth. They had worked out an extensive list of what did and did not constitute work for the purposes of the sabbath. For example, if you spat on a rock, you weren't working, but if you spat into the dust, you were working because you were making clay! They made a regulation for the allowable distance to walk on the sabbath day, and drove markers around the towns to show one's boundaries. They were really uptight and critical of others based on these man-made regulations. One day Jesus and His disciples were traveling and they plucked some ears of corn to eat. It was lawful for the poor to pluck corn for themselves, but the disciples did this on the sabbath day. Here's how Mark relates the story in Mark 2:23-28:

*And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.*

*And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?*

*And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?*

*How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?*

*And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:*

*Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*

God made the sabbath day, the day of rest, for man. It is intended for man's benefit. God loves man and has made provision for the limitations of our bodies. He set the example for us Himself. We would be wise to follow His example, which he later issued as one of His Ten Commandments. Yes, it's that

important. At the same time, we all understand that there are times when work may be unavoidable. If you get a flat tire on the way home from church, you might just have to change the tire! Surely you aren't expected to sit in a hot car and suffer until the next day. Work may be unavoidable, but that is the exception rather than the rule. If you find yourself constantly working all seven days, week after week, you are making the choice to do so. It was important enough to God to set the example in this area for me and for you.

The second reason God rested on the seventh day was to show us that each day was just one regular day. God is not still "resting," which He would be if each day were millions or billions of years in length. No, the verbs are past tense: *God rested*. Exodus 20:11 is also helpful here:

*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day:*

It just would not make sense for God to use the seven days here as an example for us if those days are supposed to represent ages and ages of history. Are we also supposed to work for millennia before resting for a millennium? That would be absurd. No, God assures us that His work of creation was completed in just six days, with a seventh day of rest that was intentionally instructive for us.

Dr. Franz Halberg spent a lifetime exploring the human body's natural rhythms in a field of study called "chronobiology."<sup>1</sup> The body has a natural seven-day cycle. It needs a period of rest.

The third reason God rested was to show us that He was finished with His creative acts. Notice that two words are juxtaposed here in Genesis 2:3:

*And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.*

Remember, the word *created* here is that special word that is only ever used with God as the subject. It means to create something from nothing. Only God can do that. The word *made* here means to fashion, to form; that is, something is fashioned out of existing materials. God created the matter and energy of the heavens and earth from nothing, and then He fashioned those materials throughout the week. He also created souls for the animals He made and a spirit for mankind during that week.

When you read these first three verses in Genesis 2, you will see that they state four times that God ceased what He was doing. Why four times? For emphasis! The time of *creating* and *making* is over. This marks a break in the way He interacts with His creation. During that first week, the first operating principle of the universe was one of *innovation*--God creating new things that did not exist before. Starting with day seven, the operating principle of the universe was one of *conservation*--from this point on, matter and energy would neither be created nor destroyed. They can change form, but they cannot be created or destroyed. We call this the Law of Conservation of Matter and Energy, or the First Law of Thermodynamics. We know now that the total amount of matter and energy in the universe is a fixed amount. It does not change. Obviously, during the first week of the universe, this law was not in effect. It has been in effect since day seven.

There was another principle in operation those first few days, a principle of *integration*. God took the elements He had created and fashioned them together. He integrated them. Starting in Genesis chapter 3, though, a new principle came into operation and remains with us today. It is the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which has been defined as "a system left to itself tends to disorder." That is, there is

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1 See <http://www.msi.umn.edu/~halberg/>.

a principle of *disintegration* in effect right now, which is the direct opposite of the principle of *integration* which operated during the first six days of the universe. What this means is that the universe is wearing out. While the total amount of matter and energy do not change, some energy becomes unusable. Scientists recognize that at some point in the distant future, all of the available energy in the universe will be used up, all temperatures in the universe will reach equilibrium, and the universe will die a “heat death.” This principle operates a result of the curse of Genesis chapter 3, so we’ll shelve this discussion for the time being.

It is enough for us to recognize that during the creation week, God used principles of *innovation* and *integration* (creating and making), but now the universe operates by laws of *conservation* and *disintegration*.<sup>2</sup> The creating and making ceased on the seventh day, and the law of conservation came into existence. The principle of disintegration did not apply until the curse in Genesis 3, and this is why God could declare His creation to be good, even “very good” in Genesis 1:31. There was no death, no decay, no suffering in God’s original creation.

Since the scientific principles of the creation week were different than those in operation now, it stands to reason that science alone can *never* discover those principles or their outworkings. Science cannot tell us how the worlds were formed or how life began. Scientists try to explain the origin of all things, but all such explanations are suggestions and speculations because there is no way to observe or test their explanations. We could not know how the universe came to be unless the Creator Himself told us--*and that is the great beauty of these opening words of the Bible!* We have an eyewitness, the Creator Himself. Look again at the first part of verse 4:

*These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created*

This is the first mention of “generations” in the book of Genesis. We’ve talked about this before, but we need to repeat this now. There are several of these “generations” statements in the book of Genesis, and they come at the end of one section and are transitioned into the next section. All of the other “generations” are attached a human name, a human who would have been an eyewitness of the events described in the preceding section. We discussed before how ancient tablets had a colophon at the end with the sort of information that we have here in these “generations” statements. It seems that Moses compiled the book of Genesis from records handed down through antiquity, and that the individuals whose names are listed with the “generations” formula are the original scribes. It is not too much of a stretch of the imagination to believe that records were both written down early in human history and preserved through the lineage of God’s faithful believers until the time of Moses, who was royally educated in Egypt, the center of learning and culture in the ancient world. After all, Abraham himself was from a highly cultured, literate civilization built at the center of early human society. It’s not unlikely that he might have had written accounts as part of his family heirlooms. In fact, I pointed out a word previously that showed that Abraham had holy writings. Consider Genesis 26:5:

*Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

According to the Brown-Driver-Briggs lexicon, the word *commandments* has as its root the word for *engraved*, and *commandments* actually means a code of law written in stone or clay.<sup>3</sup> Thousands of clay tablets from Abraham’s day and area are still in existence today.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Morris, *The Genesis Record* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), pp. 80-81.

<sup>3</sup> David Livingstone, “From What Did Moses Compose Genesis?” Available at <http://www.ancientdays.net/mosescompgenesis.htm>

But this record is different than the other “generations” records in Genesis. There is no human name attached to it. It is the “generation of the heavens and earth when they were created.” It is the “genealogy,” not of a patriarch, but of the universe itself. Only God could be the author of that. God may have given Moses direct revelation of these events, or perhaps God gave Moses this account on Mount Sinai.

But the final question for us today is this: “Why is all this important?” The answers to that question are many and long. I will briefly touch on a few before we leave today, because I want you to begin thinking this through.

What is the basis of marriage? In fact, what is marriage at all and why is it necessary? The answers are here in these opening chapters of Genesis. If we throw out these first few chapters of Genesis, we have no biblical or historic reason to think of marriage as a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman. This bears more inspection at a later date.

What is the basis for morality? If we throw out the first few chapters of Genesis, if we succumb to the idea that man evolved over millions of years, then there is no basis for determining right and wrong--even if you are of the opinion that God somehow guided the process of evolution. Again, this statement, and any statement so strong, needs closer inspection, which we will attempt in the not-too-distant future.

Why do we wear clothes? Without Genesis, there is no reason to wear clothes except perhaps convenience, and I can tell you from experience that neckties are not very convenient. I’m told that pantyhose are fairly inconvenient. Why go through the trouble? The answers are here in Genesis. A related question is, Why do we insist that our children *not* wear certain kinds of clothes? Let’s face it: it’s fashionable to look like a tramp! Without a proper understanding of Genesis, our reasoning for refusing to allow them to dress in certain ways amounts to “because I told you so!” Sometimes as parents we simply have to say “because I told you so” because we know something that the child doesn’t know and we feel they are not ready to know. We can accept that. Children can and will accept a “because I said so” if it’s coupled with “Mommy knows some things that I can’t share with you yet, so you need to trust me on this.” The child can understand that there is a reason for your denial of permission. Too often, however, the “because I told you so” is just a cover--we can’t give a reason. It comes across to the child as an arbitrary decision based on personal taste. When it comes to clothes, there is definitely a wrong way to dress, and as we explore these early chapters of Genesis, we will find out why and then we will be able to make decisions based on God’s Word and common sense rather than on a gut feeling.

As a side note, I should also point out that sometimes children simply demand a reason so that they can argue against the reason and hopefully win. So there is room for the “because I said so” if it’s used sparingly.

One last consideration today: What makes human life so special? Without Genesis, human life is *not* special. We are the result of billions of coincidences, the random scrambling of atoms in the universe. You have to understand this: you will never convince people that aborting babies is wrong unless you first convince them that life is special. This also goes for those who believe the elderly should be assisted by doctors to commit suicide. If a baby is unwanted and won’t be cared for properly, or if it shows sign of a birth defect, or if a person is too old and sick to contribute to society, just terminate them. Problem solved, right? Without Genesis, there is no moral basis for defending the sanctity of human life.

God is good and loving and wise. As a good God, He made a perfect world with no suffering, no

disease, no death. As a loving God, He created all that we can see, and much that we cannot yet see, as a means of preparing the universe for His special creation, mankind. He wisely gave us His own example of rest from labor and provided us with a record of His work. We should thank Him, praise Him, and trust Him for His goodness, love, and wisdom.