

Revivification *by Bill Scheidler*

“What” you may ask, “is revivification?” The dictionary defines “revivification” as “the act of recalling or restoring to life; renewal of life; revival: the state of being revived.” The word “revive” means “to return to life; to recover life; to become alive again.”

The fact of the matter is that we all need seasons of revivification. As we go through life and the circumstances of life it is easy to get “bogged down,” to become stale or to lose our vitality and zest for life. This can happen on the job, in our family life or in human relationships. It is easy to become weary in well-doing. It is easy for our work to become a monotonous routine. It is easy for our family life to become too predictable and even boring at times.

God understands the need of man for seasons of refreshing. There is some reason to believe that God Himself enjoys a break from the routine and times of relaxation of effort (Gen. 2:2). It appears that even nature goes through seasons of productivity followed by a resting or relaxation (Ex. 31:17).

When God did His work of creation and restoration in Genesis chapter one He chose to rest after six days and enjoy the works of His hands. This does not mean that God was exhausted to the point of fatigue. Nor does it mean that God was weak in His mental or physical capabilities. But God was demonstrating the principle of true life that allows for a healthy balance between work and responsibility, refreshment and pleasure.

God put forth a tremendous effort for six days and because of it He was able to rest on the seventh. People who are accustomed to working hard and taking their responsibilities seriously should never feel guilty or feel they must apologize for making a place for leisure, recreation, relaxation and refreshment. In fact, it is when we have applied ourselves with all diligence that our recreation becomes the most enjoyable.

God is not against rest. He is not a ruthless taskmaster who demands the full quota of bricks every single day of our lives. In fact, God commanded His people to rest one day in seven (Ex. 34:21). God even indicated that a heavy schedule of activity should not stand in our way of enjoying such a rest (Ex. 34:21).

Napoleon, who had a great vision to conquer the worlds, felt that he could short-circuit God’s plan for rest. In order to get more out of his men and animals he went to a 10 day week. Everything seemed to be going fine for a while and then the fruit of this change began to manifest itself. The animals began to break down under their loads, the morale of the men became depressed, strife broke out everywhere and productivity began to wane. His ultimate solution was to go back to the one day in seven principle.

There is no question that seasons of refreshing affect the quality of our life. They are the oasis in the desert. The Hebrew word for “revive” means “to keep alive” or “restore to life.” It is carefully planned and utilized seasons of refreshment that keep us alive in our

inner man and help to restore vitality to our lives. Someone once said, “If we don’t come apart, we might come apart.”

Jesus understood this in His life and ministry. The individual who thinks it is spiritual to announce “I am not going to take a vacation this summer; the devil never does” is not really following Christ’s example. Jesus did not live under the tyranny of a panic mentality. When He was tired or under stress, it was not uncommon for Him to withdraw from His normal schedule for a time of refreshing. In fact, in His three years of active ministry ten references to special seasons of refreshing are mentioned in the Gospels. This was in addition to nightly rest and Sabbath rest which Jesus also observed (see: Mark 6:31; Mt. 14:13, 23; 17:1).

The real question is “Who’s example are we following?” If we follow the devil’s example of “no rest for the wicked” we will follow a path that leads to trouble. The trouble will manifest itself in potential physical problems related to stress and fatigue, relational problems and even spiritual problems. By following the example of “no rest” we will have no time to develop our relationships with family and friends that really give value and meaning to our life. George Mueller once said “The stops of a good man are ordered by the Lord as well as his steps.”

In the Old Testament God gave us a good picture of how important seasons of rest and refreshing are in the lives of His people. If you want to know how God feels about something, you can always look to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the people of God were not as free to make choices about how and when they did things as we are under the New Covenant. But if you want to get an idea of how God might want your finances structured you can look to the Old Testament where His commands to the people reveal the principles that He feels are important.

When it comes to the area of rest, God built important times of refreshing into their schedules. None of those times were optional for them; they were a matter of obedience to the Lord. By this God was saying that “If you are going to be My people, who reflect My order, who experience My values, then rest will be a vital part of your lifestyle from now on”.

God prescribed weekly rests (Lev. 23:3) and yearly rests for His people (Lev. 23:4, 8). One day in seven they were to set aside and they were to do no work. The Sabbath was to be dedicated to the Lord and was designed by God to bring spiritual and physical renewal. Because of the way God limited their activities on this day, it was a time when families were forced to spend their time in close relationship.

In addition, God provided for a type of “family vacation.” Three times a year there were religious feasts to be held in Jerusalem where all the males were to come up before the Lord. It is clear from the Bible that it was their practice that the whole family would come and feast together (Luke 2:41-42). The Feast of Tabernacles was a particularly good time. It lasted for one week. Some of the things that characterized these times include the following:

1. They were to occur on a regular basis.
2. They were to set an extra tithe aside for these times in advance.
3. They were to use their money in impractical ways (Deut. 14:26).
4. They were to have a time of joy and rejoicing. (Deut. 14:26; Lev. 23:40).
5. They were to honor the Lord at all times (Lev. 23:37-39).
6. They were to dwell in unfamiliar places (Lev. 23:42).

This clearly shows us that God is interested in a change of pace, a break from the routine and times of spiritual and physical refreshing for His people. In other words, God is interested in “**RECREATION!**”

Recreation is not just playing. Recreation is to be purposeful and planned. The word ‘recreation’ literally means “to create anew”. It means to revive, to refresh after toil, to divert, to amuse, to be animate or to cheer. Recreation is an answer to fatigue and exhaustion.

It is wrong to make recreation an end in itself, but it is equally wrong to eliminate recreation from our lifestyle, thinking that we are doing God service. Recreation is godly. It is not poor stewardship. On the contrary, it is part of a balanced and obedient life. There are several things that will make our recreation more productive.

A Regular Time

If family recreation is going to accomplish its intended purpose, it must occur on a regular basis. The children of Israel had special times several times a year. You cannot become fit by waiting until the negative symptoms occur and then go out in one week of solid activity and hope to “get into shape.”

In the same way, you cannot control stress, build family relationships, and have meaningful recreation by planning a vacation once every three years. It won’t work. It is much better to take three short times a year than one “humongous,” three-month vacation every five years.

Family times must be planned at regular intervals and they must be scheduled in such a way that there can be a growing anticipation of them. Half of the fun is the anticipation of the coming event. Every family should plan to have at least one family vacation a year where they go somewhere and do something special.

A Planned Time

Things that are not planned for in advance rarely take place at all. It costs money to take a vacation. There is no way around it. We should not get to the place where we approach the family and say “we will have a vacation this year, *if* we can afford it.” God would not allow His people to say “we will keep the feast, *if* we can afford it.”

Yet it must have cost a lot of money to keep the feasts the Lord commanded. God told the Israelites that the feasts had to be enough of a priority that they had to figure them into their regular monthly budget. They had to be willing to keep the rest of their lifestyle in check so that the feasts could be kept. They had to set aside an extra ten percent of their monies on a regular basis to fund these trips. They were going to be spending this money on themselves, but God wanted them to put it away as if it belonged to God. Money for the feasts was not to be taken out of their regular tithes but they were to set aside another tithe for these trips.

How understanding God is of human nature! God knows that unless we have a system, unless we are willing to exercise discipline, we will probably not have it when we need it. To do this it may mean trimming our normal lifestyle to some degree, but the refreshing rewards will be worth the cost.

A Time of Freedom

When the children of Israel were obedient in setting aside the finances for their trip, it became a real time of freedom from worry. Normally, God wants us to be extremely frugal and careful about how we spend our money. He wants us to exercise wise stewardship. But when it came to the feast time, He told the people “you may spend that money for whatever your appetite craves... or whatever you desire” (Deut.14:26, Amp.).

Obviously, God is not encouraging His people to sin and cast off all restraint. God is saying, “Enjoy yourself”. Don’t be a penny pincher when you are on vacation. Don’t measure everything in dollars and cents. Don’t always be thinking how much this ride costs. If you have this mentality, you will have a miserable time and so will everyone else around you.

God is saying “You have saved your money all year long, now relax and have a good time. If you see something that catches your eye and you have money for it, buy it. You’ve been good; go ahead you are released to be a little impulsive now”. You will not enjoy a vacation time if you evaluate every purchase on the basis of its practicality as you do at other seasons. You are investing in something intangible. You are going to experience a refreshing.

A Time of Rejoicing

Vacation times are to be fun times. God told the children of Israel, “You shall take the fruit of *pleasing* trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall *rejoice* before the Lord your God seven days.” (Lev. 23:40, Amp.).

Vacations are times when we leave the normal schedule and routines of life and have some fun. The Feast of Tabernacles was to be “A joyous celebration, and no heavy work is permitted” (Leviticus 23:36 Living). Businessmen should never take work with them on vacation. It will take the fun away.

Parents must do everything possible to build happy memories for their family members. Focus on enjoying life and God's creation. Make it as pleasant as possible.

A Time of Sacrifice

All of the feasts in Israel included a bringing of sacrifices to the Lord. Sad to say, some Christians leave God out of their vacation. The feast of tabernacles lasted eight days. The first day and the last days were holy convocations with a week of feasting in between. One of the most exciting things to do on vacation is to visit another church. We teach our children the wrong thing if we teach them that God is out of place on our vacations or that somehow we can take a vacation from God.

In all that we do on our vacation, God must be at the center. We are to keep the feast "before the Lord" (Deut. 14:26). This means that we do not lower our Christian standards, we do not drop our prayer and devotional times and we do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together just because we are on vacation. In fact, many of these things can be strengthened and reaffirmed during this time.

A Time of Travel

What a tremendous time to see new sights, to examine our heritage, to observe God's creation and to broaden our frame of reference. Travel should be a vital part of vacation plans. I know that there is some inconvenience that comes with travel and that you usually breathe a sigh of relief when you are in your own bed again, but a change of scenery can bring a certain refreshing in and of itself.

For the children of Israel, it meant packing, putting their tent up (booths) and leaving behind the convenience of home. But the doing of it united the family, gave the children a better understanding of their national roots, provided an atmosphere for learning and gave everyone a renewed appreciation for the wonderful works of the Lord.

Revivification? God is for it! Begin making plans now to work this into your lifestyle and you will be refreshed. The word 'refreshed' literally means "breathed upon." Family recreation is one way that God can breathe upon you.