

UNDER PRESSURE

**HOW THE GOSPEL
HELPS US HANDLE THE
PRESSURES OF WORK**

Andrew Laird

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HOW TO HANDLE... THE PRESSURE OF EVER-PRESENT WORK

It was four days after Christmas. I was staying at my parents' house going through boxes of my old belongings when my eldest daughter, who was three at the time, reached into one and pulled out a cassette tape. 'What's this, Daddy?' she asked. 'That is a tape,' I responded. *And you just made me feel old*, I thought quietly to myself. It feels like only yesterday I was collecting and cataloguing cassette tapes, and now my daughter holds one up in wonder at what it is.

The speed at which technology changes is rapid, and at times overwhelming. Recently I took my iPhone in for an upgrade and the sales assistant's eyes opened wide when he saw the model I was still using. I'd had this supposedly prehistoric phone for two years.

Technology is always developing, and this is largely a good thing. Improvements in science, medicine, communication and travel can provide great blessings. But it is often the case that we embrace technological advancements and only later reflect on their impact upon us. That's why, in recent years, many people have begun asking

questions about the way changes to technology are impacting how, when and where we work, and whether all of them are for the best.

Changing the how, when and where of work

It's obvious that changes to technology have had a revolutionary impact on work in recent decades – a revolution that some suggest is even greater than the Industrial Revolution. We are now deep in the Information Revolution.

Not too many generations ago, most work was of a manufacturing or farming nature. That kind of work had inbuilt limits: you could only farm for certain hours of the day, when the sun was up; and as much as you might have liked to get ahead on next month's projects, you simply could not harvest the crops until they were ready. Even manufacturing work had some built-in constraints; you could only make as many products as you had the resources for.¹⁵

But the working world has changed. Many of us now do what we described in the introduction as 'knowledge work', the kind of work that puts information together rather than physical materials. Architects, software developers, lawyers, academics, accountants and writers – our main capital is not timber or wheat but information and knowledge. And in one sense that is an infinite resource. If I, or my organisation, can think it or dream it, then potentially we can do it.

Add to this the coinciding developments in technology, and there's a growing sense that my work (and the potential to do just a little bit more of it) is always with me. I can scribble down a few more ideas on my laptop, or keep working on that design on my tablet while in bed. I can reach into my pocket and send another email at any hour of the day. Tony Crabbe, in his book *Busy: How to Thrive in a World of*

15. Burkeman, 'Why you feel busy all the time (when you're actually not)'.

Too Much, describes this as being in an 'infinite world' that combines both no end of possibilities and no escape from them.¹⁶

Not all these changes are negative. The freedom and flexibility to work anywhere and at any time, when managed well, can be wonderful for increased productivity and employee happiness. Some employers are beginning to realise this, encouraging their employees to enter the office for a few hours only, in the middle of the day for meetings; they are otherwise free to work wherever, whenever, just as long as the job gets done.¹⁷ The focus for these managers is on 'the mission of the job rather than the time in the chair',¹⁸ leading to greater engagement, productivity and happiness for their staff.

The Information Revolution also brings the return of something that was lost for many in the Industrial Revolution – the joy of creativity. 'The Information Age and the present Age of Creativity perhaps offer more scope for creativity as work moves from repetitive tasks to creative interventions, a kind of artisanship done in the imagination and mind.'¹⁹ The Information Revolution has replaced some of the repetitive tasks of the industrial age with work that is more innovative and imaginative in nature, giving work the potential to be fun, even joyful.

For all the potential positives, however, the combination of endless work possibilities and no apparent escape from that work is placing most of us under enormous pressure. According to one recent survey, 46% of workers in Australia say technology makes them feel like they are 'always on'. 'When reflecting on the impacts of the changing workplace, respondents were largely in agreement

16. Tony Crabbe, *Busy: How to Thrive in a World of Too Much*, (London: Piatkus Books, 2014), 9.

17. For example, see Caitlin Fitzsimmons, 'Bosses need to catch up: the traditional nine-to-five-work day is dead', 30 November 2016 (accessed 18 July 2017), smh.com.au/comment/bosses-need-to-catch-up-the-traditional-nine-to-five-work-day-is-dead-20161129-gszyyq.html.

18. Schulte, *Overwhelmed*, 88.

19. Stevens and Ung, *Taking Your Soul to Work*, 73.

that advances in technology have not, in the main, freed them from work, but made work a constant pressure in their lives.²⁰

Slaves to the system

It's little surprise, then, that 'busy' is one of the most frequent responses I hear to the question 'How are you?' (and one of the responses I'm commonly tempted to give!)

But are we really any busier than previous generations? While there is no disputing the changing nature of work and its ever-present nature, the reality is that most of us aren't actually working longer hours than previous generations. 'The total time people are working – whether paid or otherwise – has not increased . . . in recent decades. Modern parents who worry they're spending insufficient time with their children spend significantly more of it than those in generations past.'²¹

So why do I feel so busy if I'm not actually working longer hours? For some, part of the reason might be the juggle of husband and wife who, as parents, are both in paid employment. Each are working regular days, but one starts later to drop the kids at school, another finishes earlier to pick the kids up, and the day becomes stretched. So the individual hours aren't greater, but the days are longer.

But the ever-present nature of work might also explain our feeling of busyness, a sense that we are 'always on'. The five-minute interruption from a colleague's text message in the evening, or the quick email that is sent before leaving for the office in the morning, add to our sense of always working. We can never truly get away from work so we feel constantly busy, and 'living in an always-on tech-

20. afuturethatworks.org.au/reports (accessed 19 July 2017). Italics mine. For millennials, that figure rises to 54%.

21. Burkeman, 'Why you feel busy all the time (when you're actually not)'.

nological haze leads to mental exhaustion.'²² Work is ever present – a constant pressure.

I wonder if sometimes all this pressure feels like slavery? The constant sense of being available, the 24/7 work cycle, the after-hours ping of a text message about work. It's like a modern day form of slavery where we are bound to a demanding workplace system. Unlike the pressure to have it all, which is oftentimes self-imposed, the pressure of ever-present work feels like something we can't escape from.

It perhaps wasn't too different for the Jews of Jesus' age, who knew what it was like to be part of a demanding system – a demanding religious system that Jesus describes in terms of slavery, a system with leaders who 'tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them' (Matthew 23:4).

This slavery imagery Jesus employs would have resonated deeply with his Jewish audience, harking back to their *physical* slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1:8–11). Now Jesus picks up on that slavery imagery, not to speak of the past, but to shed light on the then-present *religious* slavery the Jewish people found themselves under. And like many of us, they were going along with the system they found themselves a part of, just living with the pressure of it.

In his book *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to a Culture of Now*, Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann reflects on today's working world as being like a system of slavery. The cruel slave drivers are the gods of this age – commodity and consumption – and they drive our workplaces at a cruel pace. Brueggemann writes,

These gods of commoditization for the most part go unchallenged in our world. As a result, their exploitative systems go unchallenged and unnoticed. The

22. Schulte, *Overwhelmed*, 26.

abuse becomes normal. Restlessness is unexceptional. Anxiety is a given, and violence is unexamined as ‘the cost of doing business.’ It is all a virtual reality in which we become narcotized into a system that seems to be a given rather than a construction.²³

Rarely do we stop and question the system that we are a part of. We take it as a given that this is simply what is required to live and work in the Information Age.

A better kind of slavery

But Jesus speaks into our context, too, and offers hope. Aware of Israel’s *physical* slavery in the past, and their present *religious* slavery, he says, ‘Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light’ (Matthew 11:28–30).

To the weary and exhausted, have more refreshing words ever been spoken? Rest. Gentleness. Humility. The very words themselves make me feel calmer!

The context of these words is that Jesus has just spoken about his relationship with his Father, explaining that if you want to know the Father then you need to know him, the Son (11:25–27). Then he makes this invitation: ‘Come to me . . . and I will give you rest.’

Spiritual rest or physical rest?

Before we unpack what Jesus means, we need to address an important question. We began this chapter talking about a *physical* kind of slavery to a demanding workplace system. But in this passage Jesus is addressing a *spiritual* kind of slavery to a demanding

23. Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to a Culture of Now*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2014), 17.

religious system. Primarily, the kind of rest that he is offering in these verses is not physical, but spiritual. So does this passage have anything to say to our problem? Yes, and here’s how.

A classic New Testament passage about rest is found in Hebrews 4. There, the author holds out a promise of entering ultimate rest to followers of Jesus (4:1–11). It’s a picture of being back in relationship with God – kind of like a return to Eden (Genesis 1–2), but better. Right relationship with God is the true and ultimate rest, and we know how we enter into that rest – through Jesus’ death and resurrection. This is why his yoke is good news for those under a demanding religious system. Rather than having to work to get ourselves right with God, Jesus says, ‘Bind yourselves to me, because I have done all the work necessary for you to be right with God. Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you spiritual rest’.

But – and this is a big but – it’s a mistake to separate physical rest from spiritual rest. The New Testament sees a very tight connection between the two. For example, this passage in Matthew about spiritual rest is followed immediately by a passage about physical rest on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1–8). Physical and spiritual rest are inseparable; oftentimes our physical rest-less-ness is an outworking of a spiritual rest-less-ness. We’re busy because we’re trying to prove ourselves, or earn the approval of others, or keep things under control, all of which have spiritual problems at their root that impact us physically.²⁴ Similarly, large parts of our demanding workplace system might have the same spiritual problems at their root, so to address one type of rest in our lives, spiritual rest, is to begin to address the other, physical rest. The two go hand in hand.

So, Jesus’ words do apply to our own modern day form of slavery. ‘Take my yoke upon you,’ he encourages us. The yoke

24. For more on this see Tim Chester’s excellent book, *A Busy Christian’s Guide to Busyness*, (Nottingham: IVP, 2011). Chester goes through a series of spiritual problems that might lie beneath our physical restlessness.

was an article of slavery, something which bound a person to another. And Jesus says to those bound to a demanding system, not ‘free yourselves from all bindings’, but ‘bind yourselves instead to me’.

How is that good news for the weary and exhausted? It’s good news because, unlike the demanding yoke of slavery that Jesus’ listeners were under, unlike the demanding yoke of slavery that you are under, Jesus’ yoke in comparison is easy and his burden is light. Jesus does not say, ‘Come to me . . . once you’ve fulfilled these requirements, or cleaned up your act’, but simply, ‘Come to me. I know your burdens. I know your weariness. I know your exhaustion from trying to fulfil the demands of the religious system that you are under, trying to fulfil the demands of the workplace system that you are part of. Come to me and find a more restful way under my guidance’.

And how can we trust that Jesus’ yoke is easy? Because of his character. Jesus explains, ‘learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart’. For Jesus’ original audience, humility and gentleness stood in stark contrast to the proud and ostentatious system of the Pharisees. And it stands in stark contrast to the proud and ostentatious workplace system of our day. Jesus invites us out from under the burdensome slavery of our working world to learn how to live differently under his loving yoke. Let’s look at what this ‘learning with Jesus’ could look like for us.

Acts of resistance

Jesus’ words sound refreshing, but you may wonder just how they can help you to cope with this demanding workplace system – the pressure of ever-present work. In this section, I want to show that ‘binding ourselves to Jesus’ or being under his yoke is not a fluffy spiritual concept but an immensely practical one.

First, it’s vital to get our thinking right when it comes to rest. If spiritual rest and physical rest are deeply connected, then right thinking about spiritual rest is key to right living when it comes to physical rest. Knowing that in Jesus we have true rest frees us from trying to work to prove ourselves through our work. Just like Jesus’ original audience, we too can rest in him who has done all that is necessary for salvation (we don’t need to work to prove ourselves to anyone) and in whose sovereign hands we rest (we don’t need to work to keep things under control). He is our ultimate master – not the demanding workplace system.

How does this change how I handle the pressure of ever-present work? I think the title of Walter Brueggemann’s book that I mentioned earlier gives us a big clue – *Sabbath as Resistance*. We live as people who are ultimately bound to Jesus, yet we still live in a world where we have to function within the demanding workplace system. This means that at times we might need to undertake ‘acts of resistance’. Sometimes to live Jesus’ way of restfulness, ultimately bound to his yoke, will require us to push back against a system that is seeking to bind us to itself.

Here are some possible acts of resistance that could be helpful as you seek to make it known to the world that you’re ultimately under Jesus’ yoke. (I offer these as suggestions, not heavy loads to place on your shoulders!)

Practice humility and gentleness

Binding ourselves to Jesus means binding ourselves to one who is ‘gentle and humble’ (Matthew 11:29). As I said earlier, there is something about those words that I find deeply calming. And I don’t think that is an accident. Because if you’ve ever practised gentleness and humility you’ll know it is a more restful way to live.

Jesus offers himself to us as the ‘gentle and humble’ master. Now, the New Testament makes it plain that those who follow Jesus and

are filled with his Spirit become more and more like him, including becoming people of gentleness and humility. In proud and ostentatious workplaces, living gently and humbly will also become a point of difference, at times even an act of resistance, because gentleness is not a common feature of modern workplaces. Chances are you've never encountered a job description that required it of you. On the contrary, a requirement of many workplaces is that employees do the opposite - refuse to take no for an answer, throw weight around and so 'get things done'.

Yet gentleness is to be a defining characteristic of the Christian person. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is cited as evidence that someone is living by the Spirit (Galatians 5:23). We are to pursue it (1 Timothy 6:11) and clothe ourselves in it (Colossians 3:12). And this gentleness is not only to be directed towards those colleagues that we like but also those who oppose us (2 Timothy 2:25). We are to 'be gentle toward everyone' (Titus 3:2). Gentleness is to shape our interactions with unbelievers when they ask us about the hope that we have (1 Peter 3:15).

You could think of gentleness as 'humility in action'. In the New Testament the word that is often translated as 'gentleness' is in some cases translated as humility.²⁵ In at least two cases, humility and gentleness are seen as inseparable (2 Corinthians 10:1; Ephesians 4:2). Jesus places them side by side in this passage in Matthew also. Gentleness is, perhaps, the defining characteristic of a humble person.

This doesn't mean that a gentle person will never be firm. Paul can write to the Corinthians, 'By the humility and gentleness of Christ I urge you' (2 Corinthians 10:1). But it may mean that when we put forward a strong opinion strongly, we do so with a willingness to be persuaded otherwise. We will take no for an answer. We won't fight for our way to the bitter end.

25. See for example James 1:21; 3:13 in the NIV.

What has this got to do with restfulness and handling the pressure of ever-present work? Well a strange thing happens when you practice gentleness and humility. You actually begin to *feel* more restful, relaxed, at peace and calm. Life doesn't feel so pressured, demanding and exhausting when you learn to live like the one who is 'gentle and humble'. Being forceful and proud is tiring; being gentle and humble is restful. It also opens the way up to other acts of resistance.

Say no

Humility will mean that you no longer have to say yes to everything: partly because you're able to let opportunities pass you by so that others might shine instead of you, and partly because you're resting in Christ and not your own labours. Learning the way of gentleness and humility allows you to gently turn down requests because you don't need to prove yourself. You're no longer trying to please a certain slave master because you have the approval of a new master.

We might balk at this in part, because we rightly want to serve others. Some of us find it very hard to say no. But being a servant doesn't mean needing to say yes to every request in the office - especially if our yes is born out of a desire to satisfy an old slave master. Check yourself when you're tempted to say yes to everything. Why are you saying yes? Are you simply trying to impress others or prove yourself? Or is this a situation where you have no choice in the matter? If so, take the task on and ask your gentle and humble Lord to sustain you. But if there is a choice and you are already overwhelmed, embrace the freedom that comes with being yoked to Jesus and say no.

Turn off from work

One of the simplest ways of handling the pressure of ever-present work is to literally turn off devices that keep you bound to that

system when you are no longer physically in the office or required to be working. And yes, seriously, you can do this!

A big lie of the demanding workplace system is that the world will stop turning if you stop working. But for the one bound to the sovereign Lord who controls all things, you know this not to be true. Therefore, you are free to release yourself from the bindings of the demanding workplace system – at least for a few hours of a day or week.

Perhaps you've heard this practice described as a 'technology Sabbath', the idea of turning off devices for a period of time each week. It's a concept that's becoming increasingly popular. Google 'technology Sabbath' and you'll discover a wealth of helpful articles on the topic. But Christians have something that is missing from much of this wisdom: the spiritual purpose and resources to regularly embrace such a Sabbath. We know that we are ultimately bound to Christ, not bound to our workplace cultures and systems, so we truly have a freedom to switch off regularly. When the demanding workplace system is still your ultimate master it will keep pressuring you to give up on such a Sabbath.

What might a technology Sabbath look like? For me it means turning off my phone when I arrive home from work in the evening and keeping it off until my kids are in bed. It's only a couple of hours, and if there is a family emergency those in the know are aware of how they might make urgent contact. I turn off at this time for two reasons: first, so that I can switch off from work for a couple of important hours with my kids, and second, so that my kids don't see me bound to my phone. I want to model to them what it looks like to be bound to Jesus, which is very hard to do when my head is in my phone while they're trying to talk to me. (Yes, I've been there too many times.)

Added to this evening Sabbath, I also aim for a weekend Sabbath where I turn off my phone and laptop from sundown Friday night to

sunup Sunday morning. There's nothing inherently spiritual about these particular hours, although it is the traditional Jewish Sabbath. It's simply a good time for me to switch off and it's what works best for my family. You might choose the same pattern or a different pattern. The important thing is that we learn to switch off as a way of loosening some of the ties to a demanding system – a practical way to remind ourselves that our workplace is not our ultimate master.

Don't always choose the most efficient way

One of the features of the demanding workplace is the emphasis placed on efficiency. I've already admitted to my love for efficiency in the previous chapter, and those who know me well know that it's something I value highly. But efficiency often comes at the expense of relationships; 'efficiency savings' usually means people losing jobs. Efficiency also lacks gentleness. On the contrary, inefficiency often helps develop relationships.

So when the opportunity is available, choose the inefficient way as an act of resistance. You'll find that it slows you down both mentally and physically, helping you to feel more rested. One way that I try to practice this act of resistance is by taking a longer commute on occasion, whether by public transport or riding my bike, instead of taking the absolute quickest way to get to work. This act gives me an opportunity at the start of the day to reflect, oftentimes on the rest that I have in Jesus and what it might mean to live bound to him. Another way I do this is by not always getting my coffee as a take-away, instead taking five or ten minutes to sit and drink it at the cafe. Not only does it mean I get to know the staff (inefficiency helping to foster relationships) but it's another chance to slow down, take stock and move gently.

Perhaps you could walk an extra block to get your lunch. Or even just get out of your workplace at lunchtime to walk around the block! Again, doing that inefficient act opens up the possibility to do it with

a colleague and so foster a relationship. Whatever you choose to do, find some small and creative ways to resist the dominant culture and be regularly inefficient.

HABIT CHANGE

- 1 Which of the four acts of resistance (practicing gentleness, saying no, switching off and being inefficient) did you find most appealing? Make a commitment to practice one act of resistance in the week ahead – place a note in your diary or to-do list.
- 2 Which act/s felt impossible to do? Why? Are the obstacles real or perceived/self-imposed?
- 3 Gentleness is a hallmark of a Spirit-filled and empowered life (Galatians 5:23). It doesn't just happen by trying really hard. Consider resolving to pray about gentleness each morning for the next ten days.

What to do when there is no escape

I know what some of you might be thinking at this point. Yes, Jesus is my ultimate master. Yes, I'm seeking to learn to live his way of gentleness and humility. Yes, acts of resistance will sometimes be useful for both demonstrating that he is my ultimate master and relieving some of the pressure of ever-present work. But Andrew . . . you don't know my workplace and my boss.

And my answer to that is, you're right. I don't know first-hand the overwhelming pressure that you are under. I don't know

your boss – the one you feel is impossible to say no to. I don't know how hard you have already been trying to switch off from ever-present work, but to no avail. I don't know. But your master does. And he has something to say to you even in this kind of situation.

Up to this point in the chapter we have been exploring ways to relieve and resist some of the pressure of ever-present work. And this is a good and right thing. There is only so much pressure that we can each handle. But in reflecting on how to handle pressure there is a critical caveat we need to consider. That is, that not all pressure is bad.

As I said in the introduction, pressure denotes the idea of being squeezed, pushed, or pressed in by something or someone. But just like applying pressure to an orange produces something positive – juice – so a good amount of pressure in our lives can also be a positive thing.

Pressure as a good thing

Health professionals are certainly aware of this. Doctor Steve Midgley writes about the 'stress response curve', where just the right amount of pressure produces a positive result. 'Our performance improves in line with the motivational demand upon us . . . as the pressure on us rises, so does our performance. That, for example is why athletes regularly produce performances in an Olympic finals which they would never manage in training.'²⁶

But this is not just wisdom from health professionals. The Bible takes this view of pressure also. Our culture resists the idea that suffering, difficulty and pressure can be useful, viewing them as things to be avoided at all costs. Scripture, however, shows that

26. Dr Steve Midgley in Christopher Ash, *Zeal Without Burnout*, (New Maldon, UK: Good Book Company, 2016), 117.

suffering leads to glory, and difficulty, hardship and pressure are means that God uses to refine us.

Romans 5:3–4 puts this most plainly: ‘We glory in our sufferings, because we know suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.’ There is a place for ‘glorying’ in our sufferings, difficulty and pressure because of the way that God might use these for our good. As New York pastor Timothy Keller puts it, ‘A lump of coal under pressure becomes a diamond. And the suffering of a person in Christ only turns you into somebody gorgeous.’²⁷

So when it feels like you are under pressure from that which you cannot entirely escape, resentment is not your only option. Instead, you can accept and welcome some pressure for the good that it might do, the ‘priceless grace’²⁸ that such pressure can be and the way that God might use it to refine your heart. You will only learn patience when you’re put in a situation where you are tested by impatience. You will only learn gentleness when you’re in the midst of busyness and tempted by efficiency at the cost of relationships. You will only learn perseverance when you’re stuck in something you have to persevere through. It’s worth having a bit of pressure sometimes to help us learn perseverance, isn’t it?

It’s a great thing if we can accept the idea that pressure can do us some good. American author John Piper writes, ‘I do live under a lot of pressure . . . but I don’t begrudge that. I think deadlines and pressure are the most productive things in the world. If you try to run away from stress, run away from pressure, run away from deadlines, you’ll probably be a relaxed do-nothing.’²⁹

27. Timothy Keller, *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering*, (New York: Dutton, 2013), 181.

28. Jon Bloom, ‘The Priceless Grace of Pressure’, 8 August 2014, accessed 19 July 2017, desiringgod.org/articles/the-priceless-grace-of-pressure

29. John Piper, ‘What Do You Do To Relax and Unwind?’, 2 February 2010 (accessed July 19 2017), desiringgod.org/interviews/what-do-you-do-to-relax-and-unwind.

Some pressure can refine character and bring focus to work. Let’s embrace it!

The witness of helplessness

When we find ourselves feeling helpless and overwhelmed by the pressure of ever-present work, there’s also a powerful opportunity to demonstrate our desperate need for Jesus. Being in a place where we are beyond our means is not always a bad place to be. It is precisely the place where we start embracing the gospel, recognising we don’t have all the resources, physically *and* spiritually, and that we need another.

In 2 Corinthians 12, the Apostle Paul recounts a cryptic event that concludes with him being given a ‘thorn in the flesh’ (12:7). Three times he pleads for God to take it away. But instead God says to him, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’ (12:9). Therefore Paul concludes, ‘I will boast about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me’ (12:9).

Paul rejoices in his suffering because when he is weak God’s strength shines through. And it can be exactly the same for you when you’re under pressure at work. Acknowledging weakness creates space for God’s strength to shine. So join Paul in ‘boasting’ about your weakness – that the pressure of the demanding workplace system is at times too much. Admit it to your colleagues and employer. Be the kind of person who says, ‘I don’t know’. Chances are you’re not the only one in your workplace who feels overwhelmed. But you might be the only one with the confidence to speak up, because you know that you have another master whose yoke you are under.

HEART CHANGE

- 1 What external pressures are you under at the moment that you can't escape from? Can you see any ways yet that God might be refining you through them? Don't worry if you can't – sometimes it is difficult to see this in the midst of the pressure (if at all!).
- 2 Consider memorising Romans 5:3–4 and reciting it to yourself when you are facing external pressures.
- 3 Do you find it easy to say 'I don't know' in the workplace? Why or why not? What heart issues might need to be addressed if you find it difficult to admit helplessness?

Resting: A 'bodily act of testimony'

In 1991, Sir James C. Brown wrote in *The Times* of London, 'We doctors in the treatment of nervous diseases are compelled to provide periods of rest. Some of these periods are, I think, only Sundays in arrears.'³⁰ If this was true in 1991, how much more today with the pressure of ever-present work?

Our colleagues are slaves to a demanding master. But there is a better way, a better master. And we know him. As we seek to live under his yoke, we learn to live his way of gentleness and humility, undertaking acts of resistance, embracing pressure for the good it can do and admitting when it is just too much. Not only do we help ourselves handle the pressure, we also bear witness to our colleagues, giving them a glimpse of our better master. Brueggemann describes

the practice of Sabbath as 'a bodily act of testimony'.³¹ When we embrace spiritual rest in Christ and begin to let it shape our physical rest, we testify with our bodies, displaying to our colleagues something of what they are missing out on in not being yoked to Jesus. In a restless world, the restful stand out. Those who admit weakness allow the strength of God to shine through.

How can we possibly testify to a restless world of the rest that is found in Christ if we're constantly busy, restless people? The short answer is, we can't. So again, hear the words of Jesus: 'Come to me'. Come to him afresh. Keep coming to him each day. Keep learning what it means to live his restful way for your good, and the good of your colleagues.

30. Quoted in Ash, *Zeal Without Burnout*, 117.

31. Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 21.