



We Have Forgotten Sabbath, by Wayne Muller

A "successful" life has become a violent enterprise.Â We make war on our own bodies, pushing them beyond their limits; war on our children, because we cannot find enough time to be with them when they are hurt and afraid, and need our company; war on our spirit, because we are too preoccupied to listen to the quiet voices that seek to nourish and refresh us; war on our communities, because we are fearfully protecting what we have, and do not feel safe enough to be kind and generous; war on the earth, because we cannot take the time to place our feet on the ground and allow it to feed us, to taste its blessings and give thanks.

As the founder of a public charity, I visit the large offices of wealthy donors, the crowded rooms of social service agencies, and the small houses of the poorest families.Â Remarkably, within this mosaic there is a universal refrain: I am so busy.Â It does not seem to matter if the people I speak with are doctor or daycare workers, shopkeepers or social workers, parents or teachers, nurses or lawyers, students or therapists, community activists or cooks.

Whether they are Hispanic or Native American, Caucasian or Black, the more their lives speed up, the more they feel hurt, frightened and isolated.Â Despite their good hearts and equally good intentions, their work in the world rarely feels light, pleasant, or healing.Â Instead, as it all piles endlessly upon itself, the whole experience of being alive begins to melt into one enormous obligation.Â It becomes the standard greeting everywhere: I am so busy.Â Â

We say this to one another with no small degree of pride, as if our exhaustion were a trophy, our ability to withstand stress a mark of real character.Â The busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves and we imagine, to others.Â To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time for the sunset (or even to know that the sun has set at all), to whiz through our obligations without time for a single, mindful breath, this has become the model of a successful life.

How have we allowed this to happen?Â This was not our intention, this is not the world we dreamed when we were young and our whole life was full of possibility and promise.Â How did we get so terribly lost in a world saturated with striving and grasping, yet somehow bereft of joy and delight.Â

I suggest that it is this: we have forgotten the Sabbath.

--Wayne Muller, in _Sabbath_

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