

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

BETHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
ELKHORN, NEBRASKA  
OCTOBER 16, 2005  
PASTOR MARK FRY

1 PASTOR MARK FRY: If you want to go back to your  
2 scriptures, I'm going to come to that in a minute here.

3 Pastor Wenda last week shared a little bit on the  
4 learning circle.

5 And I think to set the context we need to  
6 understand, I think that we need to be okay with, whether we  
7 are okay with it or not, I think it's true that if we are  
8 disciples of Jesus, then he's teaching us some stuff.

9 The very essence of the word disciple in its Greek  
10 language is matheses, which means learner.

11 And we have done some things that are  
12 counterproductive to that whole concept by thinking that  
13 some people know it all, thinking the only people teachable  
14 are kids or whatever, and nothing could be further from the  
15 truth.

16 That's what's exciting, we keep learning as  
17 disciples, we are always doing that.

18 So that is the learning circle. You have a way of  
19 processing an event that happens in your life, that God is  
20 trying to get your attention and say what can you learn by  
21 this?

22 This week's circle is kind of two-sided. That was  
23 a one dimensional circle. This week is a semi circle and  
24 it's about balance.

25 And, again, I'm not the expert on this, but I am a

1 learner and I need to begin by apologizing a little bit  
2 because in a lot of ways my generation has gotten us to  
3 where we are.

4 I'm a baby boomer, and one of the popular little  
5 slogans is that boomers live to work.

6 The offshoot of that is the younger generation, my  
7 kids, and the busters and the millennials, they work to  
8 live.

9 And some of the things that we have done have been  
10 so out of balance that we've messed it up.

11 And so I come with an attitude of confession and  
12 repentance of that, of I'm sorry, we've messed that up a  
13 little bit, because some of us have been judged by  
14 productivity and how much work.

15 And so today is kind of a day to come clean of that  
16 and I have a little bit of a song bite that I want to set  
17 the stage with. This is my generation's song.

18

19 "I'm taking care of business woman can't you see  
20 Got to make it for you, got to make it for me  
21 Sometimes it might seem that I have neglected you  
22 But I would love to spend more time  
23 I've got so many things to do  
24 Oh, I got work to do, I've got work, baby  
25 I've got work to do, I've got to give it

1 I've work to do, I've got work to do  
2 Got work to do, got so much work  
3 I've been trying to make it, woman can't you see  
4 Takes a lot of money to make it, let's talk  
5 Truthfully; keep your love light burning  
6 A little food hot in the plate  
7 You might as well get used to me  
8 Coming home a little late  
9 Because I have got work to do  
10 I've got work baby."

11

12 Please forgive me for my work patterns, but also  
13 the music of my generation. Disco. The Average White Band.

14 I played in an all black basketball league in high  
15 school and I had a bunch of friends that would come over to  
16 my house and I had a big stereo that I got and that was the  
17 only album I had with any soul, so I put that on for my  
18 friends.

19 So we've gotten that work to do thing mixed up.  
20 That's the context.

21 I do come with not being the expert, but with a  
22 whole local of repentance.

23 You don't have to forgive me, I hope God will  
24 forgive me for some of the ways I have not had proper  
25 balance of rest and work, because it' fatal.

1           We're going to look at the semi circle today. It's  
2 counterintuitive, but mostly it's countercultural, because  
3 we live in a world where we are judged by what we do.

4           We have so much work to do. We can fall prey to  
5 the fact that we are judged by our jobs, and what we do,  
6 instead of the essence of who we are as God's creatures and  
7 Jesus's disciples.

8           Take a look at John 15. He's talking about I'm the  
9 vine, I am the true vine and you guys are the branches.

10           To focus in on the 8th verse of that, Jesus said,  
11 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit  
12 and become my disciples."

13           I point out, first of all, notice that it says  
14 become my disciples.

15           It's ironic to me and very interesting to me, this  
16 is right before Jesus's crucifixion, these guys have been  
17 with him for three years and yet they have not arrived.

18           He says that you still have learning to do, even  
19 hanging around with me for, it long doesn't matter how long,  
20 doesn't mean you're my disciples yet.

21           And you don't become my disciples by going to  
22 Sunday school, you don't become it by getting confirmed, you  
23 didn't get it by being ordained.

24           How do you become my disciple? By giving your  
25 Father glory by being fruitful, that you may become my

1 disciples.

2           So I point that out, but what we want to look at is  
3 the bearing fruits part of that.

4           That really is the essence of this and the best  
5 place to start is at the very beginning.

6           Join me in the Book of Genesis, first chapter of  
7 the Bible, the Book of Genesis.

8           This is God's story of how he created us and then  
9 the whole design of creation.

10           But you'll notice in the 1st Chapter of Genesis,  
11 the 28th Verse, "God blessed them and God said to them be  
12 fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it and have  
13 dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the  
14 air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

15           God created us on the sixth day, along with all the  
16 animals.

17           And he want us to be fruitful and multiply. That's  
18 our design.

19           That is what we are created to do, is to be  
20 fruitful and multiply; to bear fruit.

21           Being fruitful is part of the design of creation.  
22 God blessed them and said be fruitful and multiply, fill the  
23 earth and subdue it.

24           This all takes place on the sixth day. Now right  
25 across the column from that, if you are in your scriptures,

1 Chapter 2, Verse 15.

2 "The Lord God took the man and put him in the  
3 Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it."

4 So we are created to work. The garden was not a  
5 picnic.

6 The garden required work, he needed to tend to it,  
7 to till the soil, to get rid of the weeds, to be working.

8 It's the essence of who we are. We are created to  
9 work.

10 We have work to do, because God created us to do  
11 work.

12 And I want you to notice that that's a gift; it's  
13 not a curse.

14 It's part of the created design. You were created  
15 to be a productive person.

16 And I believe that's what happens when people  
17 either retire or they get unemployed, is all of a sudden  
18 they get depressed because they aren't working anymore.

19 That's God saying yes, it's important, and I'm not  
20 just talking about your job; I'm talking about bearing fruit  
21 in all different parts of our lives.

22 But I know so many people that they are just going  
23 to work, work, work and then retire and play golf.

24 And a lot of those that I've met are bored after  
25 about two weeks of that, because they've lost some of their

1 essence of who they were created to be, a productive,  
2 fruitful, working people.

3 So that's it. God creates us on the sixth day to  
4 work.

5 Now in between that, and notice work is never a  
6 curse, it becomes a curse after the fall of Adam and Eve in  
7 the 3rd Chapter, the 19th verse.

8 So this sweat of the brow thing, that's the curse,  
9 but it's not the job itself.

10 It's just you are going to need to be a little more  
11 appreciative of what you've got. So the blessing is work,  
12 got that part.

13 Now, notice Chapter 2, Verses 1 through 3. Right  
14 after we saw that everything is good it says in 1:31, I  
15 think it is, it was very good, and there was evening and  
16 there was morning the sixth day.

17 We have been created and then in Chapter 2, Verse 1  
18 and 2, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all  
19 their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the  
20 work that he had done and he rested on seventh day from all  
21 the work he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and  
22 hallowed it," made it holy, that's what that means, "because  
23 on it God rested from all the work that he had done in  
24 creation."

25 Here is the key part of it. We were created to

1 work, but the first thing we are supposed to do is rest, not  
2 work.

3 If you get that figured out you have understood the  
4 semi circle, because God rests after he did all this work,  
5 but notice the day of the week we were created on is the  
6 sixth day and what happens on the seventh day? Rest.

7 But what we want to do is, we want to get right at  
8 it right now, and so we gun it and we get busy on the work  
9 thing.

10 God rested and so should we rest, it's the first  
11 thing we were created to do, it's part of our essence, but  
12 the first thing we are supposed to do is rest.

13 We are not supposed to get that mixed up, but  
14 sometimes we do.

15 Let's go to Exodus 20. This is God's top ten list,  
16 this is the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20, 1 through 17.

17 And we don't have time to literally go down all of  
18 the Ten Commandments, but this is where they are found in  
19 the kids' Bibles and our Bible, Chapter 20, Verse 2.

20 I am the Lord your God, you don't need any other  
21 gods. That's the first commandment.

22 The second commandment is Verse 7, don't make  
23 wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God.

24 In other words, don't use the Lord's name in vain,  
25 don't be cussing and cursing.

1           The third commandment is Verse 8, "Remember the  
2           Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and  
3           do all your work. The seventh day is the sabbath to the  
4           Lord and you should not do any work, not you or your son, or  
5           your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock or  
6           the alien residents in your town, for in six days the Lord  
7           made heaven and earth, the sea and all that was in them, but  
8           he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed  
9           the sabbath day and he consecrated it."

10           Then you have your fourth commandment, honor your  
11          mom and dad.

12           Five is don't murder.

13           Six is committing adultery.

14           Seven is steal.

15           Eight is false witness.

16           Nine is coveting your neighbor's house.

17           And ten is coveting your neighbor's wife or any of  
18          your neighbor's other possessions.

19           And we have kind of read those forever, a lot of  
20          us, and now they are in the paper and stuff, too, about  
21          having them posted in schools and court houses.

22           But do you realize that not taking a day off is  
23          tantamount to murder?

24           In fact, I would make a case that since it's listed  
25          sooner it might even be worse than murder.

1           And that's kind of a shocker for me. Not taking a  
2 day off and resting is tantamount to murder.

3           And it gets worse before it gets better. In Exodus  
4 31, it's on page 79 in my Bible, one of the key parts of  
5 this is God is saying to Moses, he says this is so important  
6 I want you saying it, I don't want you to give it to your  
7 brother, I don't want Jethro saying it, but this is your  
8 word to speak to the Israelites, so it begins in the 12th  
9 verse.

10           Say to the Israelites. You shall keep my sabbath,  
11 for this is a sign between you and me throughout your  
12 generations, given in order that you may know that I, the  
13 Lord, sanctify you."

14           It's a process.

15           "You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for  
16 you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever  
17 does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people.  
18 Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a  
19 sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any  
20 work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore  
21 the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath  
22 throughout the generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a  
23 sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six  
24 days the Lord made heaven and earth and on the seventh day  
25 he rested and was refreshed."

1           Proper rest is literally a matter of death, but do  
2 you realize how counter-cultural that is?

3           We are working ourselves to death. We are killing  
4 ourselves.

5           We are murdering ourselves, our families, our  
6 marriages, our churches, by not approaching this in the  
7 proper rhythm of life.

8           Being fruitful and multiplying takes on a whole new  
9 meaning with a major paradigm shift of understanding this.

10          Can you imagine being held accountable to take a  
11 day off each week?

12          We are now doing that in our office. It's been met  
13 with some interesting results.

14          Because we're always available, I will take my cell  
15 phone with me when I go do my abiding time.

16          No, you won't. You need to have some time. You  
17 need to have a day off.

18          And Pastor Wenda and I have been very intentional.  
19 Monday is our day off.

20          And there is times when we need to be abiding. We  
21 need to be resting fully.

22          It doesn't mean just sleeping all day; it means  
23 fully abiding, being at Jesus's chest listening to him,  
24 seeing what he has to say to us.

25          And that's not just one day a week. That's the

1 irony, too, it's kind of like the giving thing, it comes off  
2 the top, but each day we should have abiding time built into  
3 it.

4 And for me that is working out beautifully, because  
5 I do it in the morning.

6 The first thing I do in the morning, if I have a  
7 meeting at 6:30 or 7:30 I get up extra time so that I can go  
8 to my work out of my rest.

9 And so I want you to repeat this with me. We are  
10 to work from rest; not rest from work.

11 Would you say that with me?

12 We are to work from rest; not rest from work.

13 Most of us are trained and schooled and we have  
14 been hammered by coming home and saying I'm just so glad  
15 that day is over. I just can't wait to rest.

16 That's not being fruitful; that's being kind of  
17 crazy and it's flirting with fatality.

18 I first experienced this in June, I didn't take it  
19 seriously in April and May, started my sabbatical of really  
20 taking this seriously.

21 First thing I do in the morning is I go and watch  
22 the moon come up, or I listen to Jesus wake up the birds on  
23 my deck, and I'm not giving you or anybody else that time of  
24 the day.

25 That's my sanctuary right now, and it's in the

1 total darkness, I'm not doing out there doing Bible study.  
2 I do that when I get in the house.

3 But what I found myself doing was legalistically  
4 getting up, going out and getting the paper, turning on the  
5 coffee, sitting my chair with my light on, getting my  
6 scriptures read and then I was ready to go.

7 I made my abiding into a work, instead of just  
8 resting and coming into the day working out of my rest,  
9 instead of resting from my work.

10 That's the semi circle, and those are harsh and  
11 prophetic words, and to not understand those is fatal.

12 It's a rhythm of life of productivity and  
13 fruitfulness. It's not just sleeping rest; it's rest.

14 And I know we live in sleep-starved world. I read  
15 the statistics on that all time, that we aren't getting  
16 enough sleep.

17 And some of the sleep we are getting is not very  
18 restful because we are so stressed out from our jobs and our  
19 relationships, so this is a reality check for all of us.

20 It's also interesting, I mentioned the whole  
21 concept of retirement and going to play golf.

22 People do get depressed when they retire or become  
23 unemployed. The word retirement never appears in the Bible.

24 So this old "I did that when I was younger for the  
25 church" thing is not really very scriptural either.

1           And I'm amazed by people, my mom is one of them,  
2 she's retired now and she says she has more things to do now  
3 than she ever had.

4           Hello. Are you resting, mom? Are you getting  
5 enough rest?

6           And then are you still being fruitful? Are your  
7 kids learning who Jesus is?

8           Oh, that's the church's job.

9           We need to all understand that this is kind of a  
10 level ground thing. To abide and produce fruit that lasts  
11 is not temporary.

12           See, what we do is we get in this pattern of work  
13 and rest and we kind of start thinking I am really going to  
14 gun it and get a whole lot done, and then we come crashing  
15 down to earth, but we don't come all the way crashing back  
16 down to rest.

17           We don't get all the way there and then we get in  
18 that burn out zone of getting up too far and we get burned  
19 out and we crash.

20           Some of you know I'm a holocaust nut. I've been  
21 the Europe a few times and I love World War II history.

22           I had the privilege, and it's holy ground, I have  
23 been on the campus of maybe seven or eight concentration  
24 camps, and they called those work camps back in the day.

25           There is a sign right over the gate of every one of

1 them that say "Arbeit Macht Frei".

2           And I always thought that was kind of interesting,  
3 sounds like my name a little bit, Mark Fry.

4           What it means is work gets freedom. It's really  
5 interesting to me because I wonder if we are not in another  
6 holocaust, and I don't say that to belittle my Jewish  
7 brothers and sisters and all the people who went through the  
8 hell of that.

9           But we have fallen prey to that same demon; that we  
10 are going to work hard enough, we are going to make  
11 ourselves free.

12           And sadly those were the last three words a lot of  
13 people saw when they were either going out of or coming into  
14 those work camps, that work gives freedom.

15           They were under the delusional, demonic, evil  
16 rhetoric that if you work hard enough we'll let you go.

17           Is that a wake up call for me? I believe so.

18           And you need to also know that since I've started  
19 abiding my productivity has gone up so much.

20           But then the temptation is I will cut back in my  
21 resting time and I will maybe make a couple of phone calls  
22 during that time.

23           I'll do so emails during that time, or I'll get  
24 ahead of the game and I'll read what my sermon text is  
25 supposed to be for November.

1           No, no, no, that's not rest; that's work. Rest is  
2 putting your head on the chest of Jesus and listening to him  
3 when he says abide in me.

4           We have diluted that and we thought it was, I'm the  
5 vine, you guys are the branches, so hang out with Christian  
6 friends, be together, fellowship.

7           That's part of it, but he says abide in me, not  
8 with my disciples. Abide in me.

9           That's huge for me, because we are judged and we  
10 are redeemed, not because of what we have done, but because  
11 of what God has done for us.

12           It's being over doing. We are not human doings; we  
13 are human beings. And we are creatures of the King.

14           Abiding is largely a lost concept and we need to  
15 rediscover that for true productivity.

16           Again, I don't want another holocaust of thinking  
17 we are going to work ourselves out this. We won't.

18           It's like being on two treadmills, and I have been  
19 on them, and it's very valiant to go down trying.

20           But it's not biblical, and it's also not what God  
21 want us to do, to work ourselves to death.

22           It's killing our relationships, it's killing a lot  
23 of churches, that they just program themselves to death and  
24 they have a meeting every night of the week at the church.

25           What is up with that? That's workaholism, and it's

1 not abiding, and it's not fully resting. So that is a wake  
2 up call.

3 I want to lighten the mood a little bit with an  
4 email I got. It's called the buzzer, the bat and the  
5 bumblebee.

6 The semi circle, we will have the rest on the left  
7 side and the work on the other.

8 And you kind of go back and forth, but you have to  
9 get all the way back, is the key.

10 Here is the email. If you put a buzzard into a pen  
11 that is six feet by eight feet and it's entirely open at the  
12 top, the buzzard, in spite of its ability to fly, will be an  
13 absolute prisoner.

14 The reason for this is that the buzzard always  
15 begins a flight from the ground with a run of ten to twelve  
16 feet.

17 Without proper space to run, as is its habit, it  
18 will not even attempt to fly.

19 It will remain a prisoner for life in a small jail  
20 with no top on it. So that's the buzzard.

21 The bat, an ordinary bat flies around at night, a  
22 remarkably nimble creature in the air, but it cannot take  
23 off from a level place.

24 If placed on the floor or the flat ground, all a  
25 bat can do is shuffle about helplessly and no doubt

1 painfully until it reaches some slight elevation from which  
2 it can throw itself into the air and then at once it takes  
3 off like a flash.

4           Now the bumblebee. A bumblebee if dropped into an  
5 open jar will be there until it dies unless it's taken out.

6           It never sees the means of escape at the top. It  
7 persists in trying to find some way out through the sides  
8 near the bottom of the glass.

9           I used to catch bees and I noticed they always  
10 bumped into the sides of the Miracle Whip jar.

11           You can take the lid off. They will not come out.  
12 It will seek a way where no way exists.

13           It will keep doing the same thing over and over  
14 again and it's bumping its head and it's knocking its wings  
15 off, they just keep doing that and will completely destroy  
16 themselves and die.

17           The buzzard, the bat, and the bumblebee.

18           How about people?

19           In many ways there are a lot of people that are  
20 like buzzards, bats, and bumblebees.

21           They're struggling. They are struggling about with  
22 all their problems and their frustrations, one of which is  
23 work, but they are never realizing that all they have to do  
24 is the same thing the buzzard, the bat, and the bumblebee  
25 need to do. That is look up.

1           Scriptural, look up, your redemption is drawing  
2 near.

3           It's not found here. It's not found in the cell  
4 phone. It's not found at the laptop.

5           It's taking the time to look up and understand that  
6 you are judged not by what you do, but by what you are.  
7 What you are is a child of the King.

8           Let's end with the wonderful verses from John 15.  
9 You need to leave with this, because I hope you've gotten a  
10 little bit of conviction and not condemnation from what I am  
11 learning as a disciple.

12           Again John 15, Verse 8, "My father is glorified  
13 that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

14           Lord, we want that, too. We are going to try. We  
15 are going to give it a shot. We are going to look up and we  
16 are going to try that.

17           "As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you.  
18 So abide in my love."

19           Not in my condemnation, but abide in my love.

20           "If you keep my commandments," one of which is the  
21 sabbath, it doesn't have to be Sunday, but it does have to  
22 be a day of rest, "you will abide in my love. Just I have  
23 kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I said  
24 these things to you that my joy may be in you and that your  
25 joy may be complete."

1           Another translation for complete is balanced. And  
2 joy feels good.

3           It's working from your rest; it's not resting from  
4 your work.

5           Joy is found in basking in the love of Jesus on  
6 your deck, in your car, on the golf course, letting him love  
7 you, and then hearing his heartbeat of love for you.

8           You are so important, I want you to be rested so  
9 you can bear fruit and be productive. That's what he says  
10 to us through the heartbeat of love.

11           Would join me in a few moments of prayer?

12           Lord Jesus, it's easier said than done, because  
13 oftentimes we think that you love us because of what we do,  
14 or that you are mad at us because of what we do or don't do.

15           You love us, Lord, because we are your children,  
16 and you sent Jesus that he might teach us how to live.

17           Oftentimes, Lord, if we look at the scriptures,  
18 there are those times that you off by yourself in a lonely  
19 place listening to what your dad had to say.

20           That's what we need to do so, Lord, and so empower  
21 us to do that.

22           Give us better time management skills. Give us the  
23 ability to inhale and exhale slowly so that we can work from  
24 our rest and then be accountable to becoming your disciples.

25           Thank you, Lord, for these friends. Would you

1 please bless them with a faithful and restful day.

2           If not today then, Lord, soon and very soon. In  
3 your precious name. Amen.

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25