

## *Leisure and Spirituality: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*

By Paul Heintzman

*Reviewed by Peggy Hothem*  
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In this special issue on Sabbath, it is appropriate to include a review of *Leisure and Spirituality* by Dr. Heintzman, a leading scholar of leisure and spirituality. This *Engaging Culture* series book is designed to help Christians respond with theological discernment to contemporary culture. The book is not just for leisure scholars and students but is a “must read” for anyone interested in work, business, theology, and ethics as well as for church leaders and laity.

Little theological literature exists to guide ethical decisions related to leisure; yet leisure plays a major role in our lives and can affect one’s work. Heintzman admits the leisure concept is very complex because of the societal changes in regard to leisure, work, and lifestyle values. When leisure is experienced, one knows it, but it has pluralistic meanings and nuances. Similarly, spirituality has various interpretations. Recently there has been an outpouring of literature on what contributes to Christian spiritual formation. One may not think of leisure as a spiritual discipline, but Heintzman skillfully reviews leisure concepts and history to inform the reader that many biblical principles inform leisure. The book’s structure is a systematic critique of biblical, historical, and contemporary concepts of leisure. With a full command of the subject of leisure and spirituality, Heintzman integrates philosophy, theology, history, sociology, and psychology using classic theories and contemporary research. For the reader who is thinking about leisure for the first time, or for the mature scholar, Heintzman’s comprehensive scholarship is presented in a readable, fascinating form.

The book is well organized and thorough in weaving disciplines that impact the integration of leisure and spirituality. Heintzman carefully guides the reader to connect the disciplines with clear articulation as to why it is important to consider leisure for the purpose of spiritual formation. He critiques and illuminates the positive and negative features of seven concepts of leisure

(classical, time, activity, symbol of the leisure class, state of mind, feminist, and holistic) that leisure theorists use. Through an extensive exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, Heintzman challenges readers to consider that the “state-of-being” concept is the best foundation for understanding leisure. He also draws upon his personal experiences to connect theory with practice and show how the spiritual dimension of leisure can give wholeness to life. He concludes that receiving the gift of the Sabbath and embracing God’s rest is the deep root of a Christian theology of leisure that flows into personal healing and an ethical lifestyle.

Heintzman has delivered a true classic that I would recommend to anyone concerned about our over-worked, over-stressed, and spiritually deprived society. It is an important scholarly work with practical applications because “...leisure is part of God’s lifestyle for us; for rest; for renewal; and for learning about, appreciating, and enjoying God and God’s gift of creation.”