

# *The Rest of Life: Rest, Play, Eating, Studying, Sex from a Kingdom Perspective*

By Ben Witherington III

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This book contains five essays on common weekly activities: rest, play, eating, scripture study, and sex. In “Is there a Sabbatical plan for Christians?” Witherington interacts with Tonstad’s (2009) *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day*. Tonstad, a Seventh-Day Adventist, argues that Christians need to recover Sabbath observance. In contrast, Witherington concludes, that “the rest one has in Christ alleviates the need to maintain Mosaic ritual practices such as Sabbath observance ... we still need rest and restoration, but this does not require keeping Sabbath” (pp. 29, 37). Tonstad and Witherington lie at the extremes of the spectrum on Sabbath observance. A more helpful and biblical approach is in between.

In “Play on” Witherington distinguishes play from rest, noting that it is “a celebration of life lived to its fullest” (p. 42) that “generates its own joy” (p. 63). He draws upon Johnston’s (1982) *The Christian at Play*, noting that there has not been much development on this topic since then. However, Berryman’s (1991) *Godly Play* and the associated Godly Play movement in many churches, along with essays by Hoffman, Visker and Byl (1994/2006) are all significant. Unlike other chapters, few biblical references are provided to support Witherington’s theology of play. Unfortunately, while there is some discussion of plays, music, and dancing, the vast majority of examples are from sports, especially professional sports, which give a skewed understanding of play.

An excellent chapter, “Food for Thought,” reviews biblical material on feasting and fasting, and also recounts the Frugal Gourmet and the Galloping Gourmet. Witherington fails to mention that the Galloping Gourmet became a Christian and changed his food preparation to minimize fat and cholesterol. He is justifiably critical of contemporary Christian eating and drinking practices: “Overdrinking and overeating, which is to say gluttony, once described as one of the seven deadly sins, is now seen as the guilty pleasure of choice.... *Christians’ views on food*

*and drink very seldom have any basis in what the Bible has to say...*” (p. 73).

Witherington provides detailed exposition of 2 Timothy 2:15; Psalms 19, 119; and Hebrews 5:11-6:3 in “Eat this book — Studying the Scriptures,” to emphasize lifelong learning through diligent study and memorization of God’s word. As studying is associated with work and education, this chapter does not seem to fit as well with rest as the other chapters.

The first half of “Sex and the City of God,” reads as a review of Bell’s (2007) *Sex God*, with Witherington both agreeing and disagreeing with Bell’s views. The second half discusses whether Paul is a prude (1 Corinthians 7) and sexual relationships from a Kingdom perspective (1 Timothy 3). These discussions, in the longest chapter, seem tangential.

As three chapters primarily interact with one author, they do not survey the breadth of scholarship on each topic. Nevertheless the book provides an introduction to those not familiar with a Christian perspective on these topics. The book would be helpful supplemental reading in any course that touches upon one or more of the five topics covered in this book.