Living Joy! Reflection

Rule #7: Rest
By Janet Jones and based on Living Joy: 9 Rules to Help You Rediscover and Live Joy Every Day by Chris Stefanick. Emmaus Road Publishing. 2020. (All quotes and page numbers are from the book unless otherwise noted.)

Quotes to Ponder:

Remember the sabbath day—keep it holy. Six days you may labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God (Exodus 20: 8-10a)

Then Jesus said to them, “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. (Mark 2: 27)

“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” – proverb

“Doing nothing often leads to the very best of something.”- Winne the Pooh

Let’s Get Started:
I am old enough to remember when department stores were closed on Sundays and the grocery store was only open for a few hours. Sunday was meant to be a day for church, family and doing something different from the other days of the week. Sunday was to be a day of rest. Sadly, that has changed. But God’s commandment has not.

While in slavery in Egypt, the Israelites were forced to work every day. They were slaves and at the mercy of Pharaoh. After their release from captivity, God, in the Ten Commandments, instituted the Sabbath day. As Chris points out, “God made us to share in his joy, simply because he loves us. We aren’t human doings. We are human be-ings.” (pg. 118)

The idea of the Sabbath was and is revolutionary. As Chris explains:

“It was a declaration of war on an entire lifestyle. It attacked the very fabric of their slave society. On the surface, it was about rest and worship, but on a deeper level, it was about freedom. It was about putting work, and Pharaoh himself, in his place. The Sabbath has forever put kings and bosses in their place, saying to them, “There’s an agenda for mankind that is higher than yours.” The Hebrews no longer existed to serve earthy kings. Their name was not to be reduced to functionality, “slave,” but raised to relationship, “God’s chosen people.” The concept of a Sabbath was revolutionary, and it still is when we actually live it.” (pg. 117)

The Israelites took the observation of the Sabbath very seriously. But in their zeal for observing a day of rest, they lost sight of its true meaning and made unreasonable demands upon the Jewish people. Jesus was condemned by the Jewish leadership for doing “work” on the Sabbath. Of course, the work Jesus performed were signs of compassion. Yet that did not seem to matter and ultimately was one of the
factors that led to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus. For Christians the Sabbath moved to Sunday: the day of Christ’s resurrection.

For us in the present day, the beauty of the Sabbath is found when we discover who we are beyond the daily routine of the work week. Chris states the value of the Sabbath: “It’s so easy to forget ourselves, our hobbies, our fun, the things we enjoy about ourselves and that others like about us. We need to give ourselves space to rest so we can simply rediscover ourselves again. Every week, we’re summoned to remember who we are. We are more than the things we do or the roles we play. This even applies to our most noble roles in life.” (Pg. 119)

The Sabbath is also meant to give us the freedom to slow down and rest in the present moment. This is where we find entry into eternity. We experience it whenever we become so captivated by something or someone that we lose track of time. “The Sabbath is about learning to rest in the eternal now. That’s where God, and every gift of your life, is waiting for you. That’s why the devil is always at work to separate you from it.” (pg. 121)

This is the only JOY rule that is also a commandment. And like so many of the JOY rules, we must be very intentional about it. It’s so easy with our busy schedules to put off some of the chores till Sunday. And sometimes there is no other alternative. But this can be a slippery slope where our day of rest becomes a day of mowing the grass and doing laundry. There are also professions that are required to work on Sunday. We thank all those first responders and health care workers because emergencies do not take a day off. But no matter our professions, we all need a day of rest and it does not always have to be on Sunday. Speaking against the world’s insistence that money and power is the answer to all our problems, Chris points out: “There’s an agenda for mankind that is higher than yours.” (pg. 117) Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy because it is imperative for our JOY.

Questions to ponder:
1. Can you think of an event when you lost track of time?
2. How do you observe the Sabbath? What different activities do you do?
3. Are there chores or activities that you perform on the Sabbath that need to be done some other time during your week?

How-to’s from Chris (pgs.123-131):
1. Wage war on work, one day, every week- do nothing for a whole day
2. Savor moments. Smell the roses, taste your food, enjoy what you have and stop dreaming about what you want
3. Don’t rest lazily; engage in activities that lift your spirit (other than work, trolling the Internet, reading emails).
Join me in praying this prayer for JOY:

Heavenly Father, I will praise you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will declare all your wondrous deeds.
I will delight and rejoice in you; I will sing hymns to your name, Most High.
You will show me the path to life, abounding joy in your presence,
the delights at your right hand forever. I trust in your faithfulness.
Grant my heart joy in your help, that I may sing of the LORD,
"How good our God has been to me!"
Father, help me to remain in your love.
So that your joy may be in me and my joy may be complete.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.