

BOOK REVIEW

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

by Paul Heintzman (2015)

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This book explores how Christians can address leisure in contemporary society. As noted by the author, there is a lack of theological and ethical guidance on leisure and recreation. As early as 1997, Dr. Heintzman considered spiritual health in recreation services for individuals with disabilities (p. 22), and most recently (2008) he shared his Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model, noting the relevance of the model to coping with stress through spirituality within the context of one's leisure (p. 56). Both the model and book may be used by therapists to assist individuals to transcend life challenges such as the stress associated with disability, illness, or marginalization and to experience an enhanced quality of life. The last section of the book, Part 6, contains two chapters that expand on the relationship of leisure and well-being (Chapter 12) and reaffirm how spiritual coping that occurs during one's leisure facilitates a sense of balance in life (Chapter 13). While these two chapters might appear as the most relevant, the remaining chapters have utility with professionals as they interact with caregivers and health care professionals; and, as they sustain their own personal and professional health through living a good life. On a more practical note, the information covers content commonly found in foundations/history and trends and issues classes such as leisure, work, play, boredom, consumption, ethics, social and environmental justice, and enjoyment of life—foundational concepts covered by the NCTRC exam.

In this publication, Dr. Heintzman examines seven contemporary views on leisure and associated topics related to work through a biblical lens introducing a holistic concept of leisure that brings a Christian perspective to leisure studies literature and research. Throughout the publication he uses the work of Christian authors and researchers with biblical excerpts to explore and interpret the meanings and concepts of leisure and related topics resulting in an explanation of how Christians understand and practice leisure (Epilogue). The book consists of six parts with the Epilogue. The first part, Chapters 1 and 2, reviews seven concepts of leisure within the context of North American contemporary industrial society then summarizes current practice issues and trends. The seven leisure constructs that organize the text's discussion are identified as (1) classical view of leisure as a state of being, (2) leisure as a non-work

activity, (3) leisure as free time, (4) leisure as a symbol of social class, (5) leisure as a state of mind, (6) feminist view of leisure as enjoyment, and (7) holistic view of leisure. Throughout the book, Heintzman presents support for a holistic view of leisure that combines a classical state of being with the view of leisure as a non-work activity. Issues and trends are examined for each of the seven views. The reader learns from the data that even though leisure time has remained stable over time, we are challenged by time stress with the bulk of our time being devoted to TV and media, resulting in reduced quality of our leisure participation. Also, we tend to be consumptive but find ourselves experiencing boredom even with extensive leisure opportunities. While the author concludes this part by noting that the spiritual dimension of leisure is impoverished, we are reminded of the many benefits or outcomes of leisure presented in the Introduction (Table 1.1) where he notes that a healthy spiritual life relies on the healing dimension of leisure that opens us to appreciation, growth, and relaxation (p. xxiii).

Part 2, Chapters 3 and 4, survey the historical concepts of two of the seven predominant leisure views; the classical view of leisure as a state of being evident in ancient Greek culture (Chapter 3) and the Protestant view of leisure as non-work time and activity perceived as a refresher from work or re-creation as preparatory for future work (Chapter 4). Chapter 3 summarizes Aristotle's views of leisure (contemplation and pursuit of truth) and the Roman treatment of leisure as entertainment while introducing the monastic culture in which good works were to fill free time so that "one could escape the natural desires of one's body" (p. 68)—leisure and contemplation were preferred to physical work. Chapter 4 reviews the Renaissance followed by writings of Luther and Calvin during The Reformation then describes the active life of the Puritans. Work was the center of Puritan life and became a unifying force of other life dimensions while leisure became a time off work to re-create and return to work. The intent of both was devotion to a higher being and meaning in life. Chapter 4 closes with a discussion of the disintegration of the Christian worldview as work was no longer seen in relation to the divine. Influences of capitalism, utilitarianism, and the Industrial Revolution elevated work to "a human's highest ideal" leaving leisure to be defined as "free time" (p. 77).

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 (Part 3), review the biblical underpinnings of leisure giving us insight to a Christian perspective and practice of leisure. Several concepts are explored through analyses of biblical excerpts, most importantly considered are the Sabbath, rest as characteristic of quality of life, leisure as activity (festivals, feasts, dance, hospitality, and friendships), and work and leisure balance. The author's Epilogue (p. 247) formalizes these concepts into a theology of leisure. A biblical understanding of leisure includes both a *quantitative dimension* (rhythm of life) and a *qualitative dimension* (kind of life). The Sabbath reminds us that there is more to life than work and that the rhythm of work and non-work is necessary for our well-being (p. 248). Additionally, like the Sabbath, leisure is an attitude characterized by peace, joy, contentment, and celebration (p. 250). Rest along with peace, freedom, and the good life are descriptive of the quality of life found for the Christian in gifts of God's creation like the wilderness.

A Christian philosophy of leisure must consider other dominant life dimensions, particularly work. Chapters 8 and 9 (Part 4) explore contemporary and historical nature of work (Chapter 8) and the biblical view of work (Chapter 9). Historically, work has experienced a number of differing interpretations. Medieval theologians glorified spiritual work: Calvin and Luther stressed that all work is to be of service to God; yet

over time, the religious dimensions of the Protestant work ethic were modified and the secularized view of work became evident in the 19th and 20th centuries (pp. 144, 147). Leisure was relegated to the status of free time and the work ethic developed into a gospel of wealth (p. 147). Today, due to a number of factors, including technology and people's dissatisfaction with their work, there is an increasing awareness that work is no longer the moral center of life; yet for many there is tension between the work ethic and leisure or pleasure and the consumption ethic. According to the Bible, work is a blessing as it is a means to meet human needs, achieve human fulfillment, and provide stewardship over resources of creation (pp. 155-157). Work (our doing) is an attitude that flows from our being; we may be able to experience leisure while we work (p. 160). Thus, there is a middle ground between the work ethic and the leisure ethic.

The two chapters in part 5 (Chapters 10 and 11) construct the Christian perspective on the philosophy of leisure with a critique of the seven concepts of leisure followed by a discussion on the relationship of work and leisure as viewed from the Christian perspective. A Christian holistic view of leisure integrates the classical Roman Catholic understanding of leisure as a spiritual attitude and the Protestant view of leisure as activity (p. 205): Thus, the classic state-of-being view is supported by the biblical concept of rest reflective of a quality of life and the idea of the rhythm of life put forth with the Protestant practices of non-work time or activity that refreshes or restores, are the underpinnings of a holistic view of leisure. Leisure seen from the classic view is *qualitative*, a spiritual attitude a condition of our being; from a *quantitative* perspective, leisure consists of certain activities and times from silent contemplation to celebration in the gifts of creation when intensified leisure experiences contribute to well-being and wholeness (p. 210). The author presents the Golden Rule for leisure activity as one will treat oneself well as a model for others (p. 211). Selected activities improve our total health—nurturing social relationships, improving bodily health, promoting self-concept, expanding our abilities, and spiritual awareness.

As noted in the opening paragraph of this review, the closing part (6, Chapters 12 and 13) presents literature and research that link leisure and spirituality which facilitate coping and support a holistic approach to life—a balance in life. As a precursor to the Leisure-Spiritual Coping model, the author introduces eight processes identified in research that enable the leisure-spirituality linkage (p. 218). Among these are spending time in nature, getting away, times of solitude, connecting with others, attitude of gratitude, and places associated with childhood. The model described in Chapter 13 and in the 2008 article, synthesizes research and theory on leisure, stress, and spiritual coping—ways that people, for example, receive help through faith communities. The author references research on mental illness, HIV/AIDS, arthritis, dementia, and concludes the chapter with a personal narrative of the model's application to his management of cancer. Specific mention of therapeutic recreation is made with reference to our professional roles in the APIED process when we encourage social relationships creating a sense of connectedness that is significant in restoring wholeness (p. 242).

This book offers spiritual sustenance to therapists, caregivers, and constituents. As a resource, the significance of wholeness to health and leisure in the quality of life are explained. The healing power or belief in a “higher being” is articulated. The thorough investigation of biblical, historical, and contemporary leisure concepts and issues is unique and soundly establishes the centrality of spiritual health in our well-being and

as an element of a Christian good life. More fundamentally, we may use the text and the Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model as a resource to construct our life-script that articulates our life's intent and desired values, beliefs, and outcomes and serves as a model to promote health among our colleagues and constituents.

References

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