

# Leisure: A Theological and Psychological Inquiry

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the theological and psychological aspects of leisure to illustrate its value in promoting human prosperity, spiritual rejuvenation, inner peace and mental well-being. It seeks to create a unified paradigm that merges biblical theology with the modern psychological theory to guide the contemporary Christian practice and academic thought. The study adopts a multidisciplinary approach to research using a qualitative approach that integrates biblical interpretation, theological reflection, and psychological analysis. Its main sources of data are Scripture, works of the prominent theologians and the current psychological studies. The paper delves into the biblical principles of leisure manifested in Sabbath, holy festivals, prayer and fellowship. It also includes psychological implications suggesting the importance of leisure to resilience building, identity development, and improved well-being. The paper provides effective suggestions on how Christian communities and individuals can be involved in areas of deliberate rest, meditative prayer, shared hospitality and celebratory patterns that can lead to spiritual and psychological recovery. The significance of this research lies in its ability to connect theology and psychology by offering a comprehensive model of leisure that is both spiritually significant and psychologically beneficial. It enhances scholarship by illustrating the interplay between theological concepts and psychological theories in conceptualising leisure as a fundamental component of Christian discipleship, pastoral care, and personal development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Leisure is one of the most underestimated yet essential elements in human life.<sup>1</sup> It fits into theological concepts of the sabbath rest and spiritual renewal to further express the *imago dei* within humankind. In psychological terms, it is an avenue leading to mental health, personal development, and well-being.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, its importance is often misinterpreted as mere idleness or consumeristic indulgence, especially in modern societies that prioritise efficiency.

<sup>1</sup> Yoshitaka Iwasaki, Catherine P Coyle, and John W Shank, "Leisure as a Context for Active Living, Recovery, Health and Life Quality for Persons with Mental Illness in a Global Context," *Health Promotion International* 25, no. 4 (2010): 483–94; Andreja Brajša-Žganec, Marina Merkaš, and Iva Šverko, "Quality of Life and Leisure Activities: How Do Leisure Activities Contribute to Subjective Well-Being?," *Social Indicators Research* 102, no. 1 (2011): 81–91; David B Newman, Louis Tay, and Ed Diener, "Leisure and Subjective Well-Being: A Model of Psychological Mechanisms as Mediating Factors," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 15, no. 3 (2014): 555–78; Jinmoo Heo et al., "Daily Experience of Serious Leisure, Flow and Subjective Well-being of Older Adults," *Leisure Studies* 29, no. 2 (2010): 207–25.

<sup>2</sup> Junhyoung, Kim, Jae-Pil Ha, and James F. Williams., "The Role of Leisure Activities in the Relationship Between Physical Health and Subjective Well-Being: Evidence From Korean Older Adults," *Journal of Leisure Research* 47, no. 2 (2015): 228–50.

The biblical account offers a significant foundation for the definition of leisure. In Genesis 2:1-3, God's resting on the seventh day establishes a sacred rhythm of work and rest, calling humanity to participate in this divine pattern. The Sabbath command, as given in Exodus 20:8-11, emphasizes the social and spiritual significance of rest, identifying human activity with the agenda of God.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the history of the Christian church, theologians such as Augustine and Aquinas have examined the virtue of leisure, defining it against sluggishness and offering it as a means to meditation and spiritual growth.<sup>4</sup> In more recent theological discourse, Peter Kreeft's "Between Jesus and Stalin: The Church has a Point", in an appendix to the second edition, argues that authentic leisure is best defined as receptivity and festivity, which are at the centre of the worship of God.<sup>5</sup>

Psychological research has examined the impact of leisure on well-being and mental health. Participation in meaningful leisure activities may facilitate stress alleviation, enhance emotional resilience, and foster personal fulfilment.<sup>6</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's theory of flow describes the phenomenon of profound delight and immersion experienced during leisure activities, offering a framework to understand the transformative potential of leisure.<sup>7</sup> Self-determination theory emphasizes that individuals must fulfill intrinsic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—thereby enhancing general well-being.<sup>8</sup> These insights underscore that leisure is not simply a break from work but a fundamental component of a fulfilling existence.

Psychology and theology each esteem human flourishing, but far too often consider leisure from opposed directions. For theology, leisure exists as a participation in divine repose, but for psychology, it is a factor in personal development and affective equilibrium. This research aims to combine these two perspectives on leisure, inferring that, as a theological practice and psychological requirement, leisure holds immense opportunities for spiritual rejuvenation and mental health.

This current study is an interdisciplinary analysis of leisure's psychological and theological essence to provide individuals and communities with positive ways to devise constructive leisure activities. It endeavours to thoroughly examine leisure from an interdisciplinary perspective, merging theological and psychological insights to reveal its profound significance and propose a framework for comprehensive human flourishing. The purpose of this research is threefold: first, it seeks to consider the theological basis of leisure; second, it seeks to consider psychological theory and evidence-based literature outlining the role of leisure in sustaining human identity and well-being; and third, it aims to synthesize these findings within a composite model that will assist contemporary Christian living, pastoral practice, and mental health care. By closing the gap between psychology and theology, this research aims to respond to contemporary issues of work-life imbalance, mental health crisis, and spiritual disconnection with academically sound and practically relevant answers.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

This study employs a qualitative, interdisciplinary research paradigm that integrates theological interpretation with psychological inquiry. This research is exploratory, seeking to amalgamate biblical, historical, and theological perspectives on leisure with psychological theories and empirical facts. The study uses conceptual analysis, theme synthesis, and hermeneutical reflection rather than experimental or quantitative methods to clarify the relevance and implications of leisure for human flourishing. The design incorporates concepts from religion and psychology, enabling both normative (what ought to be) and descriptive (what is) evaluations of leisure.

### Data Sources

<sup>3</sup> Richard H. Lowery, *Sabbath and Jubilee*, Louis, MO: Chalice (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 45.

<sup>4</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 113.

<sup>5</sup> Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (New York: Ignatius Press, 1998), 32.

<sup>6</sup> Ryan T., et al. Howell, "Positive Psychology and Leisure: Well-Being and Human Flourishing," *Journal of Positive Psychology* 3, no. 3 (2008): 123–29.

<sup>7</sup> Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, vol. 1990 (New York: Harper & Row, 1990), 71.

<sup>8</sup> Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, "Self-Determination Theory and the Facilitation of Intrinsic Motivation, Social Development, and Well-Being," *American Psychologist* 55, no. 1 (2000): 68.

This study employs data from two primary domains: Theological Sources, which include biblical texts (Genesis, Exodus, Ecclesiastes, the Gospels, Hebrews, etc.), early church writings (Augustine, Aquinas), and significant theological works concerning Sabbath, rest, and leisure (Pieper, Brueggemann, Dawn, Heschel, etc.). These works lay the groundwork for understanding leisure as a religious and spiritual pursuit.

Psychological Sources encompass peer-reviewed journal articles, theoretical frameworks such as Self-Determination Theory, Flow Theory, Psychological Reactance, and Cognitive Appraisal Theory, as well as contemporary studies on leisure, well-being, and identity. These sources furnish empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks for the psychological dimensions of leisure. Secondary sources include studies from different fields, historical assessments, and pastoral-theological ideas that link psychology and theology. This research formulates an extensive framework for comprehending leisure as both a religious and psychological action of significance.

### **Theological Foundations of Leisure**

The concept of leisure, often linked with modern industrialisation and day life, has antecedents in earlier periods, as depicted in the scriptures and Christianity. The core of Christian theology is not seeking enjoyment for its own sake as leisure or the absence of work; instead, it is focused on the spiritual, psychosocial, and ontological dimensions. This section outlines the theological understanding of leisure, its roots in the biblical texts and the historical theological debate. The discussion will synthesise the lesson of leisure and recreation with the theological discourse on important historical figures and movements. The primary aim of this section is to elucidate that leisure, when understood correctly, is consistent with ideals of human well-being and activity in the processes of creation and redemption.

Leisure is usually defined as time for personal activities beyond fulfilling job responsibilities and basic needs.<sup>9</sup> This would lead to a general belief that as work hours lengthen, leisure time is reduced. These categories include three forms of time: existential time, or the time spent on eating and sleeping; subsistence time, which people spend in the production process; and leisure time, used in resting, rejuvenating our energies, maintaining social relations, and fulfilling our cultural and spiritual urges.

Leisure should free the human brain from daily concerns, enabling people to reflect on essential matters. It is time to re-examine the importance and purpose of the human body, partake in a creative or restorative endeavour, and revitalise existence's physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Unfortunately, leisure does not live up to these high expectations for many people because it has become severed from its spiritual origins. They seek to find meaning in their lives by passively consuming goods and services in leisure rather than striving for cultural and spiritual ideals.

### **Biblical Perspectives on Rest and Leisure**

In his book on a biblical perspective of work, Alan Richardson observed the following regarding leisure in ancient times: The Bible knows nothing of “a problem of leisure.” No such problem had arisen in the stage of social evolution reached in biblical times. The hours of daylight were the hours of labour for all workers (cf. Ps. 104:22f; John 9:4), whose only leisure time was during the hours of darkness. The general standpoint of the Bible is that it is “folly” (i.e., sinful) to be idle between daybreak and sunset. A six- or eight-hour day was not envisaged. Hence, we must not expect to derive from the Bible any explicit guidance upon the proper use of leisure.<sup>10</sup>

While Richardson accurately noted that the Bible lacks clear directives regarding leisure, he erroneously depicted the lives of individuals in antiquity as solely focused on labour. The Hebraic lifestyle, characterised by observance and commemorating festivals and holy days, implies that

<sup>9</sup> John R Kelly, *Freedom to Be: A New Sociology of Leisure* (Routledge, 2019), 49; Stanley Parker, *Leisure and Work*. (George Allen & Unwin, , 1983), 22; Chris Rojek, “The Cultural Context of Leisure Practice,” in *Leisure and Culture* (Springer, 2000), 104–40; Sue Glyptis, *Leisure and Unemployment.*, 1989; Geoffrey Godbey, *Leisure in Your Life: An Exploration*, 1999, 12; David Harris, *Key Concepts in Leisure Studies*. ( SAGE Publications, , 2005), 4; Peter Bramham and Stephen Wagg, *The New Politics of Leisure and Pleasure* (Springer, 2010), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work* (London: SCM Press, 1952), 51.

existence encompasses more than mere toil. Despite the Bible's limited vocabulary concerning leisure and its insufficient theological discourse on the topic, some modern authors have pinpointed biblical aspects that can enrich our comprehension of leisure: the framework of creation,<sup>11</sup> creativity in the Old Testament;<sup>12</sup> the notion of Sabbath rest;<sup>13</sup> the concept of the image of God in play;<sup>14</sup> the counsel of *Qoheleth* in Ecclesiastes;<sup>15</sup> the Hebraic lifestyle encompassing festivals, dance, feasting, and hospitality; the quality of life embodied in Jesus Christ;<sup>16</sup> and the kingdom of God. These elements demonstrate that a biblical comprehension of leisure includes both a rhythm of life (a quantitative aspect) and the nature of life we possess in Jesus Christ (a qualitative aspect).

Judeo-Christian history has profoundly shaped Western perceptions of leisure, particularly emphasizing Greek leisure concepts.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, the discipline of leisure studies has frequently neglected other Mediterranean traditions, including the Judeo-Christian heritage. In examining leisure in ancient Israel, Robert Crabtree challenged the attribution of sole authorship of leisure to Aristotle and the Greek empire. He contended that Israel was a pivotal society as it served as the foundation for Christianity, profoundly influencing the Western world. The Sabbath served as the foundation of Jewish life and offered a more egalitarian approach to leisure than Greek civilisation. Aristotle's leisure concept relied on the ancient Greek practice of slavery, but the Jewish Torah conferred an intrinsic right to Sabbath rest for all individuals.

Israel's comprehensive perspective on leisure encompassed feasts, national holidays, and festivals that emphasized the nation's connection with God and the concept of rest. The Mosaic Law mandated seven feasts: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Harvest of First Fruits, Weeks of Ingathering, Booths or Tents, Trumpets, and Atonement. These events reminded the Israelites of their commitments to God and commemorated the persistence of their relationship with Him. Through these activities, the Israelites recognised the advantages of rest and the perpetuation of their relationship with God.

In his dissertation, Crabtree thoroughly examines the concept of leisure in ancient Israel and argues in support of a holistic view that includes aspects of time, activity, place, attitude, and state of being.<sup>18</sup> The Sabbath year was instituted to foster social justice and enhance community welfare, while feasts, national holidays, and festivals were associated with rest intervals. These ceremonies are intended to remind Israelites of their commitments to God and to mark the permanence of their relationship with Him. The religious site was associated with the Promised Land of Canaan, characterised by settlement, notable prestige, the divine presence in the Promised Land, and tranquillity or relief from strife. The practice of rest was established on veneration for the Lord and faith, cultivated by reflection on Scripture. This mental position was characterised by believing that no condition could dominate an Israelite.

The arrangement of rest, shaped by time, activity, and place concepts, enhances physical and spiritual relaxation at the Individual, family, and societal levels. The ideal state of existence was realised through the family, as individual families influenced the societal landscape. Crabtree asserted that societal leisure is not an authentic Greek concept but a synthesis of the Israeli notion of rest (Scriptural viewpoint) and the Aristotelian interpretation of leisure (humanistic perspective). The idea of leisure has been part of the Divine and His creation. Hence, as reflected in the sabbath commandments, the notion of rest in the creation account elucidates how leisure has been featured in the universe.

<sup>11</sup> Harold D. Lehman, *In Praise of Leisure*. (Kitchener, ON: Herald, 1974), 134 -36.

<sup>12</sup> David A. Spence, *Towards a Theology of Leisure with Special Reference to Creativity* (Ottawa: Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1973), 57-66.

<sup>13</sup> Lehman, *In Praise of Leisure*. ; Arthur F Holmes, *Contours of a World View* (Eerdmans, 1983), 229 -30; Robert K. Johnston, *The Christian at Play* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 88-95.

<sup>14</sup> Holmes, *Contours of a World View*, 228 - 29.

<sup>15</sup> Johnston, *The Christian at Play*, 102-10.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon Dahl, "Work, Play, and Worship in a Leisure-Oriented Society," 1972, 70-71.

<sup>17</sup> Karen M Fox and Elizabeth Klaiber, "Listening for a Leisure Remix," *Leisure Sciences* 28, no. 5 (2006): 411-30.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Dale Crabtree, *Leisure in Ancient Israel (before 70 AD)* (Texas A&M University, 1982).

Thus, the scriptural basis for leisure originates from the creation account in Genesis.<sup>19</sup> The rhythm of work and rest is intricately interwoven into the essence of creation. Genesis 2:2,3 states: "By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so, on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Accordingly, this passage emphasises the importance of rest, as God's rest on the seventh day acts as both an ideal and a theological need for humanity.

The Genesis creation narrative demonstrates that God has established a sabbatical framework for history, the basis for the weekly life cycle. The act of creation spanned six days, after which God ceased his activity on the seventh day. Leland Ryken, Jim Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III asserted that God's repose on the seventh day is the original biblical depiction of leisure.<sup>20</sup> The Sabbath, subsequently formalised in the Mosaic Law (Exodus 20 8–11), represents rest as a sacred observance, encompassing the cessation of labour and engagement in God's creation order. Hence, the Sabbath signifies dependence on divine providence. By ceasing labour, humanity acknowledges its reliance on God rather than its efforts. The theological dimension of rest is crucial for understanding leisure as spiritual renewal and divine communion.

### Biblical Concept of Rest

The biblical notion of rest is derived from the Hebrew root "*nuakh*". It encompasses four primary theological applications: psychological-spiritual (personal) tranquillity, soteriological (salvation) repose, martial (cessation from adversaries), and a connotation associated with death.<sup>21</sup> These applications are developmentally interconnected and crucial for understanding leisure. The psychological and spiritual significance of rest is shown in Job 3:26 when Job expresses his anguish at the absence of tranquillity. The soteriological application of rest is linked to the theology of the Sabbath, wherein individuals are called not just to cease their labour but also to attain a state of victorious rest. This repose is attainable through God's presence and provision; through the Messiah, God will bestow genuine rest upon His people.<sup>22</sup>

The Deuteronomic concept of rest is linked to a pleasurable, secure, and blessed existence on the land. This concept is connected to the creation's objectives outlined in Genesis 1:1–2:4a and exemplified by the Eden tale. The realisation of the promise of rest in the Old Testament is initially articulated in the book of Joshua, wherein the LORD granted Israel all the land He had vowed to their forebears, and they occupied and established themselves there. In 2 Samuel, the Lord assured Israel of tranquillity during David's reign and the consecration of Solomon's temple. The realisation of this promise is associated with Solomon's blessing, recognising God's supply of tranquillity. Nonetheless, there exists an impression that the assurance of rest was unfulfilled in the Old Testament.<sup>23</sup> The Chronicler's interpretation of rest diverges from the Deuteronomic understanding, as "rest from all your enemies" is portrayed as a periodic gift bestowed upon righteous monarchs. Solomon is now regarded as a "man of peace" in a novel context when God resides among the Israelite people. This expectation is a citation from Psalm 132, articulating the hope that God will ultimately emerge and dwell among his people.

In Psalm 95, the people's resting place signifies God's rest and the essence of God's rest. The Lord God proclaims that they shall never get His rest, which indicates a gift of repose that Israel will achieve solely via a personal communion with her God. The author of Hebrews adopts this type of rest. In Hebrews 3 and 4, "rest" (*katapausis*) appears repeatedly, including two instances when

<sup>19</sup> P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-Day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977); Richard M Davidson, "In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1," 1994; Norman. Wirzba, *The Paradise of God: Renewing Religion in an Ecological Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (Fortress Press, 1993); Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Westminster John Knox Press, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Leland Ryken, James C Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (InterVarsity Press, 2010), 505.

<sup>21</sup> Leonard J. Coppes, "Nûah," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. Robert Laird Harris, Gleason Leonard Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke, vol. 2 (Chicago: Moody, 1980), 562.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Heintzman, *Leisure and Spirituality (Engaging Culture): Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Baker Academic, 2015), 108.

<sup>23</sup> Heintzman, *Leisure and Spirituality (Engaging Culture): Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives*, 108-109.

reiterating the initial citation. *Anapausis* is the predominant phrase for "rest" in the New Testament and the Septuagint. Donald Hagner contended that the author of Hebrews alludes to three separate forms of rest: the tangible rest in the land of Canaan, God's rest (Heb. 4:4), and the rest intended for Christians.<sup>24</sup> The initial category of rest, the Deuteronomic rest in the land, is referenced in Psalm 95 as cited in Hebrews 3:7–11 and again in 4:3. This rest signifies an eschatological anticipation, a realisation of the promises of redemption and an entry into the rest that has eternally existed with God.

The divine rest is perceived today as fulfilling God's purpose in creation: to grant humanity such repose. Following the fall, God's original intentions for humanity's experience of rest are realised via his restorative actions among his people. The ultimate fulfilment is shown as a celestial repose, the antithesis of the rest in the Promised Land referenced in Psalm 95:11. Lincoln contended from four perspectives that this rest is proper for Christian believers. A prominent topic in Hebrews is that heavenly realities, including rest, are accessible via Christ to believers. Secondly, the current aspect of rest is underpinned by the concept of faith referenced in 4:3, signifying that through faith, the future, the unseen, and the celestial are rendered assured and definite in the present.<sup>25</sup> The current availability of rest aligns with the repeated usage of "today" in the passage, indicating that rest is yet to be attained and requires effort.

The text examines the biblical concept of rest, emphasising the realisation of God's promise of rest for Christians. It posits that the rest provided by Joshua's generation represents a superficial aspect of God's entirety of rest. The physical dimensions of rest are inseparable from the spiritual dimensions, as the assurance of physical territory, tranquil living, and a gratifying life cannot be dissociated from the spiritual realm of God. In Hebrews 4:9, the author introduces an additional aspect to the notion of rest, asserting that a Sabbath rest persists for the people of God. This rest entails entering into God's repose and discontinuing personal labour, akin to the celestial rest described in Revelation 14:13. The Sabbath rest parallels God's cessation from all His works after creation, indicating it is integral to God's design for humanity.

Jean Hering and Calvin have linked Sabbath rest to the Sabbath day, characterised as a day of repose and joy.<sup>26</sup> Witherington characterises this rest as a "state of being," existing in faith, with the peace of Christ within our hearts, anticipating the future without trepidation. This rest represents a quality of life that has typically evaded humanity and can only be achieved by communion with God, specifically via a personal encounter with Jesus Christ.

The notion of repose in Matthew 11:28-30 is a significant motif in Christian literature, frequently synonymous with leisure. Jesus soles the tired and encumbered, presenting a gentle yoke and a light load. This text exemplifies a compelling hermeneutical phenomenon since it is receptive to interpretation and poised for elucidation. The remainder is extended to all those burdened by the stringent rules and restrictions imposed by scribes and Pharisees. Theodore Robinson contended that the invitation should not be restricted to any specific form of labour or fatigue.<sup>27</sup> Still, Calvin maintained that Christ extends his hand to those who toil and bear burdens.<sup>28</sup>

The remainder is obtained through discipleship, which provides rejuvenation and revitalisation, allowing individuals to bear their responsibilities without perceiving them as onerous. The direct translation of the remainder is "I will rest you," which conveys a meaning beyond "give you rest."<sup>29</sup> In Christ, there exists repose since Jesus possesses distinct power and authority, extending an invitation and promise to the weary and encumbered populace. The remainder can be characterised as an existing reality, discipleship rather than passivity, tranquilly in God, and a holistic rest for the Individual. It is not a distant aspiration or repose in the afterlife but a present solace accessible to everyone who adheres to Jesus. The remainder encompasses the burden of discipleship, unconditional forgiveness of all

<sup>24</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Hebrews: A Good News Commentary*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 54.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew T Lincoln and D A Carson, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 1982, 210-12.

<sup>26</sup> Jean Hering, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip J. Allcock (London: Epworth, 2010), 32; Jean Calvin, *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, trans. William B. Johnston, vol. 12 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1994), 49.

<sup>27</sup> Theodore H. Robinson, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1928), 106.

<sup>28</sup> John Calvin, *The Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Associated Publishers and Authors Inc., 1960), 227.

<sup>29</sup> William Robertson. Nicoll, *St. Matthew, The Expositor's Bible*. (New York: : Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), 155.

transgressions, reconciliation with God, and certainty of salvation. The rest for the souls pertains not solely to the inner self but to the entirety of the Individual, as Jesus provides rest that is advantageous for both the soul and the body. He is an absolute saviour, providing a tranquil heart and mind that can have a restorative impact on the whole Individual, including soul and body.

The biblical notion of rest is intricately associated with leisure since it denotes a pleasurable, secure, and blessed existence in the land. This rest signifies a location for repose and a condition of fulfilment, tranquillity, happiness, wellness, harmony, and safety. The aspects of rest contribute to the quality of life found in Jesus Christ, equivalent to the qualitative dimension of leisure. The quality of life we possess in Christ is articulated by many New Testament passages that delineate this experience. Hagner and Hendriksen associated Sabbath rest with "the peace of God," whereas others, such as John 16:33 and 14:27, highlight peace and satisfaction. In John 10:10, Jesus assures a complete and plentiful life, urging individuals to transcend trivial pursuits and directing them towards a richer, more exhilarating, and aesthetically pleasing experience of existence.

Leisure is frequently regarded as a means to explore life in Jesus Christ, as it is during leisure that individuals uncover the truth, attain serenity, and evolve into the person Christ intends them to be. Freedom, wealth, serenity, and rest characterise the qualitative aspect of leisure, reflecting the quality of life experienced in Christ. Historically, a distinction has been made between the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*. The medieval monastic culture characterised leisure primarily by its qualitative aspect. However, the Protestant tradition perceived leisure quantitatively as non-work time for restoration and rejuvenation before resuming labour. Nonetheless, a significant scriptural focus is "being," acknowledging the Sabbath as a spiritual disposition and appreciating the rest and quality of life afforded us in Christ.

### **Biblical Themes Related to Leisure**

The Old Testament depicts leisure as an active pursuit, encompassing festivals, feasts, dance, hospitality, friendships, and leisure activities in the Gospel of Luke. These festivals served as religious events for the Israelites of the Old Testament, fostering a culture of celebration, gratitude, and joy. The Sabbath was the paramount holy day, whilst the New Moon festivals were the basis for the liturgical calendar.

In Deuteronomy 16, Moses delineates three principal annual holidays in Israel's tradition: the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, also known as Pentecost or First Fruits, and the Feast of Booths, referred to as Ingathering or Tabernacles. These celebrations were not pagan orgies; instead, they represented a period of respite devoid of labour. They had a social orientation characterised by feasting and festivity for seven days.

The atmosphere of these festivals was to celebrate before the LORD your God, to express joy throughout your festival, and to exult before the LORD your God for seven days. As the pinnacle of all festivals, the Jubilee Year culminated the complete life cycle of sabbatical days, months, and years. Nehemiah's call to celebration indicates that Israelite existence encompassed more than mere labour and monotony. He urged the populace to indulge in exquisite cuisine and delightful beverages and dispatched provisions to those who were unprepared. The festival was inclusive, with attendees celebrating for seven days, illustrating that recreational activities may fulfil human desires for celebration and social rituals.

Feasts were pivotal occasions in Israelite life, frequently including celebration and sustenance. These feasts represent God's benevolent presence among his people and were integral to Jesus's experiences and teachings. Jesus's attendance at gatherings and meals, including the bridal feast at Cana, was a reaction to the criticism of his associations with inappropriate company. Jesus underscored the significance of equilibrium in a celebratory life, steering clear of excessive indulgence and austerity extremes. He highlighted the importance of relishing life within God's creation, free from accumulation, dependency, or fixation.

Jesus redefined celebration by separating it from the inebriation and leisure of the Greeks and Romans, as well as the rigid legalism of the Jewish Sabbath. He regarded Holy leisure in celebration as an affirmation of trust in God's grace and providence for everyone. The Last Supper, a prototype

for the Eucharist, served as an occasion for Christians to gather for a meal, commemorating Christ's suffering for humanity's salvation.

In the Bible, feasting was not an endorsement for excessive consumption, as it occurred infrequently during critical events such as festivals or marriages. Feast tables in the Bible symbolise rejuvenating and joyous camaraderie, representing an appropriate leisure pursuit to promote. The Old Testament often references dance as a form of celebration and worship. Dance was an element of Israelite festivities, exemplified by David's victory over the Philistines and his transportation of the ark of the covenant to Zion. African Christianity has embraced dancing as a medium for expressing worship and celebration.

Hospitality was esteemed in the ancient Near East, notably Israel, even towards adversaries. Disregarding hospitality was regarded as a grave transgression deserving of harsh retribution. Ezekiel 16:49 indicates that the primary transgression of Sodom was not sexual immorality but rather a deficiency in hospitality. In the Book of Judges, a guest was entitled to protection and respect for up to three days.

Jesus underscored the significance of friendships. In Luke 7, Jesus differentiated his friendly lifestyle from the asceticism of John the Baptist. Jesus embodied the pleasure of the kingdom, whereas John emphasised repentance. Jesus valued the company of others and was recognised for his association with the marginalised and rejected. Jesus exhibited camaraderie with Zacchaeus and the lady caught in adultery.

In the narrative of Jesus's second anointing by a woman in Bethany, John identified the lady as Mary, a close friend of Jesus, and noted the presence of her siblings, Lazarus and Martha. Johnston asserted that friendship must encompass more than an extravagant feast; it should also entail amicable consideration. Thus, the Old Testament underscores the significance of dance, hospitality, and friendship within ancient Israel.

In her work "Does the Gospel of Luke Suggest a Christian-Judaic Form of Leisure in the Graeco-Roman World?" Karen Fox contended that the Gospel of Luke depicts Jesus as contesting and altering leisure customs within the Graeco-Roman context. The Gospel emphasises pursuits and environments typically linked to leisure, including socialising, travelling, sharing meals, enjoying outdoor dining, and exploring natural landscapes. The notion of *scholē* permeates the Gospel by employing parables and illustrations. Graeco-Roman leisure activities encompassed dining, social interactions, and hospitality, and Luke contextualises his words accordingly. Fox referenced Byrne's interpretation of Luke's metaphor of hospitality, which encompasses more than just meals, visitors, and guests, aiming to make a stranger feel "at home." The segments of tales and parables that emphasise food and dining customs promote the principles of charity, sharing, and hospitality. Luke's emphasis on leisure activities conveys that if pleasure imposes a burden on others, it is unethical. In summation, Jesus's life and teachings are intertwined with diverse culinary practices associated with leisure, including communal dining and food sharing.

## The Psychological View of Leisure

Leisure, one of the distinctive aspects of human existence, has been extensively examined by several disciplinary perspectives, including sociology, economics, and psychology. The psychological perspective on leisure provides insight into how people perceive, experience, and gain pleasure from recreational activities.

### a. Defining Leisure in Psychological Terms

Those actions that are defined by intrinsic motivation, personal choice, and subjective enjoyment are what psychologists identify as leisure activities. Leisure is not always free time. The theory of "flow" developed by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi can be applied here since it is a state of heightened involvement and optimal experience usually attained through leisure activity participation.<sup>30</sup> The leisure experience is pleasant, as it reinforces positive attitudes and stimulation the mind.

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<sup>30</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 4.

Another characteristic of leisure is that it is marked by the absence of external compulsion and the fact that it is considered voluntary. The reasons that drive people to work most of the time are extrinsic, i.e., monetary benefits or the demands of society. However, by contrast, the motives that impel people to relax, enjoy themselves, and improve themselves are inherent.<sup>31</sup> The psychological significance of leisure as a vehicle for self-expression and affect regulation is underscored by this analogy.

Other than being a key determinant of psychological resilience and satisfaction with life in general, relaxation and flexibility are also essential. Several studies have established that people who engage in leisure activities regularly have greater life satisfaction, less stress, and improved mental health outcomes.<sup>32</sup> This is due, in significant part, to the recuperative nature of leisure activities. Through these activities, one can recover from the weariness and intellectual depletion of one's work. But that is not all, as performing leisure activities makes it easier to interact with other people, which has been proven beneficial for one's sense of belonging and well-being.<sup>33</sup>

The activities that individuals engage in during their free time differ from one culture to another and from one person to another, thus influencing how people view and utilise their free time. Moreover, the experiences that individuals have when they are using their free time differ from one Individual to another. On the other hand, some cultures are more likely to indulge in passive leisure activities, e.g., watching television or playing computer games. In contrast, others value active leisure activities, e.g., sports and creative pursuits. The culture's values play a significant role in determining the meaning and importance of leisure activities.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, the psychological impacts of recreation are closely related to subjective and cultural factors that define the participation and experience of a person in recreation in their given scenario regarding recreational activity.

## **b. Psychological Theories of Leisure**

Various psychological theories have been introduced into research to explain the function and role of leisure in the existence of humankind. Some of them are described below.

### **i. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)**

As Deci and Ryan established, self-determination theory clarifies that recreational activities are most satisfying when they have the three core psychological attributes of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.<sup>35</sup> Deci and Ryan developed this theory. Instead, the sense of mastery is also called competence, while the sense of relatedness is called social connections. Self-direction need is also referred to as autonomy. There is also a relationship between engaging in leisure activities satisfying these criteria and experiencing a sense of enhancing one's psychologically healthy state. According to the research findings, individuals who engage in leisure activities that meet their intrinsic needs have been shown to enjoy more pleasure and higher levels of personal satisfaction.<sup>36</sup> In addition, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) sheds light on the concept that leisure activities promoting individual development and self-improvement significantly contribute to long-term well-being and a sense of purpose in life. This is what the i. Self-determination theory (SDT) is considered the most critical aspect of leisure activities.<sup>37</sup>

### **ii. The Flow Theory**

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory emphasises achieving and sustaining a challenging-to-skill balance in leisure activities. When individuals engage in appropriately challenging leisure activities, they can feel a profound sense of engagement and delight, resulting in

<sup>31</sup> Edward L Deci and Richard M Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013), 25.

<sup>32</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 103.

<sup>33</sup> Robert A. Stebbins, *Between Work and Leisure: The Common Ground of Two Separate Worlds* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 30.

<sup>34</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 223-226.

<sup>36</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 240.

<sup>37</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 251 -253.

increased satisfaction and self-enlargement. Since the state is marked by eliminating ego consciousness and the unity of action and consciousness, leisure is a vital self-actualisation tool.<sup>38</sup> The blending of action and awareness characterises this condition. Flow experiences are invaluable for improving individuals' creativity, productivity, and emotional strength.

- iii. According to studies carried out not so long ago, individuals who experience flow regularly in their activities for enjoyment tend to have more significant positive effects and overall well-being when viewed from the point of serious leisure.<sup>39</sup> One initially developed the "serious leisure" concept, distinguishing it from casual and project-based leisure. Robert Stebbins was the first author to introduce the idea. Serious leisure characterises the pursuit of a systematic activity, which entails the participant's learning of skills, patience, and personal commitment. It has been established that participating in this form of leisure activity can result in increased levels of self-esteem, the establishment of an identity, and long-term psychological benefits. Casual leisure, however, is used mainly for the sake of pleasure and is spontaneous. However, serious leisure demands commitment and persistent effort, while casual leisure is primarily employed for pleasure.<sup>40</sup> Research has found that individuals who engage in significant leisure activities, like playing an instrument, participating in competitive sports, or pursuing artistic endeavours, usually possess a strong sense of personal identity and self-esteem.<sup>41</sup>

**iv. *Psychological Reactance Theory***

According to the Psychological Reactance Theory, developed by Jack Brehm, when individuals believe that their autonomy concerning recreational activities is limited, they experience a psychological resistance that makes them feel like they are losing the enjoyment they derive from such activities.<sup>42</sup> This concept comes into effect when considering how people engage in activities during their time off and are influenced by external pressures, such as societal pressures or limitations imposed by their profession.<sup>43</sup> For instance, when individuals are forced to take up specific leisure activities as a function of societal norms or through peer pressure, they are likely to derive less enjoyment from these activities than they would if they chose to participate freely.<sup>44</sup> By understanding this concept, people can increase their ability to design leisure spaces that promote the greatest extent of personal freedom and autonomy. This will ultimately increase the overall quantity of pleasure attained through leisure activities.

**v. *Cognitive Appraisal Theory***

Richard Lazarus developed what is known as the Cognitive Appraisal Theory. Per this theory, individuals evaluate their leisure activities in terms of perceived challenges and whether they can overcome them. However, participating in recreational activity perceived as too demanding or overwhelming would have an indirect opposite influence and further positively contribute to emotional well-being. Leisure activities that are deemed to be fun and controllable, however, are what make an individual emotionally healthy.<sup>45</sup> According to this theory, which emphasises the significance of personal perception, whether a specific leisure activity is healthy or unhealthy for an individual's psychological health is a matter of personal perception. On the other hand, those who find physical activity burdensome may discover it is stressful to engage in physical activity.

<sup>38</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 71-74.

<sup>39</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 89 - 93.

<sup>40</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 135 - 137.

<sup>41</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 135 - 137.

<sup>42</sup> Stebbins, *Between Work and Leisure: The Common Ground of Two Separate Worlds*, 58 - 63.

<sup>43</sup> Jack W Brehm, *A Theory of Psychological Reactance* (New York: Academic press, 1966), 1-5.

<sup>44</sup> Brehm, *A Theory of Psychological Reactance*, 37 -39.

<sup>45</sup> Richard S. Lazarus, *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*, vol. 445 (Springer, 1984), 22-27.

### c. The Psychological Benefits of Leisure

There are several different ways that leisure activities contribute to a positive impact on mental health and psychological well-being. Stress Reduction and Coping Strategies: Participation in leisure activities, such as exercise, listening to music, or painting, stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, which decreases stress and leads to relaxation.<sup>46</sup> Leisure activities also act as a coping strategy to enable individuals to manage well with their anxiety and depression well.

One's development is partly shaped by recreation, which has a pivotal role to fulfil. It may be possible for one to sustain one's identity and social affiliation by taking up activities that possess significance. Take, for instance, those individuals who identify as musicians, sportsmen, and writers. The activities they use to pass leisure time often yield much of one's sense of self-worth.<sup>47</sup>

Studies have established that engagement in mentally stimulating leisure activities, like learning new skills, puzzles, or chess, increases emotional resilience and cognitive functioning. Learning new skills, mentally stimulating activities, and new skills are also among them. Furthermore, leisure aids creative thinking, ultimately improving problem-solving skills.<sup>48</sup>

With the evolving nature of society today, the face of leisure activities keeps changing. In modern culture today, development has revolutionised how individuals engage in leisure activities. Besides offering new avenues for relaxation, digital leisure activities such as social media and video games also pose issues, including increased screen time and reduced physical activity. While there are studies that emphasise the positive impact of computer recreation on cognitive flexibility, there are also studies that warn against the danger of individuals getting addicted to it and becoming socially withdrawn.

### Interdisciplinary Integration of Biblical and Psychological View of Leisure

In theological literature and psychology literature alike, leisure as a diversified facet of the life of humankind occupies a vital place. The combination of biblical and psychological wisdom regarding leisure is such that it offers a thorough comprehension of why leisure is not merely a strategy of physical as well as psychological replenishment but a spiritual activity, too. The whole combination provides this.

### a. The Intersection of Theology and Psychology on Leisure

Psychological and religious conceptualisations of leisure activities recognise the value of leisure to human happiness. Within the framework of biblical thinking, leisure may be traced back to the concept of Sabbath rest, which views rest as a heavenly command and an essential rhythm of existence. According to the idea of the Sabbath, which is found in Genesis 2:2–3, rest is not simply the cessation of labour; instead, it is a holy labour of worship and repair.<sup>49</sup> On a theological level, leisure is seen as an opportunity to participate in God's established order, in which rest and pleasure are symbolic representations of God's plans for human existence.<sup>50</sup>

From a psychological perspective, leisure is characterised by its propensity to improve well-being, voluntariness, and intrinsic motivation. Developed by Deci and Ryan, the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposes that the most effective way to maximise mental health and life pleasure is to engage in leisure activities that satisfy the psychological demands of autonomy, competence, and relatedness.<sup>51</sup> The idea that rest is not only a physical state but a profound relational one with God and others is consistent with the biblical understanding discussed here.

At the junction of psychology and theology, there is a shared awareness that leisure is essential to individual and collective well-being. While psychology emphasises leisure's mental and emotional advantages, theology is more concerned with the religious and community aspects of leisure activities.

<sup>46</sup> Lazarus and Folkman, *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping*, 212 - 215.

<sup>47</sup> Stebbins, *Between Work and Leisure: The Common Ground of Two Separate Worlds*, 125 - 128.

<sup>48</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 178 -82.

<sup>49</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*.

<sup>50</sup> Marva J Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 28.

<sup>51</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 235-253.

They both advocate for a balance in which work, and rest complement one another, bringing prosperity to individuals and communities.<sup>52</sup>

### **b. Leisure as a Sacred and Psychological Practice**

The biblical concept of the Sabbath and the Christian practice of spiritual rest in a broader sense are the origins of leisure as a spiritual practice. On the Sabbath, one does not just refrain from working; instead, it is a deliberate practice that involves contemplating the kindness of God and participating in activities that revitalise oneself.<sup>53</sup> To halt or to rest is the meaning of the Hebrew word "Shabbat," which is the Hebrew term for the Sabbath. This word highlights the biblical requirement to find regular moments to relax.<sup>54</sup> Theologically speaking, leisure time may be a method of encountering the divine, finding spiritual refreshment, and expressing gratitude, as this approach emphasises.

The management of stress and the generation of good affect are two of which leisure activities contribute to mental and emotional wellness from a psychological standpoint. Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory demonstrates that highly engaging leisure activities produce a "flow" characterised by total participation and enjoyment. This, in turn, leads to increasing levels of life satisfaction and personal development.<sup>55</sup> This psychological insight agrees with the biblical concept that rest that is gratifying is not a result of inactivity but rather involves participation in activities that are beneficial to one's life.<sup>56</sup>

In addition, activities that constitute leisure time, such as praying, contemplating, and participating in activities with the congregation, bridge the gap between spiritual and psychological well-being. According to research, participating in religious leisure activities is associated with increased emotional stability, decreased stress levels, and increased social support.<sup>57</sup> These activities allow for psychological revitalisation and spiritual significance integration, resulting in holistic thriving.

### **c. Implications for Holistic Human Flourishing**

It is possible to unearth several implications for the fullness of human flourishing from the combination of biblical and psychological reflection on leisure across various academic disciplines. These implications may be obtained from the fact that there are multiple implications. Within their respective conceptual frameworks, both fields view thriving as the result of living a good, meaningful, and relationally satisfying life. On the other hand, religious concepts validate the inherent significance of rest as a symbol of divine favour, in contrast to the psychological view that emphasises the rehabilitative and formative worth of leisure time.<sup>58</sup>

1. Restoration of one's spirituality and affirmation of one's identity : In leisure activities, the Bible is an inspirational source, creating an atmosphere suitable for spiritual revitalisation and identity determination. Furthermore, the Sabbath commandment, which can be found in Exodus 20:8-11, helps to strengthen the identity of God's chosen people. This happens in addition to the fact that it mandates rest.<sup>59</sup> To continue in this line, research conducted in psychology reveals that activities that encourage self-expression and autonomy during leisure time are advantageous to developing a strong sense of self.<sup>60</sup> As a result, engaging in leisure activities in conjunction with spiritual interests has the potential to assist in the affirmation of one's identity and purpose.
2. Reducing Stress and Improving Emotional Regulation in the Individual. The leisure practice is an essential method of coping that assists in reducing stress and improving emotional control. According to a psychology study, engaging in leisure activities may help one relax and minimise

<sup>52</sup> Dorothy C Bass, *Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time* (Fortress Press, 2019), 42-46.

<sup>53</sup> Abraham Joshua. Heschel, *The Sabbath*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 18-22.

<sup>54</sup> Abraham Joshua. Heschel, *The Sabbath*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1951), 18-22.

<sup>55</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 91-95.

<sup>56</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, 91-95.

<sup>57</sup> Harold G. Koenig, *Faith and Mental Health: Religious Resources for Healing* (Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 103 - 107.

<sup>58</sup> Martin E P Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being* (Simon and Schuster, 2011), 32-36.

<sup>59</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014)54- 57.

<sup>60</sup> Deci and Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior*, 278 - 281.

the effects of chronic stress.<sup>61</sup> The invitation that may be found in Matthew 11:28 to "come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28) is a text that can be found in the Bible that symbolises the healing power of holy leisure. The incorporation of a variety of perspectives helps to foster the development of holistic approaches to mental health.

3. The development of healthy bonds between individuals and communities : Both psychology and theological studies recognise the socially interactive nature of leisure time. As stated in Acts 2:42-47, the biblical traditions strongly emphasise the necessity of communal worship and collective relaxation as essential elements of human connections because they are critical components. According to the psychology research findings, the idea that engaging in leisure activities that create opportunities for social connection is a sign of increased life satisfaction is confirmed by empirical research data.<sup>62</sup> In light of this dual perspective, the relevance of leisure activities as a means of establishing relationships and contributing to the general well-being of communities is brought into focus.

The worries concerning society's values and the biblical and psychological viewpoints on leisure also have ethical ramifications for contemporary culture, a crucial cultural point to keep in mind. Due to excessive employment and consumerist leisure, dignity and social fairness would probably be eroded. To confront religious objections to workaholicism, which are built on the concept of the Sabbath, it is necessary to provide a countercultural affirmation of simplicity and rest. Seventeen studies in psychology have shed light on the potentially detrimental effects that work-related stress may have on an individual's health and have urged the implementation of leisure habits that promote health and well-being.<sup>63</sup> The adoption of these findings has the potential to influence not just public policy but also personal actions that prioritise the health and happiness of people over productivity.

## Discussion Summary

The study can be summarised as follows:

1. The biblical origin of leisure, taken from the commandment of the Sabbath, emphasises the divine intention of leisure to grant human beings rest, refreshment, and spiritual communion. The resting of God on the seventh day is a model for humanity, a lesson emphasising the significance of leisure time as part of an equitable way of living.
2. Due to its ability to melt tension, facilitate emotional strength, and aid in developing mental and imaginative skills, leisure is an indispensable component of mental well-being. Flow Theory and Self-Determination Theory are two psychological concepts that prove their role in personal satisfaction.
3. Recreation is portrayed in religious imagination not as idleness but as a holy time that enriches the spiritual reflection and worship moments so that they become more significant. It does this by coordinating human action with divine purpose, thus vindicating a general feeling of well-being.
4. Leisure is most important in making humans thrive, which enables a person to have a satisfying life by supplying appropriate proportions of work, rest, and religious interests. Both the theological and psychological perspectives endorse this belief.
5. Both the Bible and psychological research place great significance on leisure time in developing and maintaining social relationships. The importance of shared leisure, which psychology now recognises as a central aspect of social well-being, is reflected in the festivals, feasts, and celebrations found in the Bible.
6. Because of the pervasiveness of a consumerist and workaholic culture, leisure time must be reclaimed as a positive activity rather than merely one devoted to pleasure. Psychological or scriptural instruction does not condone overwork but instead promotes self-restorative recreations.

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<sup>61</sup> Harold G. Koenig, *Faith and Mental Health: Religious Resources for Healing* (Templeton Foundation Press, 2005), 103 - 107.

<sup>62</sup> Koenig, *Faith and Mental Health: Religious Resources for Healing*, 155 - 159.

<sup>63</sup> Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness and Well-Being*.

7. When one spends some time playing and relaxing, he can redirect his attention back to others, himself, and God. That this creates room for personal development, healing, and spiritual growth indicates that its worth is more than something as trivial as a form of recreation.
8. In the Bible, the Sabbath is centred on a harmonious life that includes work and enjoyment so that rest is not compromised at the expense of greater productivity. Planned recreation has also attracted the attention of psychology as an intervention that can heal burnout and stress.
9. Engaging in recreational activities with full awareness is a sacred act that fosters one's spirituality and elevates one's relationship with God. A person's religious and emotional status can be enhanced through meditation, prayer, and contemplation.
10. The research results suggest that leisure can be re-evaluated from psychological and theological perspectives. As the essential component of holistic living, leisure time must be embraced by individuals, employers, and the church. This means promoting personal actions towards balanced living.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Biblical Strategies for Rest**

**Sabbath Observance:** Following the weekly cycle of Sabbath rest (Exodus 20:8–11) lets people stop working and spend time in worship, reflection, and communication with God. This planned break shows faith in God's care and brings back spiritual energy. The Sabbath is not just a day off from work; it is also a time to focus on God, family, and community. It makes time sacred by affirming that one's identity belongs to God and not to the needs of productivity. In this manner, keeping the Sabbath becomes a countercultural act of faith that fights against workaholicism and materialism and brings life back to its totality.

**Participation in Festivals and Sacred Celebrations**— Like the feasts of Israel in the Bible (Leviticus 23), regular gatherings of worship, thanks, and community life bring back joy. These divine rhythms save life from becoming boring and repetitive, and they encourage full rebirth. Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles were all meant to remember God's actions in history and to bring people together and make them spiritually strong. Participating in communal festivities today can remind us of God's faithfulness, help us feel more connected to our culture, and provide us with chances to be happy, welcome others, and remember things together as the body of Christ.

Jesus invites us to come to Him for rest in Matthew 11:28–30. Christians are advised to do this through prayer, meditation, and reading the Bible. This spiritual practice helps you find serenity within yourself, restores your soul, and gives you real relaxation that goes beyond just stopping work. Contemplative practices enable believers to encounter God's presence, recontextualise life's obstacles, and foster resilience. The rhythms of silence, seclusion, and meditation on God's Word are strong ways to let go of anxiousness and get your spiritual balance back. Practices like this change rest from being only physical to being deeply life-changing and healing.

**Practising Hospitality and Community Fellowship** – The Bible talks of feasting, hospitality, and companionship as ways to heal (Luke 7:34; Acts 2:42–47). Eating together, worshipping together, and spending time together are all good for your spiritual and mental health. They provide you time to relax and recharge as a group. By welcoming others into our homes and lives, hospitality turns everyday time into sacred space. This is like how God welcomes us into Christ. Being part of a community helps people carry each other's problems, gives them hope, and makes them happy by sharing experiences. In this sense, rest is not just something that people do alone, but also something that brings people together and makes society and the church stronger.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the theological and psychological dimensions of leisure to demonstrate its importance for human flourishing, spiritual renewal, and mental well-being. The research has shown, via an analysis of biblical foundations, theological traditions, and psychological theories, that

leisure is not a mere distraction from obligations, but a sacred and restorative pursuit rooted in divine purpose.

Theologically, the Sabbath, sacred festivals, prayer, and communion create rhythms of rest that reflect God's purpose for humanity. Leisure psychologically enhances resilience, identity development, emotional equilibrium, and social connectivity. The combination of these principles reveals leisure as a holistic activity that affirms both the *imago Dei* and the human need for rejuvenation.

This study concludes that leisure should be re-established as a fundamental aspect of Christian discipleship and pastoral practice. Disregarding rest undermines God's design for humanity, whilst embracing it signifies an acceptance of God's gift of wholeness. For the church, this is intentionally creating space for rest, celebration, and fellowship that reveres God. In psychology, it denotes recognising the spiritual dimension of leisure as an essential component of human well-being.

This study enriches academic discourse by merging theology and psychology in the analysis of leisure, offering an interdisciplinary framework that can impact spiritual life, pastoral care, and mental health practice. Leisure is not merely an option; it is a necessity—an embodiment of divine grace and human flourishing that remains significant for Christians today.

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