

# Blog 1

## Why Productivity Is Exhausting Us, and What the “Work Beneath the Work” Reveals?

Work can feel good. Finishing a project, closing the loop, crossing a finish line, getting the room cleaned, pulling off an event, there is a deep satisfaction in effort that lands somewhere inside the body as relief and pride at the same time. That “good tired” carries a quiet dignity because it comes after something meaningful. The ache makes sense.

Yet something has shifted in the modern experience of work. Plenty of people still work hard, but the tiredness no longer feels clean. It feels sticky. The day ends, but the mind keeps running. The weekend arrives, but the heart stays braced. Even a vacation can become a slow detox from a pace that has been normal for too long.

That is why it is not surprising to hear how widespread depletion has become. The book points to a workforce stretched thin, with “two-thirds of employees reporting they are overwhelmed,” and many describing emotional drain, stress, and an inability to truly shut off work even during downtime. The question is not whether people are tired. The question is why the tiredness feels so total.

A helpful answer appears in a phrase that refuses to let the problem stay on the surface: the issue is not only the work, but the *work underneath the work*.

### The Hidden Engine Behind Exhaustion

Two people can do the same job with similar hours and similar pressure, but one person ends the day with a stable sense of self, while the other ends the day feeling hollow, anxious, or strangely ashamed. That difference is rarely explained by workload alone.

The book frames this difference as an inner drive beneath the visible tasks, what motivates the work and what the work is secretly trying to achieve. Abraham Kuyper is referenced for naming that “underneath” dynamic in human work, and Dr. Timothy Keller is cited for giving it language many people immediately recognise: “the work underneath the work.”

Under that layer, work is no longer just work. Work becomes a strategy.

A strategy to earn approval.

A strategy to hold identity together.

A strategy to feel control.

A strategy to outrun insecurity.

A strategy to escape other realities.

When work becomes a strategy for the soul, it stops being a simple effort-and-rest rhythm. It becomes a constant negotiation with fear and desire. That is why productivity can feel exhausting even when life looks “successful.”

### **When Work Turns Into Identity**

A quick cultural snapshot explains the pressure. In older societies, a person was known by place or family line. Today, introductions often move quickly toward a single question: “What do you do?”

That question is not evil. It is a window into how the modern world sorts people. Titles and output become shorthand for belonging. Over time, it becomes easy to feel that work is not simply what happens during the day, but what makes a person count.

The problem with that arrangement is weight. Identity is heavy. Work “cannot bear the freight” of being asked to prove worth. Once work becomes the defining feature of the self, every email, metric, criticism, delay, rejection, or setback stops being a normal part of life and starts feeling like a verdict.

That pressure shows up in small, everyday ways. The book uses the example of lawn work as a kind of “tangible proof” that something was accomplished, lines in the grass that can be seen, while much of human work is slow, relational, and harder to measure. Many people live inside that ache: the desire to *see* evidence of value.

When identity sits underneath the work, productivity is never “just helpful.” It becomes personal. That is why rest can start to feel undeserved, unsafe, or lazy.

### **When Work Turns Into Control**

The second layer underneath the work is control. The book describes how weekend tasks can feel attractive because they create a sense of control, something concrete that can be managed.

For many people, work becomes the one reliable lever in life. Family, health, relationships, uncertainty, culture, and economics can feel ungovernable. Work becomes the area where effort produces predictable results. At least, it feels that way.

That illusion matters. Because when that one “controllable” area becomes shaky, when plans fail, outcomes stall, influence fades, or authority is questioned, the nervous system responds like a ship in a storm. The book notes how the “loss of control can be disorienting,” and how chasing the illusion again can become elusive and contribute to burnout.

At that point, productivity is no longer about excellence. It is about anxiety management.

The calendar fills because open space feels like danger. The mind keeps rehearsing because uncertainty feels like threat. Rest becomes difficult, not because the body cannot stop, but because the heart

believes it must not.

## When Work Turns Into Insecurity

The third layer is insecurity: the quiet fear that worth is fragile and must be defended. The book describes a moment where a mentor delivers a line that reorders the inner world: “Christians always mix up their justification and their sanctification.”

The implication is simple and sharp. When security comes from performance, the soul becomes needy. Progress becomes proof. Productivity becomes a way to stay safe.

That is why approval and achievement become exhausting. They are never settled. They can lift someone for a moment, then demand more the next day.

The book pushes the logic even further: when identity is tied to performance or approval, rest and peace become bound to the same things. Approval gets to decide whether rest is allowed. Performance gets to decide whether the mind can settle.

This is how people end up both overworking *and* under-resting, even when the schedule suggests “free time.” The body is present at dinner, but the mind is still trying to earn something. The person is home, but the soul is still clocked in.

## Why Blaming Ambition Misses the Point

A common reaction is to blame ambition. Some people assume the cure is to become less driven, less committed, less invested. But the book refuses that simplistic move. It argues the deeper issue is not ambition itself, but what is powering ambition, the story underneath the work.

In fact, the book’s theology insists that ambition and calling do not need to be erased to find rest. God’s work is wide-reaching, and the problem is not meaningful effort. The problem is when meaningful effort is driven by approval-hunger, identity panic, or control addiction instead of grace and grounded purpose.

That distinction matters, because it means the goal is not to become passive. The goal is to become free.

## A Quick Diagnostic: What Is the Work Trying to Earn?

A practical way to apply this idea is to ask one direct question:

**What is work secretly trying to earn right now?**

Approval from specific people?

A sense of identity that feels solid?

Control in a life that feels uncertain?

Escape from pain, loneliness, disappointment, or fear?

That question is not meant to shame. It is meant to locate the engine.

Because once the engine is exposed, the pressure starts to make sense. Exhaustion stops feeling mysterious. The “always on” feeling becomes explainable. The cycle is no longer random. It has a logic.

The book’s framing also removes a damaging misunderstanding: work is good, but it makes a terrible god. When work becomes the place where salvation is attempted, where identity, security, and control are chased, work becomes heavier than it was ever designed to be.

### **A Simple Reset That Can Start Today**

A full healing process takes time, but one small step can begin shifting the pattern: name the motive underneath the work before the day ends.

Take five minutes and write one sentence:

**“The thing I have been trying to earn through work lately is \_\_\_\_.”**

Then write a second sentence that tells the truth without drama:

**“Work cannot carry that weight.”**

That is not the end of the journey. It is the beginning of clarity. And clarity is one of the first forms of rest.

Because once the “work underneath the work” is brought into the light, productivity stops being a life-or-death arena. Work can return to its proper place: meaningful, imperfect, human, and finally... something that can be set down.

## Blog 2

## Burnout or Spiritual Testing? How to Discern What Your Weariness Is Really Telling You

“Burnout” has become the modern umbrella word for almost any kind of tired. Some days it means someone is sick of routine. Other days it means someone feels emotionally numb, spiritually dry, and unable to keep going. The challenge is that the same label gets used for very different experiences, and that can lead to rushed decisions that do not match what is actually happening. The manuscript makes a blunt observation: **“burnout” is not a word found in the Bible**, yet the feelings people attach to it are real, and worth examining carefully.

A premature burnout diagnosis can work like a switch. Once the word lands, the conclusion feels final: “Done. Walk away. Scrap it.” The book describes that mindset as dangerous because it can give people permission to quit based on a word being used too broadly, or even irresponsibly. The more helpful approach is slower and more honest: identify what is going on *before* deciding how to respond.

### **The First Step: Name the Kind of Tired**

Not all weariness comes from the same source. Sometimes fatigue is physical and medical. Sometimes it is emotional depletion built up over months. Sometimes it is the weight of conflict. Sometimes it is grief. Sometimes it is spiritual dryness. Sometimes it is a mix of all of it.

The manuscript makes room for that complexity. It notes that when a person is experiencing consistent physiological symptoms affecting sleep, appetite, and desire, a doctor is an appropriate next step. That sentence matters because spiritual language should never be used to ignore real physical red flags. Discernment includes wisdom, not denial.

At the same time, the book challenges the habit of calling everything “burnout” before asking better questions. When someone feels depleted, the more accurate question might be the one Alex’s parents asked him: **“Are you burned out or are you hurt?”**

That question opens a door.

Hurt needs healing.

Depletion needs replenishment.

Fear needs reassurance.

Overload needs boundaries.

Burnout might be present, but it might not be the whole story.

## A Story That Mirrors Real Life

Alex's situation does not start with laziness or a lack of discipline. His life becomes heavier in a way

many people recognise: a high-pressure season at work, serious relational strain, leadership conflict, and a looming family transition. Under board scrutiny, staff division, and the stress of a baby and a new home, Alex starts running out of fuel.

He tells friends what is happening. They want to support him, so they call it burnout and advise him to walk away. The book does not paint those friends as villains. It simply shows how easy it is to label pain quickly, especially when someone is crying and overwhelmed, and how tempting it is to choose the simplest explanation.

Yet his parents slow things down. They listen. Then they introduce a better diagnosis process.

## **The Pivot: “Burnout” Might Be a Signal, Not a Sentence**

One of the book’s central arguments is that what people call burnout may sometimes be something else in disguise: **a form of testing**, not as punishment, but as strengthening.

It reframes the experience in a striking way: what feels like an attack from circumstances might instead be a test that gets attention and reveals what is actually going on beneath the surface.

This does not deny that burnout exists. The manuscript explicitly says burnout can happen. The distinction is that the label should not end the conversation. It should start one.

### **“Every Call Is Tested”: A Lens for Discernment**

The book includes a formative line shared by a pastor that becomes a guiding principle: **“Every call is tested.”**

That statement is not meant to romanticise suffering. It is meant to normalise the reality that good things often face pressure. Callings get tested. Marriages get tested. Integrity gets tested. Faithfulness gets tested. The book even expands it: “Everything good gets tested.”

Testing, in the manuscript’s framing, often shows up in vulnerable moments. Yet the purpose is not humiliation. God does not test to showcase failure; God tests so a person can see His faithfulness.

That changes the emotional posture of discernment. Instead of asking, “How do I escape this as fast as possible?” the question becomes, “What is being revealed here, and what kind of faithfulness is being formed?”

### **Burnout Talk Can Be Too Flat for a Complex Soul**

A major warning in the book is the way burnout language can flatten reality. The manuscript notes how broadly the term is used, sometimes for minor frustration, sometimes for something truly serious, and how, in professional contexts, it can land like a “death sentence.”

That is why it describes burnout as functioning like a toggle switch: either “burned out” or “not burned out,” with no middle ground.

The book offers a better image: not a switch, but a dimmer. A person can be depleted and vulnerable without being finished. That framing protects people from making permanent decisions during temporary depletion.

## **A Practical Discernment Checklist**

The manuscript does not present a shallow three-step fix. It openly states the goal is not to define burnout or prescribe quick solutions, but to cast a vision of a life that remains ambitious while being rooted in rest.

Still, discernment needs handles. Here is a grounded way to start.

### **1) Check the body before spiritualising everything**

If sleep, appetite, and desire are consistently disrupted, take that seriously and seek medical support.

### **2) Ask the “hurt vs. burnout” question**

Hurt can look like burnout on the outside. The question Alex’s parents asked is a strong diagnostic tool: “Are you burned out or are you hurt?”

### **3) Identify what is being tested**

If “every call is tested,” then pressure does not automatically mean the calling is wrong. Pressure might reveal an unhealthy way of carrying the calling.

### **4) Watch out for reaction decisions**

The manuscript describes two poor paths: staying to prove something, or leaving out of fear and bitterness. Both are reactions, not discernment.

### **5) Look underneath the label**

Alex’s story raises the deeper question: was the ministry itself the drain, or was his way of being in ministry draining life out of him?

That question leads to the inner work that lasts.

## **Testing Does Not Mean Being Alone**

The manuscript grounds testing in Scripture. It references God testing Abraham, Israel, and Jesus, each time revealing God’s faithfulness. It also references Peter being sifted, and how Jesus’ response was not abandonment but prayer and restoration.

Paul’s words are included as a raw model of how spiritual testing can feel: pressure beyond ability, despair, and the sense of a “sentence of death,” followed by a renewed reliance on God. The point is not to glamorise suffering. The point is to show that exhaustion is not always evidence of failure. Sometimes it is the moment the soul learns it cannot run on itself.

## **What Weariness Might Be Trying to Teach**

Weariness can carry a message.

It might be saying the body needs care.

It might be saying hurt needs attention.

It might be saying a calling is being tested.

It might be saying the way the calling is being carried must change.

The danger is rushing to a single word and treating it like a final verdict. The healthier approach is discernment: slow enough to name what is real, honest enough to seek help when needed, and faithful enough to believe testing is not designed to break a person, but to strengthen them for what is ahead.

# Blog 3

## Sabbath as Resistance: How Rest Becomes a Countercultural Act in an Overdriven World

Modern life rarely needs to *command* people to stay busy. Pressure does that work quietly. Calendars fill themselves. Notifications hum in the background. Expectations multiply without asking permission. Even days off can become performance spaces, packed with improvement projects, social obligations, and self-imposed standards for how rest should look.

Against that backdrop, the idea of Sabbath sounds almost naïve. One full day set apart. No productivity goals. No catching up. No optimization. Just rest, enjoyment, and presence. Yet the book frames Sabbath not as retreat or laziness, but as something far more provocative: **an act of resistance**.

### Why Rest Feels So Hard Now

Many people assume they struggle with rest because they are bad at it. The manuscript suggests something more unsettling: rest feels difficult because modern systems quietly train people *not* to rest. The problem is not a lack of discipline, but a deep cultural rhythm that treats output as identity and busyness as virtue.

The text captures this tension clearly: “A busy heart abhors an open spot on the calendar.” Silence feels suspicious. Margin feels wasteful. White space feels like risk.

That reaction reveals something important. If rest feels threatening, it may be because rest interrupts the *work underneath the work*, the inner drive that needs to stay active in order to feel secure.

Sabbath directly challenges that drive.

### The Original Shock of Sabbath

In the ancient world, Sabbath was not a spiritual accessory. It was an economic and cultural anomaly. Agricultural societies survived by maximizing labor. Crops waited for no one. Livestock required constant care. Yet Israel was commanded to stop one day every seven.

That practice made them visibly different. While surrounding nations worked without pause, Israel rested, and trusted that provision did not depend solely on endless effort. The book names the result boldly: they were invited to become **“the most well-rested people in the world.”**

Sabbath, from the beginning, was a declaration. It said something about God. It said something about power. It said something about trust.

And that declaration still carries weight.

### How Rest Became Complicated

Over time, Sabbath drifted from gift to burden. Rules multiplied. Boundaries tightened. By the time

Jesus entered the scene, the day meant to restore people often exhausted them further. The manuscript recounts how religious leaders objected even to disciples eating grain or to healing on the Sabbath, turning rest into surveillance.

Jesus' response was not subtle. He did not abolish Sabbath. He reclaimed it. When He said, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath," He was declaring authority over rest itself.

In other words, Sabbath was never meant to be a test of rule-keeping. It was meant to be a way of life shaped by trust, enjoyment, and freedom.

### **Why Sabbath Is Resistance Today**

Calling Sabbath "resistance" may sound dramatic, but the book makes the case carefully. Sabbath resists several powerful cultural forces at once.

It resists the idea that worth must be earned daily. It resists the belief that stopping will cause everything to fall apart.

It resists the illusion that control comes from constant engagement.

It resists the pressure to document, optimize, and monetize every moment.

Choosing not to work, even briefly, exposes the lie that life is held together by human effort alone. That exposure can feel uncomfortable, even frightening, because it reveals how much meaning has been attached to productivity.

Sabbath gently but firmly says: *the world will keep turning without you.*

That truth is not diminishing. It is freeing.

### **Ceasing, Not Switching**

One of the book's sharpest insights is the difference between ceasing and switching. Many people think they are resting when they are simply redirecting effort, moving from paid work to personal projects, from professional pressure to social performance, from obligation to curated leisure.

Sabbath is different. It is not about doing different work. It is about *not working*.

That distinction matters because switching activities still keeps the engine running. Ceasing turns it off.

True rest requires learning to be present without producing, valuable without achieving, and loved without proving.

### **Enjoyment as a Spiritual Discipline**

The manuscript emphasizes enjoyment as central to Sabbath. God's rest after creation was not exhaustion; it was delight. God paused to enjoy what had been made and called it "very good."

Enjoyment, in this sense, is not indulgence. It is attentiveness. It is receiving the moment instead of managing it. The book describes true enjoyment as “enjoying the life you have, in the life you have, in the place you have it.”

That kind of enjoyment resists the constant pull toward elsewhere and later. It anchors a person in the present, where rest actually happens.

### **Why Sabbath Exposes the Heart**

Sabbath does not simply refresh. It reveals. When work stops, the inner narratives become louder. Anxiety surfaces. Guilt appears. Fear whispers. The mind looks for something to fix, improve, or control.

That discomfort is not failure. It is information.

The book repeatedly shows that Sabbath confronts the *work underneath the work*, the need for approval, identity, control, or escape. When those motives are named, rest becomes possible at a deeper level.

In that sense, Sabbath is not passive. It is honest.

### **Practicing Resistance in Small Ways**

Sabbath does not begin with perfection. It begins with intention. The manuscript encourages practices that are simple but disruptive to unhealthy rhythms:

Leaving open space on the calendar without filling it. Choosing presence over productivity for a set period. Refusing to measure the day by output. Ending the day with gratitude instead of evaluation.

These practices may look small, but they retrain the heart.

### **Rest That Strengthens Ambition**

Perhaps the most counterintuitive claim in the book is that Sabbath does not weaken ambition. It strengthens it. Rested people do not abandon purpose; they carry it more lightly. Ambition rooted in rest becomes sustainable instead of frantic.

The manuscript holds these two truths together: God has great ambitions for people, and those ambitions were never meant to run on exhaustion.

Sabbath, then, is not withdrawal from meaningful life. It is alignment with it.

### **Choosing a Different Way**

In a culture that celebrates constant motion, choosing rest is a quiet rebellion. It says no to the idea that value must always be proven. It says no to fear-driven productivity. It says no to the lie that stopping equals failure.

Sabbath is resistance because it re-centers life around trust instead of pressure, enjoyment instead of

striving, and grace instead of performance.

And in a restless world, that resistance may be one of the most powerful acts a person can practice.