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WHAT I DID ON MY SABBATICATION

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For the second time in my 35 years at IPC the congregation has given me an extra two months off as a sabbatical, which when added to the regular one month of vacation time, meant I was away for three months in 2021. I am grateful, extremely grateful, for the time allotted.

I hesitate to talk about myself. However, there seems to be some interest in what all I did. So let me explain. Sabbatical time is working time. After nearly 40 years of ordained ministry, I have accumulated a lot of “stuff” which in a permanent written form might be useful to our congregation and the broader church. I pray daily that I will not attempt to reduce to writing anything that others have already done or can do more effectively than I am able. There is no sense in reinventing the wheel or building a wheel inferior to those already built or in the process of being built. Most of what I have published over the years has been written because I saw a void that needed to be filled (see especially *The Family Worship Book*, *Leading in Worship*, *Worshipping with Calvin*, *The Identity and Attributes of God*, *The Christian Sabbath*, *Catechizing Our Children*, etc.).

So what did I do during my two months of sabbatical? Granted that such an article will generate the excitement of a “what I did during my summer vacation” school paper, here is my accounting for my sabbatication.

Writing

I did a lot of writing. A lot. Let me separate my work into three categories.

Works published

Final editing was done on the following books and articles, each of which was published in 2021.

Books:

1. *Leading in Worship* (published in Spanish Feb. 28)
2. *Westminster Confession of Faith for Study classes*

(published in Chinese May 18)

3. *The Christian Sabbath* (published by Banner of Truth Trust June 14)

4. *Westminster Confession of Faith for Study classes* (published in Spanish July 2)

5. *Understanding Family Worship: Its History, Theology, and Practice* (Christian Focus Publications, published December 7, 2021)

Articles:

6. “Leading in Public Prayer,” article in *New Horizons Magazine* (published June 2021)

7. “Worship at General Assembly: What We Want” posted article on *The Aquila Report* (published July 16, 2021)

8. “Yes, Scripture Reading Really Does Change People,” article in *9Marks Journal* (published July 26, 2021)

9. “What is ‘the Name’?” article for *Reformation 21* (published October 13, 2021)

10. “The Blessedness of God,” article for *Banner of Truth* magazine (published November 2021)

11. Two blog posts for Christian Focus promoting the new book, *Understanding Family Worship*, entitled “Why Should We Have Family Worship,” and “How to Do Family Worship” (anticipated early 2022)

Works approved for publication

Final writing and editing was done on the following, now at the publisher and soon to be published:

Books:

12. *Who Needs the Church* (Christian Focus Publications, anticipated June 2022)

13. *Expositions on the Gospel of John* (Reformation Heritage Books, anticipated Summer 2022)

14. *Excellencies of God* (Reformation Heritage Books, anticipated August 2022)

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15. *Expositions of Acts of the Apostles* (P & R Publishing, anticipated 2024)

16. *Who Am I*, Portuguese edition, anticipated 2022.

Articles:

17. "Love, Justice, and Wrath," *Tabletalk* (submitted December 2021)

18. "Catholicity and Intergenerational Worship," *Gloria Deo Journal of Theology*, Spring 2022

Works for which publishers will be sought

19. *Inquirers' Class* material (wrote and rewrote the entire class content)

20. *Westminster Confession of Faith for Study Classes* (revised and expanded, English version)

21. *The Pastor's Public Ministry* (Evangelical Press *pending, revised and updated)

All totaled, of what was written, prepared, or published in English, this equals 3,800 plus pages written, edited, or revised in 2021. I wore out several blue Bic pens. The careful reader will note that four books are scheduled to be published in English in 2022. This volume of work would not have been possible without the sabbatical.

Travel

Is that all we did? Why no. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, as the English say. Emily and I made this a special year for special trips: four days in January in Bluffton, three days in February at Ponte Vedra, a week in March at Newport Beach to meet Nora Johnson, a week in April in Hilton Head, a week in May at North Litchfield Beach, SC, two weeks in June in Boone, NC, a return to Newport Beach for a week in July with the whole Johnson extended family, a week with Sally in Chicago in September, and a return to Boone for two weeks in October. All told, we were off for 13 weeks or 3 full months, two for sabbatical and one for vacation. Our basic pattern for all 13 weeks was read, study, write until late morning, eat lunch, and play for the rest of the day. Part of our leisure was reading, so I read... alot.

Reading

I read a number of "devotional" books in connection with my morning prayers:

- J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*
- Richard Alleine, *The World Conquered by the Faithful Christian*
- Thomas Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*
- J. I. Packer, *Rediscovering Holiness*

- Thomas Goodwin, *The Heart of Christ*
- Edward Pearce, *The Great Concern*
- Thomas Watson, *The Beatitudes*
- Amy Carmichael, *If: What Do I Know of Calvary Love*
- John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*
- John Brown, *Godly Prayer and Its Answers*
- C. H. Spurgeon, *Cheque Book in the Bank of Faith*

I also read a number of histories and/or biographies:

- Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals*
- Michael Green, *Thirty Years that Changed the World*
- Stephen Nichols, R. C. Sproul: *A Life*
- Voddie Baucham, *Fault Lines*
- Daniel Brown, *The Boys in the Boat*
- Tom Holland, *Dominion*
- Elizabeth Passarella, *Good Apple: Tales of a Southern Evangelical in New York*
- Ellen Vaughn, *Becoming Elisabeth Elliot*
- Rodney Stark, *How the West Won*
- Sean McMeekin, *Stalin's War*
- Michael Winship, *Hot Protestants: A History of Puritanism in England and America*
- James Hornfisher, *The Last of the Tin Can Sailors*
- James Hornfisher, *Ship of Ghosts: The Story of the USS Houston, FDR's Legendary Lost Cruiser, and the Epic Saga of Her Survivors*
- John Piper, *Contending for Our All*
- John Piper, *The Hidden Smile of God*
- John Piper, *The Roots of Endurance*
- John Piper, *The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*

Finally, in keeping with my general disinterest in fiction, I read one – Somerset Maugham, *The Painted Veil*.

Speaking

Covid continued to limit the number of uncanceled conferences. I preached or lectured outside of IPC just twice.

- In September, while visiting Sally and family in Chicago, I zipped over to Boise to speak twice at the local Reformation conference on the subject of worship.
- In November, I delivered a paper to the Evangelical Theological Society on "Catholicity and Intergenerational Worship."

As you can see, sabbatical time was indeed working time. Hopefully this labor will bear fruit for the kingdom of Christ, and my labor will prove not to have been in vain. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this work.