

## Preparation for G89 – Creative Idleness

*“If Sisyphus had only found the time for some creative power lounging, he might have ended his pattern of self-destructive behavior and discovered that some stones are best left unturned.”*

-- Gregg Levoy, “Creative Idleness,” Hemispheres, November 1994

***If you’re too busy—or too idle :>)—to read all of the preparation, here’s the short version:***

“Creative Idleness” is about taking extended periods of time just to sit back and relax, and to reacquaint ourselves with a nonbusy mode of living and nonwork forms of expression. ***Now skip to the exercises at the end.***

***For those of you who want more:***

“Idle hands are the Devil’s playground.” Thank goodness we don’t think like that any more. Or do we? We may not believe in the Devil, but what’s behind our constant busyness and working? Other kinds of devils—hard-driving employers, workaholism, financial insecurities, fear of boredom...there are lots of reasons, and some are good. But think about the words of writer Gregg Levoy:

“I used to think of Sisyphus as sort of a patron saint of workaholics...Lately, though, I feel I have been overlooking the true instruction of Sisyphus’ life, which is that each time his great grindstone rolls to the bottom of the mountain, he is granted a rest while he walks back down to retrieve it. Though he must work for all time, according to the myth, he does not work all the time.”

UU minister Rev. Cathleen Cook, says that the “right” model for living is not “action-action-action”—which she compares to “breathe out, breathe out, breathe out” with no chance to breathe in—but “action-reflection,” which gives us time to understand our actions (and others’), to integrate and learn from our experiences, and to rest in preparation for the next action.

Gregg goes on to write about taking a four-month sabbatical. “I needed distance from what was pressing in on me so that I could find a penetrating quiet inside myself. And I needed to hold that silence up to my ears, like an empty shell, and listen to the roar of my own life. I needed time to reacquaint myself with some nonwork modes of expression, and some friends; to open myself to some of the things that gave me joy as a child; to savor the benediction of play; to read a novel again; to await further instructions.”

***Exercise 1: Take an imaginary sabbatical***

What if you could just step off the roller coaster for a couple of months? Not a vacation, but a real sabbatical, which obviously comes from the same root as “Sabbath.” How would you rest and refresh yourself? What would you reflect on? What creative energies would you renew or release? Where would you go to do this?

***Exercise 2: Downsize that sabbatical***

Could you do any part of your imaginary sabbatical in just a day or a weekend? Could you cancel weekend chores, take the phone off the hook, send the kids to a relative’s, or whatever it takes to give yourself some of the rest and renewal you imagined? **We lovingly dare you to try it!**