



# Sabbath

*Slowing down to create space for resting  
in God and His grace.*

## **What is the Sabbath?**

The Sabbath is a 24-hour period of rest and refraining from work commanded by God in His Word (Exodus 20:8-11). It is a reminder to us, as finite creatures, that we are not called to hold everything together or keep the earth spinning. That is God's business. We are limited. The Sabbath is a reminder, but also a celebration, that we are not God.

The Sabbath starts with God. God calls us to a state of peace so we may experience Him. Sabbath, he calls it. Rest is the culmination of all His creative work. It's the natural celebration of completion that God Himself modeled for us (Genesis 2:2-3).

The Sabbath is about rest. We long to be whole and complete, both individually and communally. We want to experience deep connection with God and others, as well as a break from the challenges of life. When we don't get the rest we need, the rest we were created for, we become depressed, frustrated, quarrelsome, discontent and isolated. We pull away from God, from our community, from our family and friends.

God has more for us. He wants more for us. He has richness and life and purpose at hand, ready to pour out on us. And all he wants you to do to experience it is...*nothing*. He is calling us into his rest, so we can lay down our work for a day and enjoy Him.

## Helpful Tools and Tips

### **REPENT:**

Repent from how you've tried to be God in your life and hold your world together. The first step has to be a heart level change. We can't just say - "ok, let me try this sabbath thing." We have to first acknowledge how we have tried to be God, asking for His forgiveness and help in renewing our hearts.

### **EAGERLY SEEK REST:**

Don't be proud of business. There's no virtue in never resting. It's foolish and arrogant to be a person who constantly works and ignores God's design. To pursue rest is to acknowledge your own human limitations as well as the higher purpose God has for your life. If you are too proud for rest, then you cannot be intimate with God.

You also have to know yourself. We recommend a healthy balance of time with people and away from people.

### **MAKE A PLAN:**

Put the Sabbath on your calendar. If you don't schedule it, it won't happen. For many of us, we can't take a sabbath because we aren't working hard enough the rest of the week. Taking a full 24-hours to rest and celebrate God and others means we have to plan it and plan around it.

Plan *when* to Sabbath, but also plan *how* to Sabbath. No matter what day of the week is your Sabbath day, have a repeatable, predictable set of activities. This helps reduce the mental load of having to worry about what to do. Options include taking a nap, reading a book, going for a walk or having a great meal with friends or family. We would recommend the concept of *pleasure-stacking*. Try to find things that bring you life, and do a bunch of them on the same day together. Enjoy reading, steak, wine, a cigar, and a campfire? Do all of that at the same time, letting your heart give gratitude to God for His good gifts.

### **SET DOWN YOUR WORK:**

Don't do your day job on your Sabbath. If you have a 9-to-5, this means not answering email, or checking in on things. If you are self-employed, it's setting down the life-swallowing details long enough to think. If ministry is a dominant theme of your life, either vocationally or not, your sabbath should be an opportunity to be ministered to. If your day job is parenting and administering a home, find ways to get a break

from the daily grind. Maybe it's pre-made meals or letting your spouse find recreation through meal preparation, or just ordering a pizza. Moms and dads need rest too, as much as it can be found in the crush of early parenthood.

**SET DOWN YOUR CARES:**

This isn't easy. You stop working and you start feeling, and thinking and sweating over all the struggles and anxieties of life. Often we don't slow down because we are afraid of what will happen if we do. When you rest and you feel the clutching feeling in your chest, that is the moment to seek Jesus. Cast your cares on Him for He cares for you.

# PRACTICES

## **Practice #1 - PLAN YOUR SABBATH**

The goal of this practice is simply to set aside some period of time for delight in God, rest, feasting, and worship. Begin by asking yourself the question, "What would I do for a 24 hour period of time if the only criteria was to pursue my deepest joy in God?" Be patient with God, yourself, and others - this is going to take time to resist opposing forces and learn to surrender yourself to delight!

We have found it helpful to think through different categories where God might be inviting you to rest in His presence. For each category, write down one or two things you could do on your sabbath to rest in God.

\*Note: Don't let the word "rest" trick you. Sometimes the most restful things we can do are actually active and engaging, but they bring us a deeper rest in body and soul.

### **Spiritual Rest:**

(ex: Bible reading, prayer walk, journaling, worship music)

### **Physical Rest:**

(ex: take a nap, go for a run, play a sport you enjoy)

### **Emotional Rest:**

(ex: take all of your anxieties to God, laying before Him your concerns and prayers)

### **Intellectual Rest:**

(ex: read a book, watch a documentary, research a topic you're interested in)

### **Social Rest:**

(ex: spend time with close friends, date your spouse, play with your kids)

## **Practice #2 - MAKE A PLAN**

“A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed at some indefinite time in the future.” - George S. Patton, WWII General

Don't wait to sabbath until you know exactly what to do. Pull out your calendar, pick a day, and go for it! This will require some planning. The best way to prepare for a sabbath is to mark it on the calendar, and then work hard on the six days leading up to it so that you can truly set your work aside (both your job and your home responsibilities) and rest in the presence of God.

Once you have the day selected, look at your list above, and make a plan for what you will do and when that day. Even if the plan is not perfect, having some predetermined activities will help against suddenly finding yourself bored with nothing to do at 1pm reaching for your phone or tv remote.

If you have a family, be sure to include your spouse and kids and make a plan that works for everyone. The sabbath is communal, and any sabbath plan should help all members of the household rest with God.

### **Practice #3 - RETREAT**

There are seasons in life when we feel off; restless, discontent, exhausted, or fearful, but we can't seem to figure out why. Even worse, the relentless pressure and demands of a busy life offer us no ways for relief anytime soon. How do we break this vicious cycle?

Throughout the history of God's people, retreats have played a critical role in catalyzing deeper levels of rest, awareness, and guidance. Retreats invite us to an extended period of silence and solitude where we can pay attention to God's past, present, and future movements in our lives. Think of them like extended sabbaths.

In Mark 6:30, Jesus called to his disciples: "Come away to a deserted place...and rest awhile." Jesus offers the same invitation right now to our tired, weary, overwhelmed souls.

#### **Making your plan:**

- Decide if you want to retreat alone or include family and friends. Your retreat could also be: a day, a weekend or a week.
- Choose a reasonable location for your retreat.
- Finish work and leave technology at home. If you choose to bring a phone be sure to power it off or limit checking it to a minimum.
- Bring a Bible, pen, and journal.
- Create a flexible plan for your retreat and communicate your intentions to those who need to know (family, friends, boss, direct reports, etc). Here are some suggestions for elements to incorporate:
  - - Scripture reading and prayer. Themes and guided resources can be helpful.
  - Naps
  - Physical activity: walking, running, biking, hiking, singing.
  - Creating: drawing, painting, writing, nature walks. Be curious & open.
  - Self-Awareness: What thoughts, feelings, and desires are stirring? Name them.
- Execute your retreat. Don't wait for the perfect conditions. Just do it! If you can't do a full day, find a pocket of time for a few hours in the city. The same principles apply to four hours as they do to twenty-four hours.

## RESOURCES

The following are recommended resources if you would like to journey further into developing a practice of the Sabbath:

- [\*Sabbath as Resistance\*](#) by Walter Brueggman
- [\*Call the Sabbath a Delight\*](#) by Walter Chantry
- ["Sabbath Practices"](#) by Bridgetown Church