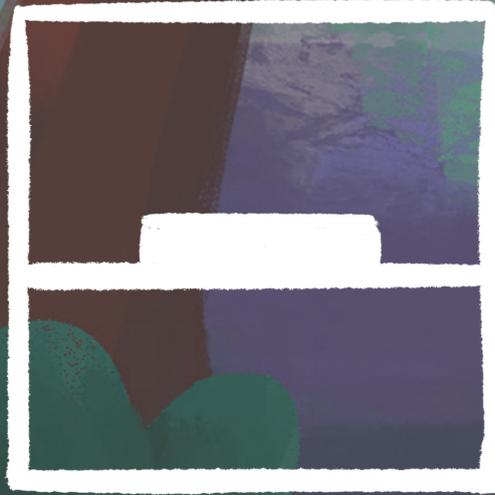


ATTENTIVENESS

SABBATH



SESSION 3: SABBATH AS RESISTANCE

Main Text:

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Take Home Exercise:

Foster a spirit of gratitude



OPENING EXERCISE (10 Minutes)

Spend a moment in prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your time together, and then lead your group through the below exercise.

Throughout this series, we are exploring four elements of Sabbath—stop, rest, delight, and worship. This week, we will briefly explore the third element—delight. On Sabbath we delight in God and in his world, and we engage in activities that bring our souls delight. As we move through the day, we take time to notice, ponder, and explore. To delight on the Sabbath means that we celebrate, feast, and savor the goodness of each moment and the people around us. We observe and appreciate beauty, and in all of this—we enjoy God.

Take some time now for each person in the group to find and share one picture on their phone, perhaps from the last week or last month, of something that they had the opportunity to delight in. It could be a photo of a beautiful sunrise, a delicious meal, quality time with a friend, a favorite place, or anything that brought great joy and delight.

Then invite group members to consider and share how they might intentionally take time during their Sabbath this week to delight in something or someone that brings deep joy to their souls.

OPENING DISCUSSION (15 Minutes)

Spend some time together debriefing the take-home exercise from your last gathering.

In our last gathering, you were encouraged to set aside time to plan and prepare for your Sabbath day. Giving yourselves immense grace, share with the group about how this went. Consider the following questions as you reflect back on the exercise:

How did your practice of Sabbath go this past week? What went well? What was a challenge?

Is it possible that you may have over-planned for your Sabbath? What might it look like to leave more time on your Sabbath to rest at an unhurried pace?

How might you be more intentional about your planning/preparation for Sabbath moving forward? What might you do differently?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the study and discussion below for your group.

As we begin the study today, watch this brief overview video.

Video 3 - Sabbath as Resistance

Have someone in your group read Deuteronomy 5:12-15 aloud.

Here, the second generation of freed Israelites are given the same instruction their parents received, but with a twist. Rather than the rationale for Sabbath being the way it is integrated into the fabric of creation, the rationale is to remember their time as slaves in Egypt. God understands the allure of empire, the allure of becoming like Pharaoh or becoming enslaved again to the desires of empire. Sabbath functions as a protest against this allure. Sabbath is a weekly reminder that we are more than what we accomplish or what we accumulate. And the second generation of Israelites needed this reminder as they sought to become a new people in a new land. While they have gotten out of Egypt, Egypt was still alive and well within them and is, too, in all of us. This is what Sabbath confronts. It does so in two ways—individually and communally. The Sabbath command here is explicit that Sabbath is not just for us as individuals but also for all—sons, daughters, servants, animals, foreigners, etc. Sabbath was both to be cultivated for the individual, but the call was also to create a Sabbath culture available for all in their sphere of influence. Use the below questions to generate a conversation about the ways Sabbath confronts both our work habits and our consumption habits.

Re-visit Exodus 20:8-11. How does the reasoning God gives the Israelites for Sabbath in the passage this week (Deuteronomy) differ from the reasoning in Exodus 20? What similarities do you observe? What do we learn about God's intent for the Sabbath?

Consider the significance of Deut. 5:15. Why might God have instructed the Israelites to remember their past?

Sabbath is a weekly reminder of God's deliverance and redemptive plan. What might be some Pharaohs in your life that you feel enslaved or attached to?

Look again at Deuteronomy 5:14. Sabbath is intended for all people. Inherent in this passage is a warning for the Israelites and also for us. If we are not careful, we, like Egypt, can become the oppressor. How might this be a significant warning for us? How does this challenge you personally?

PRACTICE THIS TOGETHER (15 Minutes)

This week, we will pay attention to the way that our habits and decisions, particularly our patterns of consumption and accumulation, have a ripple effect on those around us. In our practice of Sabbath, it is important that we do not hinder others from resting.

Furthermore, we must actively consider ways that we can serve, advocate for, and give rest to those around us. As it was with the Israelites, Sabbath is a scheduled social and economic justice that enables us to be liberated from our attachments and resist the tendency to enslave ourselves and others through our habits and decisions.

In his book *Subversive Sabbath*, A.J. Swoboda writes:

“Sabbath breaks down false walls and powers, and any rationale that leads to social stratification wherein one is perceived as more valuable than another. At the Sabbath, like the cross, everyone stands on equal footing and gets a break. We realize



that we are all loved and embraced by the love of God as we rest in his presence. Everyone, not just the privileged, is invited into the rich feast of mercy that has been theirs since the creation of the world. A Sabbath is a weekly jubilee during which the powerful are humbled and brought low, and the poor and lowly are gifted space, love, and generosity” (p.109).

How might you extend the blessing of Sabbath to others who may not even keep a Sabbath?

Consider your co-workers, the people you supervise, family members, roommates, etc. What might it look like for you to practically enable and encourage them to rest?

As you listen to one another sharing obstacles and sources of resistance to Sabbath, how might you support one another? What might it look like to serve and walk alongside each other?

What changes do you sense God inviting you to make in your work habits or business practices? Your consumption habits? Technology habits?

This week, as you Sabbath, consider the impact you have on those around you. Use the words in the command

TAKE HOME EXERCISE—Create a Sabbath Box (5 Minutes)

Read through the below exercise that each individual will do before your next gathering. Work through any questions people have on what they are to do. Again, it is about practice not perfection. Give yourselves grace.

In a culture that prizes comfort and convenience, it is becoming increasingly easy for us to spend wherever and whenever we want and without limit. We often do so without even really thinking about it. Our spending and consumption habits, however, directly affect others in significant ways. For example, our spending impacts the people who are laboring to produce, package, and deliver the very products that we find at our doorstep the very next morning. How might we approach Sabbath as a day set apart even for our spending and consumption habits?

Below is an exercise that everyone can try out before the next meeting. Spend a few minutes reading the instructions aloud with the group and discuss any questions that may arise:

On the day you have identified as your Sabbath, refrain from spending money for a whole 24 hours. You might find it helpful to refrain, also, from browsing/online shopping, looking at catalogs and magazines, and window shopping.

This will likely require some amount of planning prior to your Sabbath day. For example, this may mean purchasing groceries or food from a restaurant in advance and, to the best of your ability, planning activities that do not require spending money.

In addition to not spending money, make it your aim to foster a spirit of gratitude as you move throughout your day. Sabbath is an opportunity to remind ourselves that we have enough and that God is enough. In doing so, we move from greed to gratitude, from discontentment to contentment, and from scarcity to abundance.

Below are a few ideas for how you might foster a spirit of gratitude:

- Begin your day with thanksgiving—thanking God for your life, shelter, food, relationships, work, etc.
- Thank God for something that you see or experience in creation as you spend time outside.
- If you share a meal with others, take turns sharing one thing you are grateful for and how God has been working in your lives. Thank God for the people around the table.
- Pray over your plans for the day, and thank God for the opportunity to engage in each of these activities.
- Read a psalm of thanksgiving, like Psalm 34, Psalm 100, or Psalm 111.

•When you think of or see something you want to replace or simply have the urge to shop—thank God for one thing that you already have.

This exercise will no doubt be challenging. As you move through the day, take note of where you feel resistance and what this might reveal about your spending habits and attachments. Consider journaling about this or taking time to reflect and bring your observations before the Lord.

CLOSE IN PRAYER (5 Minutes)

Close your time by reading the following prayer together. Then take some time to share any prayer requests/updates and pray for each other's upcoming week.

“Lord of Creation, create in us a new rhythm of life composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy, of time that trickles rather than tackles. Lord of Liberation, by the rhythm of your truth, set us free from the bondage and baggage that break us, from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us, from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us. Lord of Resurrection, may we be raised into the rhythm of your new life, dead to deceitful calendars, dead to fleeting friend requests, dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, we bid, “Peace!” To our over-caffeinated consciences, we say, “Cease!” To our suffocating selves, Lord, grant release. Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes, we rest in you, our lifeline. By your ever-restful grace, allow us to enter your Sabbath rest as your Sabbath rest enters into us. In the name of our Creator, our Liberator, our Resurrection, and Life, we pray. Amen.”

From Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals