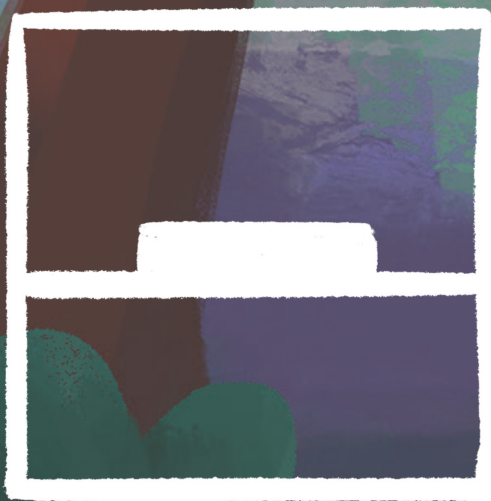


ATTENTIVENESS

SABBATH





SESSION 1: THE BASICS: WHAT IS SABBATH?

Main Text:

Matthew 11:28-30

Mark 2:23-3:6

Take Home Exercise:

Create a Sabbath Box

OPENING EXERCISE (5 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 explore four Sabbath elements—stop, rest, delight, and worship. This week we briefly explore the first element—stop. On Sabbath, we stop from our regular rhythms of work and consumption. We stop from our worrying and wanting, reminding ourselves that God is in control and that He loves and cares for us.

One way, among many, for us to stop is by unplugging from our devices for a period of time. This is a counter-habit to constant connectivity, productivity, and endless scrolling. In disconnecting from technology, we commit to being more present to God and one another.

As a group, take some time to power down your phones and put away any other devices and distractions. We recognize there may be important reasons to leave your phone on, which is okay; feel the freedom to do so. But if possible, power down with your group as a symbolic “micro-practice” of Sabbath. For some, this will seem like a significant challenge. Do this together as a symbolic micro-exercise representing the basics of Sabbath—stopping.

Briefly discuss the following questions together:

When was the last time you unplugged from technology for a period of time? What did you observe about your energy, attention span, and presence to God and others?

What boundaries might you want to set on your technology usage, specifically, as we explore the habit of Sabbath?

OPENING DISCUSSION (15 Minutes)

Together, watch this overview video on week one of Sabbath and discuss the following questions as a group.

We are continuing our year-long focus of practicing “Attentiveness to God.” Today, we are beginning

our journey to cultivate our second habit, the habit of Sabbath. Watch the following video that provides an overview of the first week’s teaching on the basics of Sabbath.

Video #1 - What is the Sabbath?

Reflecting honestly, how tired are you—physically, spiritually, and emotionally? Where might you be experiencing a yearning or ache for rest?

What is your current understanding of Sabbath?

Is Sabbath currently part of your life, or not? What does this look like? If you don’t observe the Sabbath, what do you suppose has kept you from doing so?

What appeals to you about Sabbath? What do you find compelling about Jesus’ invitation to rest?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the study and discussion below for your group. Feel free to read it in its entirety or put it in your own words.

Invite someone in your group to read aloud Matthew 11:28-30.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30

What a beautiful invitation from Jesus! The implication is that to follow Jesus is to learn from him how to find rest for your soul. We must be careful in interpreting the idea of the “soul.” Don’t think of a disembodied ghost-like thing. The New Testament concept of the “soul” comes from the Greek word, **ψυχή = psuché = Pronounced (‘psoo-khay’)**. This is the root word of our English word, psychology. At its core, it means the whole of the individual, both the biological and the spiritual; body, mind, spirit, and will.

But let’s be honest, does this invitation actually reflect your felt experience in following Jesus?

Discuss this question as a group.

Has your discipleship to Jesus led you in the direction of rest for your soul?

Has your apprenticeship to Jesus impacted your daily schedule? Have you ever considered the way Jesus wants to bring rest for your soul?

The practice of Sabbath is an opportunity to take a practice from the way of Jesus to counteract the modern obsession with busyness and hurry that ultimately distorts our soul.

The Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word **שַׁבָּת = Shabbat = Sabbath**, which means “to stop, cease, be done.” Sabbath, at its core, is the weekly practice of stopping. A day set aside for the Lord (different from a day off) to refresh our souls. Note, the refreshment is for our souls, not just our bodies, but our entire being—physical, spiritual, the whole of who we are.

There are likely many questions that arise when we think about Sabbath. Do I really have to Sabbath? What can’t we do on the Sabbath? What can we do on the Sabbath? As we consider these questions, it is important that we start by reminding ourselves of what, or rather whom, the Sabbath is really for. If we do not, we run the risk of viewing Sabbath as a burden, rule, or obligation and can miss out on fully and freely embracing it as a good gift from God.



Invite someone in your group to read Mark 2:23-28.

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions." Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mark 2:23-28

Notice how Jesus leans into the tension of Sabbath and challenges the Pharisees' strict regulations around its practice. The Pharisees, out of a zeal for obedience, had lost the plot and purpose of Sabbath. They had turned it into a burden to abide by rather than the gift it was. And Jesus' response is really important. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

What does this passage reveal about God's intention for the Sabbath?

Notice that Jesus' response to the Pharisees was two-fold. First, "the Sabbath was made for man..." and second, "...not man for the Sabbath." For the legalism of the Pharisees, they needed to hear the second part of Jesus' teaching. They had been so zealous that their practice of Sabbath, it felt like humans were being forced into Sabbath. The burden and weight of adherence were so high it produced the exact opposite of God's intent for Sabbath, rest for your souls. It was loaded with hundreds of rules and regulations.

The reality is that most of us don't struggle too much with legalism around the Sabbath because the idea of Sabbath is all but forgotten in the modern world. Most of us in the modern world actually need to hear Jesus' specific instruction in the first part of the teaching, "Sabbath was made for man..." We've forgotten that the Sabbath is a gift from God to humanity. A gift that is meant to be enjoyed, embraced, and welcomed. In a modern world that no longer has any imagination of what a Sabbath rhythm could look like, we need to remember that the Sabbath is a gift from God to us.

Which half of Jesus' statement on Sabbath are you most prone to forget or even resist?

How might you, like the Pharisees, struggle to view and embrace Sabbath as a gift from God intended for your flourishing?

PRACTICE THIS TOGETHER (15 Minutes)

Take a look out over this upcoming week and pick a day when you will Sabbath. This can be any day of the week. There is not one set day on which we must observe the Sabbath. It is possible that the day you choose now may change in different seasons or stages of life, and that is okay. One helpful principle, or goal, for identifying a day for Sabbath is the one-in-seven principle. Choose one day out of seven as a day of rest. Many people choose to Sabbath on Sunday, as that is also a day for gathering together in worship as a community, but not everyone will. Pick a day that works best for you and those you may choose to Sabbath with (family, roommates, community group, etc.).

Consider what your Sabbath day will look like for you in your current life stage and season. Remember to start where you are, not where you think you should be. If 24 hours is too challenging, consider starting with 3-4 hours. Start small and think through simple ways you can remind yourself to stop, unplug, and move more slowly through the day.

Remember that the goal is not to do Sabbath perfectly. God will meet you in the time you intentionally offer to him, however little or however much, with love and endless grace. The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. It is a gift that he desires for you to embrace and experience with freedom and joy.

Spend some time discussing the following questions as a group:

It is very likely, and to be expected, that beginning a Sabbath practice will be very challenging—this does not come easily. In her book *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*, Ruth Haley Barton identifies three types of resistance to embracing Sabbath rest that we might experience: practical, psychological, and spiritual resistance. Read the three statements below. Which of these might you most resonate with right now?

Practical Resistance: “I just don’t know how I can make Sabbath work in my life.”

Psychological Resistance: “I’ve worked hard all my life, and I really don’t know who I am when I’m not working or producing.”

Spiritual Resistance: “I’m so used to depending on myself that I’m not really sure I believe God will provide for me if I take a break for one day.”

What are some unique challenges and opportunities embedded in the season and stage of life you are in right now?

What day/time of the week might be best for you to Sabbath? This might look like starting with 3-4 hours rather than a full 24 hours. Take into consideration your stage/season of life and the people (family, roommates, community group, etc.) you might practice this with.

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 may have on what they are to do. Again, it is about practice, not perfection. Give yourselves grace.

When we stop, we receive and embrace God’s gift of rest for us. We do not stop when our work is finished—our work is never finished. The Sabbath is a humbling and freeing reminder that we are not what we do, what we produce, what we have, or what others think of us. We find our identity in the One we are deeply loved by. We stop our striving and work as an act of trust and a reminder that God is in control and that he cares for the very world that he created and called “good.”

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:

Step 1—Pick a time to Sabbath

Select a time that works best for your life stage and weekly schedule. The importance is not the particular day but the rhythm of one day in every seven days. There are three basic options:

1. Sabbath on Sunday; this works best for many since it is also the day of worship.
2. Traditional Sabbath from sundown on Friday night to the same time on Saturday.
3. Midweek Sabbath for those with non-traditional work schedules.

If a 24-hour period is not possible to start, that is okay; select a 3-4 hour block where you can intentionally Sabbath. It may be best to do that after church on Sunday or a weekend night. Use that time to put work and phone, and just stop to Sabbath with the Lord.

Try to cultivate a regular rhythm to your Sabbath as best as possible, meaning work to find a consistent time that will work best. It will always be hard, but that is okay. The goal is practice over perfection.

Step 2—Sabbath Box

This week, you will create a “Sabbath box.” You can do this exercise on your own, though you might also choose to invite others you share life/space with (friends, family, roommates) to join you. A Sabbath box is one of many ways to physically remind yourself to stop and embrace God’s gift of Sabbath rest, surrendering your cares, worries, and unfinished work to the Lord.



At the start of your Sabbath (whether it is 3-4 hours or a full 24 hours), write down on individual strips of paper any unfinished tasks, unresolved conflicts, worries, and concerns that are weighing on you. Place the strips, one at a time, in a box or jar as a physical act of entrusting and releasing these cares to the Lord. Spend some time in prayer after closing the box or jar, and offer this time of Sabbath rest to him.

As you do this exercise or even throughout the day, take some time to reflect on the following verses:

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7

As an extra challenge, consider putting your phone, computer, tablet, etc., in the box as a way of unplugging from constant connectivity and social media. This can become a family practice that launches your entire house into Sabbath. Note, however, that this may require some prior planning (i.e., communicating about plans ahead of time, setting an automatic reply on email, and letting people know that you will be unavailable for that time).

Step 3-Sabbath Activities

Over the course of this series, we will continue to build out your practice of Sabbath, but for now, pre-decide some life-giving activities that offer both rest and worship.

A few suggestions for Sabbath activities:

- Light candles
- Eat a Sabbath meal
- Practice gratitude
- Worship with your church community
- Go on a hike
- Have a picnic
- Read, especially scripture
- Take a nap
- Play board games
- Spend time alone with God
- Spend time with family and friends in conversation

This is not a to-do list, but rather ideas to generate rest and worship with God. Consider selecting 1-3 of these activities (or make up your own) that your heart is drawn to and sound appealing to your personality and life stage. Then try them out and see what happens.

A few more tips to remember as you try out Sabbath for the first time this week:

- Remember the heart behind Sabbath; Sabbath is a day of rest by which we practice attentiveness to God and cultivate a spirit of restfulness in all of our lives.

- Remember to start where you are, not where you think you should be. If it's challenging to stop for a whole 24 hours, start with 3-4 hours.
- Consider unplugging from social media/screens during this time.
- Pick a beginning/ending ritual (praying, lighting a candle, a song, reading a Psalm, sharing a meal) for your Sabbath day.

CLOSE IN PRAYER (5 Minutes)

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

"May this day bring Sabbath rest to our hearts and homes. May God's image in us be restored, and our imagination in God be re-storied. May the gravity of material things be lightened, and the relativity of time slow down. May we know the grace to embrace our own finite smallness in the arms of God's infinite greatness. May God's Word feed us and his Spirit lead us into the week and into the life to come." Pete Greig, Lectio 365

ATTENTIVENESS

SABBATH



SESSION 2: SABBATH AS RHYTHM



Main Text:

Exodus 20:8-11

Take Home Exercise:

Prepare for Sabbath

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 second element—rest. Sabbath is a day when we fill our souls with deep rest. This is different from leisure. We engage in activities that restore and replenish us. For some, this might look like sleeping in, slowly sipping a cup of coffee or tea, reading, listening to music, or going on a slow, long walk in nature. Rather than filling the whole day and hurrying from activity to activity, we intentionally move through the Sabbath day slowly. We take time to linger a little longer, pause and allow for more margin in our schedules.

Invite your group members to get comfortable and take a few slow, deep breaths. After a long, full, or busy day, it can be hard to slow down, so allow for some extra time and space for your group to settle in.

Consider using a breath prayer here (syncing your prayer with the cadence of your breathing) as you meditate on Psalm 46:10:

Inhale: **Be still**

Exhale: **and know You are God.**

As a group, read and take a few minutes to slowly reflect on the following poem by Wendell Berry:

To sit and look at light-filled leaves
May let us see, or seem to see,
Far backward as through clearer eyes
To what unsighted hope believes
The blessed conviviality
That sang Creation's seventh sunrise,

Time when the Maker's radiant sight
Made radiant everything he saw,
And everything he saw was filled

With perfect joy and life and light
His perfect pleasure was sole law;
No pleasure had become self-willed.
For all his creatures were his pleasures
And their whole pleasure was to be
What he had made them; they sought no gain
Or growth beyond their proper measures,
Nor longed for change or novelty.
The only new thing could be pain.

-III, from A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems
1979-1997 by Wendell Berry

Use the following questions to guide your conversation as you briefly discuss your reactions to the poem:

What themes or images stand out to you?
Is there a line that you find to be particularly beautiful?

OPENING DISCUSSION (15 Minutes)

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

In your last gathering, you were encouraged to find a day, whether a full 24 hours or 3-4 hours, to practice stopping. The take-home exercise was to begin your Sabbath by creating a Sabbath Box—placing any cares, concerns, and unfinished work in a box or jar and then closing it as a physical act of trusting the Lord and surrendering these worries to him.

Giving yourselves immense grace, share with the group how this went. Use the following questions to guide your discussion as you reflect back on your Sabbath experience:

Were you able to find a day/time to stop? If not, what prevented you from doing so?

How was your experience with building a Sabbath box? Was there anything particularly encouraging, surprising, or challenging for you?

Going forward, how might you practically remind yourself to stop this week regardless of whether or not your work is finished (i.e., setting an alarm or reminder on your phone, powering down devices at a certain time)?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the study and discussion below for your group.

Watch this brief overview video together and discuss.

Video 2 - Sabbath as Rhythm

Have someone in your group read Exodus 20:8-11 aloud.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

As God was liberating the Israelites and forming them in the wilderness, the command of Sabbath became a central part of what it meant for them to follow God. For their years in slavery in Egypt, they were forced to live out of rhythm with creation. They worked seven days a week. Their existence was reduced purely to what they could produce. They were transformed more into machines than humans.

When God created the world and rested, he wove a rhythm into the fabric of creation, six days you work, and one day you rest. This six-and-one rhythm confronts the gods of accomplishment that views rest as a mere impediment to achieving more. It confronts our addiction to achievement and forces us to embrace our limitations.



When we resist this rhythm, we experience dissonance, stress, anxiety, and tension. Or, as the saying goes, “When you go against the grain of the universe, you get splinters.” Over the next few questions, discuss the way life in the modern world pulls us toward living without rhythm.

Why might God have explicitly instructed the Israelites to “remember” the Sabbath command?

Why is this reminder significant for us today, too? What causes us, today, to forget to rest?

In Genesis, the day begins with rest (evening), and for man (created on the sixth day), the week begins with Sabbath. On the first day of their human existence, God himself rested on the Sabbath, blessed it, and called it holy. How is the rhythm of creation a reflection of the grace of the gospel?

How does the Sabbath challenge our cultural beliefs about where we find our identity (i.e., you are what you accomplish, you are what you produce)? How is Sabbath a humbling act for us? How is it liberating?

PRACTICE THIS TOGETHER (10 Minutes)

Ironically, taking one day a week for Sabbath rest requires work of intentional planning and preparing for the day. The author of Hebrews writes about Sabbath rest: “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...” (Hebrews 4:11a). The Sabbath is a gift that we must actively and willfully receive and enter into. If we do not plan and prepare for Sabbath, it simply will not happen.

This week you will come up with a plan for how you will intentionally prepare for the Sabbath day. It is typically helpful to set aside a few hours the day before your Sabbath, or perhaps throughout the week, to plan and prepare. As you plan for your Sabbath, take into consideration your work, your relational responsibilities (i.e., caregiving or parenting), and other routine life tasks—grocery shopping, cleaning, preparing food, paying bills, and running errands. The goal of preparation is not to complete every task on your to-do list prior to Sabbath—but rather for you to plan your week in a way that allows you to freely engage in activities on the Sabbath that lead you to rest, delight, and worship.

Take some time now as a group to discuss how you will go about planning and preparing for your Sabbath this week:

What day/time of the week works best for you to spend a few hours intentionally planning and preparing for your Sabbath?

What obstacles might you encounter as you prepare for your Sabbath? How might you overcome these?

What might you need to say no to on your Sabbath in order to say yes to embracing this gift of rest?

How might you invite others, perhaps from this group, to support you in this?

TAKE-HOME EXERCISE—Prepare for Sabbath (5 Minutes)

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

The goal of the take-home exercise for this week is to create a plan for your Sabbath preparation day(s). Ironically, it takes work to stop. There are a few categories you might consider as you plan for your Sabbath preparation day: work responsibilities, relational responsibilities, errands, and boundaries for technology.

Spend a few minutes reading the instructions for this take-home exercise aloud with the group and discuss any questions that may arise:

Set aside time during the week to attend to routine life tasks that won't be done on Sabbath. For many people, this typically looks like taking a few hours the day before Sabbath to do so, but you might find it helpful to have a few days to space out the preparation and planning.

It will be helpful for you to share this plan with those you may be spending the Sabbath with (family, friends, roommates, etc.), and also to communicate about and take into consideration differences in personality and preferences. Take some time to pray over your Sabbath and to invite God to guide you as you plan.

Remember that the goal of Sabbath preparation is not to check off every item on your to-do list or to fill your entire Sabbath day with activities. Plan your Sabbath day loosely in a way that allows you to move through the day freely and slowly as you stop, rest, delight, and worship.

Take into consideration the following categories to start as you plan for your Sabbath preparation day:

Work Responsibilities:

- What might you need to communicate with coworkers, supervisors, etc?
- Will you set an automatic response on email?

Relational Responsibilities:

- What relational/care responsibilities will you have?
- How might you invite others to support you in this?
- Are there events/activities/appointments/sports on the calendar for those you are caring for that you need to plan for? Which ones will you say yes to on the Sabbath? Which ones will you need to reschedule or say no to on the Sabbath?

Errands/Routine Tasks:

- When will you take time to go grocery shopping?
- Will you need to cook meals in advance?
- When will you clean, do laundry, housework, etc.?
- When will you pay bills, go to appointments, and complete other routine tasks?

Boundaries for Technology:

- If you will be turning your phone off for the day, what plans will you need to make in advance?
- What decisions might you make in advance about screens, social media, etc.?

Additional practical tips for your Sabbath this week:

- Unplug from social media, and limit your time on screens.
- Engage in activities that restore and replenish you. Binge-watching a TV show might sound relaxing, but consider activities that allow you to genuinely rest and be refreshed.
- What is restful for you will likely be different from those you may be practicing Sabbath with. Have a conversation in advance about what resting looks like for you on the Sabbath, as well as how you might navigate those differences.
- If possible, aim to get at least 6-7 hours of sleep the night before your Sabbath.
- Remember that not everything needs to be done/finished before your Sabbath starts.

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.

"O God of peace, who hast taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of thy Spirit lift us, we pray thee, to thy presence, where we may be still and know that thou art God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

(from the 1928 Book of Common Prayer)

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.

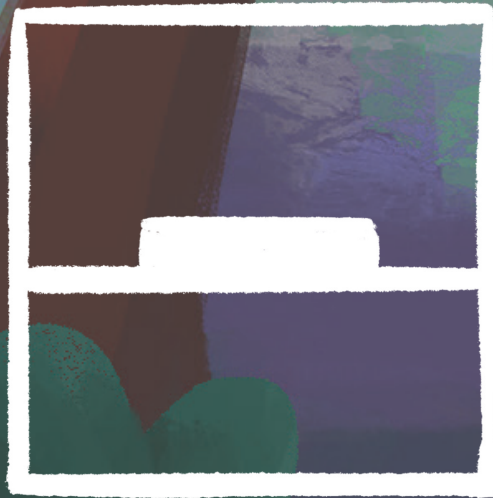
“Lord of Creation, create in us a new rhythm of life composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy, of time that trickles rather than tackles. Lord of Liberation, by the rhythm of your truth, set us free from the bondage and baggage that break us, from the 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

ATTENTIVENESS

SABBATH



SESSION 4: STOP, REST, DELIGHT, WORSHIP

Main Text:

Psalm 23

Take Home Exercise:

Sabbath Feast



OPENING EXERCISE (15 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 fourth element—worship. Our stopping, resting, and delighting on Sabbath leave us in wonder, gratitude, and awe of God and his goodness. Worship is our God-glorifying response to who God is and what he has done. The Sabbath is a day for worship that ultimately cultivates a life of worship. Worship is more than just singing; we worship God with the whole of our lives—through giving of our affection, time, resources, work, and surrendered wills to him. Worship is a way of orienting the whole of our lives around God.

Spend a little longer in this opening exercise this week, taking some time to worship together through reading, reflecting, and responding to a psalm. Allow for some time for group members to reflect individually and then to share, pray, and respond to God and his Word together as a group.

Invite two group members to each read Psalm 92 aloud.

After reading the psalm, spend five to ten minutes responding individually in worship. Invite group members to respond freely to God and the passage you just read together however they choose—through art (drawing, coloring, painting), prayer, journaling, writing, silence, etc. It might be helpful to have some extra supplies (paper, markers, colored pencils, paint, pens) available for your group.

Then take some time together to share the words or images from the psalm that evoked awe, wonder, and gratitude toward God.

Consider the following questions as you share:

What word, phrase, or image particularly stood out to you from this Psalm?

What does this Psalm reveal about God's character?

Close this time by responding to God and his Word together in prayer and/or musical worship.

A few suggestions for musical worship are:

“Goodness of God” by Bethel Music

“Great Are You Lord” by All Sons and Daughters

“Great Things” by Phil Wickham

“How Great is Our God” by Chirs Tomlin

OPENING DISCUSSION (15 Minutes)

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

Last week, you were encouraged to refrain from spending money for a whole 24 hours as a way of liberating ourselves and others from accumulation and accomplishment. Giving yourselves immense grace, share with the group how this went. Consider the following questions as you share about your Sabbath experience:

Were you able to refrain from spending money? If so, for how long?

What was challenging about this exercise? What was encouraging?

How did you seek to foster a spirit of gratitude throughout the day?

What did this exercise reveal about your spending habits and attachments?

STUDY TOGETHER (20 Minutes)

Lead the study and discussion below for your group.

Have someone in your group read Psalm 23 aloud.

One of the central themes of this psalm is David’s recognition and admission that he is in the control of another, “The Lord is my shepherd...He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters...” The regular practice of Sabbath confronts our perceived sense of control. On Sabbath, we release control and rest in the very presence of God our shepherd. Each week we learn to yield ourselves to the guidance and presence of God, embracing our finitude and limitations. But the psalmist’s promise persists, “he refreshes my soul.” While this psalm does not directly reference Sabbath, the essence of Sabbath permeates the relationship between the psalmist and God the Shepherd. The journey of the Christian life is increasingly learning to yield control to Jesus as you grow in learning to rest in God’s presence, regardless of circumstances. Each week, as we enter the Sabbath, we are given the opportunity to yield again to Jesus and learn to tune our souls to God’s presence.

How has your practice of Sabbath the past few weeks led you to yield your perceived control over your life?

What role does releasing control of your life to Jesus play in your discipleship? In this coming Sabbath, how can you practice the comforting presence of God by releasing your burdens, anxieties, and circumstances to him?

Throughout this series, we have been slowly integrating this four-part framework for Sabbath—Stop, Rest, Delight, Worship. Watch this brief video together, reviewing each element, and then lead your group through the following discussion.

Video 4 - Stop, Rest, Delight, Worship

Rather than simply talking about Sabbath, we want to be a



people who begin to embrace and experience the gift of Sabbath as we practice it. Kevin unpacked the framework of stop, rest, delight, and worship and walked us through his typical Sabbath day. These four elements of Sabbath are not a rule for Sabbath, but rather, a guide as you consider what your Sabbath day will look like. This will likely look different for each person in this group.

Take some time now to discuss the sermon from the fourth week (March 26) as a group:

What resonated with you from the teaching this week? What encouraged you? Was there anything that you found to be particularly challenging?

Which of the four elements (stop, rest, delight, and worship) are you most naturally inclined to? Which of the four elements is the most challenging for you?

What might it look like for you to intentionally practice Sabbath in the context of community?

What lingering questions, fears, or reservations might you have about developing a Sabbath rhythm?

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)

In our last gathering, we discussed and came up with a plan for our Sabbath preparation, whether that looks like setting aside a few hours the day prior to our Sabbath, or a few hours throughout the week. This week, we will consider what it looks like to plan for our Sabbath day itself. Again, the goal of planning is not to completely fill our Sabbath day with activities. It is important that we loosely plan in a way that enables us to move freely and slowly through the day. The goal of planning is to intentionally dedicate this Sabbath day to the Lord as one where we stop, rest, delight, and worship.

Take time now with your group, intentionally considering how you can incorporate rhythms of stop, rest, delight, and worship into your Sabbath day.

Do you have a starting ritual/liturgy for your Sabbath to help you stop? If not, what might you choose as your starting ritual (i.e. lighting a candle, reading a psalm, listening to a song, eating donuts, etc.)? Feel free to be creative with this, and consider, too, how you might invite those who you may Sabbath with into this.

What activities are truly restful for you? What is one activity that you want to intentionally incorporate into your Sabbath rhythm this week?

What are some activities that are delightful for you? In other words, what fills your soul with deep joy?

How do you like to connect with God? What might it look like for you to take an hour or even fifteen minutes during Sabbath this week to worship and commune with God in this way?

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.

Below is an exercise, adapted from PracticingtheWay.org, 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:

Plan a Sabbath feast this week as a way of starting (or ending) your Sabbath in community. Feel the freedom to be creative with how this looks; it could be a potluck, a barbecue, or a three-course meal! Choose what is feasible and life-giving for you and the people you will share this meal with. This could be a meal you plan with family, roommates, or even together as a community group. If a meal or feast is already part of your Sabbath rhythm, invite someone to join your gathering this week—a coworker, neighbor, or friend.

Consider how you might incorporate the elements of stop, rest, delight, and worship as a community during this gathering. Below are a few ideas:

- Turn your phones off and put them away for the meal.
- Build a Sabbath box together. Write down on pieces of paper your worries or concerns and place them in the box, along with phones, laptops, and work-related items.
- Choose a starting ritual for the meal (lighting a candle, reading a psalm, prayer).
- Take some time to bless kids who are present, and also bless each other.
- Share some highlights of the week.
- Spend some time in prayer and thanksgiving together.
- Feast!
- Enjoy conversation, games, and celebrating together.

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.

God of rest,
Today we make the active choice
To enter into your rest,
And to join with you
In delighting in this good world you have made,
And dreaming of the perfect world you will remake.

We choose to tune out,
Of demands and deadlines,
Of performance pressures
Of flickering screens
Of that which robs our souls of joy
And the ways in which the world
Seeks to define and shape our identity.

We choose to tune in,
To your affirmation and love,
To the celebration of freedom,
To worship and your word,
To the enjoyment of that which fills our souls with joy,
And reminds us of our identity in Christ,
As a deeply loved children of God.

Amen.