

Small Group Discussion

EXODUS 5.4–19; 20.1–17, DEUT 4.15–20, ISAIAH 30.15–16, MATTHEW 11.25–30

Sabbath: The Problem of Rest



Getting Started

- What comes to mind when you think of sabbath? Would you say your memories or perception are largely positive or negative?
- Most of us observe sabbath—at least in part—by participating in worship on Sunday mornings. Do you have any other elements of your sabbath observance?
- Have someone in your group read Exodus 20.8–11 aloud. Reflect silently on these verses for 3–5 minutes. Stop, be still, listen, and breathe.

Static Questions

- **WHAT WAS THE MESSAGE ABOUT?**
 - Note the key details (Who, What, When, Where, Why, etc.)
 - Pay attention to the main *Facts* of the message.
- **WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**
 - What did the message reveal about God? About people?
 - Was there a promise or a command or a warning?
 - What is the main truth of the message?
 - What lessons do you see?
- **HOW WILL YOU APPLY IT?**
 - How does this message relate to your life right now?
 - What change in your thinking or behavior is needed to align with the truths in this message?
 - How should you respond based on what you learned?

From the Teaching this Morning

“Biblically, though, the point of the Sabbath is exactly its uselessness, its sheer impracticality for us and our work. It is a regular reminder that God alone is God; the universe and its maintenance does not depend on me or my ministry.”

Rodney Clapp, *Border Crossings*

- Do you relate more to the constant focus on production & commodity seen in Exodus 5.4–19 or to the promise of relationship & covenant in Deuteronomy 4.20 and Exodus 20.8–11?
 - What parallels do you see between the temptation to the ancient Israelites to create idols and focus on commerce and our situation today?
 - “If we have an unhealthy theology of work, we will have an unhealthy theology of rest.” What did Sten-Erik mean by this?
- Sten-Erik said the fourth commandment was the hinge between the three commandments focused on our relationship to God and the six commandments focused on our neighbor. How do you think sabbath serves to ground us in the first three so we can live out the last six?
 - “The Cult of Productivity: If we are not doing *something*, we are not glorifying God.” How do you find yourself falling for this lie?



APPLICATION

- Read Matthew 11.28. God offers us something better than our escapism, idols, and production. He offers us *Himself*. How could that truth change your perspective on Sabbath?
- Make a list of some of the activities you and your family might normally do on any given Sunday. Include both pre-COVID and current activities. e.g. Attending church, ABF, meetings, volunteering, grocery shopping, sports, social media, work for your job, surfing the web, etc. Be as thorough as you can.

Now underline those activities that fit into the idea of restfulness. **Circle anything that can cause anxiety or stress.** Show your list to someone else in your small group. Ask them to hold you accountable as you attempt to eliminate as many items that cause anxiety, or at least reduce the amount of time spent doing them. What restful items could you add or expand upon to help you move toward a more intentional day of rest?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“In a culture where busyness is a fetish and stillness is laziness, rest is sloth. But without rest, we miss the rest of God: the rest he invites us to enter more fully so that we might know him more deeply.... Some knowing is never pursued, only received. And for that, you need to be still” (Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath*, 3)

“A commandment is often assumed merely to be a prohibition. Such thinking is idiocy. God's commandments prevent us from sucking diesel fumes in order to orient us to delicious, fresh air. Sabbath is the healthiest air for us to breath, and it requires we obey God's command and turn away from anything less desirous” (Dan Allender, *Sabbath*, 7).

“Sabbath is holy time where we feast, play, dance, have sex, sing, pray, laugh, tell stories, read, paint, walk, and watch creation in its fullness. Few people are willing to enter the Sabbath and sanctify it, to make it holy, because a full day of delight and joy is more than most people can bear in a lifetime, let alone a week.... The Sabbath is a feast day that remembers our leisure in Eden and anticipates our play in the new heavens and earth with family, friends, and strangers for the sake of the glory of God” (Dan Allender, *Sabbath*, 5).

“The [practice of Sabbath-keeping] begins with a willingness to *acknowledge the limits of our humanness* and take steps to live more graciously within the order of things” (Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*, 137, emphasis added)



Pause & Rest