

SABBATH

“Sabbath is not primarily about us or how it benefits us; it is about God, and how God forms us. It is not, in the first place, about what we do or don’t do; it is about God – completing and resting and blessing and sanctifying. These are all things that we don’t know much about... But it does mean stopping and being quiet long enough to see – open-mouthed – with wonder – resurrection wonder... Our souls are formed by what we cannot work up or take charge of. We respond and enter into what the resurrection of Jesus continues to do.”
— Eugene Peterson

The bow cannot be always bent without fear of breaking. Repose is as needful to the mind as sleep to the body. . . Rest time is not waste time. It is economy to gather fresh strength. . . It is wisdom to take occasional furlough. In the long run, we shall do more by sometimes doing less. — Charles Spurgeon

SYNOPSIS:

God instituted the Sabbath so that we would rest and reflect on who He is and what He is doing. God knows we need times of rest and reflection on a daily and weekly basis. Sabbath rhythms provide a space to delight in the goodness and beauty of God while also recalibrating our bodies and mind to align with Him. We physically align our priorities to the reality of His kingdom. As we rest in this reality, we demonstrate a lavish trust not only in the sovereignty of our Creator but in His ability to manage and care for our daily/weekly pressures.

GOD-GIVEN FRUIT:

When sabbath becomes a regular rhythm, some of the God-given fruit includes delighting in all good gifts of creation like meals, seasons, and your family. There is a freedom that allows for acknowledgment of our human limits and the ability to live within them. You may begin to notice the overlooked gifts around you and cultivate gratitude. Slowing to a deliberate stop may help you honor the way God created and allow for healthier living of an intentionally rested life.

EXAMPLES:

As you expand your rhythm of sabbath, consider incorporating some of the following options. Practice restful activities one day a week like walking, picnics, a Sunday afternoon nap, a phone visit with someone you love, tea or coffee with a friend, family time, game with your kids, love-making. Let go of things that stress you out for 24 hours. Don’t create a to-do list for Sunday. Create a sabbath box. This is where you can place the things you don’t need to take with you into your sabbath day. This could include cell phones, credit cards, other gadgets, work projects or homework.

BASELINE SUGGESTION:

If sabbath is not a regular rhythm for you, we suggest trying the following practice for this week. Plan a 24-hour sabbath. Consider the things that would nourish you and plan them spaciously into the day. Begin your sabbath gently the evening before. Light a candle. Invite the presence of Christ to guide you through your sabbath. Eat with family or friends. Go to bed early, praying for Christ to give you deep, refreshing sleep. Awake gently to your sabbath day. If possible, don’t set an alarm. Get up slowly and attend to your desire to encounter God today.

PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

1

What is your current sabbath rhythm? What would you like to add or take away to enhance this rhythm?

2

Creating a rhythm of sabbath is about celebrating who God is, how He has made you and growing in intimacy with Him. Consider this rhythm as a weekly holiday - it will take planning and creativity but can become highly anticipatory. What types of activities bring your soul rest and rejuvenation?

3

What would you need to do to create a rhythm of sabbath in your week?

4

What is your plan for practicing sabbath this week? Be as specific as possible.

Downstream

A practice that comes easily or naturally to you.

Upstream

Practices that don't come easily; a practice that seems difficult or unnatural to you.

Would sabbath be beneficial for you to pursue? Why or why not?

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

God works and rests. What are the implications of that for people made in His image?

Read Exodus 20:8-10. What's the difference between a day off and a sabbath? How can you make the distinction in your own practice?

Does the idea of practicing sabbath come with preconceived ideas? What are they? Where did those come from?

What makes a sabbath day nourishing and enjoyable to you?

RHYTHM PLAN

What:

When:

Where:

RESOURCES

ALL RHYTHMS:

Celebration Of Discipline by Richard J Foster

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adee Ahlberg Calhoun

The Spirit Of The Disciplines by Dallas Willard

Practicingtheway.org

MEDITATION:

New Seeds Of Contemplation by Thomas Merton

Here And Now: Living In The Spirit by Henri Nouwen

Devotional Classics by Richard Foster

PRAYER:

Open Mind, Open Heart by Thomas Keating

Contemplativeoutreach.org

Daily Prayer (app)

With Christ in the School of Prayer by Andrew Murray

Prayer by Timothy Keller

Finding the Heart's True Home by Richard Foster

31 Days of Prayer from Bridgetown Church
bridgetown.church/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PrayerCard.pdf

SILENCE & SOLITUDE RHYTHM:

Invitation to Solitude and Silence by Ruth Haley Barton

Bridgetown Church on Silence and Solitude
<https://bridgetown.church/series/silence-solitude/>

FASTING

Fasting: The Ancient Practices by Scot McKnight

God's Chosen Fast by Arthur Wallis

SABBATH

Sabbath Summit Bridgetown Audio Podcast
ncbc.church/BridgetownPodcast

24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life by Matthew Sleeth MD

Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Brueggemann