

Rediscovering Sabbath, Week 1

Small Group Discussion Guide, week of Sept 11th

SEPT 11TH SERMON SUMMARY

REDISCOVERING SABBATH: RECEIVE

1. What is sabbath?
 - In creation, God stopped working and rested, not because he was tired, but because: 1) creation needs rest; 2) work does not define God or creation; 3) God wanted to enjoy his work (Gen 2:2-3).
 - From the beginning, God created the world with rhythm and balance between work and rest. This is part of our identity as God's people (Ex. 20:8)
2. What does it mean for us?
 - God made Sabbath for us (Mark 2:27). It's a gift, made for us to enjoy and to bless us. In a culture defined by activity and anxiety, we can be restored and enjoy the fruit of work.
 - Ask: am I willing to consider that God's way might be better? Am I willing to make some changes and sacrifices in the purposeful pursuit of rest?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is one way you have felt blessed by God recently?
2. Prior to hearing this message, did you think of the Sabbath as: out-dated, irrelevant, legalistic, good, beautiful, healthy ... or something else? Explain your answer.

Read Mark 2:23-27

23 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. **24** The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

25 He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? **26** 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."

27 Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."

3a. From their remark in v. 24, what can you infer about the Pharisees' view of the Sabbath?

b. How was Jesus' view of the Sabbath different from theirs?

c. The Jewish prohibitions against any form of work came from a desire to honor God and protect people from any chance of violating God's command.

- Discuss the positive attitudes and intentions behind the Sabbath laws.
- Discuss the problems that resulted (see Luke 13:14 for an example).

d. How is your view or attitude toward the Sabbath like or unlike that of the Pharisees?

4a. Sabbath is made for us. What does this reveal about who God is and what He is like?

b. *"Perhaps more than anything else, we live in a culture saturated with activity and anxiety. Our lives are defined by doing, more and more ..."* (John Koessler in The Radical Pursuit of Rest). How is this true for you, or the people you know?

c. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important do you think it is for us to purposefully pursue a day or time of sabbath rest? Why?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

5. Sabbath is a gift and a blessing for us to receive. Discuss your response to this idea.

- What would you enjoy about receiving this gift and taking a Sabbath day?
- What would you struggle with?
- If you have taken a Sabbath day, share what you have enjoyed or struggled with.
- If you are retired, or not working, how do you think this applies to you?

6. Share whatever thoughts arise as you reflect on these questions Brandon raised:

- Am I willing to consider that God's way might be better?
- Am I willing to consider that the rhythm God has established might be more healthy, might bring more joy, more fulfillment, more productivity?
- Am I willing to make some changes and sacrifices to enjoy this gift?
- Am I open to what God might call me to do in the coming weeks?

SABBATH PRACTICES AND EXERCISES

Each week you will be given some practical ideas and exercises to incorporate a time of Sabbath. These are suggestions, and you can use them, or not - or tweak, change, or adapt them in whatever way fits you. You can do these on your own, or sometimes you might try one in the small group meeting.

Lighting Sabbath Candles

The traditional Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown with the lighting of candles. Those who celebrate Sabbath find that in this moment, the stopping truly begins. They take a few breaths, allow the mind to quiet, and the quality of the day begins to shift. Ira says he can feel the tension leave his body as the wick takes the flame. Kathy says she often weeps so great is her relief that the time for rest has come. Even Sam, who does not celebrate Sabbath at all, is especially fond of the moment he lights the candles. It is, he says, a kind of silent grace, a ritual beginning of family time.

Find a candle that holds some beauty or meaning for you. When you have set aside some time – before a meal, or during prayer, meditation, or simply quiet reading – set the candle before you, say a simple prayer or blessing for yourself or someone you love, and light the candle. Take a few mindful breaths. For just this moment, let the hurry of the world fall away.

Sabbath afternoons

Take a nap. Sabbath afternoons are renowned for their ability to evoke unrepentant napping. For Janet, walking is her Sabbath meditation.

For many, music is a language that connects beneath words, deep in the body and heart. For centuries people have used hymns, chants, and sacred melodies to center and attune their souls. Sing or listen to music that speaks to your soul.

Perhaps the most universally popular Sabbath activity involves going out into nature. Strolling, hiking, lying under a tree, feeling the heartbeat of the earth, the rhythms of nature that synchronize the beating of the heart, the breath in the lung.

Brian uses Sabbath afternoons to call someone who lives far away. Carolyn, every Sunday afternoon, sits quietly and writes letters. “I get to spend time with people I love. It is a little old-fashioned, but that is part of why I like it so much. It connects me to an earlier time, when life was slower, and more thoughtful.”

Some, of course, simply pray. Sabbath is an especially sweet time for giving thanks; we remember all the blessings, gifts, and fruits of our life, and offer a simple word of gratefulness.

(Excerpts from Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives by Wayne Muller, p.21-22, 226-229.)