

Spiritual Practices: Sabbath
Lesson 2

(Please read scripture references with your group)

The concept of Sabbath is introduced early in Scripture ([GENESIS 2:2-3](#)). The word Sabbath comes from a Hebrew word that means “to cease, to stop working.” Israel, as a nation, was told to keep the Sabbath holy ([EXODUS 20:8-10](#)). It was a commandment given to God’s people and is the longest and most specific of the ten commandments. Sabbath provides a cadence for a reordering and reorientation of our lives around the LORD. It is an intentional activity in which we imitate God by stopping our work and resting.

Practicing Sabbath is radical and challenging due to being harried and hurried. It is core to our discipleship. Remembering it as a command of God and recognizing the beauty of its’ gift. In a culture that encourages worth based upon what we do or have, Sabbath reminds that we are deeply loved by God for who we are, not what we do. Eugene Peterson, in his book *Working the Angles*, writes “Sabbath is not primarily about us or how it benefits us; it is about God and how He forms us...I don’t see any way out of it; if we are going to live appropriately in the creation, we must keep the Sabbath.”

Here are four qualities that may offer a biblical framework to help you in this practice.

- **STOP:** That is the literal meaning of the word Sabbath. That is difficult when we feel the pressure of our to-do lists and tasks we believe must be accomplished. However, being able to stop allows us to acknowledge our limits. It is a blessed paradox that by acknowledging and rejoicing in our limitations, we experience liberty. We acknowledge our limitations and weaknesses, but also see the love God has for us. The world will not come to a screeching halt when we stop. Practicing Sabbath helps us to “be still and know that He is God” ([PSALM 46:10](#)), and to be settled about tomorrow ([MATTHEW 6:25-33](#)). God will handle our business when we take care of His. We can trust Him. When we acknowledge our weaknesses and limits, we receive grace.
- **REST:** God rested, so can we (think about what we communicate when we do not). When we cease from our work, we are honoring God and His image in all of us. We are human beings, not human doings. God knows us ([PSALM 103:14](#)) & the Sabbath was a gift given for us ([MARK 2:27](#)).
- **DELIGHT:** Have you ever wondered what God was doing when He rested ([GENESIS 2:2-3](#))? Psalm 121 tells us that he “neither sleeps nor slumbers.” God was delighting in His creation ([GENESIS 1:31](#)). Genesis 1 tells us that God looked at his creation and called it “good” ([1:10; 12; 18; 21; 25](#)). Yet when he saw “ALL that He had made, it was VERY GOOD.” The first Sabbath was an act of celebration. When we practice Sabbath, we practice delight in all of God’s good gifts ([PSALM 104:14-15](#)). The practice of Sabbath is an appetizer for eternity when we will enjoy God fully. It becomes that liminal space where we engage delight to connect with God.
- **REFLECT:** Practicing Sabbath is “holy to The Lord” ([EXODUS 31:15](#)). It is a time to reflect on the richness, beauty, and depth of God’s love for all His creation. Throughout Jewish

and Christian history, Sabbath has included worship with God's people, where we share the Lord's Supper, sing praises, read, and study Scripture, and practice silence before Him.

Group Questions:

1. Why is it so hard to stop?
2. Of the four qualities above, which one would be easiest for you? Which one would be hardest?
3. What would be the results of a life without cadences that allow one to rest in God?

Here is a helpful resource from Pepperdine University that may help in the practice of Sabbath. Please consider making copies and sharing with your group:

[sabbath-with-others.pdf \(pepperdine.edu\)](http://pepperdine.edu/sabbath-with-others.pdf)