



How To Guide: Sabbath

Introduction:

The Gospels reveal that Jesus prioritized regular rhythms of retreat, Sabbath, and quiet time. These rhythms gave him focused time to rest, pray and have special communion with the Father and the Spirit. This lifestyle was a mark of the Spirit-filled life of Jesus and fueled the fruit that flowed from him.

This guide is meant to equip you to practice weekly Sabbath. Our hope is that it helps you enjoy this weekly gift from God as a place to encounter Him and His care and provision for you.

What Is A Sabbath?

Sabbath is a dedicated time (historically 24 hours) that God's people have enjoyed weekly as a time to stop, rest, delight in God and delight in God's works.

Biblical Foundations

There are many Scriptures on Sabbath, but two stand out as fountainheads for understanding the Sabbath.

Sabbath In The 10 Commandments

The Sabbath is found in the 10 Commandments:

Deuteronomy 5.12-15 "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. 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 ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

From this passage we learn important truths about Sabbath.

First, Sabbath was a gift to the people of God and a reminder they were no longer slaves. Remember, God's people lived in a harsh slavery in Egypt for 400 years. As slaves, their lives were dominated by Pharaoh's brutal demands on their lives. But now God had brought them out of slavery and out from under Pharaoh's hand. Now their lives were not dominated by Pharaoh's brutal demands, but God's loving care.

Second, Sabbath was a gift for everyone. The gift of Sabbath was for men and women, young and old, rich and poor, citizen and foreigner, man and beast. This reflected God's loving care for the whole community.

Third, Sabbath required them to stop, to rest, and to delight in God and His work in their lives. To keep the Sabbath, they needed to stop their work, to rest, and to delight in God and how he had blessed them.

Fourth, Sabbath is the longest commandment of the 10 Commandments. It has been said that The Lord spent the most time explaining the Sabbath because it is such an important gift.

All of these truths, shape our understanding of Sabbath today.

Sabbath In The Teachings of Jesus

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.”

The religious leaders of the day had twisted Sabbath from a gift to enjoy into a burden to carry, loaded with rules and regulations. Jesus, restores the original meaning of the Sabbath, namely that it is a gift for humanity, not that humanity was created because God needed some people to observe a Sabbath.

Interestingly enough of Jesus’s 22 detailed healings in the Gospels, 7 occurred on the Sabbath. Jesus viewed the Sabbath as a day for healing. And God continues to heal and restore his people through the gift of Sabbath.

Saints From Church History:

William Wilberforce, Sabbath and the Shaping of the World

William Wilberforce was born in 1759 in England. And as a 21-year-old was elected to Parliament. Later in his twenties, he came to faith in Christ, under the influence of John Newton (the author of the hymn Amazing Grace).

As he grew in his faith, he sensed God calling him to work to see the slave trade ended and slavery abolished in the British Empire. He would contend for this for the next four decades, facing countless setbacks and opposition.

In the midst of the opposition, he was presented with many opportunities to continue to climb the ladder of society, but in so doing, he would need to leave behind his calling to work for abolition. The temptation of fame, fortune, and prestige were intoxicating to an ambitious Wilberforce. The Lord used the regular habit of enjoying Sabbath to strengthen Wilberforce to stay faithful to his calling in the Lord.

On one particular Sabbath his journal he wrote:

“Blessed be to God for the day of rest and religious occupation wherein earthly things assume their true size. Ambition is stunted.”

The gift of Sabbath helped Wilberforce to see with perspective and stay faithful to the Lord’s calling on his life. The simple practice of Sabbath, was a means of God’s grace in Wilberforce’s life, and the strength he found there, shaped the history of our world.

Putting It Into Practice:

We want to intentionally practice our faith. To get going, here are some steps to prayerfully consider:

Scripture To Memorize:

This is a powerful scripture to tattoo on your mind and heart about quiet times.

Mark 2.27 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."

Book To Read:

Subversive Sabbath by AJ Swaboda

Action To Take:

Look at your calendar and see when you can block off time for Sabbath. Your goal is 24 hours, but you may need to build up to this. You want to practice this weekly.

What do you do in Sabbath time? We recommend four main ingredients that we see the Lord work through time and time again:

- Stop: In Sabbath time you want to stop your work and take a break.
- Rest: In Sabbath time, you want to do things that are restful.
- Delight in God: In Sabbath time, spend focused time with the Lord either alone, or with the church
- Delight in God's Works: In Sabbath time, do things that you enjoy that help you delight in God's work in your life.

If you have a spouse, we encourage you to Sabbath with your spouse if possible. If you have kids, look for ways to include them as well.