

LIVING the SABBATH

A PRACTICE OF FULFILLMENT, DELIGHT, & NEW BEGINNINGS

Study Overview

God has called each of us to practice *Sabbath*. Over the course of history, our understanding, and perceived need, of sabbath has changed. We have gone from strict religious practice, to almost no practice at all.

However, in the course of this cultural shift, many have struggled to find the strength, energy, and joy to practice faithful discipleship in our Savior Jesus. Instead of being opportunities to grow more intimately in our relationship with Him, the practice of spiritual disciplines have become one more item on our already too long to-do list.

This 3-session study is opportunity to dive into what it means to live out the Sabbath as a disciple of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is designed to be experienced in your small group, with those you are discipling, or even in your individual devotion and study of God's Word. It is my prayer that this study will help you grow deeper in the intimate relationship you have with our Savior Jesus Christ, and as He draws you closer to Himself, you will also draw others closer to Him.

May our Savior richly bless you as you experience *Living the Sabbath: A practice of fulfillment, delight, and new beginnings!*

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Session 1

Living The Sabbath: A practice of fulfillment

Introduction: Our culture has taken the Biblical concept of *sabbath* and simplified it into a time of passive resting. However, simply resting was never the full extent of the command and practice of the sabbath, but it's also not a burden of obedience that we must endure. The sabbath was created by God, for man, for rest, replenishment, restoration, and celebration. It is an active practice in our journey of discipleship. This session will dive into the purpose of the sabbath to celebrate the completion of our work and the ways God has been present throughout our life.

Diving into God's Word:

Look up the following Bible passages and walk through the discussion questions for each.

- Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.
 - What does God say about each day after it is completed?
 - As you consider this, what do you think this response to His creation every day says about God and His perspective of His creation?
 - ___Good___ in this context refers to the concept of completeness, fulfillment, nothing lacking, or even perfection. How does this help you frame what happens on the 7th day of Creation, when God rested?
- Consider what Jesus says as He was dying on the cross in John 19:30, “When Jesus received the sour wine, He said, ‘*It is finished,*’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (ESV, italics not original)
 - How have you understood this verse before? What have you generally thought Jesus meant when He said, “It is finished,”?

- As you consider what happens next - Jesus is buried in the tomb for 3 days - do you see any connection to what God does on the 7th day of Creation?
- How do you think reading, "...and God saw that it was good," would impact your reading of this verse?

Reflecting on Truth:

- As you consider your current life circumstances, would you say you struggle with work-life balance? Reflect on why...
 - Do you feel like you could do more or that you're not doing enough?
 - Are you striving for affirmation – through promotion, praise, something else?
 - Does work provide an opportunity to escape another area of your life?
- Considering the Biblical passages shared in this lesson, is work wrong? If so, why? If not, then wherein lies the issue?
 - Consider the curse of the fall into sin in Genesis 3:17-19. What does God draw attention to as the real struggle now?
- What do you do when you complete a task?
 - Do you celebrate, pause or simply move on to the next one?
 - What was the last project or task that you completed that you actually felt fulfilled?
- As you consider the Genesis account, and even Jesus' last words on the cross in the Gospel of John, how does "fulfillment" contribute to our practice of sabbath as disciples of Jesus?

Live It Out:

1. This week I will practice the sabbath on...which means I will complete my work by...
2. Daily practice *fulfillment* by taking 10-minutes at the end of every day to reflect on how God showed His presence throughout your day, share your gratitude for His blessings, and pray for rest and restoration for the day ahead.
3. Create a priority list of things that must be done before you “head home” for the day and the week. Review this list before leaving as an opportunity to celebrate the work you’ve completed and be assured that all is “good” for you to go home.

Session 2

Sabbath: A practice of delight

Introduction: Our time of rest, or sabbath, is not a mindless, passive activity. In fact, it can be argued that while God rested at the end of every day and on the sabbath, He *delighted* in the work He had done. Our sabbath is an opportunity to celebrate and rejoice, to delight in the blessings God provides.

Diving Into God's Word:

Look up the following Bible passages and walk through the discussion questions for each.

- Read Exodus 20:1-17
 - What do verses 1-3 say about God's purpose in giving the commandments to the people of Israel? *Pay special attention to verses 1-2.*
 - How have you typically understood the commandments?
 - As you consider the context of the commandments being given – in a place of freedom, in preparation for what is yet to come (Ex 20:1-2) – does this modify or change your approach to living them out?
 - Consider the order in which the commandments are written. Exodus 20:1-7 looks at God's redeeming work for Israel, and their relationship to Him. Exodus 20:8-11 discuss the sabbath. Do you believe there is purpose to this order, and if so, what would that purpose be?

- Read Matthew 11:25-30
 - How do Jesus words to His disciples align with this perspective of the commandments in Exodus 20?

Reflecting on Truth:

- Did you practice a sabbath after the last session? If so, how did it go? What was a challenge for you?

- What does the practice of sabbath look like in your household? What can you do to help your spouse/children/others, as applicable, live out the sabbath with you, based on what you've learned in this study?

- Faithful practice of the sabbath requires planning out, and being intentional, about the practice in your weekly rhythm.
 - What are things you can do this week on your sabbath that would bring you delight and joy?
 - What do you need to prepare for those pieces of your sabbath?

Next Steps:

1. Plan out your sabbath practice this week, including at least one thing you will do that will help you *delight* in the work of God.
2. Begin reflecting on and planning a sabbath vacation for your household that you could practice this year, using the principles of a weekly practice of the sabbath: activity that is restoring, replenishing, focused on celebrating the blessings of God in your life, and dreaming about what's next on your journey.

Session 3

Sabbath: A practice of new beginnings

Introduction: The practice of the sabbath, as we have learned, includes rejoicing in the completed work, the fulfilling work of God, and being refreshed and replenished through that time of celebration. But, the sabbath is also about looking ahead and prayerfully considering what is to come. Our time of rest and restoration is so that we can move forward to what God has in store for us next in His Kingdom work.

Diving Into God's Word:

Look up the following Bible passages and walk through the discussion questions for each.

- Read John 20:1-10.
 - What day do we typically consider the *sabbath*?
In western culture, the sabbath is usually taught to be Sunday, our day of Worship. In John 20, though, the sabbath is actually Saturday, and Jesus is raised to life on Sunday, the first day of the new week.
 - As we have been putting the practice of the sabbath in the context of Jesus death and resurrection, what significance or meaning do you see that Jesus rose on Sunday morning, the first day of the new week?
 - What implications does this have for our understanding of worship on Sunday mornings?
Instead of a just a time of rest and replenishment, which certainly takes place in our corporate worship gatherings on Sunday mornings, it is also a time of preparation for the week ahead, the continuation of the mission and purpose of God in our lives!

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.
 - What does Paul say is the new work we are now called to in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
 - How do you carry out this work every week?
 - As you consider what you have learned and experienced through *Living The Sabbath: A practice of fulfillment, delight and new beginnings*, how could faithful practice of the sabbath prepare you for the new-life mission Christ calls us to as His disciples?

Reflecting on Truth:

- What has challenged your understanding or perspective of the sabbath the most throughout this study?
- Where do you see the greatest need for alignment in your life with a Biblical understanding of the practice of a sabbath?
- How are you going to personally:
 - Celebrate the work that has been completed throughout your day and week?
 - Practice a daily and weekly sabbath?
- How is your household going to practice a yearly sabbath?
- What new beginning do you feel God might be calling you to at this moment in your life?

Next Steps:

1. Implement a practice of daily and weekly Sabbath.
2. Identify 1-2 individuals that you can share this study within your context – family member, friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc... - and schedule a time to meet with them.

Resource List

At Your Best: How to Get Time, Energy and Priorities Working in Your Favor. Carey Nieuwhof. Carey Nieuwhof Communications Limited: 2021.

Body Keeps the Score, The. Bessel van der Kolk, M.D. Penguin Books: New York. 2014.

Celebration of Discipline. Richard J. Foster. Harper One: New York, 1978.

Didn't See It Coming: Overcoming the 7 greatest challenges that no one expects and everyone experiences. Carey Nieuwhof. Waterbrook: 2018.

Faith Begins At Home: The Family Makeover with Christ at the Center. Mark Holmen, Regal Books: 2005.

Grasping for Breath: Inviting God's Spirit into your overwhelmed life. David Johnson and John Busacker. Emerald Books: Lynnwood. 2021.

Joining Jesus: Show Me How. Greg Finke. Tenth Power: Tyler. 2017.

Joining Jesus On His Mission: How to be an everyday missionary. Greg Finke. Tenth Power: Tyler. 2014.

Long Obedience in the Same Direction, A. Eugene H. Peterson. IVP Books: Downers Grove. 2000.

Ordering Your Private World. Gordon MacDonald. W Publishing Group: Nashville. 2017.

Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders. Reggie McNeal, Jossey-Bass: 2006.

People Fuel: Fill your tank for life, love and leadership. Dr. John Townsend. Zondervan: Grand Rapids. 2019.

Practice of the Presence of God, The. Brother Lawrence. Whitaker House: New Kensington, 1982.

Ruthless Elimination of Hurry, The. John Mark Comer. Waterbrook: Colorado Springs. 2019.

Sabbath. Dan B. Allender. Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2009.



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