

Small Groups and Home Study

Week of April 14th, 2024



Opening Prayer

A member of the group may open the time with prayer.


Focus on the Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17

Read from more than one translation of the Bible.

1. Are there any notable differences between these translations?
2. If any, name the main people, locations, events, things that are mentioned in the reading.
3. Which stories or events come before or after this reading? Do you see a connection?

Questions for Group Discussion

1. How does the practice of Sabbath serve as resistance against societal pressures and anxieties?
2. What values and assumptions does the Sabbath commandment challenge in our culture?
3. In what ways does the Exodus story of the Israelites escaping from Egypt illustrate the link between anxiety and oppressive systems?
4. What similarities exist between the Israelites' experience under Pharaoh's rule and contemporary societal structures?
5. How does the fourth commandment act as a bridge between our relationship with God and our relationship with others?
6. How does the Sabbath promote neighborliness and community care, contrasting with competitive and threatening systems?

- 
7. Reflecting on the study of the Good Samaritan, how does the speed of our daily lives affect our ability to act ethically and help others?
 8. How can individuals in positions of power contribute to or alleviate the anxieties and pressures faced by others?
 9. What practical steps can we take to integrate moments of rest and Sabbath into our busy schedules?
 10. How can we foster a mindset of Sabbath rest in our daily activities, promoting peace and neighborly concern?

Closing Prayer:

Falling Back into Reliable Goodness by Walter Brueggemann (On reading Exodus 20:8-11)

From the outset you called the world, “very good”! Unlike you, we find the world a dangerous, demanding locus for our lives: We are beset by fears of scarcity and running out.

We are visited by fears of falling behind and not measuring up. We are occupied with rumors of war, danger, and terror. We are frantic to protect our little places of well-being. We are weary of achieving and accomplishing. We are exhausted with neighbors who seem to us like competitors and threats. In our anxiety we find the world at best bearable, but less than “very good.” You, creator of heaven and earth!! You are so unlike us! You do the orderly proper business of creation, of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night.

You sustain the regularity of seasons, sun, moon, stars, and wind. And then you pause in confidence. sure that the world will hold, unworried about scarcity, certain about flourishing, unbothered about the threat of chaos. We imagine you peaceable, cherishing your good world, at leisure, not restless, anxious, or worried. We are so unlike you in our anxiety and fatigue. We resolve, nevertheless, in your presence, to be more like you, to imitate you, to fall back into quiet confidence and serenity. Like you, we may trust that your world will hold.

Like you, we may enjoy the good order of your creation. Like you, we may be at rest and unanxious. We are so unlike you; and you are so unlike us. And now, in this moment of honesty before you, we promise to replicate your restfulness, finding ourselves able to bask in your reliable goodness, unanxious, unafraid, unbothered, unworried, defined by your durable goodness. Amen.

Resource List

- [Sabbath as Resistance](#)
- [The Sabbath World: Glimpses of a Different Order of Time](#)
- [For Sabbath's Sake: Embracing Your Need for Rest, Worship, and Community](#)
- [The Sabbath by ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL \(Links to a PDF of the book\)](#)