

Sabbath Challenge

As the Industrial Age took off, some speculated that people would work fewer and fewer hours as technology made our jobs easier and faster. Philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote in 1932 that soon a person would need to work only four hours a day. Around the same time, John Maynard Keynes, an economist, felt sure that people would need to work no more than 15 hours a week by 2030. Not even close. We're working longer than ever. Compared to other developed countries, we Americans work longer hours each week and take less vacation. (Imagine having over 35 days of vacation like many western Europeans!) According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, we Americans work one month (160 hours) longer than we did a generation ago.

As a result we're twice as likely as workers to suffer from depression and anxiety, and we tend to die sooner of stress-related causes like heart attacks. Many of us lack what Bertrand Russell said working less would give us: "happiness and joy of life, instead of frayed nerves and weariness . . ."

"Sabbath" simply means "to cease or refrain from work" from the Hebrew word *shabbat*. It doesn't refer to one particular day over another, just "one day in seven" (Genesis 2:1-3). So God's original intention in commanding us to "Remember the *shabbat*, to keep it holy" was not to point out the *particular day of the week* that we should rest from work. He intends us to rest *one day out of seven*. Old Testament scholars point out that it seems God deliberately left the day of week unspecified to make room for Sunday worship under the New Covenant. At least, God didn't want us to make the *day* the issue, but rest in Him one day out of seven, on which Jesus teaches we should devote ourselves to piety (worship), mercy, and necessity.

So here's the challenge: **This week, choose one day as your Sabbath.**

- *Focus on rest.* Take a walk or a nap. Do no work or house projects. Do only what is necessary.
- *Focus on the Lord.* Listen to worship music, talk with Him, read His Word or a good book about your walk with Him. Give TV, internet, and non-Christian books and magazines a break.
- *Focus on relationships.* Spend some time with your family, other believers, or lost

Moms and Dads, help your kids keep the Sabbath. Our children tend to be busier and more stressed than ever these days. Academic achievement and sports are good, but they can drive our children into performance anxiety. Dr. Seuss had it right in *The King's Stilts*: "When we work, we *really* work. And when we play, we *really* play." So many people are telling us our kids need more extended times of unstructured, unsupervised, unplugged play—a child's version of Sabbath rest.

Work. Worship. Rest. Repeat.
the TEN series

The Gift of Rest

God gives us the Sabbath as a gift. It's an island of get-to in a sea of have-to.
Kevin DeYoung

1. What opinions have you heard and what practices have you seen when it comes to the Sabbath Day? What have you personally thought or practiced?

2. Read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. What reasons does God give His people for remembering the Sabbath? Do you think these reasons apply to us today? In what ways?

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Exodus 20:11

3. What exactly did it mean for the people of Israel to “keep the Sabbath holy”? Refer to the verses above and reflect on what Pastor Dan said in his message.

4. One Bible scholar wrote: “The proper observance of the Sabbath guards against people idolizing their own work and agendas.” Do you agree or disagree? How have you seen overwork affect your walk with God? Share a time when rest and time with the Lord really helped you.

5. What more do these verses teach us about keeping the Sabbath here and now?

- Genesis 2:1-3—

- Exodus 16:16-30—

- Mark 2:23-28—

- Colossians 2:16-17—

6. What helps you to unwind and rest each week? What could you do to make this time a “restoring retreat” with and for God?

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Exodus 20:8