

## SABBATH - STOP / REST / DELIGHT / WORSHIP

---



### QUESTIONS:

We are all at different seasons of our lives...thinking about where you are now and where you have been, is practising Sabbath (taking one day of rest in every seven) something that comes easily, or something you struggle with? Why is that?

What do you think of this statement, quoted in *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer?:

"The sabbath has largely been forgotten by the church, which has uncritically mimicked the rhythms of the industrial and success-obsessed West. The result? Our road-weary, exhausted churches have largely failed to integrate Sabbath into their lives as vital elements of Christian discipleship. It is not as though we do not love God - we love God deeply. We just do not know how to sit with God anymore...We have become perhaps the most emotionally exhausted, psychologically overworked, spiritually malnourished people in history"

*A J Swoboda "Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World"*

### SO WHAT IS THE SABBATH?

Firstly, Sabbath is a HOLY day, set apart and blessed.

Bible Passage: Exodus 20:8-11:

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour 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 animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 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. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

## Sabbath is a day of REST

There are two Hebrew words that can be translated for our English word “rest”:

**Shabbat** and **nuakh**

### Shabat

The Hebrew shabat means to “cease from.”

*Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. On the seventh day, God completed his work which he had done, and he rested (Heb. shabat) on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.*

**Genesis 2:1-2**

God ceases from his work because “it is finished” (Gen. 2:1).

### Nuakh

The Hebrew word **nuakh** means to “take up residence.”

For in six days, the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested (Heb. **nuakh**) on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath (Heb. **shabbat**) day and made it holy.

Exodus 20:11

When God or people **nuakh**, it always involves settling into a place that is SAFE, SECURE, and STABLE.

**QUESTION: Have you ever experienced Sabbath in that way? Share your experiences - both positive and negative.**

Sabbath invites us to stop and to rest with God in security, safety and stability. Sabbath is a gift from God, it is the practice of the presence of God. God dwells in the Sabbath - and wants us to dwell with him.

### OPTIONAL EXTRA

The theme of sabbath is woven throughout the Bible from Genesis to Jesus. The practice of Sabbath points to our future restoration in Jesus. The Bible Project has created a great 5 minute overview if you want to watch it together:

<https://youtu.be/PFTLvkB3JLM?si=FQzl-mBllep0WtCf>

## **SOME PRACTICAL TIPS:**

There is a fantastic website called <https://www.practicingtheway.org/> created by John Mark Comer which goes into some practical tools which can help us to experience God's rest and presence through the practice of Sabbath.

See the companion guide on how to start here: [The Sabbath Practice](#)

It would be worth reading the whole guide in your own time, but here is a brief summary below. You may want to discuss this as a LIFEgRoup and think about what the challenges of doing this might be. Or you might want to pick an activity that you can do together to celebrate Sabbath. Or maybe you just want to choose something to do and ask each other to hold you accountable to that. Reflect back the following week on how you did!

## **SUMMARY OF THE SABBATH PRACTICE:**

### **Week 1      STOP**

Week 1 explores the most literal meaning of the Hebrew verb shabbat - "to stop". To sabbath is, at it's most basic, to stop, to cease, to be done.

Pick a time to sabbath and give it a try. If an entire day is too much, you can start with a three-four hour time period.

Pick one to three Sabbath activities to enter into the spirit of Sabbath

- Light candles
- Bless the children
- Eat a meal together
- Express gratitude
- Sing
- Worship at church
- Go for a walk
- Have a nap
- Read - especially scripture
- Spend time alone with God
- Spend quality time with family and friends

### **Week 2      REST**

Week 2 explores the second movement of Sabbath - to rest.

Prepare for the day ahead of time, so that you can actually rest during the time you have set aside for God. This might include any of the following:

- Get the shopping done
- Prepare your meals

- Clean the house
- Run any errands
- Answer all your texts and emails in order to switch off your phone and devices
- Make plans to meet up with your family and friends

Prepare for some internal resistance. Is there something you might need to say “no” to? E.g. your phone, social media, the internet, TV and entertainment, shopping, social obligations, sports, weekend chores or work?

### **Week 3      DELIGHT**

Sabbath is designed by God as a day to give yourself fully to delight in God’s world, in your life in it, and ultimately in God himself.

Some ideas: plan to have a Sabbath meal together with friends or family (or your LIFEgroup!) where you share highlights of the week, bless each other and celebrate each other.

Make a list of activities that cause you delight and joy - and plan to do some of them during your Sabbath.

### **Week 4      WORSHIP**

This week elevates Sabbath from a restful, joyful day to a holy day of worship and delight in God himself.

- Rest in God’s goodness for a while.
- Maybe listen to some worship music
- Read a psalm
- Go for a walk in nature and reflect on God’s love
- Do some in depth Bible study
- Go to church
- Go to a communion service
- Find whatever way you are uniquely wired to enjoy God.

### **QUESTION**

As you look at these practices above, think about where you can feel resistance in yourself? Why is that?

What do you think the hurdles might be for you?

If there is just ONE thing that you will try to do next week - what will it be?