

Sabbath

Week 4: Embracing

Read aloud with your group:

On another sabbath [Jesus] entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him. Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?" After looking around at all of them, he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." He did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Luke 6:6-11

"The elements of embracing God's kingdom and his purposes move us beyond the repentance of ceasing and the faith of resting into the application of the Christian lifestyle. By embracing God's instructions in response to his immense grace and love, we choose to imitate God...The important point in all our imitation of God is its deliberate intentionality. We don't just think God's values are good. We embrace them wholly...To embrace is to accept with gusto, to live to the hilt, to choose with extra intentionality and tenacity."

Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, p. 100

"Sabbath, we must remember, has ramifications for the world that go far deeper than we recognize at first glance. Sabbath is economic justice.

Now we live in a 24/7 world. I can, at any hour, go to the grocery store and purchase what I need. I can email a colleague late at night and most likely get a response before sunrise...I can get anything, anytime, at my leisure. With all of this convenience, it is easy to forget the price tag of such conveniences: *others*. A 24/7 world requires a 24/7 workforce. The result is a kind of sabbath inequality where some rest and some cannot. In consumer society, we have been duped into thinking that life is about stuff...Our belief that we are limitless people who can either work endlessly or have others work endlessly for us without harmful consequences is wrong. Sabbath reminds us that the bottom line is more than making money, having experiences, and obtaining cultural power. Sabbath is also about nurturing and caring for people. The sabbath is a form of resistance against the powers of this world that say that people are mere cogs in a machine.

We all have the power to take a day a week from spending and purchasing. Such a practice, as difficult as it may seem, not only serves those who work in business but also helps to guard our minds and souls against the corrosive dangers of consumer idolatry.

Sabbath restores relationship back to its proper place. On the Sabbath, we turn our hearts and lives from the consumption and gluttony of knowledge toward each other...The kind of hyperactivity associated with having the world in our pockets is catching up to us. Sabbath settles us down."

A.J. Swoboda, *Subversive Sabbath*, p. 91-98,

Sabbath embracing is recognizing that God does something restorative in our practice of Sabbath-keeping—restoring bodies, minds, souls, and relationships. It is a restoration of the body, yes, but also restoration of humanity. That is what Jesus focused on. Through Sabbath practice, Jesus is inviting us to live into the new heaven and new earth. Sabbath teaches us to embrace the ways of God and to rest from the ways of the world that *dehumanize* us. We are not machines, we cannot intake and process endless information, and we are not made for consuming more *stuff*. Things get set right *in* and *around* us when we observe weekly rest. We remember who we are, we remember others, and this helps us to embrace the shalom God offers us.

Eugene Peterson mentions that, "Sabbath-keeping is not a matter of belief but of using time, not an exercise of heart and mind but of the body. Sabbath-keeping is not devout thoughts or heart praise but simply removing our bodies from circulation one day a week."¹

Deliberate intentionality with our actions communicates what we value. In our Sabbath practices, not only do we stop doing stuff, but we also engage in actions that imitate God. We rest from consuming (stuff, information) and spending and embrace what we already have been given. We rest from production and embrace our relationships.

Enjoy a meal with the people you love; celebrate time spent together; practice a spiritual discipline. Although at times that may seem counter-intuitive, living intentionally like this brings a fresh and lively character to life; it brings healing to our bodies and restores our souls.

Option: watch Week 4 video (5:16) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbBksCCOgr8>)

Some discussion questions for your group:

1. How has keeping sabbath been? Any new discoveries? What's still hard? What was joyful?
2. How might keeping sabbath be healing to you, your life, your community?
3. What are ways that you find yourself wanting "more?" What would it look like to rest from that and embrace what you already have?
4. Sabbath is a day to cease producing, striving, consuming, but it is also for embracing other life-giving practices. What kinds of Christian disciplines or practices do you think would be helpful to start practicing as a part of your sabbath observance?
5. What are ways of being in the world that you observe in others that shows a life imitating the ways of God?
6. What kinds of patterns fill your life right now? Do you ever feel scattered by your commitments? (Sabbath is meant to integrate the scattered things of our lives).
7. What if you started thinking about Sabbath as time to get creative and be more generous with your time, money, and energy? How might that change your perspective of "Sabbath?"

PRACTICE: Write it down

1. **What is one simple thing you have wanted to do but you've felt you "don't have time" to do?"** (e.g. reading a book for fun, calling a friend/family member for a longer conversation, cooking a favorite dish?) Plan to do that thing during this next sabbath.

Closing Prayer:

Gracious and empowering Lord, may our Sabbath worship empower us in living our walk with you every day. Empower us with the spirit of generosity. Strengthen and heal our community as we gather. In Jesus' name we pray; Amen.

¹ Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles*, 73.