

Sabbath

Week 3: Resting

Read aloud with your group:

¹How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty! ²My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ³Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young—a place near your altar, Lord Almighty, my King and my God. ⁴Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you. ⁵Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage. ⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. ⁷They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion. ⁸Hear my prayer, Lord God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob. ⁹Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one. ¹⁰Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. ¹¹For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. ¹²Lord Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Psalm 84

“A second meaning of the Hebrew verb *shabbat* is “to rest.” In the Hebrew Scriptures, to desist from labor is associated with resting—for God, people, animals, even the land...We might wonder how anyone can possibly truly rest when there is so much to do...[but] to have deliberately set apart a whole day for rest makes “the choice to rest” easier, because the discipline of observing the Sabbath has reoriented our entire week’s calendar...If the sabbath is the high point of the week, we spend three days getting ready (preparing for the bride) and three days afterward remembering it (the delight of the wedding)...a “rhythm of the sacred”...The more persistently we practice the discipline of preparing for the Sabbath in the three days preceding it, and the more thoroughly we enjoy its benefits in the three days following it, the more delightfully restful the Sabbath itself will be for us in its actual practice, as well as in its anticipation and remembrance as these transform the entire week.

Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, p. 53-54

“When we keep a sabbath, our entire existence begins to experience the ripple effects of rest. We sleep better. We are more aware of the people we are with. We have more energy. We pay closer attention to being people of gratitude. In other words, we enter into peace...the sabbath has a kind of healing effect within our lives.

The fact that one is exhausted when overworking eighty hours a week and never keeping a sabbath is not a prayer issue; it is an obedience issue...God is not likely to answer in prayer what you are unwilling to repent of. I suspect that we do not need to pray about our exhaustion—we need to learn how to rest. We need to act on taking a sabbath...when we do, sabbath rest begins a process of God repairing our broken bodies.

Sabbath is about wholeness.

Although our minds and emotions may not discern it at the time, when we take a day of sabbath rest, changes are beginning to take place deep inside us that may be indiscernible—we are being renewed, rejuvenated, remade in the shalom that Christ brings...Sabbath healing is spiritual, physical, emotional, social, and psychological.”

A.J. Swoboda, *Subversive Sabbath* p. 48-51

It’s a bit of a paradox that to rest requires some preparation. But the pace and posture of our society and lives won’t not allow for intentional rest to simply happen without our preparing for it. It takes some planning and shifting—making sure work, homework, cleaning, and other responsibilities are taken care of beforehand so

we can set them aside during sabbath without guilt and stress. This takes practice and will get easier with each passing week.

Psalms 84 invites us to rest – to be comforted by the peace of coming close to God. This can be really good news on days where we feel like we are just being carried along by stress and the pressure of the next big project. To rest, *really rest*, is something God calls us to enjoy with regularity. It's a gift to be received. But a gift we need to prepare to receive, otherwise it can be lost on us.

Option: Watch Week 3 Video (8:54) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xu5HZL7VogU>)

Some discussion questions for your group:

1. What have you observed about your sabbath keeping this past week compared to the first two weeks?
2. What do you need rest from? How can you rest spiritually, physically, emotionally, intellectually, socially? How can you help others to rest?
3. Why is rest important? Daily rest (sleep), weekly rest (sabbath), seasonal rest (holiday)? *Are you convinced that you need rest?*
4. What practices might help you rest this sabbath? (e.g. set up email autoreply for the weekend; rest from TV, Netflix, social media, phone; be outside).¹
5. “Hurry is not just a disordered schedule. Hurry is a disordered heart.” If you are [prone to] hurrying, ask: what drives this?”²

PRACTICE: Write it down

1. **Identify what you will need to do to be able to rest from productivity for a day.** (e.g. take half a day or some hours before your sabbath to take care of errands, clean, etc.) Remember the sabbath is not a catch-up day, it's a day of rest and delight.³
2. **What is one way you can rest this week during sabbath** (rest from screens; take a nap; take a walk, leisurely meal)? **One way you can play this sabbath?**

Closing Prayer:

Help us, Lord, to know ourselves in this Sabbath time. We often run away from the quiet, preferring the noise of our lives to what we may find in the quiet, and your still, small voice. Our schedules are often so full that when we finally stop, we fall asleep; but even in our sleep we toss and turn. We are exhausted, restless, and stressed Lord, and we need to find rest in you. Help us to know ourselves and draw close to you and the rest you offer us. We pray these things in the name of Jesus, Amen.

(Closing prayer adapted from “Christian Reflection: Sabbath” www.ChristianEthics.ws)

¹ Swoboda, 100.

² Swoboda, 100, quoting John Ortberg from *The Life You've Always Wanted*.

³ Swoboda, 86.