

Week 5: (S)ABBATH - The Practice of Rest and Enjoyment

Discussion Guide

Review (10 minutes)

Last week, we explored hospitality and friendship through the lenses of friendship, church, marriage, and family. We talked about three key practices: 1) G.R.A.C.E. 2) Being Present 3) Pursuing Relationships.

Take a moment to reflect on your week. Share your experiences. What challenges did you face in practicing hospitality and friendship? What were the joys or unexpected outcomes? How did you see God at work through your efforts to bless others, and how did these moments impact your own heart?

Introduction

The practice of Sabbath is countercultural in our busy, hurried, and often distracted lives. Today's discussion will help us explore why Sabbath is essential, why we resist it, and how we can embrace it as a gift to rest in his finished work and joyfully engage God, others, and our world in the present moment.

Discussion

Opening Reflection (5 minutes):

Icebreaker: Share about a time when you were close to burnout or actually burned out. What contributed to that burnout, and why is it important to protect yourself from it?

Biblical Foundation (15 minutes):

Read Genesis 2:1-3

In Genesis 2:2, we see that after creating the world in six days, God rested. It wasn't because He was tired but because the work was complete, and it was time to enjoy what He had made. This pattern of work and rest is a model for us. God gave humanity the gift of the Sabbath so that we might delight in our dependence on Him and celebrate His reign over creation. The Sabbath reminds us of two key truths:

1. We are not God. We can trust Him to not just complete, but perfect the work He has started. Taking Sabbath rest reminds us that the world can go on without us.
2. We are creatures, dependent on God not just for life but also for redemption. Sabbath helps us step away from the tyranny of busyness and recognize that true freedom comes not from our own efforts but from resting in the finished work of Christ.

Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15

In this passage, we learn that Sabbath is a way of living free in the gospel from enslavement to idols, especially work. Rest is a gift from God. God calls us to Sabbath **not to add another task to our to-do list but to joyfully receive afresh life and salvation as gifts from God**. The focus of the Sabbath is to remember that all of life is meant to be a worship response to the God who made us and saved us.

[Discuss] How does your understanding of Sabbath change when you see it as a gift, not a task?

Sabbath is like a wedding reception. Imagine a couple at their wedding reception. They've finished all the planning, decisions, and work. Now it's time to dance, laugh, and celebrate. In the same way, Sabbath is

a time to set aside work and simply enjoy the goodness of God. Are you too busy working for lesser joys that you don't take the time to enjoy God and His good gifts?

[Discuss] In what ways do you think busyness is preventing you from enjoying God and His gifts in your life?

Putting it into Practice (30 minutes):

The purpose of Sabbath is not simply to rejuvenate yourself in order to do more production, nor is it the pursuit of pleasure. The purpose of Sabbath is to enjoy your God, life in general, what you have accomplished in the world through his help, and the freedom you have in the gospel—the freedom from slavery to any material object or human expectation. The Sabbath is a sign of the hope that we have in the world to come. -Tim Keller

Sabbath is an invitation to trust in God's sovereignty and provision. It's a time to recognize that He is in control, and we can rest in that truth. As we practice Sabbath, let's consider how to find joy in the rest He offers and to live out of that rest in our daily lives.

WHY PEOPLE RESIST THE SABBATH

Tim Chester lists several reasons for why people resist the Sabbath. Which ones do you resonate with? How does this show that your resistance is a result of not being rooted in the gospel?

- I'm busy because I need to prove myself.
- I'm busy because of other people's expectations.
- I'm busy because otherwise, things get out of control.
- I'm busy because I prefer being under pressure.
- I'm busy because I need money.
- I'm busy because I want to make the most of life.

4 ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR THE SABBATH¹

- **Stop:** Trust God and leave unfinished work undone.
- **Rest:** Do things that replenish and delight you spiritually, physically, emotionally, and intellectually.
- **Delight:** Celebrate God's good gifts.
- **Worship:** Sabbath is relational, devoted to the Lord, not a personal vacation. Prioritize worship and establish traditions.

GUIDELINES FOR SABBATH

- Pick a day.
 - Coordinate to people.
 - Plan it
- Start simple. (e.g. unplug, walk, pray, light candles, don't do things that feel like work...)
- Evaluate / Assess
 - Is what you are doing creating more work?
 - Is what you are doing helping you rest in what Jesus has done for you?
 - Do you feel renewed and replenished for the other six days?

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for the gift of rest and the reminder that we are dependent on Him for life and redemption. Pray for grace to embrace the Sabbath as a rhythm of joy and worship.

¹ Drawn from Peter Scazzero's Emotionally Healthy Spirituality