

## **The Sabbath was Made for Man**

Luke 6:1-11

**(Discussion Guide on pg. 12)**

We live in a world that is constantly on the move. Big cities, like Chicago, and New York, are known for their non-stop activity. Chicago has been called the City of big shoulders and the city that works. New York has the reputation of being the city that never sleeps.

Now the names given to these cities are not meant to express a problem. These names are given to convey what people believe is something to be admired and commended.

You see, we live in a culture where hard work, putting in long hours at the office, and being busy, is celebrated.

Now, there is biblical warrant for commending hard work and sacrifice. The Apostle Paul wrote: *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup> knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.”* Col. 3:23-24

However, the same God that commanded us to give our best, also designed us in a way that in order to do so we must also give ourselves to rest.

**Main idea:** Sabbath rest was made for man's best.

To unfold this theme, I want us to learn 3 lessons about the Sabbath that will help us to do it well for our good and God's glory.

### **1. Sabbath is a time of rest from work**

What is the purpose of the Sabbath? To begin with, the **Sabbath is a time of rest from work**. Luke writes:

*“On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their*

*hands. <sup>2</sup> But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” Luke 6:1-2*

Was Jesus and His disciples violating the Sabbath as the religious leaders were accusing them of doing? I want to suggest to you that Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, walking through the grainfields with His disciples, gives us a window into what the Sabbath was meant to be.

Of course, the Old Testament also provides teaching on the purpose and practice of Sabbath. But the New Testament, and in particular the revelation of Jesus, is the fulfillment of all that the ceremonial law pointed to. Jesus is our ultimate rest, which is what it means to sabbath.

Concerning the Sabbath, we read in Exodus 20:11: *“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy”* (Exodus 20:11).

The word Sabbath here means to cease, to stop, or to rest. As I noted, Jesus is our ultimate rest. In the gospels, He declared: *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* Matthew 11:28

Could there have been a better way for the disciples to observe the Sabbath than by walking, talking, and eating with Jesus away from the crowds? The religious leaders missed it because they didn't see Jesus for who He is. He wasn't just the Lord of the Sabbath, as He would later declare, He is the giver and sustainer of life.

Now, we will talk more about the importance of learning to rest in Jesus. But it's important to note also that God made our physical bodies with a need to rest.

But in this fast-paced world, where many believe they must burn the candle at both ends or get left behind, many people today do not rest

well. Some people are so stressed out they find it hard to rest. Others simply neglect to rest so that they can keep on working.

Sadly, this inability or unwillingness to rest has also plagued many Christians today. This is often the case because many Christians have fallen into the trap of finding their ultimate worth and security in their work, rather than in Jesus, and what He's accomplished through His finished work on the cross.

Anyone here struggle to find the soul rest that Jesus promised to give? Although I've made some progress over the years, I still struggle with slowing down my hurried soul.

As Christian author Dallas Willard suggests, there's a world of difference between being busy and being hurried.

Being busy is an outward condition, a condition of the body. It occurs when we have many things to do. Being hurried is an inner condition, a condition of the soul. It means to be so preoccupied with myself and my life that I am unable to be fully present with God, with myself, and with other people. I am unable to occupy the present moment.

One busy Pastor, who fell into this performance trap, and became severely depressed in the process, wrote: "During my busy ministry season, I set a pace that was absolutely unsustainable. One night I was giving my daughter a bath, and as I was getting her out of the bathtub, she was a bit distracted by all the toys around her. "Clarissa, come on," I told her. We've got to hurry." She stopped me in my tracks when she asked, "Why, Daddy? Where do we have to be?"

A godly friend confronted me about this when I was searching for a way out of my darkness. "Your pace is unsustainable," he told me. "You are going way too fast." Depressed people often become angry with those who point out the obvious places they need to make adjustments. Honestly, I didn't want to change. I thought everyone else around me needed to change...I remember telling a friend, "The devil never takes a day off!" Perry, he replied, I'm not sure the devil is supposed to be your example!" Peter Scazzero

Beloved, if we have not learned to develop a godly rhythm of working as unto the Lord, and resting in the Lord, we will end up in a very unhealthy place.

In his book, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer writes, “So there is a day [according to God’s word in Exodus 20:11] that is blessed and holy. A rhythm in creation. Six and one. And when we tap into this rhythm, we experience health and life. But when we fight this rhythm—ignore it, suppress it, push past it, bully it, make excuses, look for a way to get out of it—we reap the consequences. Consider the mind: we grow mentally lethargic, numb, uncreative, distracted, restless. Emotional unhealth becomes our new normal. Irritability, anger, cynicism, and its twin, sarcasm, overwhelm our defenses and take control of our disposition.”

How many of you know, if we don’t learn to Sabbath voluntarily, we will end up doing so involuntarily.

Do you realize that God not only wired us to need sleep, but He designed our world in a way where the sun rises and sets to accommodate our need for sleep? This creative cycle should be a daily reminder to us that God is ultimately in control and is watching over us. Psalm 127:1-2

When we remember that our loving Father is in control, we can lay our heads down and sleep. And we can observe a Sabbath day of rest. And by doing so we are saying, “My Heavenly Father is in charge of my life, not me.” We recognize that He is on the throne, managing quite well in ruling the universe without us.”

Now, going back to our text, the religious leaders of Jesus day measured their spiritual health by the outward works of the law. In doing so, they turned the Sabbath, which was a gift from God for rest, into a complex set of burdensome rules.

To correct their faulty thinking, Jesus gave some examples to illustrate this vital principle that is found in the parallel account in Mark’s gospel:

*“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* Mark 2:27

Why were the Pharisees accusing Jesus of breaking the Sabbath? They were accusing Him because, among other things, they were so focused on keeping the letter of the law, that they lost sight of God’s heart and intent behind the Law. What is the heart and intent of the law?

In Romans 13:8-10, the Apostle Paul explained: *“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup> For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup> Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”*

Many of us are aware that the law reveals the holiness of God. But what some fail to see is the heart behind the law, namely God’s love. This is what the religious leaders in Jesus’ day missed.

Do you know that the Pharisees were not only well versed in the letter of the law, they added to it additional rules for how to keep the law. Regarding the Sabbath, for example, rabbinical rulings added many additional regulations for how not to break the Sabbath.

According to one of many rabbinical rulings, ‘If a building fell down on the Sabbath, enough rubble could be removed to discover if any victims were dead or alive. If alive, they could be rescued, but if dead, the corpses must be left until sunset (m. Yoma 8:7).’” Pillar Commentary

Now there were many more rules like this, which led the Pharisee to believe that Jesus was in violation of Sabbath law. In our text, they believed He was in violation because His disciples were hungry and plucked heads of grain and because He healed a man on the Sabbath (Mark 3:5).

But it wasn't just the additional rules that led them to believe Jesus was breaking the Sabbath. Again, they missed the heart and intent of the law, namely love. And because they didn't have God's heart of love, they turned Sabbath keeping into a rigorous burden, rather than receiving it as a gift from God for their good.

Notice that in response to the Pharisees accusation that Jesus was breaking Sabbath law, Luke records: *"And Jesus answered them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: <sup>4</sup> how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?"<sup>5</sup> And he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath."* Luke 6:3-5

In 1 Samuel 21:1-6, we find the event that Jesus is referring to when David had come to the temple hungry, and on the run from King Saul. During that time, he was allowed by the priest to eat the consecrated bread, although it was designated for the priests only.

The point that Jesus was making was that although the bread was designated by law for the priests only, God also loved and cared for David, the anointed King of Israel. Therefore, an allowance was made to meet David's desperate physical need.

So once again, although the Pharisees had religion, they didn't know the heart of God, which led them to believe it was wrong to heal someone on the Sabbath. And not only did they believe it was wrong, they conspired with other religious people to kill Jesus for doing so. Mark 3:6

Now, we are not talking about using love as an excuse for violating God's moral law or overlooking sin. To use David as an example, after he was well established as the King, he committed adultery with another man's wife. And God didn't overlook his sin. Through the prophet Nathan, David was confronted and held accountable. God disciplines those He loves.

Although it's challenging, there's a time to confront others in love who are caught up in sin, with the goal of restoration. But when we are more focused on imposing extra biblical standards on people, rather than meeting their greater needs, this is an indication that we do not know the heart of God.

As the Apostle John explained: *"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).*

Let me add here that we will not fully know the heart of God or take on His heart if we do not learn to Sabbath well.

## **2. Sabbath is a time to reflect in worship**

Secondly, the Sabbath is not only a time of **rest from work**, but it's a time to **reflect in worship**.

How did the Pharisees utilize their Sabbath? Were they making the best use of their Sabbath day? No! They were following Jesus around to see if they could find something to accuse Him of. Notice what they were preoccupied with on the Sabbath:

*"On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered.<sup>7</sup> And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. <sup>8</sup> But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. <sup>9</sup> And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"<sup>10</sup> And after looking around at them all he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. <sup>11</sup> But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus." Luke 6:6-11*

We see here that the Pharisees were so busy being the Sabbath Police, that although they claimed to honor the Sabbath, they were not doing a good job keeping it themselves. They were not resting

because they were too busy following Jesus around through the grain fields and into the Synagogue. And they were not following Jesus to fellowship with Him, but to find something to accuse Him of.

Moreover, unlike Jesus and the disciples, they weren't slowing down and rejoicing in the day that the Lord has made. Rather, they were all wound up and worried about what others were doing or not doing. They were quick to see the faults of others, even some that they imagined, but they couldn't see the faults in their own lives.

Again, I want to suggest to you that one thing that contributed to their self-righteousness and lack of compassion was that they didn't know how to Sabbath well.

In the parallel account in Mark's gospel, we learn that when Jesus looked around at the self-righteous religious leaders before healing the man, He was "*grieved at their hardness of heart.*" Mark 3:5

What produced their hardheartedness? They were relying on their own righteousness, rather than resting in the mercy and grace of God. Consequently, they were blinded to the needs of others.

The same can be true in our lives today. We will not be moved to mercy unless we recognize our own sin before a Holy God and our need for His grace and mercy. If we are not moved by the mercy God made available to us in Christ, we will not be moved to extend His mercy to others.

Now, if our hearts are to become tender to the ways of God and the needs of others, we must regularly **reflect in worship** on who God is and all that He's done for us in Jesus. Again, this is also a vital element in learning to Sabbath well.

In Genesis 2:1, we learn that after six days God completed His work of creation, and on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Why did God rest?



God didn't rest because He was tired. I want to suggest to you that God's rest carries the idea of delighting in His good creation. In Genesis 1:31, we learn that after completing His work of creation in six days, God pronounced it was very good. He enjoyed and delighted in His creation.

Similarly, we need to set aside extended time to reflect in worship on the good that has been accomplished, not because of what we've done, but because of the goodness of God in our lives.

What is the sabbath day for? "It's a day to stop and look back at what God has done and say, "God, you're amazing. You helped me." You may have started the week saying, "How am I going to get through this." But then we get to the end of the week and we marvel and say, "Wow, look at what God has done. Look at what He's accomplished in my life," and we worship Him." John Lindell

Sabbath is not just a time to stop and **rest from work**, but to stop so that we can **reflect in worship**. It's a time to stop and delight in God, in what He created, in what He's done, and in what He's accomplished."

If we don't stop to **reflect in worship**, to delight in God, to thank Him for meeting our needs, we will become like the Pharisees, hard hearted, faultfinding, joyless people. We will be more focused on what others are doing or not doing, rather than on helping to meet people's needs to the glory of Jesus.

### **3. Sabbath is a time of rejoicing in wonder**

Lastly, sabbath is a time of **rejoicing in wonder**. As I noted earlier, the Pharisees, who claimed to honor the Sabbath, were not enjoying it because they were too busy following Jesus around trying to find fault in Him.

In contrast, Jesus and His disciples appeared to be taking a leisurely walk through the grain fields, while enjoying God's provision.

To enjoy the gift of Sabbath, we must do more than just lay on the couch all day zoning out in front of the TV or on social media. Sabbath is not just a day off to prepare for the coming work week.

From a secular point of view, people take a day off to regain their energy so that they can be more effective at their work. This view of a day off can and does yield some positive results.

However, Sabbath is much more than that. Again, when God finished His work of creation after six days, He made a pronouncement that expressed delight.

*“And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.”* Genesis 1:31

As Peter Scazzero explained; “This was not an anemic afterthought—Oh, well, it’s nice to be done with that—but a joyful recognition and celebration of accomplishment. As part of observing Sabbath, God invites us to join in the celebration, to enjoy and delight in His creation and all the gifts He offers us in it. These innumerable gifts come to us in many forms, including people, places, and things.

As part of preparing to practice the Sabbath, one of the most important questions to consider is, “What gives me joy and delight? This will differ for each of us, but part of the Sabbath invitation is to enjoy and delight in creation and her gifts.”

Geri and I both delight in the beauty and grandeur of nature—the oceans, lakes, beaches, mountains, and star filled skies. Geri is a foodie, so tasting, smelling, and savoring the gift of food is a high priority for us. I delight in libraries and bookstores. Geri loves cooking a fresh meal. Through any and every means possible, on Sabbath we seek to feast on the miracle of life with our senses.”

Remember, in Exodus 20:11, we read that God blessed the Sabbath and made it Holy. In other words, God meant the Sabbath to be a benefit to us. It was not meant to become the rigorous observance that the Pharisees made it out to be.

Rather than criticizing Jesus, the religious leaders should have been learning from Jesus. After all, as He made known to them, *the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath*. He's Lord not only because He instituted it, but because the deepest and most satisfying soul rest is found in knowing Him and what He accomplished for us on the cross.

Now in light of the importance of sabbath, the question you may be asking is, what day should we set aside for Sabbath? In Jewish tradition, Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown Saturday. In most Christian traditions, and there seems to be evidence for this in the early church as well, Christians gathered for worship on Sunday the first day of the week in celebration of Christ's resurrection, which is identified as the Lord's Day.

It's important to note also that God's word in Romans 14:1-7 and Colossians 2:16 teaches that Christians have liberty to observe a special day or to observe every day as special. Moreover, God's desire is that we worship and serve Him continually. Many Pastors, because of how busy they can be on Sundays, set aside another day of the week as their Sabbath day.

## **Conclusion**

So what day should we set aside for Sabbath? The important thing is not what day, but that we intentionally set aside one day in seven to the Lord. What's more, that we set aside that day to **rest from work**, **reflect in worship**, and **rejoice in the wonder** of all that God in Christ has given us to enjoy in this life and for all eternity.

Remember, Jesus said, "*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:27). In other words, it was given as a gift of love.

So embrace the day that the Lord has made, and enjoy it to the glory of God, all the while never losing sight that Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath.

He not only instituted it, but it's through knowing Him and surrendering our lives to Him that we find inner peace, fullness of joy, and eternal rest for our souls.

## **Discussion Guide**

Read Luke 6:1-2; Exodus 20:11; Mark 2:27.

- What was the Sabbath day for?
- What does the word Sabbath mean?
- Why were Jesus and his disciples being wrongly accused of breaking the Sabbath?

Read Luke 6:3-11.

- Why did Jesus use the example of David eating the consecrated bread to refute the claims that they were in violation of the sabbath law? (Romans 13:8-10; 1 John 3:17)
- What led the religious leaders to believe that Jesus was in violation of the Sabbath because He healed a man on the Sabbath?

Read Luke 6:5; Genesis 1:31; Matthew 11:28.

- From a New Covenant perspective, what are some key principles for learning to sabbath well?
- What are some dangers for not learning to sabbath well?
- What are the benefits for learning to sabbath well?
- After six days of exercising His creative powers, we read in Genesis 1:31 that God saw everything that He made, and behold, it was very good. How can we apply God's enjoyment of creation to the practice of sabbath?
- What changes or commitments do you need to make to fully benefit from applying the principles of sabbath?