

Awakened through Sabbath Awakened to Grace Bible Study

Purpose: Explore understanding of Sabbath using applications from Christian scriptures.

Outcome: An appreciation of the practice of sabbath for Christian growth and witness.

Call to rest and renewal:

Let us declare together -

O sabbath rest of Galilee
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity interpreted by love.
Drop thy still dews of quietness
till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

John Greenleaf Whittier, 1872.

Let us pray:

Holy One, giver of Sabbath rest,

we will find our rest in you today. Grant us a glimpse of the rest you took on the first sabbath day of creation, that we may be inspired to live. Speak to our disordered spirits to restore in Christ Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. Amen.

Introduction:

Sabbath is about holy rest. In our busy lives this is a spiritual discipline that is most valuable to the Christian witness of God's love. Sabbath is more than a day of worship or as time set apart for worship of God. Sabbath is embracing rest in God by valuing the renewal of life balanced with creation. Rest is a sacred trust in communion with God. Rest as sabbath is life giving, honoring God and community wellbeing for being healthy.

Definitions of Sabbath in Scriptures:

⁸ Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. ⁹ Six days you may work and do all your tasks, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. ¹¹ Because the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:8-11 CEB

And

¹² Keep the Sabbath day and treat it as holy, exactly as the LORD your God commanded: ¹³ Six days you may work and do all your tasks, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. Don't do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your oxen or donkeys or any of your animals, or the immigrant who is living among you—so that your male and female servants can rest just like you. ¹⁵ Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, but the LORD your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That's why the LORD your God commands you to keep the Sabbath day. Deuteronomy 5:12-15 CEB

What is similar and different in the above texts?

Conversations about the nature of Sabbath as day of worship and significance for the covenant people (Israelites) are reflected in the scriptures.

1. Exodus 16: 23 - 29

A day of rest and a holy sabbath to the Lord. There is an appeal to the creation when God rested.

Why is this observance of rest in relation to the creation important?

- Divine instruction
- Care for creation and living things as sacred worth
- focus on God's place and human connections
- Other

2. Leviticus 16: 31 and Leviticus 23:3

A sabbath of special rest and the seventh day as designated worship day of rest, as time apart for community worship. The appeal to day(s) of community commemoration of divine intervention as continuation of sacred story.

Why commemorate such special sabbath rest?

- Remembering story for next generation
- Holding to value formation
- Keeping tension of truth living with now and ancient traditions of faith
- Other

3. Deuteronomy 5: 12-15

Keeping of the Sabbath rest. Sabbath is connected with the story of the Exodus. The people escape from constant exploitive work (no rest and oppression) that threatens their relevance and divine purpose (identity) for creation.

What is the value of connecting sabbath rest with the Exodus narrative?

Can your daily story be connected to observing Sabbath rest? Why and why not?

4. Nehemiah 10:31

Concept of rest from commercial activities, production and re-aligning to being in obedience as covenant people.

Please note:

- i. Exodus 20:8-11 does not prohibit buying food as a form of work
- ii. Leviticus 25: 2-7 show that sabbath rest for the land is important.
- iii. Isaiah 58: 13-14 rejects self-serving piety that pleases self not God on sabbath.

What do you notice from the above examples about the sabbath?

How can you apply your observation to keeping sabbath?

5. Matthew 12: 1-8

¹ At that time Jesus went through the wheat fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry so they were picking heads of wheat and eating them. ² When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are breaking the Sabbath law."

³ But he said to them, “Haven’t you read what David did when he and those with him were hungry? ⁴ He went into God’s house and broke the law by eating the bread of the presence, which only the priests were allowed to eat. ⁵ Or haven’t you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple treat the Sabbath as any other day and are still innocent? ⁶ But I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ If you had known what this means, I want mercy and not sacrifice, you wouldn’t have condemned the innocent. ⁸ The Human One is Lord of the Sabbath.” Matthew 12:1-8 CEB

The appeal is to the special role of Jesus as interpreter of the sabbath.

How is Jesus the “Lord of the sabbath?”

- Rest is about healing the whole person?
- Jesus brings compassion to the weary (Matthew 11:28)?
- Sabbath is time spent in the rest given by God?
- All of the above?
- Other.

Conclusion:

Promise of Hebrews 4:9

⁹ So you see that a sabbath rest is left open for God’s people. ¹⁰ The one who entered God’s rest also rested from his works, just as God rested from his own. Hebrews 4:9-10 CEB

All who accept the invitation to life in Christ Jesus have the promise of rest just like Israel did. Believers enter God’s rest “today” by (faith in God) and will enter God’s sabbath rest when they arrive at their final destination in the rule of God.

Questions:

1. How do you place priority on observing your sabbath during the week?
2. What are the challenges that hinder observing sabbath during the week?

Let us pray:

Lord of the Sabbath, breathe into me rest, increase faith, and use us to share holy rest with those we meet. Amen.