



practicing the way

sabbath

Rhythm

Based on last week's Practice

1. What did your Practice of Sabbath look like last week? If you weren't able to practice Sabbath this week, what got in the way?
2. Did anything about it surprise you? Perhaps it was easier/harder than you'd imagined? Or maybe you felt more/less rested after your Sabbath than you'd expected?
3. Based on your experience last week, what is your primary feeling as you think about continuing this Practice? (e.g. excited, dread, uncertainty, anxiety, peace, etc.)

Overview

In the days leading up to a road trip, there are likely several things you would do to get ready: make sure your car is full of gas, put the garbage out on the curb, ask a friend to check your mail and feed your cat, etc. If you neglect to take care of any of these things, odds are it would be difficult to be fully present on your trip and enjoy yourself and the people and activities around you! At inconvenient times, your mind would return to home—is Sprinkles okay? Did my Amazon boxes get stolen off my porch? Am I literally about to run out of gas? Even though a vacation is about getting away and having fun, taking care of some business before time off allows you to be fully present to the people and experiences around you.

Similarly—and like many other Practices of Jesus—Sabbath takes preparation in order to be enjoyed fully. In fact, in the ancient near east, the day before the Sabbath was called the “Preparation Day”. While Sabbath is about rest, it's best enjoyed with some preparation behind you. Much like a road trip, if we fail to prepare, it can be difficult to be fully present to Sabbath, and to enjoy it as the gift it is. Without preparation, it's easy to let the day get lost in things we “should” have done, or what we “could” be doing in the present.

It's important to note that some people will take more naturally to the idea of preparation than others. For some (any other Js on the Meyers-Briggs out there?), lists and prep work are as natural as breathing. For others, planning ahead can feel like “overthinking” or worrying too much. While authenticity is a high value in our culture, and it may seem as though organic experiences and planning are at odds with one another, structure and organic growth go hand in hand. Take organic produce, for example: every organic farmer knows that good produce requires trellises, pruning, and intentionality—all of which are forms of structure and preparation.

So, this week, in order to help us in our journey of Sabbath, we want to take some time and begin to talk through what helpful preparation for our Sabbath might look like.

Scripture

John 19:31, Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:1-8, Exodus 16:1-30

Discussion Questions

1. Did you listen to the teaching on Sabbath as Rhythm this week? What was the main takeaway for you?
2. Are you a person for whom preparation comes naturally? Or does the idea feel a little daunting?

Community Practice (tonight!) + Individual Practice (throughout the week)

What follows are two recommendations to consider as you think through preparing for your Sabbath. Feel free to pause after each and come up with other ideas!

1. Think through what it could be helpful to spend time doing the day or so before your Sabbath. Here are some ideas to get you started:

- Go grocery shopping and stock your kitchen with food
- Pre-make your dinner (soup, enchiladas, or some kind of casserole are great options)
- Clean or pick up your house or apartment
- Answer all phone messages and return all text messages (maybe even get your inbox to zero!)
- Plan out a rough schedule for your Sabbath. (This could even include setting up when and where you want to meet up with your friend for coffee or to go on a walk.) Remember, of course, to take it slow and give yourself plenty of space.
- Think of something you can do to make the day stand apart: a special dessert, a trip to Glaze King for donuts, a picnic at the park, a spiritual book you love, a friend with whom you want to have coffee, etc.

2. Consider turning off your phone and computer for the Sabbath (or, at least, limiting your time on these devices).

There are so many benefits to this, the least of which is that you are actually able to stay present to yourself and God when you aren't tethered to a device. The Sabbath was instilled by God for the people of Israel as a way to remind them that they are no longer slaves. Some people turn off their phones and laptops to remind themselves that they are not slaves to their devices. In reality, it can be easier said than done; we don't realize how tethered to devices we really are until we try to put them away for a bit. Here are some helpful ideas for how to make this happen:

- Actually put your phone and computer away in a box or closet after turning them off
- If 24 hours is just too much, or you aren't able to do it for some reason, try turning your phone on "Do Not Disturb" mode and only checking it every four hours
- Note: For those of you who think this is legalistic or way too hardcore, we simply encourage you to try it for a few weeks (ideally 3-4, as it takes awhile to get over the cravings of digital addiction)! If you don't feel a marked increase in peace and joy in your emotional health and spiritual life, then go back to normal.

Closing Questions

1. What preparations will you need to make prior to your Sabbath?
2. What can you do to make the Sabbath special for you? How about for your spouse, if you're married? What about your kids, if you're a parent?
3. What are the positive benefits of going a full day of the week without phone, social media, or email? Is this something you would like to try?