

SABBATH: TRAINING GUIDE

Abiding Practices for Missional Communities

Sabbath: A 24-hour period to cease from the restlessness of our work to find true rest in God as the one who sustains our lives and provides everything we need in himself.

WHY WE SABBATH

The Sabbath command occurs in both of the accounts of the Ten Commandments in [Exodus 20](#) and [Deuteronomy 5](#). In both of these accounts the command to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy are nearly identical, but the reasons given are different. Exodus 20 sees the reason for Sabbath sewn into the fabric of creation by God working for six days and resting on the seventh ([Genesis 2:1-3](#); [Exodus 20:8-11](#)). Israel was commanded to remember the Sabbath because that's what God did. In his rest he blessed it and called it holy, and in so doing he laid the foundation for the Sabbath command to come.

Deuteronomy 5 grounds Sabbath observance in the greatest salvation event of the Old Testament: the Exodus from Egypt. Israel was enslaved, but God had provided salvation and set them free ([Deuteronomy 5:12-15](#)). They weren't able to rest when they were slaves in Egypt. However, God ransomed and redeemed them and set them free in order for them to rest in the work of his salvation.

In light of these two accounts of the Sabbath command, our reason for Sabbath is two-fold. First, we remember that God rested from his work, blessed the seventh day, and called it holy; therefore, we follow in his footsteps. Secondly, we observe Sabbath in order to rest in the salvation of Yahweh.

Moving forward to the New Testament, in [Matthew 11:28-30](#) Jesus declared "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The very next verses at the beginning of [Matthew 12](#) depict Jesus correcting the Pharisees' legalistic understanding of the Sabbath. He taught that he is actually the "lord of the Sabbath" and that the "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" ([Mark 2:27-28](#)). The connection between Matthew 11 and 12 is clear in that Jesus personifies and inaugurates true Sabbath rest.

Jesus came in part to teach that the Sabbath is really all about resting in and worshiping God. It's also an opportunity for us to practice our faith in God as the one who created us and saved us. If we can trust him with our creation and salvation, then surely we can trust him with the day-to-day details of our lives as we rest in his provision.

His teaching in Matthew 11 and 12 highlights that the reason behind why we Sabbath is more important than the precise rules we have while practicing it. That being said, it's still helpful to have a plan for what you intend to do during Sabbath and what you intend to cease.

Consider putting away all technology, taking a nap, creating intimate moments with your spouse, engaging in life-giving activities outdoors, eating and drinking things you love, singing your favorite worship songs, taking a relaxing bath, and so much more.

Think about doing more of the things that draw your heart closer to God and doing less of the things that distract you, keep you busy, or drain your energy away from your Father in heaven. You don't have to do it perfectly. Simply begin with where you're at instead of where you think you should be.

Together let's all disengage from the hustle and bustle of life and engage our heavenly Father who created us and provided salvation. He has extended us this invitation to love and abide in him.

[Tim Keller writes:](#)

"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."

SABBATH IN COMMUNITY

As with almost all of the Abiding Practices, Sabbath isn't something for us to do only as individuals, but it's also something to be practiced in the context of community. It's vitally important for us to practice Sabbath through the three rhythms of a Missional Community: Family Gatherings, DNA Groups, and Neighborhoods to Nations.

Family Gatherings

As mentioned before, we want to explore Sabbath in the context of community. A great starting place may simply be asking how every person currently practices Sabbath delight. Your Missional Community could commit to a day of rest once a month and engage in life-giving, restful activities together. Many Missional Communities attend the Sunday gathering together. A simple way to practice Sabbath is by eating lunch together afterward before engaging in restful and life-giving activities that afternoon.

DNA Groups

DNA Groups are designed to be the place where we most fully let down our guards to vulnerably share our struggles. It's then that we are met with the compassion and empathy of Jesus through the words of our brothers and sisters. Sabbath rest is an incredibly difficult thing to engage in, so be honest with your DNA about how it's going. There is no "failure" or "success," but simply the effort to try. Take Jesus at his word when you engage the "D" of DNA and Discover him in the Scriptures where he says "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden." Lean into the "N" to Nurture One Another's Hearts when you're discouraged that your schedule is so busy and you can't see how you'll ever be able to practice true Sabbath rest. Press into the "A" of Acting With Accountability to keep yourself from sliding into a ditch on either side of Sabbath. We're prone to struggle with a discouraging perfectionism on one side, or we fall prey to apathy on the other side that prevents us from even trying.

Neighborhoods to Nations

On the surface we may wonder how Sabbath is practiced in the rhythm of Neighborhoods to Nations, but Sabbath is more than a day off from work. It's an attitude and way of thinking in which we trust God to continue working even in our resting. One of the beautiful graces of the gospel is the fact that we can rest in God's sovereign plan to provide salvation to all nations. We rest in the fact that God is the one who saves. If we know this to be true, then we will exercise our dependence on him as we Sabbath and entrust our hearts, our families, our neighbors, and the nations to him. We can rest in the promise of Matthew 24:14 that the "gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." God will ultimately fulfill his plan, and he will do it even as we rest in him.

"In a culture where busyness is a fetish and stillness is laziness, rest is sloth. But without rest, we miss the rest of God: the rest he invites us to enter more fully so that we might know him more deeply. "Be still, and know that I am God." Some knowing is never pursued, only received. And for that, you need to be still. Sabbath is both a day and an attitude to nurture such stillness. It is both time on a calendar and a disposition of the heart. It is a day we enter, but just as much a way we see. Sabbath imparts the rest of God—actual physical, mental, spiritual rest, but also the rest of God—the things of God's nature and presence we miss in our busyness."

- Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*

SAMPLE COMMITMENT

Below is a sample commitment that you may find useful as you seek to Sabbath in community. There is no one-size-fits-all approach so you can simply use this idea as a catalyst for your Missional Community to contextualize how you Sabbath together. Be open to how the Holy Spirit may lead you to more deeply rest in the finished work of Jesus as a group.

SABBATH COMMITMENT

Missional Community Leaders: The Sosas and The McGuires

Date of Commitment: September 2022

Date to Reevaluate Commitment: December 2022

Commitment

Our Missional Community is committed to Sabbath together as a group on the first Sunday of each month.

Family Gatherings

We will move our Family Gathering from the first Monday of the month to the first Sunday of the month. We will attend the Sunday Gathering together before meeting to eat lunch together. After lunch everyone can head home for a nap before meeting up to engage in a life-giving activity together. The following will be our tentative plan for each Sunday:

- September - Hangout/Swim at the River
- October - Disc Golfing and Park Time
- November - Thanksgiving Gathering and Dinner (in lieu of lunch)
- December - Christmas Gathering and Dinner (in lieu of lunch)

DNA Groups

Each member of the DNA Group will commit to a specific 24-hour period each week to Sabbath and share that information with the fellow members of the DNA Group. They will commit to praying for one another and holding one another accountable to their commitment.

- Pray for rest in their identity in Christ
- Pray for rest in the presence of Jesus
- Encourage one another to cease from work and rest in Jesus

Neighborhoods To Nations

We will devote specific time to praying for our neighbors and the nations while encouraging one another to rest in the Father's plan to redeem people from every nation, tribe, people, and language. We will remind ourselves of the gift of salvation and the opportunity we have to rest in Jesus because he has redeemed us and will ultimately bring us to rest in him eternally.

- We will thank the Lord for his work of salvation
- We will pray for specific peoples and nations that come to mind as we rest

Conclusion

Again, this is simply an example that your Missional Community can use to begin engaging in Sabbath together. We have plenty of resources that we would love to provide if you have any questions about how to practically do some of these things. Simply email us at mc@summitcrossing.org.

SABBATH RESOURCES

We would encourage you to engage with the following resources as you discuss how to implement the Abiding Practice of Sabbath.

Recommended Sermons

[Work and Rest](#) - Tim Keller

[Entering God's Rest](#) - Mason King

[Commune/Sabbath - Life in the Vine: Practices for Abiding in Jesus](#) - Paul Whaley

Recommended Books

[Invitation to Retreat](#) - Ruth Haley Barton

[The Rest of God](#) - Mark Buchanan (quoted above)

[The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry](#) - John Mark Comer

Recommended Articles

[Keeping the Sabbath: Is It Still Relevant to Christians Today?](#) - Bible Project

[Sabbath: An Enduring Principle for the Soul](#) - Justin Huffman

[Wisdom & Sabbath Rest](#) - Tim Keller (quoted above)

Recommended Podcasts

[What Does It Mean Practically to Keep the Sabbath Holy? / Ask Pastor John](#) - John Piper

[Practice Sabbath Delight: Part 2 / Emotionally Healthy Leader Podcast](#) - Pete Scazzero

[Sabbath / Fight Hustle, End Hurry](#) - John Mark Comer & Jefferson Bethke

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