

Sabbath

- So, last week I know Alex talked about self-care and specifically taking care of your mental health.
- Originally we had planned to discuss a different discipline this week, but after Alex's self-care presentations and also just some things I personally have been dealing with, I felt like we needed to go a different route.

WHAT IS SABBATH?

- Have you ever had a day where you wish you had more time. Like the day has been super busy and you just don't have time to do everything you need to do.
- I've had one of those days today. I got to the church this morning and had to finish preparing for tonight's service, then in the middle of the day I had back to back appointments where I had to meet up with people, the first one was at 1 and lasted an hour, then the second was to start at 2 but because I had to travel to get to the second meeting I was late. Then after that I had to come back to the church and finish up what didn't get done in the morning it was a busy busy day. And it is super easy to have days like that begin to pile up.
- I mean my life when I was your age was constantly busy. I'd get to school at 6:45 because I was on our schools morning tv announcements program, then after school I'd have track, and then a theater rehearsal or sometimes a meet or something like that, and often times I wouldn't get home until 10. I'd do homework and start it all over the next day.
- I was always super busy, and often still am, and I never feel like there's enough time and then I read a passage like this- Exodus 20:8-11
- Like what am I supposed to do with this God? You want me to take a whole day each week to rest and worship you? Ain't nobody got time for that.
- But the reality is, God wants us to rest. We have such busy lives, yet God wants us to take time for Him, to rest and recharge. It's for our physical health, mental health, and our spiritual health that he wants us to do this.
- In fact he established this thing called the Sabbath from the very beginning of Creation. Let's look at some scripture:
- Genesis 2:2-3
- So, God creates everything in six days and he rests. But, did God really need to rest? Like does God get tired?
- He didn't need to rest, but He wanted to set the example for us, that it is good for us and our health to have a day of rest.
- As time went on in history, God gives a set of rules to His chosen people. One of those rules was on the sabbath.
- We read Exodus 20:8-11
- He gives them this command again in Leviticus 23:3 (read it)
- What do you think these verses are saying? What is this commandment saying?
- God is commanding Israel to rest on the seventh day. He wanted them to have a sabbath day. A day in which they would rest from all work, and they would gather together to worship Him.
- We see this happening in the New Testament. Jesus and His disciples gathered in the synagog and worshiped God on the Sabbath. In fact one Sabbath Jesus took part in leading worship by reading Scripture. You can read about it in Luke 4:16-28.
- As I studied information on the sabbath, I believe that God gave this command as a gift. It was not meant to be something that would be a burden on us. It was not meant to be something to be used as a sign that we are more holy because we take a day to rest and worship. Rather it was meant to be a gift to promote a healthy lifestyle, and as a way to grow closer to God.
- It is natural for us to be on the go all the time. I talked about it from my own experience earlier but also, Listen to this song by Andy Mineo
- Did you catch the first thing Andy said... "I feel guilty every time I watch TV. I feel like I should always be working." Essentially Andy is admitting to being a workaholic, he never feels like there's enough time in the day, and that he's always in a rush! He feels guilty if he takes time to relax.

- But God tell us in His word that it's important for us to take time and stop and relax.
- The Word Sabbath, literally means to stop, stop labor, cease working. So God tells His people every 7th day they are to stop working and worship Him.
- For Israel, God's chosen people that meant that the sabbath was from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night.
- During that time they did no work, men didn't shave, you couldn't even walk that far. There was such a thing as a sabbath days walk, which they measured out and said it couldn't be more than 2,000 cubits (approximately 3,000 feet). That's not even a mile. It's not far.
- See, the point of the sabbath was to rest your body and your soul in the Lord. God wanted you to recharge by communing or spend time with Him. But, the Israelites made it something legalistic.
- As with all the spiritual disciplines, practicing the sabbath isn't something that can earn you your salvation. We don't earn that. Practicing the sabbath doesn't make you a holier person than someone who doesn't. The point of practicing the sabbath, the point of practicing these disciplines we've been teaching you is to help you grow closer to God.
- But Israel, felt that by practicing the things that God asked of them would be what saved them. See rather than looking at His commands as opportunities to grow closer to God, they looked at them as the means by which they were saved, and that's what legalism is. It got very bad. Look at these stories and situations that Jesus encountered:
- Mark 3:1-6 : See the Pharisees were angry with Jesus because He healed a man on the sabbath. In their view healing someone was work.
- Mark 2:23-25: The disciples were hungry, so they were picking grain to eat. The Pharisees again were angry with Jesus and His disciples over doing what they perceived as work.
- Now, I want to continue looking at this story because there is a very important point to God's view of sabbath. Read Mark 2:26-27.
- Look again at what Jesus says in verse 27. He said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. What does He mean by that?
- Jesus is calling out the religious leaders saying that they are trying to conform the behaviors of people to the Sabbath, but in reality the Sabbath was created to be a help not the burden it had become.
- So now, as followers of Jesus should we practice a sabbath day rest?

SHOULD CHRISTIANS PRACTICE THE SABBATH?

- The answer I'm going to give you is that it is highly recommended.
- What do I mean by that?
- Read Romans 14:5-6
- Essentially what Paul is talking about here is something called Christian liberties. These in many cases are things that would have been considered wrong under what's called the old covenant, but because Jesus started a new covenant they've become something of a gray area. He seems to include the practice of esteeming a day as better or more holy than another.
- But, in other passages of Scripture Paul and other writers of the Bible say that we should not neglect gathering with other believers. Gathering together to worship the Lord was a major part of the practicing the sabbath, but it was not all there was to practicing sabbath.
- Let's pause here for a moment, before I go on with this thought. It's very important that I give you a good definition of sabbath before we go further.
- Sabbath is a 24 hour block of time in which we stop work, enjoy rest, practice delight, and contemplate God.
- Now, let's move back into the discussion we were having. Traditionally Israel observes the sabbath Friday night into Saturday night, the end of the week. But, at some point when christianity came on the scene, Christians began to observe the sabbath on Sunday, the first day of the week.
- Sunday is of course the day we gather to worship the Lord, but is it really practicing a sabbath day?
- How many of you have worked on a Sunday? I have, when I was in high school and college I worked at Wal-mart, they paid an extra dollar per hour to work on a Sunday. So I did. Some people cannot avoid working on a Sunday now.

- So, maybe I'm being unscriptural here, but as I've studied the idea of the sabbath yes is to worship God. But we gather together on Wednesday to worship as well. And Paul seems to say it's important that we gather together to worship, but when the early church began you were not required to take up Jewish customs and traditions to be saved. Again practicing the sabbath doesn't save you.
- But, it is a good thing, and honestly I believe it's a necessary thing. But, as I've studied this issue, under the new covenant it doesn't seem that we are required to esteem one day as higher than the other. We'll talk more about worship and gathering to worship in a later week. But, sabbath and corporate worship (meaning gathering together on a certain day) may not be married together.
- Think about it, by the straight definition of work Pastors work on Sunday. The day most Christians consider the sabbath. So how can I and other pastors practice the sabbath if it has to be Sunday.

TIPS FOR PRACTICING SABBATH

- So, I want to share some tips with you on how to practice sabbath.
- They follow the definition I gave you earlier: Sabbath is a 24 hour block of time in which we stop work, enjoy rest, practice delight, and contemplate God.
- **Stop**- first we need to stop, set a day where you will cease work. Embrace your limits and do away with this illusion that we should be working all the time. Yes we were created to work, and work is a good thing, but we also need to take time and stop.
- **Rest**- once you've stopped we need to accept God's invitation to rest. This doesn't mean you sleep all day or just veg out and binge watch your favorite show on netflix. It means you should engage in an activity that you know will restore and replenish you. Maybe take a hike, get together with friends and play a game, eat good food, read, maybe it is taking a short nap. The key is to rest from work and take time to replenish yourself.
- **Delight**- After God finished creating the world He said it was very good, look at Genesis 1:31. This is not an afterthought, but rather this is God joyfully celebrating this accomplishment. When observing the sabbath, take time and enjoy what God has given us. So when practicing a sabbath rest, you need to ask yourself what brings me joy and delight? Once you answer that question that gives you an activity that you can rest in and do on your sabbath.
- **Contemplate**- This may be the most important part of your sabbath. See the whole idea of sabbath is to rest in the love and glory of God. Pondering the love of God, and God Himself, needs to be the central focus of our sabbath. When you take a sabbath you are not taking time off from God, but rather drawing closer to him. See here is an interesting thought, when we practice sabbath we practice eternity in time.

CONCLUSION

- There is a lot to consider when talking about the sabbath, but again I want us to focus on the fact that all our spiritual disciplines are designed to draw us closer to God.
- The idea of sabbath is that we are taking a 24 hour block of time to rest, recharge, and that rest and recharging is to come from God.
- Ultimately as we finish this lesson up I want us to go back to Mark 2:27, the very end of that verse Jesus says the son of Man is lord even of the sabbath. What this means is that Jesus is our ultimate sabbath.
- Think about it, the sabbath is designed to recharge us and grow us closer to God. Not make us more busy or give us another thing to do on our to do list. Jesus does that, He recharges us, He restores our souls, and because of His death and resurrection we have the ability to grow closer to God and have that relationship with Him that He wants.
- Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:28-29, 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.
- Jesus is the way to true sabbath with God.
- Invitation—Invite those who haven't found rest in Jesus to find that in him, and those who have been saved, challenge them to begin finding a way to take a sabbath day rest.

Further Study:

OTHER PASSAGES TO READ:

1. Leviticus 25:1-6
2. Matthew 12:1-8
3. John 7:21-24
4. Hebrews 4:9-13
5. Hebrews 10:25
6. Colossians 2:16-17

Helpful Links and Videos

- [Keeping the Sabbath: Is it Still Relevant to Christians Today?](#)
- [Steps to a Meaningful Sabbath](#)