

Sacred Rhythms: Sabbath

Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Matthew 11:27-30; Luke 12:22-34

Introduction: We are in the Sacred Rhythms: Love God. Love Others Series. We're essentially discussing the ceremonies and rituals that we observe from the Bible. More specifically, we are looking at the details of how these are more than just habits. They are intentional practices with a deep seated meaning behind each. We've covered Salvation, Baptism, and Communion. Today we will study the Sabbath (or the Hebrew word *Shabbat*).

What Shabbat is Not: There are a few incorrect, yet unsurprisingly popular ways to view the Shabbat. Some see it as a holy day put forward as yet another rule. Yet another thing tacked on to a bunch of DOs and DONTs, and if you don't keep the rule, they'll stop you at the gate when you buy the farm.

Others may see it as a mini vacation with the thought that God didn't want me to work so hard. This can even become a Kingdom authorized excuse to not work and to be lazy.

Another thought could be a time tax given by God. He wants 10 percent of my money and 17% of my week.

Finally, it could be viewed as a marker for the 'elite'. You know a real Christian by how often they show up on Sunday.

Definition of *Shabbat*: *Shabbat* literally means "Stop". Like a Hard-Stop as in, you have no choice but to halt. So what is it that God is wanting us to stop? It is pretty clear from the scriptures. He wants us to stop working but also keep it Holy. Does this mean you don't pray or praise or minister to the needy the other 6 days. No. You keep it Holy in another way, but more on that later...

References: Read Exodus 20:8-11. Here the Sabbath is portrayed as, "Remember God's Example". It was seen as kind of a Cosmic Rhythm. A force of the universe. It was observed to remember He who rested on the 7th day. Remember Who is in control and for Whom you were created.

Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Here it is portrayed as, "Honor your Rescuer". It's seen as almost a mini-passover. Remember God's deeds. Remember Who is in control and for Whom you were created.

Why?: Why take a day? Why is there a focus on Remembering that God is in control and that we were created for Him and His good will?

It is very very easy to get lost in your own toil, to think that your actions are the greatest factor in your destiny, and to forget that it's not about acquiring enough funds or power to help people with the strength of your own arm. It's about choosing to lay down your will for His greater will and His greater cause.

It's all about that choice. In striving day to day, it's easy to let your work and your ambition become the center and to become your god.

Many think that slacking off and downtime would be more tempting as a false-god. However, boredom cures that often enough.

It's the essentials and the thought of fixing everything ourselves that becomes the real problem: the little gods of Survival and Self-Reliance and Chasing my own will.

Have you ever seen what super rich people do when they no longer have to worry about acquiring stuff, or food, or money? How often do they kick back and leave everyone alone? They usually go to meddling with all the 'poor destitute masses'. They're bored. Survival is too easy so now they serve the toil for others. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but it certainly becomes an idol in place of God...an idol usually of their own will.

The biggest threat is the false-god of self-sufficiency. Shabbat was emphasized, even as a commandment, to give you a constant, weekly reminder that God is in control, and you need to trust in his abundance such that you don't give in to the lie of scarcity. God can miraculously provide whatever it is that you need in your most dire moment. So if you find yourself in a dire moment, you can trust that He's already planned for that circumstance. The Shabbat is a weekly practice to acknowledge, "God is all I need. God provides, not me. God's plan needs to happen. Not mine."

Why strive?: If God has everything covered and I'm to trust Him, why not just give us a permanent vacation now? As I've said before, God's not here for your comfort. He's here for your character. He doesn't just want a person. He wants a good person. That takes adversity.

We're given 6 days to strive for our ambition. We're then given 1 day to align that ambition with God, recall that God is still in control no matter how hard life is, recall that God owns us, and all we have, and the results of our labor.

So keep it. Own its remembrance. Set it apart. Keep it holy.

Worry: One final thing is accomplished by taking this day. It reminds us to put our worries to death.

Read Matthew 11:27-30. If it was all up to me, how frustrating is it when I can't fix the world? If it was all up to me, how frustrating is strife in the community that I can't get in front of and stop? If we strive on our own and not take Shabbat, we try to take the world on our shoulders. Eventually, we won't be able to handle it and that weight will crush us. But if we have Jesus to lean on and trust, the outcome is not all up to us. It is up to Jesus. We don't have to worry about saving the world on our own.

Read Luke 12:22-24. God has chosen to include us but He has not cursed us to lift everything ourselves. He knows how heavy that is.

Long Sentence Summary: *The reason for the Shabbat is to give one day of the week back to God in order to remind us that, although the concerns and necessities of life are instrumental to*

develop your character; it is God who is ultimately in control of the cosmos, and He works it to His ambition, above ours, which is always to our good. Realizing this every seven days will guard you against the fallacies of worry, sorrow, and urgency; such that you can remember in whom you have believed in.

Reflection: Some of us may not know what the rest we speak of is. Some of us may not think that we can stop long enough to take a rest. But the burden is light when you realize God has offered to carry it. Life won't get easier, but Jesus does take away the burden of heaving the weight of your own fate.

If you have not already done so, I invite you to please turn over the burden of worrying about your destiny, and let Him carry that. It's pretty simple. Just trust that He intends good for you, and invite Him to take that burden.

Reflection Questions:

- The Sabbath is more than just halting work. It is a time to spend in God's presence to refresh our souls, realign with God's will, and recharge in order to be ready for the next 6 days of working for God's Kingdom. Going to church is a great way to have a set time for this. However, there are other ways you can accomplish/observe Sabbath.
 - What are some other ways you observe the Sabbath?
 - Does the Sabbath have to be observed only on Sunday?
- When the Israelites were freed from slavery in Egypt, they would be able to observe rest in God they did not receive in the years of slavery. They would remember not only God's example of rest during creation, but also remember God's faithfulness and provision. In our observance of the Sabbath, we too can look forward to the time after Jesus comes back to provide us with true rest in Him and freedom from our worries.
 - What are some burdens/worries you need to turn over to God?
 - Is there anything you are trying to control yourself that you need to let God handle?
 - Do you feel guilty for something that did not turn out the way you thought it should, even though you had no control over it?
 - How can you turn that over to God?