

“Sabbath” (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry Pt. 4)
(Gen. 2:1-3)

- **Ignore at Your Peril**

- What if I told you there was a *simple practice* that has the power to *save your life* from the insanity of this world’s noise and hurry—that this practice can *save marriages, families, and friendships from atrophying*; that this practice has been proven by research to improve physical and mental health; that one study even found that communities which consistently uphold this practice lived on average *10 years longer* than the surrounding population? What if I told you that this simple practice is a core commandment in the Scriptures, seen at key moments in the Old Testament and in the life of Jesus? What if I told you that the Bible says this practice is built on a rhythm that was woven into the fabric of creation? What if I told you that this practice is one of the most blatantly-ignored spiritual disciplines in the modern Western Church? You’ve probably guessed by now what we’re talking about—anyone? **Sabbath.**
- As we just noted, this practice is built on something that apparently God established at the beginning of Creation—it’s the only one of the 10 Commandments that’s directly linked with the creation of the world. So, here’s our Scripture for today: **“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.” (Gen. 2:1b-3)** With that, *let’s stop, and pray.*
- J.D. Walt wrote a poem about Sabbath: **“Breathe / rest in Rest, holy Leisure—airtight Time: / Sabbath. / hearing Ears, Creation slowing—open Eyes: / Sabbath. / guiltless Feasting, sacred Rhythms—Heaven Hugging: / Sabbath. / Nothing-doing Nowhere-going—Work unknowing: / Sabbath.”** That sounds pretty awesome. But if you’re anything like me, you don’t necessarily think of *that* when you hear the word “Sabbath.” I used to think of sabbath as a dry, boring, legalistic kind of thing for a bygone era, an optional observance from a traditional culture. To actually practice the Sabbath seemed on par with becoming Amish or Mennonite, cutting off electricity—it sounds kind of nice, but not realistic. Then two things happened:
 - First, I became an adult, and *life got complicated*—I flirted so long with burnout that I was *forced* to rethink how I structured my life and how God wanted me to live. Second, I began to study Scripture more deeply and realized how profound and life-giving the biblical principle of Sabbath really is. And for the last 10 years, like a kid learning to ride with training wheels, wobbling down the sidewalk, my family gradually, painstakingly learned how to prioritize and *enjoy Sabbath.*
- Many Christians make excuses and justifications for why we don’t need to do this anymore. The biggest one we use is something like: *that was an Old Testament thing, we live in the New Testament! Israel lived under the Law. Jesus fulfilled the Law, so we don’t have to!* And of course, that’s true to a degree—but I wonder if we really understand it. I mean, the Sabbath is *number 4 of the 10 Commandments.* What if we took this same approach with the other 9 commandments? *Idol worship, honoring your parents, murder, adultery, stealing, lying, coveting*—how would our lives go if we treated these commandments like we tend to treat the Sabbath? This is how I started to realize: maybe I was ignoring God’s command to rest *at my own peril*, maybe that applies to our *entire society.* Maybe I thought I was gaining something—but by ignoring God’s wisdom, *I was losing.*

- **Just STOP**

- Why is it so hard for us to do this, anyway? Like, stop and think of how ironic it is that God has to not just suggest, not just invite, but *command His people to rest!* What’s wrong with us? Through the ages, Scripture, and poets, and philosophers have pointed to this strange fact of human nature: *our desires are infinite. We have in us an unrelenting desire and it seems like no matter how much we get, we are never fully satisfied.*
 - Ecclesiastes says, **“He has planted eternity in the human heart...” (Ecc. 3:11 NLT)**

- Augustine said, **“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in thee.”**
 - More recently, Dallas Willard put it this way: **“Desire is infinite partly because we were made by God, made for God, made to need God, and made to run on God. We can be satisfied only by the One who is infinite, eternal, and able to supply all our needs; we are only at home in God. When we fall away from God, the desire for the infinite remains, but it is displaced upon things that will certainly lead to destruction.”**
 - Into this fallen world of endless striving, ceaseless cycles of scratching the itch until we bleed, never-stopping, never-resting, never-being full satisfied even after we get what we want, God gave this simple command to His people: *stop*. Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word “shabbat” and it literally means *“to stop.”* Stop working, stop worrying, stop wanting, *just stop*. And *rest*. And *worship*. Every 7 days. All of your life. **“6 days shall you labor, the 7th is the Lord’s.”**
 - Creation culminated, in the very beginning, with this blessed, holy, set-apart day of rest: after the unimaginable work of the creation of all things, to stop the work, and just *enjoy!* The very first humans didn’t work *for* rest, they worked *from* rest, delighting in the Creator and His good works. **In commanding us to rest from our labors, God is inviting us to enjoy His goodness.**
 - It’s incredibly insightful when you look at the key places where the Sabbath command is given in the Old Testament, as well as how the Sabbath fits in with the rest of the 10 commandments.
 - The Ten Commandments were shared at two key places in the Torah (the first 5 books of the Old Testament”). In both instances, the Sabbath is the only commandment that comes *with an explanation*—the other commands are simply given. In the first instance, the Israelites had just been freed from slavery in Egypt, the explanation for Sabbath was this: **“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...for in six days, the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy,”** (Ex. 20:11). Sabbath points us back to the beginning, to God’s creation of all things, when everything was whole and good. 40 years later, Moses repeated the Ten Commandments as a reminder before Israel entered the Promised Land, and here there’s another explanation for Sabbath: **“Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day,”** (Deut. 5:15). Sabbath reminds us of what God has done to redeem his people. Fast-forward to the New Testament, and Hebrews says this about the Sabbath: **“There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...”** (Heb. 4:9-11). So, get this: the remembrance of Sabbath points us *back* to the beginning, to what we were made for, and back to what God has done to save us. But it also points us *ahead* to when Christ will return to make *all things new* and restore *true rest for all creation*. We can think of it like this: **Sabbath reminds us the we were made for Eden. Sabbath reminds us that we were rescued from Egypt. Sabbath reminds us that every day we’re getting closer to the Day when Jesus returns for the restoration of all things.**
 - Jesus said He was the Lord of the Sabbath, and He said that man was not made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was made for man. It’s not about a lifeless, legalistic observance of the letter of the law, but a joyfully obedient enjoyment of the intention of the law: *stop, rest, delight in God and His good gifts*. In a 24/7 always on world that is tearing at the seams, *we can choose to live a holy, set-apart, 24/6 life*. And if we do this challenging, sacrificial, yet ever-so-simple thing, it could change everything.
 - I’m reminded of the renowned 19th-Century South African pastor, Andrew Murray who said: **“God is ready to assume full responsibility for the life wholly yielded to him.”** This is the heart of living the 24/6 life and the secret of remembering *how to really live*.
- **Practicing Sabbath**

- But how, we ask? How? It can feel so helpless sometimes, right? I understand. I would say this to you: **one step at a time, one week at a time. Try something new this week, and keep practicing, and keep growing.** Let this become a value you hold that gradually, consistently alters the decisions you make, the priorities you set, the way you live.
 - Sometimes, you're in a season where you just don't see a way where a full day is possible: try this instead. Choose a half-day to make it a Sabbath. Choose a full evening. Or take an hour and make it a "Sabbath hour." And build from there. As one teacher said, *those who practice the Sabbath live the other 6 days of the week differently.* Just take one step and keep walking!
- Matthew Sleeth, author of the book *24/6* (which I highly recommend) said there are "3 R's" to practicing Sabbath: **Rest, Renewal, Reverence.** **Rest from your work. Find renewal, physically, spiritually, relationally.** Practice holy reverence with God.
 - So try things like this, on your own, or better yet, with your whole family or with friends: *Plan and head and be intentional about it, put it on your calendar. Practice saying "no" to things so you can say "yes" to God's best. Eat meals together. Worship together. "Pleasure stack" (that is, load up on the things you love most). Turn off screens. Stay inside—don't leave the house for a day. Or, go outside (soak in the beauty of creation somewhere quiet). Stop shopping (make a principle not to buy anything on the Sabbath).*
- These are some ideas to get you started. It most likely won't happen easy, or quickly, or automatically. But be intentional, and lean on the grace of God to help you live into His best for your life. Because that's what this is about: whenever God gives us a commandment, it's always for *our good* and *His glory*. We can trust Him with this! If you want to un-hurry your life and live into more of the abundant life Jesus saved you for, begin to learn, and embrace, and practice the principle of Sabbath. It won't save your soul—Jesus has already done that. But it could save your life. *Let's pray.*