

OVERVIEW

Who among us hasn't dreamt of getting away from it all—maybe you long to escape the depths of winter on a sunny beach or look forward to time alone at a mountain cabin. It's normal to seek relief from the pace of modern life, but few vacations provide the deep rest our souls need. While vacations can be fun and refreshing, Scripture models a timeless balance of work and rest that doesn't depend on the number of time off we've accumulated or the size of our bank accounts. God instructs his followers to pursue a different, deeper rest by practicing the Sabbath.

In Deep Rest – Parts 1 & 2 you will:

- Examine the Biblical model of Sabbath – and how it offers the rest our souls need
- Explore spiritual and sociological factors that keep us from practicing the Sabbath
- Apply 5 practical principals to help you experience deep rest

DISCUSSION

Getting started: Explore the group's current perceptions of the Sabbath – What's the purpose of it? Have they every intentionally set aside this type of time to rest – if so, how did they structure their Sabbath practice?

Understanding the biblical principle - What is the Sabbath?

1. Sabbath reflects the life-giving pattern of work and rest we see in creation:

Read Genesis 1:31-2:3

- Take a quick look at the following verses in Ch 1: v 10, v 12, v18, v21, v24, v3
 - What theme do you see emerging?
 - What does this pattern tell you about how God experiences his creative work?
- Now look at Gen 2:3 – How does this verse shed light on the way God balances work and rest? What does it identify as the purpose of the Sabbath?

Implications:

- We're hard-wired to need Sabbath rest.

"This rhythm of work and rest is not only for believers; it is for everyone, as part of our created nature. Overwork or underwork violates that nature and leads to breakdown. To rest is actually a way to enjoy and honor the goodness of God's creation and our own. To violate the rhythm of work and rest (in either direction) leads to chaos in our life and in the world around us. Sabbath is therefore a celebration of our design."

Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*

- The Sabbath is intended for enjoyment and appreciation, not just because we're tired.

On the seventh day, God ceased from his labor, not because he was tired (Isaiah 40:28 says the Creator "will not grow tired or weary"), but to enjoy what he had created. **The Sabbath exists as a complement to, rather than an escape from work.** It's a time to stop to enjoy God, to experience his creation, to appreciate the fruits of our labor.

"The Sabbath mimics God's response on the seventh day; certainly he was not tired from his busy creational enterprise. If we need to get downtime or chill, then we should use another day and not the Sabbath. In fact, if we enter the Sabbath with joy, then it will spill its abundance into the other six days, this keeping us from indulging in idolatrous overwork that leads to even more intense indulgence in riotous pleasure. The Sabbath is the kind of delight that leads to life."

Dan Allender, *Sabbath*

2. The Sabbath is a **declaration of freedom** – not legalistic as some have made it to be

Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Look more closely at verse 15 and remember the context: God commands an entire nation of people--who had just been released from slavery--to rest one day a week.

- How does the command to practice the Sabbath contrast with the Israelite's former way of life?
- Describe a time when you felt like a slave to your work.
- How could considering this command in light of its historical context guide your personal Sabbath practice? How could God be glorified through honoring the Sabbath?

(Note how this perspective of Sabbath differs from common misconception that Sabbath is a somber time of religious practice, defined by what you don't do.)

APPLICATION

Based on the Scripture we looked at today – how motivated are you to introduce (or strengthen) Sabbath into your life?

In our next conversation we'll look at how we find deep rest for our souls. In the meantime, what practical questions do you have about practicing the Sabbath? What factors might make it hard to experience deep rest on the Sabbath?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Dan Allender, *Sabbath* (part of the Ancient Practices series)

Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*

"The Power of Deep Rest" by Tim Keller <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-power-of-deep-rest>