

How do I Sabbath?

A short guide on Sabbath for Christians

Sabbath is one of the oldest practices of Judaism. We find it mandated in Exodus 20:8-11, as part of the ten commandments, but it calls back to a time long before the Law. Its origin connects to the creation story: as God created in six days and rested on the seventh, so shall his people work for six days and rest on the seventh (Gen. 2:1-3). While this practice is dear within our spiritual heritage, few Christians today practice Sabbath. For some, this is due to our New Testament status, for we are not under the Law. Perhaps, if we knew more of Sabbath, we would find the practice more desirable than we think.

We live in a time and culture that is built upon the values of striving, performance, work ethic, profit, and constant technological connection. This isn't all bad. We have created and accomplished many incredible things. But, at what cost? The truth is that our we weren't created to live at this speed at all times. Our mind, heart, and soul are deeply affected by our lack of true rest.

Thankfully, we serve a God who offers creative solutions to have the best of both worlds, and we believe that one of these practices is Sabbath! The Hebrew word for Sabbath literally means, "Stop," and we strongly encourage everyone to practice a weekly, "Stop." The impact of taking 24 hours to stop work, enjoy rest, practice delight, and contemplate God is immeasurable! During our current season of COVID-19, our issue may not be how much time we spend at home, but whether we have allowed true rest to enter our weekly routine. Constant connection is an easy temptation, and we are inviting all in our Body to try practicing a Sabbath once a week.

We hope that this document teaches you something new, helps you imagine how God might use Sabbath in your life, and inspires you to try it out. None of us are perfect - but that's not the point, anyway. The point is loving connection to the One who made us - for He has made us to experience peace, delight, and rest.

Antioch Fort Worth

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Sabbath Lessons That We Need to Hear

Reasons You Should Sabbath...

It teaches us that rest is inherently good.

It's not just a good idea or way to produce better work. God modeled rest, not because He needs it but because it is *good*. It's not selfish to rest, but rather a way to model our Father in Heaven.

It teaches us to rely on God.

The lie of self-reliance is part of the Fall: "...when you eat of it...you'll be like God," says the serpent (Gen. 3:5). Sabbath is a prophetic declaration of our reliance upon God. Though we abstain from work on the seventh day, though we labor for increase only six days a week - our God will provide everything we need.

It reduces burnout, blowups, and busyness.

Two surveys from 2018 found that 77% of professionals have experienced burnout in their current job and 55% of Americans are experiencing stress during the majority of their day. We are not meant to look like everyone else, but rather to stand out by our peace, hope, and rest - and Sabbath is a starting point.

It teaches us that our value comes from who we are, not what we do.

We learn from an early age that part of our social value comes from what we do. It's even embedded in our language: when we ask, "What do you do?," we're actually asking, "Who are you?" Sabbath, on the other hand, affirms that God values us apart from anything that we can offer Him. His love is not conditioned upon our production.

It encourages generosity.

Sabbath roots out our tendency to hoard or worship money. Allow Sabbath to reshape your heart when it comes to generosity.

It allows us to reconnect with God and people.

We worship a relational God, and we know that our relationships are the most important parts of our lives. Yet, the way we prioritize time does not always reflect that belief. Sabbath is a great way to invest time, energy, and attention to our relationship with God and with those He has given us.

FAQs about Sabbath

Questions You May Be Asking...

Is Sabbath really necessary?

Jesus said that He came to bring us fullness of life (John 10:10). So, if our goal is to experience the fullness, we'd answer, yes! Everyone can agree that lack of sleep, an unhealthy diet, no exercise, overuse of technology, and constant stress has a negative impact on your physical health. However, we rarely consider how chronic busyness, workaholism, work-induced anxiety, and prioritizing achievements over relationships affects our soul.

We believe that Sabbath is a solution to this problem. While we're not advocating for rigid or legalistic observance, we do consider life-giving spiritual disciplines to be a necessary part of a growing relationship with Jesus. We don't usually worry about whether life-giving practices are necessary - we simply do them because they benefit us! We see Sabbath in this category.

Isn't Sabbath part of the Old Testament law? Why should Christians practice it?

While the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus has established a new covenant, He never insinuated that we are forbidden from continuing life-giving Old Testament practices. We simply practice them for the sake of connection to Jesus, not as a means of justification or ethnic status as God's chosen people. To quote Jesus, "The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren't created for Sabbath." (see [Mark 2:23-28](#))

Even further, Sabbath did not originate as a tenet of the Law, but rather as God's response to His own act of creation. Therefore, our status as New Testament Christians shouldn't hold us back from practicing Sabbath.

What if I can't find time for a full 24-hour Sabbath due to work or family obligations?

As Christians, we do not find our hope in perfect observance of Sabbath. Therefore, even if a 24-hour practice of Sabbath is unattainable for you in this season, we believe even a shorter Sabbath is better than no Sabbath at all!

However, if the amount of margin in your life is consistently, “little to nonexistent,” we strongly encourage you to consider rearranging your schedule to include a Sabbath. This is less about “right and wrong” than it is about maintaining a healthy soul. We were created for rest and refilling.

Does it have to happen on a particular day?

Jews practice Sabbath from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, and many Christians practice Sabbath on Sundays. However, we do not believe that any particular day is of the essence. The right day to Sabbath is the day that you’ll realistically be able to unplug, stop working, and truly rest.

Isn’t Sabbath about doing nothing? What exactly should we “do” then?

Well, yes and no. Sabbath *is* about stopping, resting, delighting in God, and intentionally not working. Sometimes that means doing “nothing,” but not always!

Sabbath activities can include things that refill you, bring you life, make you love and appreciate God more, and remind you of your worth apart from what you can achieve. Examples include spending time with Jesus, a family dinner, walks, reading a great book, working out, baking cookies, or even yard work (if that’s life-giving to you!)

The point is not stringent rules on what you can or cannot do - that’s between you and God - but as long as it’s not work and it leaves you full of life, it’s probably a good idea.

I’m really interested, but I want to go deeper. Where can I find deeper study of Sabbath?

For deeper study and ideas, check out the following:

- Read Peter Scazzero’s [Emotionally Healthy Spirituality](#)
- Read Mark Buchanan’s [Rest of God](#)
- Read Marva Dawn’s [Keeping the Sabbath Wholly](#)
- Listen to the Bible Project’s [Sabbath Series](#).

Simple Resources to Help You Get Started

Peter Scazzero's *4 Principles of Sabbath* are: (1) *Stop Work* (2) *Enjoy Rest* (3) *Practice Delight*, and (4) *Contemplate God*. We have provided a few practical resources for each category to help get you started on your Sabbath. Be blessed!

Stop...

- Utilize your phone's "Do Not Disturb" and "Screen Time" restrictions in order to totally disconnect from work for 24 hours.
- Practice stillness and silence as a spiritual discipline for a few minutes at a time
- Practice the Prayer of Examen (Appendix A)

Rest...

- Real rest is not to be confused with laziness, which often leaves us just as drained as before. Watching TV or lying in bed can certainly be restful at times, but consider what active activities actually replenish you! Physical activities can actually replenish you physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- Plan to take care of the routine tasks of life - paying bills, chores, etc. - *before* Sabbath so that your rest is not interrupted by anything urgent.

Delight...

- Consider what brings you joy and delight - what makes you come alive? Each one of us has a unique list! Feast upon these good gifts that God has given us.
- Follow Spotify's New Music Friday Christian playlist to discover new worship music each week, or simply browse "New Releases" under their Christian genre.
- Delight in God's creation through the many hiking trails near Fort Worth
- If you're out of ideas, check out these 100 Ideas for Making Sabbath a Delight

Contemplate...

- Family dinners around a table are increasingly rare amidst our busy schedules, but Sabbath guarantees it. Plan a meal that *everyone* enjoys, and have a meaningful conversation where all are free to share their opinions.
- Read a book from our Staff Book Recommendations (Appendix B)
- Explore the Bible Project Podcast, the Craig Groeschel Leadership Podcast, or any of the thousands of Christian podcasts designed to help you grow in Jesus. Dig into the Biblical topic you've wondered about but never explored!

Appendix A - Prayer of Examen

Adapted from Fr. James Martin

The *examen*, or examination of conscience, is a quick prayer to help you see where God was active in your day. The prayer was popularized by St. Ignatius Loyola in his classic text *The Spiritual Exercises*. Use these five easy steps to pray the *examen* every day, and soon you'll begin to notice God's presence more easily.

1. **Presence:** Remember that you're in the presence of God in a special way when you pray. Ask God for help in prayer.
2. **Gratitude:** Recall two or three things that happened today for which you are especially grateful. Savor them. Then thank God for these gifts.
3. **Review:** Review your day from start to finish, noticing where you experienced God's presence. Notice everything from large to small: from an enjoyable interaction with a friend to the feel of the sun on your face. When did you love? When were you loved?
4. **Sorrow:** Face your shortcomings today. Have you sinned or done something you regret? Express your sorrow to God and ask for forgiveness.
5. **Grace:** You may want to return to a meaningful part of your prayer and speak to God about how you felt. At the close of the prayer, ask for God's grace for the following day.

For a practical example, watch our example [HERE](#).

Appendix B - Antioch Fort Worth Staff Book Recommendations

Christian Biography / Autobiography

Paul: A Biography by N.T. Wright (Graydon)
The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr. by MLK, Jr. (Bryan)
The Heavenly Man by Brother Yun (Will)
The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boom (Graydon)
The Shadow of the Almighty by Elisabeth Elliot (Julia)

Spiritual Disciplines

Battlefield of the Mind by Joyce Meyer (Lyndy)
Conversations by Eugene Peterson (Cheryl)
E.M. Bounds on Prayer by E.M. Bounds (Cheryl)
My Utmost for His Highest by Oswald Chambers (Aaron)
Practicing the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence (Isaiah)
Present Perfect by Greg A. Boyd (Sarah)
Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Barton (Lyndy)
Spiritual Disciplines Handbook by Adele Calhoun (Lyndy)
The Circle Maker by Mark Batterson (Julia)
Victory Over the Darkness by Neil Anderson (Micah)
Wholehearted by Rick and Diane Bewsher (Hannah)

Theology

Cross Vision by Greg A. Boyd (Graydon)
The Day the Revolution Began by N.T. Wright (Graydon)

Evangelism & Missions

Chasing the Dragon by Jackie Pullinger (Will)

Christian Living / Discipleship

Abba's Child by Brennan Manning (Erin)
Beautiful Outlaw by John Eldredge (Cheryl)
Disunity in Christ by Christena Cleveland (Graydon)
Everyone Always by Bob Goff (Ashley)
Love Does by Bob Goff (Ashley)
One Thousand Gifts by Ann Voskamp (Julia)
Supernatural Ways of Royalty by Bill Johnson & Kris Vallotton (Will)
The Furious Longing of God by Brennan Manning (Erin)
The Prodigal God by Timothy Keller (Graydon)
The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning (Aaron)
Waking the Dead by John Eldredge (Cheryl)

Christian Leadership

A Tale of Three Kings by Gene Edwards (Bryan)
Emotionally Healthy Leader by Peter Scazzero (Will)
Spiritual Leadership by Oswald Chambers (Micah)
The Me I Want to Be by John Ortberg (Isaiah)
The Servant by James C. Hunter (Isaiah)