

SABBATHING

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Briefly discuss the previous lesson (Selflessness) and how God has been moving in the lives of the group.

In a Jewish home on a Friday afternoon, you will find families cleaning and preparing for Sabbath. As the sun goes down, they may light a candle, or recite a psalm, or sing a song, or share in a special meal. In fact, their whole week points to this celebratory period in time where the family can be together. They rest from their work and chores, and they can focus their attention to God. The Sabbath is what the whole week hinges upon, almost as if the Jews postured their lives around Sabbath. Posturing one's life around Sabbath is nothing new. In fact, it goes all the way back to the first day that humans walked on the earth!

Adam and Eve enjoyed their first full day together with God on the Sabbath. God had almost finished the work of creation, but then He did something special with His last creation...Sabbath.

Genesis 2:1-3: "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 _____ from all the work of creating that he had done."

This is what Adam and Eve experience immediately - a period of time of God resting. Now, why would God have to rest? This is the omnipotent God, and yet He rests, but He not only rests, He invites Adam and Eve into that rest. The reason God would rest shows us something absolutely fantastic about Himself and His desire for us. God rests because He wants to spend time having fun with us. He wants to play with Adam and Eve. He wants to talk with them and hangout with them and be close to them. He wants to do anything and everything that builds his relationship with humans.

No wonder Jews, Sabbath keepers, and even Jesus would posture their lives around Sabbath. But in a day far removed from that first Sabbath in the Garden of Eden, how can we allow the Sabbath to be what God has intended for it to be? After all God says the Sabbath is a gift.

Exodus 16:29: "See, the LORD has _____ you the Sabbath"

The Sabbath is a gift! It's a present! It's like a specially-wrapped package that God gives humans each for us to enjoy. It's specially-designed for us so that we can have playtime with our Creator!

Jesus tells us how the Sabbath was a wonderful gift for us to enjoy as He says:

Mark 2:27: "The Sabbath was made for _____, and not man for the Sabbath."

Sabbath was never created to be a burden, but it was created solely for us as a day to be with God and grow with Him, our Creator. It was made for us, so that we could know God better.

WHEN DOES THE GIFT OF SABBATH START?

If Sabbath is this incredible gift for you, it's important to know exactly when it arrives, right?

When I order a package off of Amazon, and I choose 2-day free shipping, I instantly start tracking it. When will it get to my doorstep? When can I open it? I get updates in my email. I get text notifications. And pretty soon, I get a message that says, "Your package has been delivered!" That's the best news ever, because what I've been waiting for has finally arrived!

Waiting for the Sabbath to arrive is just like this, except we know exactly when it comes each week! We know it's a 24-hour period, a full day, right? But it doesn't start at 12:00 midnight on Friday night; it begins when the sun sets. Here's how the Bible describes the Sabbath starting on a special Sabbath called the Day of Atonement.

Leviticus 23:32: "From the _____ of the ninth day of the month until the following _____, you are to observe your sabbath."

The Sabbath starts when the sun goes down on Friday night, and it ends when the sun goes down on Saturday night. As the sun sets, it's like a gradual reminder that something special has happened and something new has begun.

And as we look forward each week to this special day, let's look at how to allow this gift to flourish in our lives.

BASIC POINT

Sabbathing is a time where God spends time having fun with us!

SABBATH REST

From the installation of the Sabbath in Eden all the way through to Revelation, rest is closely associated with Sabbath. Here's how God refers to it in the 10 Commandments.

Exodus 20:8-11: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and _____ on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."

Can you see all the theme of rest in that verse? Not working, not laboring, not having someone else work. Sabbath is designed to be a retreat from everything that makes you work. In reality, the Bible does something amazing in this verse!

It outlaws work, not only for the wealthy and individuals who have the ability to take time off, but also for everyone who is under their care. This means that God prioritizes our rest. In a digital age where we have information at our beck and call, rest and sleep patterns have become so inconsistent that many go years without quality sleep. The Sabbath shows us how to rest. We rest by not working. We rest by not having others work for us. We rest by knowing that God is in control and therefore we trust in Him. We rest.

God invites us to weekly set aside time to be with Him and find rest in Him.

I'm reminded of this next verse that encourages us to find rest in Jesus

Matthew 11:28: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you _____."

Sabbath was made to find rest in Jesus, trusting Him, relying on Him, laying aside any burden that you have and finding rest in the One that controls it all!

SABBATH WORSHIP

Within the Sabbath is also this idea of worship. God says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." And later "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them" (Exodus 20:8, 11). God as Creator is tightly knit together within the gift of the Sabbath. The day is holy because it points to Him as the Creator of everything. He's the One Who made it all, and Sabbath is a day to celebrate Him!

The Psalmist writes an entire Psalm about the Sabbath, and the first five verses are his worship of the Creator. Here's what it says.

Psalm 92:1-5: "It is good to praise the Lord
and make music to your name, O Most High,

proclaiming your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night,

to the music of the ten-stringed lyre
and the melody of the harp.

For you make me glad by your deeds, Lord;
I sing for joy at what your hands have done.

How great are your works, Lord,
how profound your thoughts!"

Can you hear the worship freely flowing from someone that loves the Creator? It makes me wonder if this author was writing these words ON SABBATH! I bet he was basking in the wonder of One that loves humans so much that He would create a day to just be together.

Often times, nature gives us a clue about what Sabbath is all about. If you've ever taken a walk on Sabbath, you've heard birds chirping and seen flowers blooming. You've felt the breeze on your skin and watch clouds float along. **ALL** of this is a tribute to God as Creator, and Sabbath is a weekly opportunity for humans to worship Him too.

HOW WILL YOU SABBATH?

So, after hearing all about what Sabbath is made for, what will you do with it? How will you make sure that you have time to rest in Jesus? How will you use Sabbath as a way to worship? How will Sabbath be used as a way to know Jesus better?

In the following blank space, create a plan on how to Sabbath. You may say that you're going to turn off all media, or you may say you're no longer going to go out to eat, etc. How are you going to Sabbath?

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. What is your favorite part of Sabbath?
 2. What can you do to enjoy Sabbath more?
 3. What are some ways that you can celebrate the Creator on Sabbath?
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LESSON 7: SABBATHING

