

Theme: Sabbath rest is not a legalistic restriction but rather a gift from God to allow us to be refreshed as we rest from our daily vocations and activities so we can focus on God and His provision for us.

I. Our Lack of Life Rhythms

- A. Most humans in history have clear life rhythms
- B. Sunrise, sunset, seasons - key rhythms guiding life
- C. But in our culture, we live in a stream of time
- D. We have few dependable rhythms anymore - and COVID made this even worse!
- E. At creation, God gave a weekly rhythm of Sabbath
- F. What is Sabbath - and do we really need it?

II. The Central Idea of Sabbath - Rest

- A. The central idea of Sabbath is rest
There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a **Sabbath of rest**, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the Lord. Leviticus 23:3
 - 1. It is called a 'Sabbath of rest' - a 'Sabbath of Sabbathing'
 - 2. Usually, Sabbath mentions rest and no work
 - 3. Hebrew word שָׁבַת means to cease, desist, rest
 - 4. Exodus 20:11 interprets the word as 'rest'
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. Exodus 20:11

And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he **rested** from all the work of creating that he had done. Genesis 2:3

- a. In Genesis 2:3 God took Shabbat - He ceased
- b. In Exodus 20:11 - interpreted as He rested (נָח)

- B. The central idea in this important term is that of rest
 - 1. Not primarily about rules & regulations
 - 2. We focus on other questions (laws, days, etc.) and miss the primary point
 - 3. It is not less activity but rather more rest in view
 - 4. It calls for less activity, but to allow more rest

III. Recovering the Biblical Idea of Sabbath Rest

- A. Sabbath - rest to refresh our bodies and spirits
There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a **Sabbath of rest**, a day of sacred assembly. You are **not to do any work**; wherever you live, it is a **Sabbath** to the Lord. Leviticus 23:3
 - 1. Sabbath is a day of rest - word and specifically stated
 - 2. Cease normal activities - so you can rest

Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, **so that** your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be **refreshed**. Exodus 23:12

 - 1. No work (less) so that you may be refreshed (more)
 - 2. Refreshed - literally "re-souled"; take a breather

3. This applies to all humans - not just God's people
4. All creation needs this - humans, animals - even the land (see Leviticus 25:4)
5. We are not machines - we must have downtime to be refreshed

B. Sabbath - rest to remember redemption

There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, **a day of sacred assembly**. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is **a Sabbath to the Lord**. Leviticus 23:3

1. This is legislation for God's people
2. True Sabbath must be "to the Lord" and include sacred assembly
3. Time off without gathering to worship is just doing nothing - it is not the Sabbath we need

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. Deuteronomy 5:15

1. As God's people we observe Sabbath because we have been redeemed
2. In Sabbath, we cease other activities to focus on God and His redemptive work for us
3. Any pagan can take a day off - only Christians can really take Sabbath to remember we have been redeemed

C. Sabbath - rest to rejoice in God's provision

"Speak to the Israelites and say to them: '**These are my appointed feasts**, the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.'³ There are six days when you may work, but **the seventh day is a Sabbath** of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the Lord. Leviticus 23:2-3

1. The Sabbath is the weekly festival/feast for Israel
2. It was to be a time of celebration
3. It is not about restriction but rejoicing in abundance
4. In Sabbath, we imitate our Father, who ceased working to rejoice over the goodness of His creation.

D. Sabbath - rest to restrict our materialist urge

There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. **You are not to do any work**; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the Lord. Leviticus 23:3

1. Although the focus is rest - they were told NO work
2. We have to trust Yahweh to provide - and He does!
3. This is a speed bump on our materialist urge - life is more than accumulating possessions

Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land,⁵ **saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?"** — skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,⁶ buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. Amos 8:4-6

1. Sabbath interfered with their work & marketing
2. They were right - it was MEANT to interfere!
3. This was a constant problem for Israel (see Jeremiah 17:21-27; Nehemiah 13:19-22)
4. We have put this materialist urge on steroids!
5. Our age can not stand the thought of shutting down the wheels of commerce - even for a day!
6. Into this acquisitive age the practice of Sabbath crashes, structuring our weeks to break the materialist urge. There is no worse master than money and possessions, and the Sabbath is a rest from this master that can free us seven days a week.

E. Sabbath - rest to regard eternity

“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: **‘These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the Lord,** which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies. Leviticus 23:2

1. Feasts were typological - and in part point to eternity
2. The Sabbath points us to our eternal rest in heaven

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰ for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:9–11

1. The OT Sabbath was not the real rest - it just pointed to it

2. Our real rest comes in Jesus - and in eternity
3. This rest still awaits us - in the age to come
4. In Sabbath we focus less on this fading world and more on the eternal world to come

IV. Applying the Word

A. Am I practicing a biblical Sabbath?

1. If you have not come to Jesus to find true rest - do so today!
 - a. You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in You - Augustine
 - b. Come find rest in Christ!
2. Of all people, Christians should practice Sabbath!
3. Five key principles in a biblical Sabbath
 - a. A day of rest to refresh body and spirit
 - b. A day to gather with believers to remember our redemption
 - c. A day to rejoice in God’s provision for our needs
 - d. A day to restrict the materialism of our age
 - e. A day to regard eternity
4. Which of these is the Spirit calling me to grow in during 2024?
5. Building Sabbath into our lives
 - a. Daily Sabbath - time set aside to rest & hear from God

- b. Weekly Sabbath - setting aside Sunday from all normal activities to rest, reflect, worship
 - 1. Setting it aside as a day of no work if at all possible
 - 2. Rest physically - no chores, exercise, minimal cooking, cleaning
 - 3. Setting it aside as a day for worship - not letting other things interfere, make it a high priority
 - 4. This is the Father's gift - and it will give life to you!

6. After Hours - tips to enjoy Sabbath and receive it as God's special gift

B. Our Sabbath Meal of Rest & Refreshment

- 1. At this Table, we rest from our own works
- 2. At this Table, we receive refreshment from Jesus
- 3. At this Table, we look forward to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb
- 4. Come to our Table of rest and refreshment!

The Gift of Sabbath Rest

Leviticus 23:1-3

January 7, 2024

Communion

Numbers 6:24-26

Teaching keywords: Sabbath and rest; redemption; remembrance; contentment; heaven, hell, and eternity; legalism

The Lord bless you and keep you; ²⁵ the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; ²⁶ the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace. Go forth filled with the blessing of God's Presence, Peace, and Rest, and be a blessing!
Numbers 6:24-26

The Lord said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies. ³ "'There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the Lord. Leviticus 23:1-3