

Sabbath:
Finding Rest in a Busy World
Part Four: Sabbath Practices

1. *Worship*

2. *Creativity*

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We flew home from Hawaii on Friday, landing into Yakima around midnight Friday night. And, as always, the flight attendants walked us through the obligatory safety briefing, telling us about all the features, exits, etc. I had to chuckle when I heard them refer to the flotation devices under our seats that we were to use “in the unlikely event of a water landing.” I thought, “We’re flying from Hawaii! If we aren’t landing on the pavement in Seattle than it is *very* likely that we will have a water landing!” Then, of course, they talked about the oxygen mask that will fall in front of us, and that we are to secure the mask on ourselves before we attempt to help anyone else. I know they say that every single time, but still, it’s hard for me to think of not making sure Shelly was okay before I put on mine. When the boys were little, I couldn’t imagine not helping them first. So, knowing I’d be using it as a sermon illustration, I asked a flight attendant why it was so important to put it on my face first. She said, “If those things come out, it means there is a drop in cabin pressure, which means the air is likely going to get very, very thin, very, very fast. If you don’t secure yours first, you will probably pass out before you can help anyone else. *They* need you to have air so that *you* can help them!”

My friend, Joe Gorman, has written a book on self-care called, “Healthy, Happy, Holy,” and he points out that self-care is a lot like that oxygen mask. I would add that finding times of regular Sabbath are like that oxygen mask. If you and I are going to be any good at all to help each other, or to serve those who don’t know Jesus, then it is vital that we have Sabbath practices. In the words of that flight attendant, “the (spiritual) air is going to get very, very thin, very, very fast. If *you* don’t secure your (Sabbath) first, you will probably pass out before you can help anyone else. *They* need you to have (Sabbath) so that you can help *them!*”

That’s what I’ve been learning in my own life, and that’s what we’ve been trying to help you learn in this January sermon series called “Sabbath: Finding Rest in a Busy World.”

We began our series by seeing how desperately we need rest, and what our stress-filled lifestyles do to us physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

¹ Resources include: Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives* (Bantam Books, NY, 1999); Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath* (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 2006); Joe Gorman, *Healthy. Happy. Holy. 7 Practices Toward a Holistic Life* (The Foundry, Kansas City, 2018); Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less* (Basic Books, NY, 2016); Andy Stanley, *Choosing to Cheat: Who Wins When Family and Work Collide* (Multnomah Books, Colorado Springs, 2002); Robbie Cansler, “Kingdom Come: Remember the Sabbath,” *P&B Quarterly* (Oct/Nov/Dec 2018)

We learned what Sabbath is *not*, and then what Sabbath *is*. So we came up with this definition of Sabbath:

***Sabbath is a time to rest by worshiping God,
focusing on and enjoying his presence in your life,
and practicing the things that celebrate life and relationships.***

(repeat/write it down)

This can happen for an entire day, and it can also be done for a moment. We hope that this series has added meaning to that definition, so that you will be able to add more and more practical expression of it in your own life.

On the second Sunday, we looked at Sabbath essentials, and we saw how Scripture tells us that we've got to take the *time* for Sabbath – and trust God to provide the time we need on the other six days. We realized we need to breathe, and we need to rest.

In fact, to help you think about what that means for you personally, we gave you a “Sabbath Worksheet” to help you think through the activities you want to put into practice for your Sabbath times, which ones you'll want to avoid, what the hindrances might be, and to establish an accountability partner to help you stick to it.

Then last week, Pastor Jason spoke about the importance of Sabbath relationships. He was the perfect one to talk about this, because he and Tricia do such a good job of finding quality time with their girls and balancing it with work schedules. So he spoke on the importance of family relationships, he spoke of the importance of small group relationships, and he spoke on the importance of self-care, meaning that our relationship with ourselves is vital, too, so we need to do the things that keep us physically healthy. Those relationships can be life-giving.

In all these things, we are realizing that Sabbath is really for ourselves – nobody needs it more than ourselves. Those who need us, need us to practice it. God didn't give us Sabbath because he needs our attention. But God knows *we* need Sabbath time to renew ourselves, to reinforce our trust in him, so we can continue living in the Kingdom of God, bringing the Kingdom of God into this world, and expanding the Kingdom of God into the lives of others.

Today we want to conclude this series by looking at *Sabbath Habits* – what are vital things that we need to do on our Sabbath that will be, in essence, like putting that oxygen mask on our faces?

The first and most important thing about Sabbath is that it must include...

1. Worship

Here's the thing about Sabbath rest – even if it's for ourselves, if we seek this kind of rest for its own sake, then it just becomes one more thing on our things-to-do list. And if you are like me, your to-do list is already way too long, and no matter how much you get done in a day there are always more things to be done. So how do we

obtain Sabbath rest if seeking it only adds to our busy-ness? Here's the key: we don't seek *it*; we seek *Him*. It's the same principle that Jesus meant when he said:

“For anyone who keeps his life for himself shall lose it; and anyone who loses his life for me shall find it again. What profit is there if you gain the whole world—and lose eternal life? What can be compared with the value of eternal life?” (Matthew 16:25-26, tlb)

If we enter Sabbath seeking it for ourselves, we won't gain much. But if we enter it with a heart of worship, seeking God first, and then whatever things we do on Sabbath are done with and in him, we will find rest. But if we seek rest for its own sake, or do Sabbath for ourselves, we've limited what God wants to do in our lives. Does that make sense?

Sabbath is a noun, but it's also a verb: we *Sabbath* to worship; we seek Jesus, and when we do, we find rest:

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, niv)

First and foremost, any Sabbath time we take is for the express purpose of reconnecting with God and worshipping Him. The Old Testament commandment is clear:

“The seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do.” (Deuteronomy 5:14, niv)

It is to be a holy event; it is for truly focusing on Him. Now, there are two ways that we need to worship in Sabbath. One is *together*, like this, as a collective church. Pay attention to what is in one of the Old Testament commands of Sabbath:

“There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath 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, niv)

Do you see that: “a day of sacred assembly.” That means part of Sabbath is to come together to worship. It is vital, and worshipping together ought to happen every week. That's why the Bible warns us:

“Don't stop meeting together with other believers, which some people have gotten into the habit of doing. Instead, encourage each other, especially as you see the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:25, ceb)

I think one of the indicators of how common it is today to violate the Sabbath principle is the fact that the majority of Christians no longer attend church every Sunday. The average now among *Christians* is 2-3 times a month. Now, the last thing I want to do is get legalistic about this, so hear my heart. To the person who

would say, "I don't have to attend church every Sunday," I would say, "You're right. You don't *have* to. But why don't you *want* to? Everything in Scripture about it indicates you *need* it. Why wouldn't you do it?"

That's why when people say "I worship when I'm in the mountains, or hunting, or skiing," I want to say, "yes, I'm sure you are; just don't do it in place of church!"

But that is a good point; Sabbath is also found alone. We need to spend time daily, and especially one day a week, taking time that is set aside to worship God in our personal practice. You can call this your "daily devotional," or "Bible reading and prayer," or just time with God, but we need to do this every day. King David wrote in one of his songs:

"In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly." (Psalm 5:3, niv)

I have a friend who is a retired pastor – some of you might know him – Bob Luhn. Bob was the pastor of our Othello Church for over 30 years. One of the things that he said sustained him over the years is that he made a rule for his life; that every morning from 6-9am, he was going to be the most selfish person in the world. What he meant was that every morning from 6-9am was a time for him to Sabbath, besides his day off (unless of course there was an emergency). He would use that to seek the Lord and read the Bible, pray, exercise, and read. The other 21 hours of every day were available for family and ministry. That's not a bad way to look at it.

So Sabbath is for seeking Christ in order to worship him first – that happens weekly on whatever day we set aside to Sabbath, it happens weekly as we gather with our church family to worship. It happens daily as we seek time alone with God. These are essential Sabbath practices.

The next essential Sabbath practice is...

2. Creativity

The purpose of Sabbath, besides to worship God, is to engage in those things that put life back into you. Pastor Jason mentioned last week the word "**recreation**." We've turned that activity into something that is more like – "**Wreck Creation**" instead of what it should be: "**re-creation**" – to RE-create in our lives and in our world. God created the world in then rested, and he gives us the day of rest from work in order to re-create – not to stay busy, focus on ourselves, and wreck it. So you need to find things that put life back into you, and whatever that is, is as different as there are people in this room. What is re-creative for you might be *work* for me. Some people love to go out in the garden. But for a farmer that might be the last thing he or she would want to do for Sabbath! So *whatever* it is for you, do it! Just remember:

"Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Colossians 3:17, niv)

Do it for Jesus. So for you it might be photography, or hiking, or drawing, or gardening, or reading (I did a lot of that last week; I was able to read two books).

You will probably feel like you are being self-indulgent, because whatever you are doing is something that you enjoy, and we have this idea that if we enjoy it, it's probably selfish. Or we have this ridiculously wrong idea that God doesn't want us to do things that are fun! Do what gives life to you; just don't let anyone judge you. That's exactly the Bible's advice:

“Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.”
(Colossians 2:16, niv)

By the way, that's also why it's entirely appropriate for you to determine what your Sabbath day is – as long as you are not neglecting worshiping together with other believers. That's why the Bible says:

“One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.”
(Romans 14:5, niv)

Remember that God established the Sabbath as a *principle* right at the very beginning of creation, right? He created the world in six days and then he rested. God established the Sabbath principle thousands of years before God gave the Israelites the law, which included the Ten Commandments, which included the law about the Sabbath. Sabbath was a principle long before a law, and since we are in Christ, we are no longer under the law but under grace, according to Romans 6:14.

So find something creative to do – build a puzzle. Get romantic with your spouse. Find time to simply sit still in God's presence for as long as you want.

In 1956 environmentalist Sigurd Olson built a small cabin on the banks of a lake in northern Minnesota. The naming of lake homes is customary in the land of ten thousand lakes. Most names are rather predictable, but Olson was a little more intentional. His objective in building the cabin was to "hear all that was worth listening for." So he named it Listening Point.

Susanna Wesley raised seventeen children in a very small home, so solitude was hard to come by. Her listening spot was a rocking chair in the middle of the room. When she threw a blanket over herself, it turned into her tent of meeting. Maybe that's what inspired her son John to kneel in prayer throughout his life.

Thomas Edison had a "thinking chair." Alexander Graham Bell had a "dreaming place" overlooking the Grand River. Henry David Thoreau skipped stones on Walden Pond.

Then there was Ludwig van Beethoven. He sat at his desk until early afternoon and then took a stroll to reinvigorate his mind. He carried a pencil and a few sheets of music paper in his pocket to record chance musical thoughts.

Your listening spot will be as unique as you are, but you need to find a time, find a place.

There is a book by a non-Christian called, “Rest: Why you get more done when you work less” and in the book the author researched and studied how our brains work, and then studied people throughout modern history who were incredibly productive and influential. And what he found is that “When you examine the lives of history’s most creative figures, you are immediately confronted with a paradox: they organized their lives around their work, but not their days...Their creativity and productivity, in other words, were not the result of endless hours of toil. Their towering creative achievements result from modest ‘working’ hours...(they) weren’t accomplished despite their leisure; they were accomplished because it...we can learn how to blend work and rest together in ways that make us smarter, more creative, and happier.”² I’m not sure the author realized it, but he hit upon the Sabbath principle. So don’t feel guilty for enjoying your Sabbath! Remember what we talked about before from the life of Jesus? He healed a man on the Sabbath, but the legalistic religious people were judging him because they said healing was work, and you weren’t supposed to work on the Sabbath. But healing on the Sabbath wasn’t just part of Jesus creativity; it re-created healing in that man! So when they judged him, Jesus told them:

“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27-28, niv)

You weren’t made for the Sabbath – it was made for *you*. Seek the Lord of the Sabbath, and enjoy the activities that re-create you.

So determine time daily to Sabbath, and determine a day to Sabbath, and determine to worship with God’s people. Then do the things that are creative for you and bring life into you.

Finally, remember that whatever you engage in, in the Lord’s presence, alone and with valued relationships, it is for your...

3. Restoration

Like we said, the Sabbath was made for you, to restore your life to you, and we’ve already made the point in this series how much you need it. It reminds me of a story I read recently. It read:

“What would cause an innocent woman to welcome time behind bars? According to Maria Brunner, all it takes is her ‘lazy’ husband and ‘demanding’ children.’

Brunner’s husband is unemployed, so she supports their three young children by cleaning other people’s houses. Even without a job, her husband managed to run up quite a number of unpaid parking tickets. The bill totals nearly \$5,000. Mr. Brunner kept the tickets a secret from his wife, but as the owner of the vehicle, she is responsible. Maria cannot pay the fine, and unless her husband can come up with the money, she will spend three months behind bars in her town of Poing, Germany.

² Alex Soojung-Kim Pang, *Rest*, pages 53-60

Maria's reaction? 'I've had enough of scraping a living for the family.... As long as I get food and a hot shower every day, I don't mind being sent to jail. I can finally get some rest and relaxation.'

Police reported that when they went to arrest Maria, 'she seemed really happy to see us . . . and repeatedly thanked us for arresting her.' While most people taken into custody hide their heads in shame, Maria 'smiled and waved as she was driven off to jail.'"³

How many would feel the same way as that woman? There've been times when I've felt that way! Listen – if jail looks like vacation to you, then you need some restoration!

God has always wanted to provide rest for his people; that was the whole point of the journey into the Promised Land. God said through Moses:

“But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.” (Deuteronomy 12:10, niv)

Restoration means to be brought back to its original state, and a key part of enjoying that rest-oration or re-storation for God's people was to be in right relationship with him, and they were to prove it by making Sabbath practice a part of the regular rhythm of their days, weeks, and years, because it is God's primary practice for us, to restore us. Our Sabbath prayer is like the Prophet Jeremiah's:

“Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.” To which God responds, “I will restore you to health and heal your wounds,’ declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:14, 30:17 niv)

Peter in the New Testament reminds us that God knows that this life takes a toll on us, and there is suffering in our daily lives – which is why God wants so much to restore us:

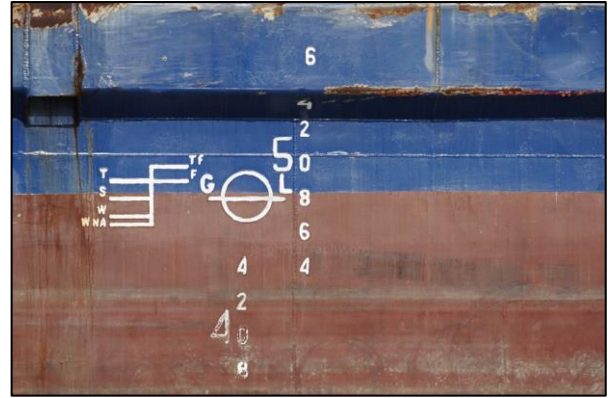
“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” (1 Peter 5:10, niv)

You and I *need* Sabbath my friends – in daily moments *and* a day a week. We need time to worship every day and a time to worship together weekly. We need a day devoted to the Lord, enjoying the day with him, being creative and restorative, whether alone or celebrating the relationships that give us life. Do it daily, make Sabbath moments, but do all you can to build up to and then protect a day of Sabbath.

If I were to ask you if you know what a “Plimsoll line” is, would you know what I'm talking about? If I show you this picture, maybe you'll recognize having seen this before on ships. The Plimsoll line is really one of the more memorable—and unique—illustrations about rest. It involves a 19th century British politician named

³ "Family of the Week," www.timesonline.co.uk (5-15-05); "I'm Ready; Let's Go"

Samuel Plimsoll. Insurance companies began to operate in the 19th century, and that created an incentive for ship owners to purposely sink their own ships and collect the insurance money. This grim practice became so widespread, and killed so many merchant sailors, that the over-insured, overloaded vessels became known as “coffin ships.” Plimsoll applied his Christian faith and a biblical view of justice to this issue. In 1868, at Sheffield's Fulwood Chapel he announced he would “do all in his power to put an end to the unseaworthy ships owned by the greedy and the unscrupulous.” Plimsoll crusaded for legislation to prevent it.



In 1873, under Plimsoll’s leadership, Parliament passed the Merchant Shipping Act, which required all ships to have a line painted around their hulls (a Plimsoll Line). From then on—and to this very day—vessels had to display the Plimsoll Mark, a loadline, painted clearly on their hulls, showing how deep they could safely sit in the water and preventing overloading. If it was below the waterline the ship was overloaded and the owners fined.

Every one of us here has a load limit. In his book *The Overload Syndrome*, Dr. Richard Swensen writes, “We are exceeding our limits in scores of areas all at the same time. From activity overload to choice overload to debt overload to expectation overload to information overload to work overload, we are a piled-on margins society.” We all need our own Plimsoll Line painted on our calendars.

Sabbath is a Plimsoll line in your life; all these things we’ve talked about are markers on that line. Ignore them, overload yourself, and you will be running the risk of sinking. You might be able to get away with it and cheat the physics of it for a while, but one day a storm will come, or a sneaker wave that you never saw coming, and your life will be swamped, submerged and you will sink. If that’s what you want to do, keep doing what you are doing....or you can practice Sabbath – to make sure your life never gets overloaded and stays on the line.

This series is about finding rest in a busy world. But listen – Sabbath doesn’t shout. Ignore it and it will retreat – at least until your body or your circumstances force you to rest. But if you will put it into practice, you will find rest in this busy world, and forever in the world to come.

“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.”
(Hebrews 4:9, niv)

Pray