

Sabbath Curriculum

The Sabbath is a day blessed by God and set aside for rest and worship. For the Jewish people, the Sabbath began Friday evening and continued into Saturday afternoon, but today many followers of Jesus observe the Sabbath on Sunday. There aren't any rules anchoring the Sabbath to a specific day of the week, we each experiment to find what works best with our lives and schedules. When that day arrives, it's helpful to begin and end our Sabbath time with a tradition like lighting candles, pouring wine, or reading a psalm to remember our time of rest and worship is set apart from the rest of the week.

Every sabbath should be a weekly celebration, almost like a holiday. Holidays properly observed require preparation (Week 2). John's gospel refers to this as the "day of preparation." Before the weekly tradition begins, before the candles are lit or the psalms are read, we go grocery shopping, clean the house, and clear errands from our to-do lists. For many followers of Jesus, powering down phones and computers for an entire day—no social media, no email, no internet—is a life-giving break from a world wrought with digital addiction.

With our day selected, our chores done, our digital feeds silenced, and our traditions established, we enter into a day of rest, worship, and intimacy with God (Week 3). Set aside a healthy window of time to spend in prayer and in the Scriptures, alone and/or as a family. Listen to the Spirit of God. Create an uninterrupted, quiet space to simply *be* with God as you work to tune yourself to his presence throughout the day.

As we settle into a consistent rhythm of rest and worship, we work to cultivate and maintain gratitude for the things that we have (Week 4). By drawing our awareness to the often overlooked gifts all around us—a roof over our heads, food to eat, relationships to enjoy—we draw our focus away from shopping and from conversations about things we don't have.

Even after learning about and experimenting with the best Sabbath rhythms and practices, we realize that it takes time, and that it will inevitably evolve with each season of our lives (Week 5). What works well for a married couple may not accommodate a single person. Families with small kids will have expectations unique to couples who do not.

In each stage of life, our hope is to disrupt the business, the workload, the media overload, and the frenetic pace of life by slowing to a deliberate stop.

A day marked by rest and worship.

Recommended time

4–6 weeks

Scriptures

- Genesis 2v1–3
- Exodus 16v1–30
- Exodus 20v8–10
- Deuteronomy 5v12–15
- Mark 2v27
- Hebrews 4v1, 9–11

Podcasts

bridgetownajc.org/sabbath

realitysf.com/sermon/the-sabbath

Recommended resources:

Garden City by John Mark Comer

Keeping the Sabbath Wholly by Marva Dawn

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel

Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Brueggemann

24/6 by Matthew Sleeth

Week One

Read these Scriptures:

- Genesis 2v1-3
- Exodus 16v1-30
- Exodus 20v8-10
- Deuteronomy 5v12-15
- Mark 2v27
- Hebrews 4v1, 9-11

Make a plan:

- What day of the week will you Sabbath?
- Ideas:
 - Friday night to Saturday afternoon, starting and ending twenty minutes before Sundown.
- This is the traditional Jewish Sabbath
 - All day Saturday or Sunday.
 - Saturday night through Sunday afternoon.
- Will your Sabbath start the night before or in the morning? (We recommend the night before)
- What needs to change in our normal, weekly routine to make sabbath happen?

Practice for the coming week:

- Mark out a 24 hour time period (or as close as you can) to rest and worship
- Pick a ritual to clearly begin and end your sabbath
 - Ideas to begin:
 - Light two candles (symbolic for two commands to “remember” and “observe” the sabbath.
 - Pour a glass of wine (and grape juice for the kids, or the straight edge)
 - Read a Psalm or say a liturgy
 - Pray: ask the Holy Spirit to bring a spirit of rest and lead you through the next 24 hours
 - Share a meal with your family or friends
 - Go around the table and do “highlight of the week”
 - Ideas to end:
 - Take a prayer walk
 - Read a Psalm
 - Thank God for the last 24 hours
 - Extinguish the candles of sabbath
 - Share a meal
- Spend an entire day in rest and worship: fill your day with activities that are life-giving - eating, drinking, reading, making love, playing games with your kids, time with family and friends, a walk to the park, napping, etc.

Discussion questions for the coming week:

- When will you Sabbath?
- What changes will you make to your normal weekly rhythm to sabbath?
- What rituals will you use to begin and end your sabbath?
- What activities will be rest and worship for you?
- What obstacles stand to interfere with a healthy sabbath?

Week Two

Debrief questions:

- How did it go?
- Does the rhythm you decided on last week need any adjustment?
- Was it hard to slow the pace of your life down?
- What was the best part?
- What was the hardest part?
- How did it effect the following week?

Practice for the coming week:

- Spend time the day before gearing up for the Sabbath (Remember, the writer John called the day before the sabbath the “preparation day” in John 19v31.)
 - Ideas:
 - Go grocery shopping and stock your kitchen with food
 - Pre-make your dinner (soup is an easy one, or enchiladas, or casserole)
 - Clean or pick up your house or apartment
 - Answer all phone messages and return all text messages
 - Plan out a rough schedule for the Sabbath (remember to take it slow and give *plenty *of space)
 - Think of something you can do to make the day stand apart - a special desert, a trip to Blue Star for donuts, a picnic at the park, etc.
- Turn off your phone and computer
 - Actually put it away in a box or closet
 - If 24 hours is just too much, or you can’t do it for some reason, try turning it “Do not disturb” mode and checking it every four hours

Discussion questions for the coming week:

- What preparations will you need to make prior to your sabbath?
- What can you do to make the sabbath special? For you? For your family?
- How will you limit your access to technology in order to enjoy the sabbath?
- There’s a lot of talk about digital addiction lately. Is your phone, social media, email, etc. a form of addiction for you?
- Do you think you need to turn off your phone for a day a week?
- What are the positive benefits of going a full day of the week without phone, social media, or email?

Week Three

Debrief questions:

- How did it go?
- Were you able to turn off your phone? What was that like?
- What was the best part?
- What was the hardest part?
- How did it effect the following week?

Practice for the coming week:

- Devote the entire day to intimacy with God
 - Ideas:
 - Start the sabbath by reading a Psalm and prayer
 - In the morning, set aside a good chunk of time to read Scripture, pray, listen to God, and just *be *with God
 - If you have a family, set aside a time during the day to read and pray as a family (A Bible story with the kids, prayer walk, worship by singing time, etc.)
 - Go on a short, slow prayer walk
 - Try the Daily Office - set three times on the sabbath (Say, at night, in the morning, and at the end of the day) to just focus on God. This time can be short - ten minutes. The goal is just to focus on God and tune your soul to his presence, so that the awareness of God stays with you all day long. Here's a few ways to do the Daily Office:
 - Go on a prayer walk
 - Read a Psalm
 - Read a liturgy
 - Put on a worship song
 - Practice gratitude
 - Pray
 - Speak in tongues
 - Practice just sitting in God's presence
 - Go somewhere beautiful in nature - a park, vista, etc. and praise God

Discussion questions for the coming week:

- How can you maintain intimacy with God throughout the sabbath?
- What spiritual disciplines/practices help you connect with God? (Scripture reading, prayer, silence and solitude, celebration, etc.)
- How might you incorporate the Daily Office into your sabbath rhythm?
- How can you lead your family (if you have one) into intimacy with God on the sabbath?

Week Four

Debrief questions:

- How did it go?
- What spiritual disciplines did you practice?
- What was the best part?
- What was the hardest part?
- Were you able to effectively spend time together with God as a family?

Theme for the coming week:

Gratitude, contentment, and a day off buying and selling

- Scriptures to read:
 - Deuteronomy 5v12–15
 - Nehemiah 10v28–29, 31
 - Isaiah 58v18
 - Matthew 6v25–34
 - 1 Timothy 6v6–10
- Recommended resources:
 - *The Sabbath as Resistance* by Walter Bruggemann
 - Podcast *to come*

Practice for the coming week:

- Write out three things that you're thankful for.
- Throughout the day, practice gratitude to God and each other.
- Don't buy or sell anything.
- Actively enjoy things that you *have.*
- Don't read/look at/think about/talk about stuff that you *don't *have.
- Savor the simple pleasures: food, drink, a place to live, time with family and friends, etc.

Discussion questions for the coming week:

- What ideas do you have to intentionally incorporate gratitude into your sabbath?
- What activities increase your sense of contentment?
- What activities decrease your sense of contentment?
- Is buying food different than buying stuff?
- What message do we send to the world by not buying or selling one day a week?

Week Five

Debrief questions:

- How did it go?
- How did you practice gratitude?
- In what ways did abstaining from buying or selling free you up to enjoy the sabbath?
- What was one simple pleasure that you really enjoyed?

Theme for the coming week:

The sabbath and stage of life

Practice for singles:

- Spend time alone.
- Spend time with friends and family. Get coffee, go out to lunch, take a walk, etc.
- Clear your schedule of work and errands.
- Nap.
- Enjoy this season of life where you have ample time to focus on God's presence.
- Spend time in spiritual reading.
- Listen to a podcast or teaching on the Bible.
- Practice gratitude for the season you're in rather than focusing on where you might be in the future.

Practice for married couples:

- Spend time together catching up.
- Don't fight (there are six *other *days to do that).
- Avoid hard conversations.
- Don't talk about things that aren't restful (i.e., stuff you need to get done in the coming week).
- Have sex!
- Nap.
- Read.
- Give each other space to do what is life giving (opposites often attract, and find very different activities restful. Create space for that).

Practice for young families:

- Spend time together as a family in celebration of life.
- Have one parent watch the kids for a few hours, while the other goes off to rest or do something life-giving, then swap (i.e., one parent takes a two hour block in the morning, another in the afternoon).
- Take breaks to do the daily office.
- Take your kids to the park or on a fun, restful outing.
- Make your kids nap or have quiet time, even as they get older.
- Have your kids light the candles of sabbath, and ask them what they symbolize (Remember and observe).
- Have your kids drink grape juice when you pour the wine.
- Do highlight of the week with your kids.
- Go to bed early.

- Have a special breakfast set out for the kids to eat, so the parents can sleep in and relax.
- Have a special box of toys that your kids just get to play with on the sabbath.
- Recognize it's hard to rest with little kids, but this is a season. Do your best. It will pass all too soon.

Practice for older families:

- Spend time together as a family in celebration of life.
- Share a meal together.
- Do highlight of the week.
- Have a time of prayer and Bible reading as a family.
- Go on a fun, but restful outing to a park, coffeeshop, or restaurant.
- Take naps.
- Read.
- Each family member practice the daily office.

Discussion questions for the coming week:

- What are the challenges of sabbath at your stage of life?
- What are the upsides of sabbath at your stage of life?
- What creative ideas do you have for others in your stage of life to sabbath well?

