

Sabbath: The Gift of Restoration and Realignment

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“How can I practice sabbath when church activities make Sunday so busy?”

“I’m a young mom with three kids under age 8, working a part-time job on weekends; when do I actually get a day off to keep sabbath?”

“We’ll be at church when we can, but we have to be at our kids’ games. They need every opportunity they can get if they’re going to be able to pay for school.”

“Why does sabbath really matter? I already enjoy my weekends, and the fun stuff I do helps me relax.”

Sabbath so often comes across as complicated, unrealistic, inconvenient, or counterproductive.

Most of the time, sabbath seems like it’s only really accessible to the superspiritual and to those with more time and fewer financial worries than we tend to have. Sure, somewhere in the nagging corners of our hearts, we know we’re supposed to “keep the sabbath day holy,” but we’ve really got no clue where to even begin.

But here’s the good news: sabbath isn’t a list of “do’s and don’ts.” It’s not a burden. It’s not another commitment we have to fit into our schedules. Sabbath is a beautiful, life-giving gift from the God who loves us.

So What Is Sabbath Really About?

In many ways, keeping sabbath is about **restoring all of who we are and realigning us with all of who God is**. As Jesus said to his first followers:

“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).

In restoring us, the Spirit also works through our sabbath practices to realign our relationships, our values, and our priorities.

Sabbath practices set aside space and time to meet with God and God’s people. Whether we are gathered virtually or in person, sabbath practices help us remember that we belong to God and that we are part of the still-expanding community of God’s beloved people. In this way, sabbath

practices realign our relationships through God's love. As John wrote, "God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" when we love each other (1 John 4:12).

Sabbath also invites us to rest. When we rest, the Spirit works to realign how we value ourselves (and others) in connection with work, with cultural definitions of failure and success, and with material possessions. **In resting, we begin to remember and believe that our real worth is found in God's love and care for us.** As we learn to trust God's loving care, the other labels used to define us (either to make us feel more important or less important than others) lose their grip on us.

Further, **Sabbath is ultimately a gateway to living more fully and faithfully as followers of Jesus Christ.** One of the church's historic teaching tools goes so far as to say that keeping sabbath is a daily practice of resting "from [our] evil ways" by allowing the Spirit to work in us. In doing so, we "begin in this life the eternal Sabbath" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 103). In this sense, keeping sabbath realigns our priorities toward faithful living, becoming a 24/7 way of life that anticipates the abundance of God's new creation.

If I Want to Try Keeping Sabbath, Where Would I Start?

Developing a new sabbath practice can be a deeply rewarding experience. Because our personalities and circumstances are unique, there is no one-size-fits-all sabbath pattern. Rather, God invites all of us to explore a mix of worship, rest, recreation, and sabbath-making activities that both restore and realign us.

The Faith Practices Project's sabbath resources provide a good starting place. The goal of these resources is to help you imagine what keeping sabbath could look like in your context. As you put sabbath into practice, we'd love to learn alongside you. Share your practices with #CRCFaithPractices and tag us on Twitter (@crc_ffm) and Facebook (@faithformationCRC).