

Exodus 31:12–17

The Sabbath: Remember and Rest

The Summit Church, *Rescue: The Book of Exodus*

MPT: Sabbath is our time to literally stop, proclaiming God as our ultimate rest.

MPS: Sabbath is God's gift of rest—modeled in creation, commanded under the Law, fulfilled in Christ, and completed in eternity.

UFN: Human desire is infinite. However, we are finite—we have limits. The result of those two things is restlessness.

Acknowledgement: Take your pick on whom I am indebted to for this sermon: John Mark Comer, Jon Tyson, Tyler Staton, Eugene Peterson, and Dallas Willard. This sermon is basically a “greatest hits” from all of their combined works on Sabbath.

Back in our series on Exodus. Today: Exodus 31 ...

INTRODUCTION

Few weeks ago, Pastor J.D. preached on the Ten Commandments; today, we're gonna double click on one of them. But before we get to it, I wanna make sure you remember all of them. **I'm gonna help you out—put your hands up ... this is an ALL SKATE (guys, no crossed arms. spirit fingers.):**

1. One God
2. Scissors: Cut out the idols
3. “W”: watch your words; don't use God's name in vain
4. Typically 4 Sundays in a month—remember the Sabbath
5. Salute. “Yes sir.” Honor your father/mother
6. Boom. Thou shall not murder
7. Two people in a marriage ... not five. Don't commit adultery
8. In some countries if you steal, they'll cut off your pinky
9. “I'm lying, I do have a pinky!” Thou shall not lie

10. Reach like you're taking someone's stuff—don't covet.

What we're gonna zoom in on today is the **fourth commandment: Exodus 20:8, Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

- Which is ironic, because this weekend is the end of literally the busiest three months of my entire life.

When Pastor J.D. asked me to preach on Sabbath rest, I texted him back and said, “*Soooo how do you preach on something you're not great at?*”

- Honestly, I thought about just showing a **John Mark Comer** sermon and letting him explain it! Instead, I've tried to combine all the “Sabbath greatest hits” and present them to you today.

PRAY

Few things in life are more annoying than waking up and realizing your phone didn't charge.

- For the rest of the day, you're constantly trying to find a charger to keep **just enough battery to survive on ... all day trying to recover from not getting a full charge at night.**

How often does life feel like THAT?!

- Like you're bouncing from charger to charger, only to get **enough to keep you surviving, but never enough to get in the green.**

The problem with running on red isn't just that it drains your battery; it begins to drain your soul. And an **empty soul is a restless soul** that begins searching for how to fill itself back up.

- That's why **John Ortberg** said "**busyness isn't just a disordered schedule, it's a disordered heart.**"
- Seems like no matter what we try—the vacation, the massage, the mental health day, the new purchase—we can't quite seem to find the **rest** our souls long for.

St. Thomas Aquinas was once asked, "**What would satisfy our human desire?**" His answer: **EVERYTHING.**

- eat at every restaurant
- visit every country
- make love to every desirable person
- win every award
- own every material item
- ... Otherwise, there would still be desires left unfulfilled.

Obviously, that's not feasible; therefore, as German theologian **Karl Rahner** puts it: "**In the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable, we learn that ultimately in this world there is no finished symphony.**"

And what happens when we take **infinite desire** and try to map it onto a **finite being**? The result is a life of **restlessness**.

What if there were a teaching from the Bible and the Way of Jesus that could give us this rest? That brings us to **Exodus 31** ...

WALKTHROUGH

To catch you up to chapter 31, at this point in Exodus, God has rescued Israel from slavery after 400 years in Egypt. Now they're at

Mt. Sinai and he's giving them instructions to build the tabernacle — the place where his presence would dwell among them.

Right in the middle of assigning this massive project, God commands them to Sabbath—to literally STOP for 24 hours once a week.

- In Jewish context, they would've done this from sundown on Friday until sundown on Saturday.
- Obviously, today we recognize Sunday as the Lord's Day, because that's the day Jesus fulfilled the "Sabbath rest" when he was resurrected.
- But regardless of the day, God's people were to *Sabbath/cease/stop* all the normal "doings" of life to focus on God.
- Even while building the very house of God, their first priority was to stop and rest as an act of faith and trust in God.

That brings us to Exodus 31, pick me up in v. 12 ...

(Normally, I'd have you stand for the reading of God's Word, but Pastor J.D. stole that from me a few weeks ago. It was the *one thing* I had going for me! So I'm stealing his TV this week.)

¹²And the Lord said to Moses, ¹³"You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all (that's a big statement) you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.'"

God knows how quickly our hearts drift toward **self-reliance** and **restless striving**. So he gave Israel the Sabbath—a day to STOP, to re-center their lives on him, and to remember that true rest only comes from his presence.

¹⁴You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. (It was designed **for your benefit**. This isn't a **restriction**; it's a **gift!**) **Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death.** (That's a pretty hard turn, huh? *Take a day off! ... or I'll kill you!* Obviously, this is a very serious thing to the Lord.) **Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.** ¹⁵Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, **holy to the Lord** (it was designed for your benefit, but also for **God's honor**). **Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.**

Now, that may seem harsh, but we have to understand that for Israel to reject this **holy commandment** was to reject **holy God**.

- This God who **created** them, **chose** them, **saved** them, **redeemed** them, **brought them** out of slavery, **set his love** on them ... to not remember the Sabbath and keep it holy was akin to rejecting and dismissing the holiness of God and the covenant relationship with him.

See, that's exactly what sin is: **rejecting God**.

- It's rejecting his **rule** and his **reign** by living like you're the one in charge.
- It's rejecting him as **Father** by looking for security and identity somewhere else.
- **Sin is taking God off the throne of your heart and putting yourself on it. It's desiring freedom apart from your Creator**—that's what Pastor Wes talked about last weekend.

And **the wages of that sin**—what we have earned because we have rejected God—**is death** (Romans 6:23).

- In a spiritual sense, rejecting God leads to a **death** of eternal separation from him in a place called hell.

- But it also leads to a **type of death in *this life*** that manifests in restlessness and unfulfilled desires.

Dallas Willard: "Desire is infinite partly because we were made by God, made for God, made to need God, and made to run on God. We can be satisfied only by the one who is infinite, eternal, and able to supply all our needs; we are only at home in God. **When we fall away from God, the desire for the infinite remains, but it is displaced upon things that will certainly lead to destruction.**"

What he's saying is when we fall away from God, the infinite desire in us doesn't disappear ... it just gets displaced onto finite things that will never satisfy and ultimately leave us restless.

- We keep trying to **plug our lives** into chargers that can't fill us up.

And that, friends, is why God gives us the gift of Sabbath. Sabbath is God's gift to restless and tired souls—it's his way of bringing our infinite desires back home where they belong.

- Sabbath is how we **breathe** and **become human** again.
- It's how we **align our hearts** again.
- It's how we **recharge** and **replenish** our weary, restless souls.

Sabbath helps us **remember** who we are, and it calls us to **rest** in who God is. Let's look at each of those:

1) Sabbath is a weekly reminder that we are not defined by what we do, but by whose we are.

The word "Sabbath" literally means to **stop, to cease**.

- Its very first use was in **Exodus 16**, when God told Israel to gather manna for six days, but on the seventh day there would

be a “Sabbath to the Lord” ... a time where they couldn’t **gather**, couldn’t **shop**, couldn’t **work**.

- Imagine hearing this command in an agrarian society. What they would’ve been thinking is, “Uhhh, God ... no work = no production = no profit = no provision.”
 - No deep freezers or fridges
- God telling them to stop working for a day was an **incredible act of faith and trust** he’s calling them into.
- A STOPPING and trusting that what God **provided during six days** would be **adequate for all seven**.
- Theologian Marva Dawn said, “The Sabbath is in essence the practicing of the sovereignty of God.”¹

Moses is saying, “If God took care of our **greatest need** all by himself—delivering us from **slavery** and giving us **salvation**—don’t you think you can trust him to **take care of your daily needs as you sabbath?**”

See, Sabbath was a way to keep Israel from falling back into the slavery of Egypt.

- At our house, we used to **lock my son’s bedroom door at night** when he was younger, just for safety reasons.
- But now we don’t lock it anymore. The door is open. He can come out anytime. And yet, out of habit, he still acts like it’s locked.
 - He’ll stand there and yell for us, instead of just reaching out and opening the door himself.
- **Why? Cuz it’s one thing to be set free; it’s another thing to live free.**

For 400 years, Pharaoh had worked them as **slaves with no rest**; now, God is here **giving them rest**.

For 400 years, they had been defined solely by **what they could produce—by what they did**; now, God is **defining them and giving them dignity and identity by calling them his people**.

God comes as the anti-Pharaoh to restore the peace and rest that God desires in our lives. In a world that tells us **we are what we produce**, Sabbath reminds us **we are who God loves**. Sabbath is a weekly reminder that **we are free**.

Yet, even though you and I have been set free by Jesus, we still live in a world that keeps yelling for Pharaoh.

And while the literal Pharaoh may be dead, the spirit of Pharaoh is still very much alive and well today—driving us to keep **working**, keep **producing**, keep **proving ourselves**, keep **accumulating**, without ever stopping.

- That’s why Sabbath isn’t just about rest ... it’s also a **weekly rebellion** against the idols of hurry, hustle, and self-reliance, and being defined by what we do.
- **Stephen Smith** says: “When practiced, Sabbath-keeping is an active protest against a culture that is always on, always available, and always looking for something else to do.”
- Sabbath is a weapon to fight against Pharaoh ... against the poverty of mass consumption that never delivers on the peace it promises.

Sabbath is a weekly reminder that **we are not defined by what we do, but by whose we are** ... and then **RESTING** in that reality, which is our second thing.

¹ Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*

2) Sabbath invites us to stop our work and rest in his work.

I think this has to be the hardest aspect of Sabbath. **Tim Keller** said your ability to rest is one of the greatest tests of the validity of your faith. *Do you have enough faith to NOT work for a day? ... to REST and trust God?*

I know just the thought of taking an entire day off to rest makes some of you bristle. It's interesting, cuz almost every time the Sabbath is talked about in Scripture, it points us back to Creation (God created for six days, then rested on the seventh). It does that because there's something about the rhythm of six days on, one day off that is **woven into the very fabric of the universe**.

- *I just have so much to do ... GOD RESTED*
- *My job is really demanding and my work is really important ... GOD RESTED*
- *I'm a high-capacity, E3 extrovert who likes to go, go, go ... GOD RESTED*

Golf cart governors // tee in engine to go fast ... Had some serious accidents cuz of it ...

- **The lesson I learned from that was if you don't slow down by choice, you'll slow down by consequence.**
- Sabbath is coming for you, whether through **delight** or **discipline**.
- As I've gotten older, my body literally can't handle the constant "go, go, go" anymore ... God's governor on my life has been through making me sick.

One author said it this way: **When work is an idol, rest will feel like a sin.**²

- *"But Satan never takes a day off" ... sure, but he loses. And he's not a great role model.*
- LISTEN, I GET IT: The Andrusko home lives primarily through the **lens of efficiency**. I'm a recovering **"Say yes to everything" addict**.
- John 15: *Apart from me, you can do nothing.*
 - Often fall into the inverse: *Lord, apart from ME, YOU can do nothing.*
- Here's what I've learned: **Spiritual maturity isn't measured by how hard we work for Jesus, but by how well we learn to rest in him.**

This is where the Pharisees got it wrong. There's a story in **Luke 13** of Jesus preaching on the Sabbath, and this woman who's been physically oppressed by a demon for 18 years comes to him—she's bent over and can't stand up straight.

Well, Jesus sees her, lays his hands on her, and heals her instantly. That's awesome, right?!

[14] But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

- *Hold on. I know we've been praying for you, Betty ... But on the Sabbath we try to focus on worshiping God. We don't heal. So if you could just come back Mon–Fri; office hours are 8–5, then maybe we can pick this back up. We don't do this kind of stuff on the Sabbath.*

² Gunner Gunderson

There's certain people in Scripture that deserve a good whippin' ... this is one of those guys ... and Jesus gives him a verbal one.

And it's easy to throw stones at the high priest for missing the point, but the truth is, we do the exact same thing: We take something God gave to bring life and we turn it into a **religious burden**, a **self-righteous checklist**, and a **spiritual badge of busyness honor** that is emptied of its power cuz it has become more about *doing something for God* than simply *being with God*.

- And that's why Jesus had to remind them in **Mark 2:27**, "**The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.**"
- Sabbath was never meant to be a **test we have to pass** ... it was always meant to be a **gift we receive**.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SABBATH

As we think about Sabbath rest, I wanna get super practical and answer two of the most common questions we get about it:

1. Are Christians required to keep Sabbath today?

No ... and yes.

No, first and foremost, because the rest the Sabbath pointed to was fulfilled in Jesus. Because of his death, burial, and resurrection, we find **eternal rest** in him ... not in following the laws of Israel.

- However, **the wisdom and benefit of these laws remain**.
- Understood like this, Sabbath is not a **commandment to obey**, but rather a **promise we're invited to enjoy**.

So the better question is, *Why wouldn't you Sabbath to remind yourself of the rest that is available to you?*

- **Ian Samkins**: "**A lot of us have room for God in our hearts, but not on our calendars.**"
- And listen, I know some of you are wondering how this is even possible ... I would encourage you to simply Sabbath as you can, not as you can't.
 - Much like the tithe—we lay it down as an act of faith, trusting that what God says is best and that he will bless for that.
- But if you're waiting for life to slow down to Sabbath, NEWS FLASH: It ain't never gonna happen.
 - "Let me get through this season"... and you know there's just another one behind it.
 - You might not be able to put a **24-hour Sabbath** on your calendar right now, but what *can* you put on there? **Sabbath as you can, not as you can't**.

2. Practically, what does this look like—what can or can't I do on Sabbath?

The "work" from which we should rest is particularly our **daily labors**.³

Aside from that, there's not really a "Sabbath checklist" to hang on your wall. "*So I do nothing?*" No! No rule here. But talk to an **ancient Sabbath guru**, and you'll find kind of 10 best practices:

1. lighting of candles
2. prayer of blessing
3. feasting (no keto or gluten-free)
4. reading of Scripture

³ Ex 34:21, plowing and harvesting. Neh. 13:15-18, winepresses and transporting. Amos 8:4-6, buying and selling.

5. singing

6. love making

a. Section in the Talmud commanding couples to make love every Sabbath night.

b. Nooooo some of you guys are interested.

7. napping

a. Now some of you ladies are interested.

8. walking

9. time with family and close friends

10. gratitude

Eugene Peterson said for him, Sabbath was a time to PRAY and PLAY.

Now, in order to do these things well, it's gonna take some preparation. It's actually **hard work** to **rest well**.

- For us, it means getting all of our grocery shopping done, house cleaned up, work finalized, etc.
- If you're a student or teacher, it probably means getting all your homework, lesson planning, and grading done Saturday night so you can Sabbath on Sunday.

Scripture always defines Sabbath as a day of rest ... so ask yourself this Q: *What could I do for 24 hours that would fill my soul with deep joy?*⁴

⁴ Isaiah 58:13–14 emphasizes that the Sabbath is supposed to be a "delight." If recreation is *delight* to you, and that's a form of rest, go for it.

How to figure out what rest is for you:

+2 (gainers)	BUCKET	-2 (drainers)
working out	Full	errands
kids	Tired	parenting
happy Liz	Burnout	sad Liz
people		people
Jesus	Moral Failure	

NOTES:

- If you work with your mind, you should probably Sabbath with your hands. If you work with your hands, you should probably Sabbath with your mind.
- Husbands: If you're married with kids, you can only have one hobby.

Here's the main point: *Sabbath isn't about doing nothing; it's about doing the right things with great intentions.*

CONCLUSION

Now, listen, all of those practical steps matter—setting aside time, clearing space, finding what fills your soul with joy— it's all important.

But if Sabbath just becomes a day of **better habits without a deeper hope**, we'll miss the point. Because Sabbath isn't ultimately about **better scheduling**; it's about **deeper resting**. It's about **anchoring our restless hearts** in the only place real rest is found.

And that's where the heart of Sabbath points us to: the deep, full, satisfying, eternal rest Jesus secured for us once and for all on the cross—a rest we could never **earn or achieve on our own**.

On the cross, Jesus opened the door for our **restless hearts** to finally come home ... for our **infinite desires** to find their satisfaction *in him*.

Jesus doesn't just offer you a **day** of rest; he offers you HIMSELF.

That's why he says in **Matthew 11:28** (the verse that led me to the Lord 17 years ago): "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." Jesus *is* our Sabbath rest.

- Not simply rest for your body, or your calendar ... but rest for your soul.
- In Christ, that rest is available right *now*.

The question is: *Will you keep chasing rest? Or will you come to the one who is rest?*

HEADS BOWED

Matthew 11:28 ...

1. Come. Your move is to **turn to him** (repent).
2. Come unto me. Believe and receive.
 - You don't have to wait until heaven to find rest. You can find it today—right now—in Jesus.

PRAY