

a one week study on

# **SABBATH REST**



**DISCIPLESHIP  
CULTURE**





# DISCIPLESHIP CULTURE

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This material is designed to be used within a group setting  
for a one week study on a specific topic.  
Enjoy!



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## SABBATH REST

### Group Day 1 – Read & Discuss the Following

#### This Week's Goal

*Teach how Sabbath rest is to be a blessing for the life of a believer and how we can observe it each week.*

Life is full of demands. Some are forced on us (housework, car maintenance, or a job to pay the bills). Some we put on our own shoulders (friend commitments, personal goals, hobbies to keep up with). Technology has made it easy to accomplish a lot, but it has also encouraged us to fill every margin of our life with things to do. In this lesson, we want to get a good idea of what God had in mind when He designed and created rest. It's so important that it makes it on the list of the Ten Commandments. Let's start there.

#### Read Exodus 20:8-11

#### Conversational Questions

**Why do you think God included Sabbath observance as one of the Ten Commandments?**

**What did Sunday look like for them growing up?**

**Did their family celebrate the Sabbath?**

**Was it in any way different from a Saturday?**

When God made the universe, He spun it into existence in the span of six days. The seventh day was a special day. It was a day for God to rest and delight in all that He had made. This pattern of six-to-one is a rhythm that God scripted for mankind. In the same way that the body was designed to rest each and every night, there was also meant to be a weekly rest from work.

Now, you might need to clear up a misconception that could be forming in your disciple's head. Work is not a negative thing to be avoided at all costs. Work is good for man and part of his God-given purpose. When God created Adam, He placed him in the garden with the responsibility "to work it and keep it." But when Adam and Eve sinned, work was cursed along with everything else. Work is now riddled with painful effort and frustration. It makes sense why some try to avoid the arduousness of it.

Nor is work to be glorified as our source of value and worth. Man is not defined by work but by His relationship with God. But since mankind's sin broke that relationship, we instinctively turn to work to create our identity and self-worth. This explains the workaholics who are motivated by how much they can make, how high they can climb the corporate ladder, and what name they can make for themselves. We're all tempted by this to some degree.

Good work is encouraged by Paul in Colossians 3:23-24: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." How can we keep work in its proper place in our life? The answer is in keeping the weekly Sabbath. When we take a whole day off from work, we remember that we are not machines. We remember that we do not equal our productive output. We remember that we are created to enjoy what God has made and accomplished.

## SABBATH REST

*Conversational Questions* – What’s your general posture towards work?

**Do they have a tendency to be lazy and avoid work?**

**Do they try to cram each waking moment with significant work?**

**Do they work with responsibility and integrity?**

**Do they feel God’s pleasure in their work?**

### **Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15**

*Conversational Questions* – In Deuteronomy, we have a reiteration of the Ten Commandments.

**What’s different here than from the Exodus passage?**

In Exodus, the reason for celebrating the Sabbath is the rhythm God laid down at Creation; in Deuteronomy, the reason is God’s miraculous redemption of Israel from slave labor. The Israelites sweated under the back-breaking burdens of the Egyptians. They groaned and cried out in exhaustion. And God rescued them from this miserable enslavement.

The history of Israel’s toil and labor serves as a picture for how work can become an oppressive task. This would apply to people who live in an unbalanced work-driven culture, but this also applies to mankind’s basic spiritual condition. Ever since we fell into sin, we’ve tried to justify ourselves by doing good works. We join Adam and Eve in the garden in their attempts to cover their own sin by tirelessly sewing and fabricating fig leaves. We try to get rid of egregious sins. We try to be kind to others. We religiously go to church, community meetings, etc. This is an impossible task. It is this enslavement that God wishes to free us from by covering our sins appropriately with the blood of another.

At the core of Sabbatical rest is the death of Jesus. Just as God acted mightily on behalf of the Israelites in bringing them out of slavery, He does the same as we are burdened under our own oppressive sins. To believe in Jesus is an act of laying down our own works and resting in the accomplished work of Jesus Himself. We celebrate the Sabbath to remember His work and to rest in it. We need the reminder. Let’s look at a passage that illustrates this need.

### **Read Exodus 16:13-30**

*Conversational Questions* – (Notice that this is after God rescued them from Egypt.)

**What had the Israelites seen God do in His work to save them?**

**Why did some people gather more than they were supposed to?**

**For those who tried to gather manna on the Sabbath, what reasons could they have had to do so?**

The Israelites saw God bring ten cataclysmic plagues. They saw Him split the sea in half. They saw Him destroy the mighty Egyptian army. But they still did not trust Him. They couldn’t break free from self-dependence. If we’re honest, the same is true for us. We’d rather depend on ourselves than trust in God. Encourage your disciple to recognize this in their life and then to ask the Holy Spirit to help us rely on Him more. He is worthy of our complete trust.

## SABBATH REST

### OBSERVING THE SABBATH

You'll want to help each other think about how and when to Sabbath. We want to first make a distinction. Not all rest is good rest. You could spend the day binging Netflix, playing video games, napping, etc. and miss out on soul refreshment. When Jesus invited the weary and the burdened to Himself in Matt 11:28-30, it was a call to "find rest for your souls." It is not a day just to sleep or to stop working. Those are components, but we are to enjoy God and all He has blessed us with. Sabbath rest is meant to be a taste of the eternal rest we will experience in heaven.

Talk about what this could look like in your weekly schedule. What day of the week might they be able to set aside? Are you already involved in too much that it isn't feasible to take a whole day? Maybe challenge each other to get out of some commitments or think about how they might incorporate two half-days of rest. Remember this was important enough to be part of God's Ten Commandments.

Challenge them not to do any work on their Sabbath. That means housework, studying, chores, etc. Help them think about how they could get the most out of that time. Some things you might suggest include:

- Setting aside your phones and laptops
- Spending time with God in the Word and through prayer
- Reading a book on spirituality
- Enjoying God's nature by hiking, biking, etc.
- Practice listening to God (silence)

### *Conversational Questions*

#### **Ask yourselves what hobbies are life-giving?**

Some time could be spent playing games, baking, drawing, sleeping or eating! The idea is to engage in those activities to refresh the mind and the body before the Lord.

This all sounds wonderful and easy, but it's not. Establishing and protecting a weekly Sabbath can be frustrated by exams, football games, social events, and your work schedule. But there are ways to fight for keeping a good rhythm. You could block out your schedule in order to protect that time, or you could finish all work and chores in preparation for your Sabbatical day. It might require sacrifices to Sabbath well, but it will be worth it. Talk together about the specific obstacles you have.

Resting is an exercise of trusting God with the unfinished tasks. We can trust that He will provide all we need: "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32).

**Before ending your time together set aside at least one 4-8 hour period where they will practice Sabbath rest this next week.**

## SABBATH REST

Jesus valued rest for both Himself and His disciples. Look at the following verses and jot down what you can learn from them.

*How did Jesus prioritize rest?*

*What did He give up to take some rest?*

*What can we learn about the quality of rest?*

### Individual Day 2

**S** • Mark 6:30-32

<sup>30</sup>The apostles returned to Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup>And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup>And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves.

**O** • \_\_\_\_\_

**A** • \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAY**

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### Individual Day 3

**S** • Mark 6:45-46

<sup>45</sup>Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go before him to the other side, to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. <sup>46</sup>And after he had taken leave of them, he went up on the mountain to pray.

**O** • \_\_\_\_\_

**A** • \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAY**

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### Individual Day 4

**S** • Mark 2:27

<sup>27</sup>And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

**O** • \_\_\_\_\_

**A** • \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAY**

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### DAILY RUNDOWN:

**S** (scripture) • Read the assigned Scripture.

**O** (observation) • Write down observations about the scripture you read.

**A** (application) • Write down how you can apply the scripture to your everyday life.

**P** (prayer) • Pray to God about the verse or passage you focused on and anything else you want to lift up to Him.

## SABBATH REST

### Group Day 5 – Gather & Pray

Once you've looked at these passages and spent some time in sabbath rest get together and discuss how the week went. Answer the following:

**What was good or easy and what was difficult?**

**How can we prioritize rest in our lives?**

**What good things might we need to sacrifice?**

**How can we ensure that our rest will be of good quality?**

### For Further Exploration:

As you develop a rhythm of sabbath rest consider these words by John Mark Comer from his book *Garden City*. This book is available for use as a DC curriculum.

*A few years ago I started racing in triathlons. This guy in our church, Brian, with a former professional triathlete. He has a body like a Greek god and was kind enough to train me. The main thing he taught me was to change the cadence of my run for long, slow, heavy strides to short, quick, light strides. And then he trained me to match my running stride to my cycling stride, so that when I get off the bike I just keep going. As easy as that sounds, it was so hard to change. Learning a new rhythm is never easy, but it's worth the effort.*

*Bryan had lots of rules chin up, run on the balls of your feet, straight back, eyes forward, arms at a slight angle, and so on. But he wasn't a legalistic jerk; he was a trainer. He wanted me to get in the best shape of my life and swim, cycle, and run better.*

*See what I'm getting at?*

*First century Jews needed to hear the second part of Jesus is teaching in Mark 2:27, "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." They had it backwards. The Sabbath isn't a cold, arbitrary rule we have to obey. It's a life-giving art form that we get to practice. But I would argue that 21st century Americans need to hear the first part of Jesus is teaching "The Sabbath was made for man." It's not that we have too many rules about Sabbath, it's that we don't have any at all.*