

study guide



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INTRODUCTION Why do we keep things?

Before my mom and dad were "mom" and "dad", they were newlyweds. My
dad rode a motorcycle. My mom rode on the seat behind him. With her arms
around his waist, they would explore the scenic roads of the Northwest.
Imagine leaning into the turns in the summer sun with youthful energy and all
the feelings of being with the person you love. It was idyllic, most of the time.
On one ride the motorcycle occasionally jerked to one side. It kept happening.
My dad was confused. Was it the road? Was it his bike? Was it his driving? No.
It was his wife. Her shoes kept slipping off the foot pegs and hitting the
blacktop. The soles would grind against the road. My dad told her to be careful,
she would ruin her shoes or even cause an accident. It kept happening. They
had ridden before, and she had never had a problem keeping her feet on the
foot pegs. When my dad eventually realized what was happening, he was still
confused, but for a different reason.

My mom's feet were slipping off the foot pegs on purpose. She didn't like her shoes. She reasoned that if she wore out the soles on the road she could justify throwing them away and buying new shoes. She didn't want to keep them. My dad has a different approach to making purchases. He got an explanation for his jerking motorcycle. He still doesn't understand the logic behind it.

Why do we keep things? Maybe you have a box filled with 20 year-old greeting cards. Maybe parts of a classic car have taken up permanent residence in your garage. Maybe you no longer use your closet for clothes because it stores collections of precious mystery items.



INTRODUCTION

Why do we keep things? It is not such an easy question to answer. We might give something away that is expensive and useful, while we use time, energy and money to keep something that is broken and has no resale value. Why? Because, for some reason, to us, it's worth it. That's it. We make a personal value judgment to determine if something is worth keeping. The difference between being thrown in the trash and stored in the attic is *perceived value*.

When God gave the 10 Commandments he said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). I want to trust God enough to do things simply because he said so. But for most of us, we want to know a good reason why. It takes effort, sacrifice, commitment, discipline, to keep the Sabbath holy. There are many possible motivations for Sabbath keeping. The most basic is that the Sabbath is worth keeping! If we don't personally see its worth, we probably won't keep it. Like my mom found a clever way to justify throwing away the shoes she didn't like, we will discard the practice of Sabbath when we see no value in it.

This study is a guide to a 5-week journey that pursues a fresh view of the value of Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for us! Did you hear that? The Sabbath has something to offer you. Through it, God extends blessings that our hearts crave. This study is designed for everyone. Because the Sabbath is designed for everyone. Maybe you have never considered practicing the Sabbath. Maybe you have valued a Sabbath practice for as long as you can remember. This journey is for you.

We should keep the Sabbath! We should do it because there is something there worth keeping!



As we begin this journey. Take a moment to reflect on your Sabbath experience up to this point in your life. Have you seen Sabbath as something worth keeping? Have you struggled to find its worth? Maybe you have never practiced keeping the Sabbath. Maybe you have but it hasn't been a positive experience. As we begin this 5-week journey, how do you hope to grow in your experience of Sabbath?

in a Sabbath worth keeping. Consider how you currently need each of these in your life.

- 1. Rest
- 2. Trust
- 3. Worship
- 4. Service
- 5. Delight



that is already there.

BIBLE STUDY A Sabbath Worth Keeping

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As we follow Sabbath keeping through the scriptures, we find a variety of ways of relating to the Sabbath. We find a Sabbath blessing worth keeping, a Sabbath not kept, and a Sabbath not worth keeping. Reflecting on each of these can help us to see the value of Sabbath.	
— A Sabbath Worth Keeping —	
Read Genesis 2:1-3.	
God thinks that the Sabbath is worth keeping! What did he do on the seventh day?	
God made the Sabbath worth keeping! What did God do to add value to this day? (see verse 3)	
Read Exodus 20:8-11. Sabbath keeping made God's top 10 list!	
As you reflect on the next two paragraphs, push yourself to a deeper understanding of what it means to "keep" the Sabbath?	
It is not our Sabbath keeping performance that makes the Sabbath holy. He made it holy, we keep it that way.	
The word "keep" does not appear in the Hebrew text of Exodus 20:8. The	
phrase "keep it holy" is communicated in a single Hebrew verb that is literally	
translated as "holy it". It is the same verb that is used in Genesis 2:3. The value is established by God. We don't make it worth keeping, we encounter the value	
established by clock velocit make it worth keeping we encounted the value	

BIBLE STUDY: A Sabbath Worth Keeping	
Notice also, we don't just keep a day, we keep the day holy (set apart).	
There is a Hebrew word for "keep" that is used elsewhere (Exodus 31:12,14,16) for keeping the Sabbath holy. It (asah) means to watch, guard, protect, preserve. Our keeping is a preserving of a special thing that God has established. I want to know what that special thing is. I want to experience a Sabbath worth keeping.	
How do the following two texts portray the importance of the Sabbath to God? Consider the context of each summarized below.	
Read Exodus 31:13. God began speaking the 10 Commandments to Moses in Exodus 20. He continued speaking all the way through Exodus 31, giving instructions, commands and detailed specifications. He concluded these most important instructions by singling out the importance of the Sabbath.	
Read Exodus 35:1-3. When Moses came down the mountain the first time, he found Israel worshipping a Golden Calf (Exodus 32). He smashed the tablets (32:19). He went back up the mountain, got new tablets, and returned to the people with a shining face. The words of verses 1-3 are the first words he spoke to the people after coming off the mountain. You might expect him to highlight the first command about not having other God's or the second about not making idols. But he highlighted the fourth, about keeping the Sabbath.	
These passages scream of value. There is a Sabbath worth keeping!	
How would you describe the experience of a Sabbath worth keeping? Have you experienced a Sabbath worth keeping? What was that experience like?	

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BIBLE STUDY: A Sabbath Worth Keeping

— A Sabbath Not Kept —

Despite God's clear communication of the importance of Sabbath, his people didn't always keep it. We have that option too. But when we pass on the Sabbath, we pass on the blessings that come with it. As we trace Israel's history between Sinai and the life of Christ, we often see the Sabbath not being kept and the people missing out on its blessings.

Read Nehemiah 9:14 & 13:15-22. Just like God directed his people to keep the Sabbath when they came out of slavery in Egypt, he directed them toward the Sabbath when they returned from exile in Babylon.

why God brought disaster on them and their city (Nehemiah 15:18).

20:12,13,16,20,21,24; Jeremiah 17:21-27; Amos 8:5; Isaiah 1:13. How would you describe God's feelings when his people break the Sabbath? How would you describe the experience of the believer who breaks the Sabbath?

BIBLE STUDY: A Sabbath Worth Keeping	
One way to understand the consequences of profaning the Sabbath is to see them as punishment from God for disobedience. Another way is to see it as a choice to step out of the path of God's blessing. I like the second perspective. Reflect on these possibilities for yourself. How do you see it?	
How does Isaiah 56:2-7 portray Sabbath keeping as a blessing?	
How would you describe the experience of a Sabbath not kept? Is that your experience? How have you missed out on the weekly gift of Sabbath?	
A Sabbath Not Worth Keeping	
There is a Sabbath that is not worth keeping. As Israel continued in apostasy they did have partial returns to "Sabbath keeping". Sadly, this very thing that God sees as so important is something he became weary of. He despised their worship including the way they "kept" the Sabbath. (Isaiah 1:11-15; 58).	
t got to a point that God said he would put an end to it. Interestingly, "he said he would end <i>her</i> Sabbaths" (Hosea 2:10-11). In all other places God calls t " <i>his</i> " Sabbath. God never stopped valuing his Sabbath, but he didn't have any interest in the one that man had made.	
When Jesus arrived on earth, he found the Sabbath being kept with great care. The trouble is that it wasn't a Sabbath worth keeping.	
Read Mark 2:23-28. Jesus had a different approach to the Sabbath than the Jewish people of his time. Try to discern from this story how the Sabbath had become something not worth keeping and how Jesus sought to redirect the people back to the Sabbath worth keeping.	

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BIBLE STUDY: A Sabbath Worth Keeping

Verse 24 "what is not lawful on the Sabbath"

The Sabbath had been reduced to a list of do's and don'ts. A "Sabbath" that is about keeping a list of rules is not a Sabbath worth keeping.

Verse 27 They had confused the purpose of the Sabbath. They didn't remember that God had made it for people. A "Sabbath" that values the day more than the people it was meant to bless is not a Sabbath worth keeping. A "Sabbath" that is more about God taking from us than God giving to us is not a Sabbath worth keeping.

Verse 28 Jesus didn't try to do away with the Sabbath. He sought to reestablish himself as the Lord of the Sabbath. They were more concerned about their rules than the rule of Christ. A "Sabbath" that does not belong to God is not a Sabbath worth keeping.

Matthew 12:1-8 tells the same story with a few different details. In verse 7 Jesus reminded the Jews, when they accused his disciples of breaking the Sabbath, that God desires mercy over sacrifices. He referred to a repeated Old Testament message that God is more interested in the inner heart of worship than the outer act of worship (Matthew 12:7; Matthew 9:13, Hosea 6:6, 1 Samuel 14:22; Micah 6:6-8). A "Sabbath" that is more about outward action than inner sincerity is not a Sabbath worth keeping.

In a final, ultimate example of a Sabbath not worth keeping, the Jews decided to break Jesus' legs to end his life early, in order to not break the Sabbath. They found he was already dead so there were no broken bones (John 19:31-33). They were so concerned about "keeping the Sabbath" that they were willing to kill Christ as an act of Sabbath keeping. A Christless "Sabbath" is not a Sabbath worth keeping! Sabbath is a relational experience with God. We cannot take Jesus out of it.

BIBLE STUDY: A Sabbath Worth Keeping

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How would you describe the experience of a Sabbath that is not worth keeping?	
Have you made the Sabbath into something not worth keeping?	
What might you do to correct your practice so that you can experience the blessing God has for you in the Sabbath?	
Don't settle for man's version of Sabbath! Don't settle for not keeping it!, Pursue a Sabbath worth keeping!	
What weekly rhythms or rituals would help you to experience a Sabbath worth keeping?	
How will you get started?	



I am going to teach you some bad words. I recently learned three of them, Karoshi(Japanese), Guolaosi(Chinese), and Gwarosa(South Korean). Each of these words have been created in recent decades because there was no other word to describe what was happening. The words all mean "death by overwork". They don't refer to forced labor but a chosen lifestyle that lacks sufficient rest. When our vocabulary requires bad words like these, we know that our culture has a problem.	
A Sabbath worth keeping is an invitation to rest!	
Read Exodus 31:12-17. The Bible explores Sabbath rest from two helpful angles. It tells us what to rest from and it tells us what to rest in. We find both angles featured in this text.	
— What to Rest From —	
The major category that the Bible calls us to rest from on the Sabbath is "work". (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 23:3 and in a bunch of other verses)	
In Exodus 31:15 God emphasizes the importance of not working on the Sabbath by declaring that if you do you will be put to death. Hold on! How should we understand this? At another time (Numbers 15:32-36) there was a physical	

stoning at the command of God for the crime of gathering sticks on the Sabbath. Not working on the Sabbath is a big deal. If I were to only get this one glimpse of the Sabbath, I would conclude that the Sabbath is worth keeping, but not for the right reasons.

It is ok if there are things in the Bible we don't fully understand. But consider an interpretive tool that can help us get some value out of the passages that issued the death penalty for breaking the Sabbath. Paul interprets God's displeasure and overthrow of the Israelites in the wilderness as being an example to us (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). Yes, these Old Testament stories really happened. They also serve as examples. The death penalty for working on the Sabbath is, in part, a prophetic example. It reveals what will happen if we don't rest. We will work ourselves to death(karoshi).

Expanded Sabbath Prohibitions

We have to be careful with going further than God has gone with Sabbath prohibitions. The Jewish Talmud details 39 categories of work. All are prohibited on the Sabbath. We might find some customized prohibitions in our own Sabbath traditions. The Bible does give some specific examples of work that should not be done on the Sabbath. Notice that the list is not long and it doesn't leave us with firm or dogmatic conclusions.

Here is what we find.

- No buying and selling (Nehemiah 10:31)
- No carrying a burden (Jeremiah 17:21-22).
- No kindling a fire (Exodus 35:3)
- No going out of our place (often interpreted as traveling) (Exodus 16:29).



These examples do make clear that Sabbath rest from our labor is an important and broad concept. Remember, the work prohibition extends to everyone in our influence, servants, children, animals, guests (Exodus 20:8-11). These details can be interpreted in problematic ways. We could make a detailed list of good and bad Sabbath activities and legalistically adhere to it. Rather than focusing on the debatable particulars, I suggest we focus on the clear principles. These additional prohibitions underscore the importance and broadness of the call to rest. We should guard our practice of Sabbath rest with intentionality so that it enriches everything within our influence.

REFLECT

What do you need to rest from?

As you reflect, consider this. Sabbath rest is not about resting from bad things. Some people approach Sabbath rest by temporarily abstaining from the perverted things they fill their life with on the other six days. Sabbath is more than a day to not listen to raunchy music. God doesn't want us indulging in sin any day of the week. He has called us to rest from work. Work is not bad. God has given us six out of seven days to do it. Sabbath rest involves routinely setting aside good things that might distract us from God. We rest from anything that might keep us from resting in the right things. God gives us the strength and drive to produce, push and provide. These are good things. We can't do them continually. What good things do you need to rest from in order to connect with God?

Why would God want us to rest? It is not because he wants to ruin our plans or cut our hours. The 2nd grade teacher doesn't punish the student by sending them to recess. When math is prohibited, it is generally not seen as a burden. God's reasons for our rest are all for our good! What do you think his reasons are?

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-What to Rest In-

What we rest from is important. But it is not the main point. It is simply a necessary step to bring us to what we rest in.

As we continue in Exodus 31, we find something new. We have read earlier that God rested on the Sabbath (Genesis 2) but here the text adds that he was refreshed. This is a beautiful description of Sabbath rest. But also, an intriguing one. This is God we are talking about; he doesn't struggle with being fresh.

The Hebrew word for "refresh" (used here) is "naphash". It is used 4 times in the Old Testament, twice about being refreshed by the Sabbath (Exodus 23:12), once about being refreshed by rest (2 Samuel 16:14) and the other time, well it is hard to spot it in the text, because it is translated as "breathed" (Joshua 11:14). The word literally means to take a breath, to inhale. Try it. Take a deep breath. This is to your physical body what Sabbath is to your spiritual health. Sabbath is a weekly rhythm of refreshing like the rhythm of breathing.

For six days God created. How did he do it? He spoke. Speaking requires breath. When we project a word, we are exhaling. God's work was accomplished with an exhale. How did he create Adam? He took dust of the ground and breathed the breath of life into it. For six days God was exhaling. He was giving out. He was producing. On the seventh day he took in a deep breath. To spiritually inhale is to take a break from our constant output to take in the things we need to sustain life.



It is a desperate experience when we are not able to breathe. It is called suffocation. You can relate if you've ever been underwater until you needed air. You can breathe out, until there is nothing more to breathe out. But until you surface, an inhale would only fill your lungs with water. With the Sabbath we surface.

The physical experience of breathing is an illustration of what we rest in on the Sabbath. Our body needs oxygen. We can choose to inhale something else, but it will not deliver what our body needs. Our soul needs God. The deep breath is not simply time off, self-help, or rest. It is resting in God. With Sabbath we breathe deep of God.

As God rested from his completed work of creation, we rest in his completed work of redemption. On earths first Sabbath God rested in his completed work (Gen 2:1-3). Adam was created on the previous day. He had not done any work yet. He didn't need to rest. But that is the point. The Sabbath calls us to rest in God's completed work. We rest from our work, to rest in his completed work. This is a weekly experience of righteousness by faith. This term refers to the way God makes us righteous. We are made righteous, not by our works, but by the completed work of God. Christ is our righteousness. Sabbath is not only about not going to work at your place of employment, it is also a spiritual rest in which we are reminded that we are not saved by our own works but by resting in God's completed work!

Hebrews 4:1-10 assures us that there remains a Sabbath rest for people to experience. The text makes it clear that the rest we enter is "his" rest (verse 1,3,5,9). The rest we enter into on Sabbath is not our rest, it is his rest. God invites us to rest in him.

What aspects of God do you most need to rest in? What realities make it a struggle for you to rest in God?

Sabbath is for you! A Biblical principle that is a continuing theme of our 5-week journey is that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". How has our study of rest helped you to see that the Sabbath is for you?

your work?



Sabbath Practice #2 TRUST

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It's your third and longest layover. You are exhausted but you stay awake to watch over your carry-ons and your kids who have fallen asleep on the floor in front of you. That's when the shady looking man you saw earlier, making a scene at the security checkpoint, approaches and suggests that you relax and take a nap, he will keep an eye on everything for you. You don't take his offer Why not?	
You hang 45 feet above the ground by a harness at a ropes course at the church summer camp. It was supposed to be fun but you're terrified as the 15-year-old camp volunteer tries to remember how to tie the knot to the carabiner. You freeze and hold to the only secure cable you see. He says, "You have to relax. I can't hook you to the zipline when you hold so stiff." You decide to go back down the way you came up.	
When we don't trust we have a hard time relaxing.	
A Sabbath worth keeping is an invitation to trust!	
—Trust God to provide for you!—	
Read Exodus 16:23-30. The first time the word "Sabbath" is used in the Bible is in Exodus 16:23. It comes in the story of God providing manna and quail for the Israelites. They complained that they had been brought to the wilderness to	

Sabbath Practice #2: TRUST	
die of hunger (v.3). God shared his plan to rain bread from heaven (vv.4-5) so that the people would know that he was their God (vv.11-12).	
God made bread rain from heaven! Our trust in God is strengthened when we recognize that God provides every good thing we receive every day we live, not just on Sabbath. We don't take a bite, a breath, or a step that is not provided by God. Don't be fooled, in our six days of work we do not provide for our needs. We simply gather what God has provided for us.	
God can do more with six than you can do with seven! The practice of resting from our work for a day requires that we stop the effort of providing for ourselves. It puts us in a position of trust in God's provision. God provided extra on day six so that they could rest on day seven (v.4, 22,23).	
An easy objection to resting on Sabbath is that we don't have enough time to get it all done during the week. Trust God. He is able to empower you to gather a double portion.	
How does your trust in God's provision impact your ability to rest on his Sabbath?	
In what ways do you need to trust God to provide for you?	

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—Trust God to prepare you! —

Preparing to rest is hard work! The people were commanded to prepare for the Sabbath by gathering double the day before. Relaxing vacations don't just happen. They require preparation (planning, packing, budgeting, booking...). When we don't prepare, we scramble the night before to find someone to watch the dogs, we miss the flight, we learn that there is no vacancy right about the time we wish we could relax in the hot tub, we are forced to take with us the work we didn't finish, we leave home sleep deprived and stressed and come home needing the rest we didn't get. Resting is not as easy as just taking time off. It is deeper than simply stopping our work. Our brain and body hang on to stress. To rest well, we must prepare well. Exodus 16 gives us a clear example of Sabbath preparations.

REFLECT

How could you better use your six days, especially Fridays, to prepare for deeper rest on the seventh?

What do you need to trust God for in the six work days to be better prepared to rest? (Energy, diligence. productivity...)

What do you not trust God to provide if you were to keep the Sabbath more fully than you do now? Time? Entertainment? Pleasure? Income?

The God who provides what we need can be trusted to preserve it as long as we need it. He provided in such a perfect way that those who gathered



—Trust God to preserve what you need! —

The God who provides what we need can be trusted to preserve it as long as we need it. He provided in such a perfect way that those who gathered much had no leftovers and those who gathered little had no lack (v.18). When leftovers were kept, they were stinky and full of worms the next morning(vv.19-20), except for on Sabbath morning (v. 24). On Sabbath God didn't provide food to gather, he preserved the food that was already gathered.

RFFI FCT

How might trusting God's preservation help you to rest?

How could the Sabbath preserve you, your family, your mental health, or your possessions?

—We have trust issues!—

Verse 27 "Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none." God told them not to go out. They didn't trust him. *There is no benefit in pushing where God is not providing.* If he doesn't rain down food, it doesn't matter how hard you look, it won't be there.

Gathering food was not excessively difficult. They weren't hunting. The food
fell from heaven! They simply gathered it. It would not have been much
effort for them to do that on the Sabbath. The people were commanded not
to gather, not so much because it was hard, but because it was distracting.
We have to be careful about those seemingly little distractions that we let
into our Sabbath practice. Work is sneaky. It doesn't take much distraction to
hijack our Sabbath rest.

REEL ECT

What trust issues do you have about the Sabbath?

How do you struggle to trust him to provide, prepare and preserve?

In verse 28 Moses asks, "How long?" God has been calling you to trust him. What makes this time of life a time when you will choose to do it?

Sabbath is for you! A Biblical principle that is a continuing theme of our 5-week journey is that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". We get this reminder in Exodus 31:29 when Moses said, "Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days". It is a gift! How has our study of trust helped you to see that the Sabbath is for you?

RHYTHMS & RITIIAI 9

What weekly rhythms or rituals could you adopt to better prepare for the Sabbath?

What weekly rhythms or rituals could you adopt to make trust more a part of your Sabbath experience?



Sabbath Practice #3 WORSHIP

I have been an American every day of my life. But on the Fourth of July the reminders are everywhere. That day stands apart to impress on my mind the good things about being American that are true of every other day. That is what holidays do. I should be thankful every day but on the third Thursday of November it is always on my mind. St. Patrick has an incredible story, but I
probably wouldn't have thought about it much if I didn't wear green once a year and hear his name. My mom and dad are always my mom and dad. But on Mother's Day and Father's Day we celebrate the parents they are throughout the year. The celebration on the one day helps us remember it's importance throughout the year.

Sabbath is the original holiday. On it we celebrate our God. He is worthy of worship continually, but one day a week there is a special occasion for worship. It recenters us as creatures whose existence is centered on worship. It helps us bring worship into the other six days.

Psalm 92 is a psalm of the Sabbath. It is not a prayer for wisdom or for help with enemies. It is not a lament. It is not a recitation of God's law. It is a psalm of worship. It praises God for who he is and what he has done.

A Sabbath worth keeping is a call to worship.

-Worship in Special Ways-

God gave his people instructions about offerings as an act of worship in Numbers 28-29. He told them to be careful to offer each at its appointed time (28:3). First were the instructions for the daily offering (29:3-8). Worship is a practice for every day. Then there were instructions for special offerings for all the appointed feasts. The first of those special offerings was for the weekly Sabbath (28:9-10). Sabbath is set apart as a special day of worship. Worship every day. Worship in a special way on Sabbath.

Sabbath Practice #3: WORSHIP

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Sabbath Practice #3. WURSHIP	
How will you make your Sabbath worship experience special? How could you worship on Sabbath in a way that will make worship a more central part of your life throughout the week?	
—Worship With Others —	
The 4th Commandment doesn't say, "Remember the Sabbath day by attending church". The practice of Sabbath worship would be greatly limited if we equated it exclusively with "going to church". Corporate worship is not	
the only valid worship setting. But it is a fantastic practice for keeping the Sabbath holy and there is a rich Biblical history of corporate worship on the Sabbath day.	
Read Leviticus 23:3. In Leviticus 23 God outlined the appointed Feasts of the Lord. These feasts include the weekly Sabbath (it is the first one). It is	
described not only as a day of rest but a "holy convocation" or a "sacred assembly". Feast, convocation, assembly… these are gathering words. They can't be done alone.	
These were not only practices that took place at the temple in Jerusalem. Apparently the Shunammite woman had a practice of going to be with Elisha on the Sabbath and on New Moons. It is like she was one of his church members.	
A synagogue is a Jewish house of worship. There are synagogue remains that have been dated to the third century BC. It is believed that this practice of meeting together for Sabbath worship in some place other than the temple goes back to the destruction of Solomon's Temple by Babylon in 586 BC.	

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Sabbath Practice #3: WORSHIP	
Synagogue is a Greek word composed of "sun" (together) and "agein" (bring). It literally means "bring together", "meeting", or "assembly. Hebrew synonyms include bet ha-knesset (house of assembly), bey ha-tefilla (house of prayer), and bet ha-midrash (house of study). Again, we see the concept of gathering.	
By the time of Christ there was a strong Jewish tradition of meeting for corporate worship in synagogues on Sabbath, rooted in Old Testament commands to have a holy convocation.	
The following texts reveal a weekly New Testament custom of gathering for worship on the Sabbath that included teaching, regular reading of the Scriptures, and religious discussion. (Mark 1:12, 27, 42; 6:2; Luke 4:16; 13:13; Acts 13:14; 17:2; 18:4)	
The call to not forsake assembling together (Hebrews 10:25) is not limited to gathering on Sabbath or in a church building, still, these are included. Gathering for worship is vital and increasingly so as we get closer to the coming of Jesus. Not because Sabbath is growing in importance but because the things that Sabbath offers us will become more rare and more needed.	
Read Isaiah 66:23. In the New Heavens and the New Earth we will celebrate the Sabbath. Not only that. We will "come to worship". Worshipping with others will be a Sabbath activity for eternity.	
How would you like to make worship (private and corporate) a richer part of your Sabbath practice?	
How has your experience of corporate Sabbath worship been positive or negative in the past? What would enrich it?	

Sabbath Practice #3: WORSHIP

-Worship God as Creator and Savior -

It is appropriate to worship God for any reason on Sabbath. However, there are two specific truths about God that are memorialized in our Sabbath worship. The 10 Commandments are given in two places, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Both of these lists include the 4th commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. Interestingly, they give different reasons for keeping it holy. Read Exodus 20:11. It calls us back to the culmination of creation in Genesis 2. Read Deuteronomy 5:15. This one calls us back to the slavery in Egypt and God's deliverance.

Every Sabbath is a memorial to creation and redemption. It's a day of life and freedom and celebration for the God who gives both! Sabbath proclaims that we belong to God. He made us. Sabbath proclaims that we are not slaves anymore. God has set us free.

REFLECT

How could Sabbath be a time for you to specifically worship God as your creator and your redeemer?

Sabbath is for you! A Biblical principle that is a continuing theme of our 5-week journey is that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". How has our study of worship helped you to see that the Sabbath is for you?

RHYTHMS & RITUALS

What weekly rhythms or rituals could you adopt that would strengthen your Sabbath practice of worship?



The celebration is more intense than anything you have ever experienced until it is broken up by the school superintendent. He announces that this rescue was done illegally. The parents had no permit, and they did not follow proper protocol. Their recklessness has made the school system liable for potentially devastating lawsuits. An investigation would begin immediately. Soon law enforcement arrives, further dampening the celebration as they detain and question those who were involved.

Crazy, right? After all, what is more important, rules or people?

Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, he cast out demons, he gave sight to a man born blind, and he made a man to walk who had been an invalid for 38 years. This was cause for celebration. But the religious leaders didn't pause to join these people in a single moment of joy. Instead, they condemned Jesus because he had healed on the Sabbath.



Jesus and the religious leaders became engaged in an ongoing disagreement
about what was lawful on the Sabbath. The religious leaders valued rules over
people, every time. Jesus valued people over man-made rules, every time.
Sabbath keeping is not just about our vertical relationship with God. It also
prioritizes our horizontal relationships with other people.

A Sabbath worth keeping is an invitation to serve others!

Serving people on the Sabbath was important in the Old Testament too!

Read Isaiah 58:3-14. The "fasts" spoken of in Isaiah 58 don't refer exclusively to the weekly Sabbath, but they include it (v.13). God's frustration was centered on their mistreatment of others, oppression of workers (v.3) and fighting (v.4). When God paints a vision of his chosen fast, it is centered on the just treatment of others (6, 7,10). Similarly in Amos 8:4-6, God is outraged with injustice in connection with Sabbath keeping.

The 4th commandment calls us to lift the burden of work off all those in our influence (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14). The expectation is that our Sabbath keeping would serve to refresh the stranger we encounter on the Sabbath (Exodus 23:12).

REFLECT

How do you see service as a central practice of Sabbath keeping in the Old Testament?

Then Jesus showed up with a persistent and clear message... Sabbath keeping includes serving people!

I've done some counting. The word "Sabbath" is used 50 times in the four gospels. It appears as a point of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders 41 of those times. Another 7 of these occurrences are in the context of the death of Christ, more conflict. The other main emphasis we see in this word study is service. There are also 41 occurrences of the word Sabbath that show up in the context of serving people, with 25 of those being specifically about healing on the Sabbath. There is only one instance in which Jesus healed on the Sabbath and it didn't result in immediate conflict with the religious leaders (Mark 1:21, also in Luke 4:31). There is only one occurrence of the word Sabbath in the gospels in which it doesn't have to do with conflict with religious leaders, serving people, or Christ's death (Matthew 24:20).

The numbers make two points incredibly clear:

- 1. Jesus and the religious leaders did not agree about what was lawful on the Sabbath.
- 2. Jesus saw the Sabbath as a time to serve people.

Luke 4 provides a good introduction to the ongoing disagreement. Jesus' mission on earth was one of life-giving service for people (v.18-19). He announced that mission on a Sabbath (V.16), then said it was fulfilled "today" (v.21). Because of his claims, the religious leaders tried to kill him (v.29), on the Sabbath. That was Jesus' Sabbath experience in Nazareth.

He then spent a Sabbath in Capernaum (v.31) where he healed a demon possessed man (v.35). We learn that *Sabbath is a day to advance God's mission*. Jesus didn't just announce his mission on a Sabbath, he intended to carry it out on the Sabbath. We also learn that *Sabbath is not a day to take life but to give life*. Jesus gave life by healing on the Sabbath. The religious

leaders were ready to take his life because he violated their Sabbath rules. They were willing to kill to protect their tradition. Jesus was willing to break their tradition to give life. They attacked Jesus to defend their rules. Jesus attacked the forces of evil to set people free. Jesus asked, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4). In the end of the conflict these two attitudes toward the Sabbath would be played out in a climactic way as Jesus lay in a tomb, on a Sabbath, killed by the Jews while simultaneously saving the life of all who would believe. Throughout this Sabbath conflict we are reminded that the *Sabbath was made for man* (Mark 2:27).

What follows is a quick trip through the Sabbath healings of Jesus. Each of them reinforces the dynamics already identified. A full reading of each is a rich but lengthy study. Here, we will simply summarize the story and highlight any features that add a new dynamic to the message of serving people on the Sabbath.

The Man with a Withered Hand (Luke 6:6-11, Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6) This was a trap designed to accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. They asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?". Before healing the man in front of their eyes, on the Sabbath, Jesus responded, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Here is a main principal of Jesus' Sabbath message. Doing good things for people is a core Sabbath practice.

The Woman with a Disabling Spirit of 18 Years (Luke 13:10-17)

Jesus was teaching on a Sabbath and paused to heal a woman, mid sermon. It didn't take much work, just a word and a touch. The religious leaders were indignant. They pointed out that this healing could have been done on any of the other six days of the week. Again, their response shows a higher value for rules than for people. In Jesus' response we see that the *Sabbath is a day to help people find freedom from the things that bind them*.

The Man with Dropsy (Luke 14:1-6)

This is a similar story with similar argument, only this time it happened while Jesus was a dinner guest of a ruler of the Pharisees. He wasn't trying to avoid offense. Following the healing he asked the well-known question about the ox in the ditch on the Sabbath. Yes, it is right to pull it out! Jesus was not endorsing the practice of scheduling emergencies on the Sabbath. He wasn't suggesting that we start an ox pulling business with Sabbath hours. No, we should guard the Sabbath. But when someone in your path needs help, help them.

The Man Who Was an Invalid for 38 Years (John 5:1-17)

Jesus gave three simple commands in one short phrase, "Get up, take your bed, and walk." With each command Jesus was intentionally violating a different Jewish rule for the Sabbath. For the lame man to get up required Jesus to heal, which was work. Carrying a bed would have been bearing a burden (the Jews picked up on this one in verse 11). And walking on Sabbath was limited by the Jews too. Later Jesus returned to the man, which allowed him to be identified for the religious leaders (v.14), as if he wanted them to notice his disregard for their Sabbath rules.

This encounter ends with the words, "My Father is also working until now, and I am working." Work is the basic thing we are not supposed to do on Sabbath. Apparently when God rested from his work of creation (Genesis 2) he didn't rest from his work of serving people. This raises questions. Is all work on the Sabbath wrong? Is it possible to rest from my work while I engage in God's work? How do we engage in God's work without sacrificing our rest? Do we rest from our work on the Sabbath so that we will be more available to engage in God's work?

Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)

Jesus prefaced his healing by stating his requirement to "do the works of him who sent me". He used the word "we" to suggest that all believers are included in that requirement as well (v.4). Again, he chose to heal in such a way that it broke the Sabbath in the eyes of the Jews. When Jesus mixed mud with his saliva (v.6) he violated a Sabbath prohibition against mixing. It caused a division. Some rejected Jesus because he broke the Sabbath. Others saw the miracles and leaned toward belief. This is a point of decision we all must come to about the Sabbath. Will we insist that a practice is not from God if it doesn't fit with our tradition? Or will we let God's love for people reshape our tradition.

REFLECT

What Sabbath perspectives of Jesus bring you the most conviction?

What Sabbath perspectives of the religious leaders bring you the most concern?

How can you practice serving people on the Sabbath while guarding it also as a day of rest, trust, worship, and delight?

Sabbath is for you! A Biblical principle that is a continuing theme of our 5-week journey is that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". How has our study of serving people helped you to see that the Sabbath is for you?

RHYTHMS & RITUALS

What weekly rhythms or rituals could you adopt that would strengthen your Sabbath practice of service?



When a war comes to an end, the landmines don't automatically go away. They must be removed. There are several ways to do this. There are large, armored vehicles called flails that intentionally detonate mines in their path by flailing chains on the ground in front of them. There are also mine plows that push mines to the side of the road or overturn them so they will not cause damage when they are run over. Clean up crews have used trained dogs, metal detectors, and ground penetrating radar. But all of that can be expensive. The other option is to do it manually, with teams of local people. They are trained to search the ground carefully and methodically for signs of buried explosives. Sometimes they use a stiff wire to investigate an area for a short distance. The work is slow, and the stakes are high. It is a task that people give their full attention to, not because it is desirable but because it is dangerous. Can you imagine getting assigned to manual landmine removal duty?

There is a world of difference between duty and delight. The Sabbath can be either. We can approach Sabbath keeping because we think we must. We can carefully and methodically tiptoe through the day with great attention to each step, so we don't get careless and mess up and get hit with the consequences. We can do it all because it is simply our duty. Or we could approach the Sabbath with an equal level of intentionality, not because we are afraid of getting blown up but because we delight in the Sabbath. When God gave the command to keep the Sabbath holy, he wasn't appealing to duty but delight. What honors God more than obedience is willing, joyful, delighted obedience.

A Sabbath worth keeping is an invitation to delight in God!

— Delight is a deeper motivation than duty!—

Read Amos 8:5. You know that it is not a happy chapter of scripture when it concludes with the words "They shall fall and never rise again" (v.14). It doesn't begin much better. We find God lamenting that the end has come upon his people Israel (v.2). The spiritual condition of these people is summarized in verse 4-5. They "observed" Gods appointed times, including the Sabbath, as a duty. In their heart they rush past it wanting to return to their business, eager to take advantage of people. When the Sabbath becomes a duty, it is reason enough for the land to tremble and everyone in it to mourn (v.8). The heart of God is grieved when we keep the Sabbath out of duty.

I remember as a kid, on a particular Sabbath our family got together with some other families. Us kids wanted to play basketball. That wasn't an activity that the adults felt we should do on the Sabbath. One of the kids went to his mom and asked in a frustrated and pleading voice, "Is it almost sundown yet?" I wanted to play basketball too. But I remember distinctly feeling that something about that attitude seemed wrong. I knew that if Sabbath was worth keeping it wasn't something I should wish away. It wasn't something that I should "keep" only to long for it to be over. I've since learned that this attitude of Sabbath keeping motivated by duty is an insult to the heart of God. God is even less interested in legalistic Sabbath keeping than we are.

As we consider who this God is who gave us the Sabbath it should not be hard to see the incredible motivation of delight that we have for keeping the Sabbath. He is the God in whose presence there is fullness of joy and at whose your right hand are pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11).

A great irony is that in an effort to "obey" the Biblical instruction to not carry
a burden (Jeremiah 17:21-27) many have made their obedience a burden.
When Sabbath keeping is motivated by duty it quickly becomes a burden.
And then, is it really even Sabbath keeping? When Jesus calls us to rest in
him in Matthew 28:11 he tells us that his burden is light. Resting in Jesus is
not a burden. It lifts our burden.

The ultimate Sabbath rest will be our eternal delight with Christ in the New Jerusalem. We are most certainly not there yet. We can live one day out of every seven as a preview of heaven. Keeping the Sabbath is like practicing heaven. God has given us an invitation to set aside all else and be lifted above the sickness of this broken world to live for 24 hours as if we were already home. How would this not be a delight?

REFLECT

How has your practice of Sabbath been motived by duty? How has it been motived by delight?

There is a difference between "calling the Sabbath a delight" and "doing our own pleasure"!

Read Isaiah 58:13-14. God wants us to "call the Sabbath a delight" but doesn't want us to "do our own pleasure" on the Sabbath. We need to understand this distinction.

I am pretty sure that calling the Sabbath a delight means that we enjoy it. Sabbath should be fun! But it is the object of our delight that determines if it

is the delight God desires. We are to call the Sabbath a delight. The object of
our delight is the Sabbath, the gift God has given us. We delight in the gift
because we delight in the giver. When the Sabbath is kept as a delight, God
says, "Then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the
heights of the earth." God is the object of our delight and he is ready to make
the extent of our delight reach as high as is earthly possible. The Sabbath is
an invitation to delight in God, not a launch pad to find pleasure in
something other than God. The Sabbath should never be a drudgery. It is a
day of celebration centered on God.

This distinction does not give us a list of approved and unapproved activities. The activity we find enjoyable is not the point. It is the object of our delight that makes the activity meaningful. The focus should not be on our actions but the affection behind them. We all celebrate a bit different. But we celebrate the same God. Delight in God and in the things that delight him!

God is not anti-pleasure. He delights in our delighting in him!

How do you understand the difference between "calling the Sabbath a delight" and "doing our own pleasure" on the Sabbath?

How might it guide your Sabbath experience?

How do you feel about delight and pleasure and celebration being one of the central practices of Sabbath keeping? Is it a new thought? Is it an uncomfortable thought? Is it a liberating thought?

Oneg Shabbat

There is a Jewish practice of gathering for special food and song on Friday evening or Sabbath after the synagogue service. It is called Oneg Shabbat. It literally means "Sabbath delight" or "the joy of the Sabbath". In our church we call it "fellowship meal". It is right to call Sabbath a delight.

Sabbath is for you! A Biblical principle that is a continuing theme of our 5-week journey is that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath". How has our study of delight helped you to see that the Sabbath is for you?

RHYTHMS & RITUALS

What weekly rhythms or rituals could you adopt that would strengthen your Sabbath practice of delight?

END OF THE JOURNEY

The 5 weeks have come to an end. Your Sabbath journey doesn't have to.

In the introduction of this study guide you were encouraged to reflect in the following way.

"Take a moment to reflect on your Sabbath experience up to this point in your life. Have you seen Sabbath as something worth keeping? Have you struggled to find its worth? Maybe you have never practiced keeping the Sabbath. Maybe you have but it hasn't been a positive experience. As we begin this 5-week journey, how do you hope to grow in your experience of Sabbath?"

How is your practice of Sabbath different than it was 5 weeks ago?

Take some time to prayerfully consider your next steps to pursue a Sabbath worth keeping!

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