



## Part 7: The Gift of Sabbath

Genesis 1:31 – 2:3

*Sabbath is God's gift, and it is a countercultural rhythm of God's people.*

### I. We are busy and tired.

“Busyness is the leading substitute for significance.” – Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*

In love and wisdom, God has given us a way to fight the temptations of living a life that runs too fast and skims over the things that matter most. It's called “sabbath.”

The Genesis creation stories introduce us to three fundamental human institutions: marriage, work, and sabbath.

“The Sabbath has largely been forgotten by the church, which has uncritically mimicked the rhythms of the industrial and success-obsessed West. The result? Our road-weary, exhausted churches have largely failed to integrate Sabbath into their lives as vital elements of Christian discipleship. It is not as though we do not love God – we love God deeply. We just do not know how to sit with God anymore. . . We have become perhaps the most emotionally exhausted, psychologically overworked, spiritually malnourished people in history.” – A.J. Swoboda, *Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World*

### II. Sabbath is built into creation and salvation.

#### A. God's Design (Genesis 2:1-3).

God “rested” (*Shabat*) = cease, stop, rest.

Obviously, God did not need to physically rest. He is modeling for humanity a way to live: six days of work, one day of rest or

ceasing. Time is now sanctified as the Lord blesses a special day to be life-giving.

This rhythm is later commanded in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15). In Exodus the command is connected to creation's design. In Deuteronomy the command is connected to our salvation. We are to "remember" the Sabbath day and keep it "holy."

B. Sabbath as twin goals: rest/refreshment and worship.

"...the worst hallucination busyness conjures is the conviction that 'I am God. All depends on me. How will the right things happen at the right time if I'm not pushing and pulling and watching and worrying?' Sabbath keeping requires two orientations: One is Godward. The other is timeward. To keep Sabbath well—as both a day and an attitude – we have to think clearly about God and freshly about time." – Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*

"We imitate God so that we stop trying to be God." – Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*

"Sabbath is the primary discipline, or practice, by which we cultivate the spirit of restfulness in our lives as a whole." – John Mark Comer, *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*

### III. Heaven is our ultimate sabbath-rest (Hebrews 4).

"It [Sabbath] is both present and future. It is a rest we taste now, enjoy now, receive now. But this present Sabbath is only a shadow of another Sabbath. This other Sabbath is beyond this world. . . Sabbath isn't eternity, but it's close. It's a kind of precinct of heaven. A well-kept Sabbath is a dress rehearsal for things above. In finding the rest of God now, we prepare for the fullness of God one day." – Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*, p.212-213

"The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals." – Abraham Heschel

"He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth ...all things were created by him and for him." Colossians 1:15-16

"Come to me, all you who are wearied 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." Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30)

## Sabbath Liturgy

May this day bring Sabbath rest  
to my heart and my home.

May God's image in me be restored,  
and my imagination in God be re-storied.

May the gravity of material things be lightened,  
and the relativity of time slow down.

May I know grace to embrace my own finite smallness  
in the arms of God's infinite greatness.

May God's Word feed me and His Spirit lead me  
into the week and into the life to come.

### Practical Suggestions:

1. Mark Sabbath from sundown to sundown (24-hour period)
2. Prepare all food ahead of time or eat leftovers
3. Take a nap
4. Cease from technology
5. Cease from your "to-do" list
6. Engage in activities that refresh you
7. Worship with God's people

### Recommended:

1. *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer.
2. *The Rest of God* by Mark Buchanan.
3. *The Tech-Wise Family* by Andy Crouch.

### Discussion questions:

1. Read Genesis 1:31 – 2:3. What is the clear pattern that God is establishing in creation? Read Exodus 20:8-11. What is the reasoning given for obeying the fourth commandment? Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15. What is the reason given for obeying the fourth commandment?
2. What has been your experience with the concept of the Sabbath? Would you say it leaned more towards ignorance of it or legalism in it?
3. What do you think are some of the possible gifts to be received in its practice?
4. Are there any changes or steps you desire to take towards the rhythm of a weekly sabbath? What are the obstacles?