



Lesson 1 – August 21, 2019 Genesis 2:1-3

It's no secret that our society suffers from a deficit of rest. Rest and sleep (or a lack thereof) can have a significant impact on the quality of our lives, and once you understand what rest and sleep do for our bodies, you will in turn understand how significant it is for us to have soul rest to nurture our spirits.

The indicators in our lack of physical rest are connected to our lack of spiritual rest. If you think about the quality of life that you have now, a lot of it has to do with the lack of physical, mental, and spiritual rest in your life. This series will be about the very simple, yet difficult idea for us - understanding what God means when He calls us to Sabbath rest.

We have been called to more than just moments of rest— we are called to a Sabbath lifestyle. Sabbath is not necessarily a vacation. Moments of rest can be deceiving, because while they can be relaxing and feel like a break away, they aren't Sabbath. **Sabbath is about intentionality and motives** – what is driving you to take the rest? Taking breaks alone is not enough to prevent burnout – it must be an intentional break away from the work of life to intentionally be with God.

For the believer, **Sabbath rest is an act that requires both *dependence and discipline*.**

Dependence – when we admit to God we cannot do it all. We acknowledge that our ability is limited and finite - no matter how hard we push ourselves. We yield to Him when we intervene to our bodies and our minds show their limitations.

Discipline - when we plan our time and say no to our indulgences. Our pleasurable distractions rob us of rest. We have opportunity to rest, but get distracted by TV, social media or DIY projects.

Sabbath is a lifestyle, but there are temporary seasons in life where it could be more challenging – mothers of young children, students, starting new jobs – these are seasons of life that require energy. Sabbath might look a little different for you, but if it's a lifestyle, this means that a temporary alteration does not negate the principle.

Why do we struggle to set Sabbath apart? We struggle with distractions. We want worth and value and find it in achievement, affirmation, status, reputation and goals. Why give that up to sit still when knowing that sitting still too long my status could change?

CONTEXT FOR LESSON 1

Fifty years ago, 84% of Americans got 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. That number has dropped to 40%. Women get far less sleep than men in general, and factors such as income, number and age of children impact our sleep.

Sleep does two main things: (1) sleep repairs and restores organs and (2) it plays a crucial role in memory and learning retention. Poor sleep is linked to weight gain. Short sleep is one of the stronger indicators for obesity risk. Sleep deprived people have bigger appetites and therefore consume more calories.

Short sleep is one of the strongest risk factors for obesity. Lack of sleep increases the risk of Type 2 diabetes. Sleep deprivation results in lack of productivity. Brain function and problem solving skills are also greatly impacted by lack of sleep. 90% of patients with diagnoses of depression complain about sleep quality and quantity. If you are sleep deprived, you are three times more likely to develop a cold or illness. Sleep affects our ability to interact socially. Fatigue, headaches, upset stomach, muscle tension, ulcers, anxiety attacks, change in appetite, teeth grinding – all symptoms of lack of rest.



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To take a day to advance your agenda, even if it is grounded in “holy work” is no Sabbath. In the book **The Pastor** by Eugene Peterson, he writes “just a day off is called a “bastard Sabbath.” A day off that is not intentionally set apart for God is fatherless -To take a day off to stop one kind of work to do another kind of work is not Sabbath. To take a day off to make yourself feel good is not the point of Sabbath. It's about communing and connecting with God, giving God reign over the day.

Sabbath is about choosing to be unproductive.

Sabbath is not about quiet time, it's about unassigned time.

Sabbath is sitting before God and saying, God, you have the floor.

Sabbath is about enjoying the privilege of spending time with the Creator of the Universe.

Sabbath is the only path to rest.

Sabbath is risky. David knew that he needed to forcibly lay down his sheep, pressing into their bodies into a posture of rest. Don't be surprised when the hand of God presses into you and takes your legs from you – this is not always a sweet, gentle process. Your agenda might be jeopardized, but you have to take this seriously because we are called to rest in His ability, authority and adoption.

Genesis 2:1-3 (NAS): Thus the heavens and the earth were **completed**, and all their hosts. (2) By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He **rested** on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. (3) Then God **blessed** the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Completed – notice that God had finished his work before he rested. Sabbath is part of a **conclusion** when a thing comes to an end – this is not a collapse because I couldn't go any further, it is actual, planned time. Sabbath is not a disruption to your day, it's a culmination of your work. You must plan for rest. The idea of completion also speaks to preparation. You must prepare for **rest**. Preparation and routine sends a trigger to your mind that it is time to shut down. How do I prepare myself for rest?

It also reminds us of how we go to sleep. How you go to sleep tells your body how well to sleep. The way you go to sleep sets your body up for quality sleep. Falling asleep on the couch is not the same as preparing for sleep. You must give your body cues for deep rest, not alertness.

Rested - God stopped the work he was doing to move towards divine **contemplation**. Sometimes you need to look around and choose to rest, because there is value in just contemplating what God has already done and appreciating His divine work.

For God, Sabbath was about His divine completion, divine contemplation and divine rest. For us, Sabbath is about physical rest and spiritual profit.

Sabbath is not just something that is allotted in a certain time period, it continues throughout scripture. Sabbath is a holy day that was appointed even before there was sin, consequence, government, before even the Ten Commandments He declared that this day was holy and woven into the very fabric of how God made us. There is continuance and permanence to Sabbath. Hebrews 4 says there remains a permanent rest for those who are in Christ Jesus.



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Blessed - God bless and sanctified the 7th day because in it he rested from all His work. Rest given by God is blessed. **All rest is not blessed rest.** When He rested He blessed it, and made it something unique and special. He sanctified it, set it apart and made it holy. Sabbath is not a suggestion, it is not optional. He rested and gave us an example of how we can do the very same thing.

Am I willing to demonstrate my dependence? This is a big decision. How do I incorporate time for God and God alone? Before God gave commandments, He instituted Sabbath as holy. Because we have lost the meaning of what it means to be consecrated, holy and set apart, we have taken what God has consecrated and made it common. How do I stop my grind and let God have his way?

We must understand what Sabbath means. We must understand the rhythm of that 7th mark of time. We must learn to deny ourselves and cut some things off. This is why Sabbath is often attached to silence, solitude and fasting. In solitude we are undistracted by others, in silence we are undistracted by our self, in fasting, we deny the distraction for the comfort of food.

We must make a decision to examine what is robbing us of our rest, but don't get stressed and think this is impossible. Sometimes you just need to be with you and God and be comfortable with silence.

How am I going to make provision for soul rest? Am I willing to give up my agenda for it?

The deeper need is soul rest. We live in an action-oriented culture, we like to walk away with a list of things to go and do to be better and fix our lives. There is actually less that you need to do in order for God to fix your life, change your heart, and reorder your priorities. Ask God what you need to adjust, and be prepared to surrender your agenda.

The thing you are holding onto so tightly may be robbing you of your rest. Everything around you will say "squeeze God in" but we must have a lifestyle that says I can't do it by myself. Let some things go and find yourself in God again.

Imagine the peace, joy and gratitude you will have when you embrace the Sabbath lifestyle!