

“People who Sabbath live all seven days differently.”
- Walter Brueggemann

Crafting a Sabbath Practice

Sabbath is a Hebrew word that literally means to stop, cease or be done. In Genesis chapter 2, we read that God stopped from his work, establishing a rhythm of work and rest for his creation. He called the day of rest “Sabbath.” For centuries, Sabbath has served as a regular practice for Christians who desire to align their lives to the Way of Jesus and experience what He called “rest for your souls.”

Use the following definition of Sabbath as a guide: Sabbath is a 24-hour time period in which we *stop* all work and set aside a day to *rest, delight and worship*. Use the following worksheet to begin to craft your Sabbath practice.

Movement #1: STOP

1. Pick a time to Sabbath and give it a try
 - If possible, pick a 24-period. For many, Sunday is an ideal day for Sabbath since it’s also the day we gather as a church for worship.
 - If an entire day is too much for you, that’s fine. Start where you are.
 - If at all possible, get into a rhythm of practicing Sabbath on the same day each week. Your body will “memorize” the day and begin to anticipate it.

I will choose to Sabbath on _____ for _____ hours.
day of the week. number of hours

2. Pick a beginning and ending ritual
 - For example, you could light a candle to begin and end by sharing a highlight of your Sabbath.
 - Other rituals might be attending church on Sunday, having a picnic, bonfire, or hot bath, reading a prayer or Scripture passage.
 - Discuss this with your household and feel free to be creative.

My beginning ritual will be _____ and my
ending ritual will be _____ .

Try stopping for a few weeks. Pay careful attention to how you and the members of your household feel about it. Talk about it with others. Talk about it with God. When you feel ready, consider continuing on to the 2nd movement: REST.

Movement #2: REST

1. Prepare ahead for your Sabbath

- In the New Testament, the day before the Sabbath is called “the Preparation Day.”
- Plan to set aside a little time, the night before or the afternoon leading up to Sabbath to prepare. You can do a little or a lot; it’s up to you.
- You could go grocery shopping, prep your meals, clean or tidy your home, pay bills, respond to waiting emails or texts, plan out some of your Sabbath activities.

I will prepare for my Sabbath by

2. Say “No” to Something

- Many things in our lives (both good and bad) can be anti-rest. It is extremely easy to get sucked into doing things that consume us and prevent us from experiencing authentic rest and delight.
- Pick at least one cultural force to say “no” to on the Sabbath.
- For example, you could say “no” to your phone, social media, the internet, TV and entertainment, shopping, social obligations, sports, weekend work, chores, errands, etc.

I will say “no” to _____ during my Sabbath.

Try resting for a few weeks. Pay careful attention to how you and the members of your household feel about it. Talk about it with others. Talk about it with God. When you feel ready, consider continuing on to the 3rd movement: DELIGHT.

Movement #3: DELIGHT

1. Plan a Sabbath Feast

- Whether it’s 20 people for a giant BBQ in the backyard or just one or two close friends out to dinner, plan a meal together.
- Cook or order your favourite food and use this time to savour God’s provision of food, family and friends! Enjoy!

Take a few minutes to plan your Sabbath Feast below...

Who? _____	What? _____
When? _____	Where? _____

2. Choose an activity that brings delight

- Make a list of activities that bring you and/or the members of your household delight and joy.
- Plan to do at least one these during your Sabbath
- For example, make pancakes, play music, take a walk, nap, go fishing, watch the sunset, sing, read fiction or poetry, play a game, go to a museum, call a friend or family member who lives far away, sit by the fire, go skiing, swim, dance, draw, garden, etc.

I will do _____ during my Sabbath because it brings me joy!
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Try delighting for a few weeks. Pay careful attention to how you and the members of your household feel about it. Talk about it with others. Talk about it with God. When you feel ready, consider continuing on to the 4th movement: WORSHIP.

Movement #4: WORSHIP

1. Repeat a Sabbath prayer

- For centuries Christians have practice something called fixed-hour prayer. It simply refers to pausing at various intervals throughout the day to reorient ourselves toward God.
- Pause two or three times during your Sabbath to pray.
- You can do this by listening to music, praying with a friend, a prayer walk, or by repeating a short a written pray or psalm.

I will choose to pray during my Sabbath at the following times _____, _____, _____.

3. Enjoy God!

- Choose at least one activity by which you enjoy God and do it.
- It could be throwing a party, being with family, walking in nature, studying theology, birdwatching, singing, praying, or journaling. Be creative!

- Ask: Does this activity connect me more deeply with God, his goodness and beauty? Do I find myself coming alive to the wonder of his creation and character and spontaneously bursting into praise?
- It may take some trial and error – experiment with some practices that you think will help you to do what Jesus called “abiding” in Him.

**I will choose to enjoy God by _____
during my Sabbath.**

Try worshipping for a few weeks. Pay careful attention to how you and the members of your household feel about it. Talk about it with others. Talk about it with God. Spiritual formation is process. As you continue to engage in the practice of Sabbath, be sure to reflect on your experience and ask for the Holy Spirit’s leading. If and when you feel ready, you might consider attempting one of the following REACH practices.

Reach Practices:

STOP - Sleep a full 8 to 9 hours a night for an entire week.

REST - Turn off all of your devices, including your phone for a full twenty-four hours.

DELIGHT - Create a Sabbath Box where you put anything that would keep you from Sabbath delight – your phone, laptop, car keys, wallet, to-do lists, notes about anxieties or unfinished tasks.

WORSHIP – Spend a portion of your Sabbath in silence and solitude, enjoying quiet time with God. Choose to read Scripture, journal, walk, nap or pray.

Start Small!

The end goal of practicing Sabbath is not to say, “I practice Sabbath.” It is to create space in our lives to welcome and respond to Jesus and to become people who are marked by a spirit of restfulness, joy, and worship. When beginning a new spiritual practice it is helpful to remember that less is more. Small, repeated changes in life surrendered to God will lead to lasting transformation in our lives.

Additional Resources:

Podcast

Rule of Life (Sabbath series) by Practicing the Way

Reading

Sabbath by Dr. Dan Allender

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer

The Rest of God by Mark Buchanan

Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest by Ruth Haley Barton