

A Family Observance: The Sabbath in Creation



Welcome to the table!

Hi Grown Ups!

We are so thankful you desire to engage your family in observing Shabbat (the Sabbath), and we are praying that you all experience a truly meaningful celebration of rest in Him.

Our desire at The Sabbath Table is to empower you with this guide for rich, approachable discipleship conversations and experiences with your kids around the Sabbath.

This guide is meant to provide you not with another "should," but instead with some freedom and clarity for how to focus in around the table with your child/children in a fun way that enriches their understanding of God through this holy day.

This guide includes opportunities for you all to **engage**, **experience**, and **encounter** the love of God on Shabbat. This is the first in our series of Sabbath focused Table Discipleship Guides. More will be coming, but this is the first.

- **Engage**: A brief telling of what the Sabbath is, time in Scripture, and formative questions to encourage meaningful family conversations about God's holiness and design of time.
- **Experience**: A guide for welcoming Sabbath through a meal and blessings.
- **Encounter**: A fun and meaningful family activity around the idea of time being set apart by God as holy.

This requires minimal preparation and would be great to do this Friday evening at your table. Shabbat shalom!

Engage:

- Genesis 2:2-3
- The Rest of God

Experience:

- *Sabbath
Table
Blessings*

Encounter:

- Set Apart
Time activity

Engage:

The Sabbath in Creation

Share with your children:

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth! Do you remember how many days the Bible tells us it took for Him to create everything? Yes, six days. But after He created everything, the Scriptures tell us something happened!

Genesis 2:2-3 says: *"By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done."* (NIV)

On the seventh day, God RESTED from all His work, but He also did one other thing. Did anyone catch it? Right! He BLESSED the seventh day and made it HOLY.

As Creator, He of course established the foundations of the earth, and He also established the foundations of time itself. He built into the fabric of time a day that is not like the other days. He made one day holy.

What does it mean for something to be holy? And what is the opposite of holy? Well, for something to be holy means that it is set apart from everything else and made special for God. The opposite of holy is not bad... the opposite of holy is *normal*. Regular. For six days, God created and did good work. But He set apart the Sabbath from the normal days as a special day for Him and for us to enjoy!

Did you know that the Sabbath was the very first thing God ever declared to be holy in the universe? This means it is not only very important to God, but also that it should be very important to us. The creation of the Sabbath by God in the beginning (before sin ever enters the world) means it is His original (first) design for experiencing and enjoying our relationship with Him. It is there in the beginning as an example of life as it should be.

Since God set this day apart in the beginning as a gift for creation, it means everyone is invited to experience this gift. Because GOD made it holy, it means the sabbath is happening every week whether we receive the gift or not. It is always there and available to us to experience. This special day of rest and enjoying peace with God is for me and for you. Yeshua (Jesus) tells us that God created this day for us, and we are so thankful for this gift!

Formation Questions:

- What did God do on the seventh day?
- What did He say about the seventh day?
- What does it mean for something to be holy?
- How do you think that first Sabbath looked? What do you imagine God looked like resting in His creation? (Let kids answer, and you can share with them the Hebrew lets us know that His rest looked like sitting on a throne enjoying one's kingdom.)
- How does it make you feel to know that God wanted us to have this special gift of rest with Him from the very beginning?
- What do you think it could look like for you to rest and enjoy this special day with God?
- What are some normal things in your week that feel like work?
- How do you see God's love in how He created the Sabbath for us to enjoy with Him?



Experience: Sabbath Table Blessings

In homes that practice the Sabbath, one of the traditional ways to differentiate it from the other days of the week is by welcoming/beginning their Sabbath with blessings.

Just like we differentiate birthdays with cake and a song, or sports games with a national anthem, we can differentiate the Sabbath by blessing God, others, and the day itself.

Beginning at sundown on Friday evening, families traditionally will gather around the table for a joyful, celebratory meal and begin their Sabbath with blessings.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth... and rested on the seventh day.”

Exodus 20:8-11

On the table are two candles, delicious bread, and a cup of juice or wine.

Beginning: Bless the Lord

The eldest woman of the home lights the candles and welcomes the Sabbath by thanking God with this blessing:

- “Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with His Word, and commands us to be a light to all people, and who gave to us Jesus our Messiah- the Light of the World.”

If there is a husband and wife in the household:

After the candles are lit and the woman has blessed the Lord, the husband then takes the opportunity to bless his wife. A traditional blessing used to bless one's wife is *Eshet Chayil*, a portion taken from the concluding section of Proverbs 31. The Hebrew word *eshet* is the construct of the word for woman, and *chayil* connotes bravery. The husband reads this passage at the table over the wife, and in doing so blesses her as a *woman of valor and strength*. A beautiful way to personalize this blessing is to add his wife's name into the verses as he reads the passage over her.

- Read: Proverbs 31:10-31

After the candles are lit, and after the husband blesses his wife as an *Eshet Chayil*, it is time to bless the children. It is traditional for the priestly blessing from Numbers 6 to be spoken over the children at the table, but parents may also want to use this intimate moment to add their own words of blessing, appreciation, and love for their children.

- *May the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.* (from Numbers 6:24-26).
- EX: *May you, [CHILD'S NAME], know that you were created by our loving God on purpose, for a purpose. May His Words guide you, may His presence give you courage, and may His Spirit teach*

Experience: Sabbath Table Blessings cont'd

you the ways you are to go. May you take joy in Him and share your gifts with the world so that others might rejoice in Him, too. May this day be a blessing and draw you closer to Him.

Dedication: Blessing the Lord, Setting Apart the Sabbath

After the candles are lit, and the family has blessed one another, the final movement is to set apart the Sabbath and bless the Lord before beginning the meal. This is known as the *Kiddush* (sanctification) blessing. It is typically said while holding up the cup of juice or wine. The blessing begins by reciting Genesis 1:31-2:3 and concludes with thanks to God for the gift of Sabbath.

- Genesis 1:31-2:3
- Conclusion:
 - *"Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, creator of the fruit of the vine."* (Drink the cup, share around the table.)
 - *"Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with His Word, and in His love gave us the Sabbath as a memorial work of His creation, the heritage of our freedom, and of His coming Kingdom. Blessed are you, LORD, who makes the Sabbath holy."*
 - (Take the bread, break off a piece, and pass around the table for all to share.) *"Blessed are you, LORD our God, King of the Universe, who gives us the Living Bread from Heaven and bread from the earth. Amen."*

-Leviticus 16:31 NIV

After blessing the Lord, blessing those present, and setting apart the Sabbath, it is customary to begin the meal by expressing to one another at the table, *"Shabbat shalom!"* [Peaceful Sabbath!] This is a joyful and loving way to express your desire for each person to experience a peaceful and meaningful Sabbath.

"If you call the Sabbath a delight... then you will find joy in the Lord..."

Isaiah 58:13-14



Encounter: Setting Apart Time

Introduction:

The concept of holiness is important for children to be able to grasp in understanding the story of Scripture. We can help them develop a strong foundation of understanding this concept by driving home that the opposite of holiness is not bad- it is just normal. This activity is a simple and fun way to engage your kids thoughtfully in considering how God set apart time (the Sabbath day) as something holy.

As you begin to unpack the idea of holiness with your children, here are a few things you can discuss:

- God made the Sabbath day holy - this means, He made it different from the other days.
- Normal things are not bad. Normal days are not bad days. Just like we have birthdays or special holidays, the Sabbath is a day God set apart as special from the other ones.
- Keeping something special makes it meaningful and important. When God tells us to keep the Sabbath, He is not shaking His finger at us. He is wanting the very best thing for us!

“Six days shall
work be done,
but on the
seventh day is
a Sabbath of
solemn rest,
a holy
convocation...”



Leviticus 23:3

Activity

Instructions: Print and cut out the Normal Time/Holy Time cards. Put them in a basket.

After discussing the idea of holiness with your kids, have each child pull out a card, read it, and share whether they think it is “Normal” or “Holy.” Sort each one into a pile for normal and holy.

- Some are obviously normal
- Some are obviously holy
- Others are a little more complex and will hopefully create some great discussion! Do not worry so much about right or wrong answers as much as you encourage good discussion and thoughtful questions about what they are processing through.

Sabbath Suggestions

- Put all your devices in a drawer for screen free time.
- Go on a family prayer walk. Invite your kids to notice God's creation and to thank Him for what they see. Encourage them to pray for the families in the homes you pass.
- Have a family worship time. Let each person lead a song that is meaningful to them. Don't forget to dance!
- Encourage a nap time or quiet time for everybody to have room to rest/reflect.
- Paint or color your favorite Bible story and share with one another about what you created.
- More into Legos? Build your favorite Bible story!
- Try memorizing a family Bible verse together. Have fun with it!
- Try spending one-on-one time with each member of the family if you're able to do so. Use this time to connect in meaningful ways you might not usually get to.

Doing homework

Brushing your teeth

Cleaning your room

Eating breakfast

Playing outside

Getting dressed

Riding in the car

Going to school

Doing chores

Watching a show

Praying	Reading the Bible
Family meal time	Going to church
Quiet rest time	Lighting a candle
Singing worship songs	Sitting quietly to listen to God
Family blessing time	Sabbath meal

Going on a nature walk	Helping a sibling
Drawing or coloring quietly	Visiting someone who is lonely
Taking a deep breath when upset	