

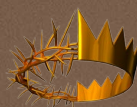


The Sanctuary in Time: Safeguarding the Sabbath

MODULE 5

RTT MODULE 5 SCRIPT

**Pastor Clayton Maurede,
Pastor of the Cambridge District of Churches**



GOD FIRST
ADVENTIST STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES

Learning Objectives

- Reframe Sabbath from a day of restriction into a divine gift of time stewardship.
- Provide practical preparation strategies to avoid the chaos of a frantic Friday.
- Offer creative ideas for making Sabbath a delight—a genuine cessation from weekly striving.

Recovery of a lost sanctuary

In a culture obsessed with productivity, the Sabbath often appears as an ancient restriction an interruption to momentum rather than a gift. Yet scripture presents the Sabbath not as a boundary imposed upon time, but as a sanctuary placed within time. Abraham Heschel famously described the Sabbath as a ‘cathedral in time’ reminding us that holiness in the biblical imagination is not only confined to sacred spaces but also it is embedded within sacred rhythms.¹ In the Exodus narrative (Exod 25:8–9), holiness is often encountered through structure. The tabernacle in the wilderness and later the Jerusalem temple were not arbitrary religious constructions but carefully patterned sanctuaries—microcosms of divine order. Every curtain, vessel, and ritual embodied a theological grammar: God dwells among His people, but His presence had to be approached according to His terms. The Old Testament sanctuary functioned as sacred space within profane geography. It localized transcendence. Israel could point to a place and say: here heaven touches earth. The Holy Place mediated access; the Most Holy Place guarded mystery. Time, ritual, priesthood, and sacrifice converged into a spatial theology of encounter.

Yet, intriguingly, Scripture places the Sabbath before the sanctuary. Genesis presents a sanctified day long before a sanctified structure. This ordering is theologically significant. Before Israel ever built a tabernacle, humanity received a sanctuary not made with hands—the Sabbath. Genesis 1–2 contains some striking parallels with sanctuary theology. Scholars such as John Walton and G. K. Beale have observed that creation itself is portrayed as a cosmic temple.² God orders chaos into cosmos, culminating not in humanity only but in divine rest. Just as the ancient temple dedications concluded with the deity “taking up residence,” Genesis ends with God resting on the seventh day. Rest therefore, is not divine inactivity but divine enthronement. If creation is a cosmic sanctuary, then the Sabbath is its sanctum—the temporal equivalent of the Most Holy Place. This inversion is profound whereas the tabernacle sacralises space within time; the Sabbath sacralises time within space. The wilderness sanctuary embodied graded holiness: outer court (common access), holy place (mediated access) and most holy place (restricted presence). The Sabbath mirrors this logic but transposes it into time. Not all time is equal. Six days are given for common labour; the seventh is set apart. Just as Israel moved spatially toward the divine presence, the weekly cycle moves temporally toward the sacred encounter. The Sabbath became a palace in time—portable, indestructible, immune to exile. Even when the temple fell, the Sabbath stood.”

1 Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man* (Farrar, Straus, n.d.)

2 John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate: 2* (IVP Academic, 2009).



“Sabbath as God’s gift of time stewardship

The Sabbath begins not in Sinai but in creation (Gen 2: 1–3). Before Israel’s establishment humanity received a rhythm. This is crucial: the Sabbath is not first about prohibition but about participation in God’s own temporal pattern. Walter Brueggemann argues that Sabbath is fundamentally an act of resistance— resistance against the anxiety of endless production.³ In a Pharaoh-shaped world where worth is measured by output, Sabbath announces that value is grounded in divine grace, not human achievement. Sigve Tonstad deepens this insight by framing Sabbath as a sign of divine sovereignty over time itself.⁴ The Sabbath reminds humanity that time is not self-generated capital but a divine trust. Thus, observing Sabbath is the ultimate act of time management not squeezing more into life, but surrendering time back to its creator. Modern productivity teaches mastery over time; Sabbath teaches mastery under God. True time management is not control but consecration. The Sabbath recalibrates our temporal imagination from ownership to stewardship. Typologically, the sanctuary and Sabbath share several theological coordinates:

i. Divine Initiation

Both originate from God’s command, not human invention. The sanctuary is shown to Moses “according to the pattern” (Exod 25:40), while the Sabbath is blessed and sanctified by God Himself (Gen 2:3).

ii. Sacred Boundaries

The sanctuary required veils; the Sabbath requires temporal boundaries. Both teach that holiness is guarded by intentional separation.

iii. Rhythmic Encounter

The sanctuary structured daily, weekly, and annual rhythms (tamid offerings, Sabbaths, festivals). The Sabbath distills that rhythm into a recurring sanctuary accessible to all, not only priests.

iv. Presence Theology

In the sanctuary, the Shekinah dwelt between the cherubim. In the Sabbath, God’s presence dwells within consecrated time. One localizes presence; the other democratizes it.

The Preparation Day Principle: Guarding the Edges of Time

If Sabbath is sacred time, preparation becomes sacred work. The biblical notion of the Preparation Day” (Mark 15:42) reveals that Sabbath holiness is protected not only by what happens on the day itself but by how its edges are guarded. Jewish tradition has long understood this principle. Heschel notes that the eve of Sabbath is not merely logistical but liturgical it is where anticipation

3 Walter Brueggemann, Sabbath as Resistance, New Edition with Study Guide (Westminster John Knox Press, 2017).

4 Sigve Tonstad, The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day (Andrews University Press, 2009).



cultivates sanctification.⁵ The Sabbath begins not at rest but in readiness. Ellen White also writes concerning the guarding of the edges and she admonishes that all work be done on Friday in preparation before the commencement of the Sabbath.⁶ Guarding the edges requires intentional boundaries. Without guarding the margins, the centre collapses. Here are some strategies that could aid in the preparation of the Sabbath; I have classified them into four rhythmic, liturgical, digital and emotional.

- Rhythmic decluttering: finish all essential tasks before sunset, ensure all major important expected requirements are fulfilled in good time in the week and are not cramped on Friday, as this will clog the Friday leading to unnecessary pressure on the day. In addition, avoid carrying unresolved stress into sacred time. Resolve all stresses in all possible ways before sunset.
- Liturgical Preparation: prepare meals ahead of time avoid last minute meal preparation, as these tend to put pressure on the day of preparation. Lay out clothes and organise spaces in good time. Also, use music or prayer to signal transition into the Sabbath.
- Digital Sabbath boundaries: we now live in a digital age where most of our lives are in constant use of digital devices and spaces. Create a technological sunset that mirrors the solar one, by setting auto-replies or setting device limits for the Sabbath.
- Emotional closure: practice forgiveness before Sabbath begins. Cultivate an attitude of gratitude where you end the week with a reflection of the things you are grateful of rather than unfinished tension.

Holiness often lives in transitions. Guard the edges of time, and you will guard the heart of the Sabbath.

From restriction to delight

Isaiah 58:13 calls believers to “call the Sabbath a **delight**.” The Hebrew term *oneg* suggests deep joy, not grim obligation. The prophetic vision reframes Sabbath not as withdrawal from life but as immersion into truer life. Marva Dawn describes Sabbath as an invitation to cease striving and rediscover delight in God’s presence.⁷ Jürgen Moltmann sees Sabbath as eschatological an anticipation of the world’s final rest.⁸ The Sabbath is thus both memory and prophecy: remembering creation while rehearsing redemption. There are some ways of making Sabbath

5 Heschel, *The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man*.

6 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church Volume 6* (Copyright © 2010, Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., n.d.).

7 Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* (Eerdmans, 1989)

8 Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God: 1984–1985* (Fortress Press, U.S., 1993).



a delight such as, **cultivating presence**: slow meals without rush shared with those you do not usually fellowship with, intentional conversations and lingering prayer.

Secondly, **re-enchanted creation**: nature walks, silence as spiritual practice also observing beauty without utility. Thirdly, **communal joy**: create a space in the community for shared meals, testimonies of gratitude and intergenerational fellowship. Lastly, **sacred reading**: use Scripture not only for study but also for savouring. Poetry, psalms or reflective theology.

At its deepest level, Sabbath is ontological before it is ethical. It addresses who we are before what we do. Modernity has conditioned us into functional identities we are what we produce. Sabbath dismantles this illusion. In Exodus, Israel rests not because work is finished but because they are free. Sabbath is the liturgy of liberation. On Sabbath, we stop performing and start belonging. The Sabbath is about **'being, not having.'**⁹ The Sabbath invites us into a sacramental mode of existence where presence outweighs productivity. God did not rest because He was tired but because creation was complete. Likewise, Sabbath calls us to rest not because life is finished, but because grace is sufficient.

Safeguarding the Sabbath in a restless age

To safeguard the Sabbath today requires both resistance and imagination. Resistance against the cultural idol of busyness. Imagination to rediscover sacred rhythms within modern life. There are some practical ways that can be utilised to safeguard the Sabbath such as; **establishing weekly rituals**: once, these are established it becomes easier to follow. **Teaching children anticipation, not obligation** is also another way of safeguarding the Sabbath. In addition, **framing Sabbath as relational rather than regulatory** also helps. Lastly, **viewing rest as worship not withdrawal**. The Sabbath must be protected not as law but as life. When neglected, souls fragment, when embraced, time itself becomes sacramental.

Conclusion

The Sabbath remains God's sanctuary in time an uncollapsed cathedral untouched by the erosion of centuries. It calls humanity back from exhaustion into existence, from noise into stillness, from striving into sufficiency. To safeguard the Sabbath is to safeguard the soul. It is to declare that time is not a tyrant but a gift, not a commodity but a covenant. In guarding the edges, preparing with intention, and embracing delight, we rediscover the Sabbath not as a burden to carry but as a sanctuary, that carries us. The final invitation of the Sabbath is simple yet profound: Stop doing. Start being. Moreover, in that stillness, discover that God has already filled time with grace. If the sanctuary required priests to guard its holiness, then the Sabbath calls for custodians of time. Safeguarding the Sabbath becomes an act of priestly stewardship. We stand, as it were, at the threshold of sacred hours, discerning how to enter without trivializing what God has consecrated. Thus, reframing the Sabbath as a sanctuary in time transforms our posture. We no longer approach it as a regulation to endure but as a holy dwelling to inhabit. The question shifts from what am I forbidden to do? To How do I enter sacred time well? And herein lies the

9 Heschel, The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man.



burden of our restless age: we have inherited the sanctuary but forgotten how to dwell within it. To safeguard the Sabbath, therefore, is to recover sanctuary consciousness—not in geography, but in chronology.”

Bibliography

Brueggemann, Walter. Sabbath as Resistance, New Edition with Study Guide. Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Dawn, Marva J. Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting.

Eerdmans, 1989.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. The Sabbath, Its Meaning for Modern Man. Farrar, Straus, n.d.

Moltmann, Jürgen. God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God:

1984–1985. Fortress Press, U.S., 1993.

Tonstad, Sigve. The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day. Andrews University Press, 2009.

Walton, John H. The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate:

2. IVP Academic, 2009.

White, Ellen G. Testimonies for the Church Volume 6. Copyright © 2010, Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., n.d.”

