

SABATH

enter rest

SABBATH

center rest

A COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY DEVELOPED, AND
DESIGNED FOR UNION POINT CHURCH.

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INTRODUCTION

Sabbath : to "cease" or "desist." **Shabbat**: To Rest **Menhuva**: Rest; Party; Celebrate

In this day and time in our world, and even more so our cultural context, there seems to be one universal word that brings with it a whole host of reactions. This word is Sabbath, or rest. Existing in a time when more is always better, rest of any kind is extremely devalued. In many ways, to our own detriment, we equate rest with laziness. Rest is held with contempt and scorn as it is seen only as an impediment to our pursuit for more. More work equals more money. More money equals more value, social/political standing, happiness, vacations and a perceived better life. Therefore, to cease and enter rest is only a distraction from our ultimate desire to accomplish and be more.

Assisting this pursuit of more has been the technological advancements of our age. We have a constant stream of information downloaded in seconds directly to the palm of our hands and the wrists of our arms. All this directed towards an effort to gain greater footing and direction towards our perceived goal. Labor saving devices have proven to be the oppressors rather the liberators of our labors, making us slaves to our perceived advancements. Seventy five percent of people sleep next to their phones. Ninety percent check their phones immediately upon waking up, and the average American watches five hours of tv per day. We are more connected to a world of virtual reality and ever disconnected from the world of our inhabitation and physical reality.

One would think, in a time and culture that seems to deliver this opportunity for more, statistically speaking, we should be ever engaged in a blissful time of happiness, right? Yet, the numbers raise alarm as we only find ourselves sitting in a room with more, yet denied the fulfillment, value and rest for our souls we so desire, want and need. Thirty seven percent of people take more than 7 days vacation a year and 14% take more than two weeks of vacation a year. All those promises of time away to enjoy the fruits of our labor later, come at the peril and expense of our current ability to engage in and enjoy life right here and now.

Even more seriously, in an effort to fill this restless void many turn to a multitude of anti depressant drugs and even to suicide as the

answer to their hopeless plight. With the rise of more, we have become an anxious people bound to our lives of busyness with no way out in sight. With this sense of hopelessness has followed abusive levels of prescribed drugs as well as a rising 20 year suicide rate. According to data recorded by the CDC, suicide is now the tenth leading cause of death in America. CDC Principal Deputy Director Dr. Anne Schuchat is recently quoted saying, "Suicide is a leading cause of death for Americans - and it's a tragedy for families and communities across the country".

When looking to the church one would hope to see a different pattern of life. Yet, sadly the church has embraced more of the workaholic tendencies of our time and day than they have the way of Jesus. We hear mantras such as "the devil doesn't take a day off" perpetuated and circled around throughout the evangelical world. As far as I remember Satan and all those in rebellion against the Most High God lose in the end (or so Revelation would have me believe), yet we happily align our churches and lives according to this rebellious pattern rather than that of the God we say we love. Let's be reminded today that Jesus told his disciples that it was the demons who run about in dry arid places looking for rest yet never find it.

As well in the church, we have come to adopt a negative perception of the sabbath as a means of objecting against legalism, thus denying ourselves a rich and robust tradition and doctrine of rest. We have forgotten the pursuits of the early pilgrims and puritans that sailed to these shores looking for a place they could shake off the king's enslaving cries for more. A place established and centered in the freeing sabbath rest of God. More for the sake of happiness was never the initial "American Dream". More doesn't make people free, it makes them slaves. Rest is the rally cry of the free.

Even further, within the church we see Jesus in the gospels appearing to care little about the sabbath. He heals on the sabbath, plucks grain on the sabbath and condemns the Pharisees, of the day, on their observance of the sabbath. We see Jesus as a rebel and confuse Him with hating something He Himself, as a Jewish man, would be in full agreement with and engaging in. Jesus was simply making the point that you can be so consumed with trying to keep a command that you can miss the purpose behind it. Thus Jesus' words, "The sabbath was made for man, not the man for the sabbath" (Matt. 2:27). Jesus was the one who called us to come away and rest in Him.

Jesus was the one who said He would make burdens light and place a yolk of ease and rest upon us. It was Jesus who was never hurried by the cares of the world or the cries for more, but was paced by and in the rest of God which enveloped His existence. He is the resurrected Savior who breathes the sabbath rest of God's life and kingdom into our downtrodden souls.

As well, we look at the Apostle Paul and see the many rifts he addressed within the early church as messianic Jews lived in the struggle of how to now embrace gentiles, who observed no sabbath rest. We see Paul as he affirms that it is no longer the "day of Sabbath" that is the marker of God's covenant but Jesus and chalks up sabbath rest as being unnecessary in totality. And in all of this, we begin to question whether the sabbath is a "jewish" thing or a "christian" thing, and like the Pharisees totally miss the point. We embrace the ten commandments and rally towards them when threatened. Yet for some reason we never talk about the fourth command to "Remember and keep the sabbath". Of all the commands, the Sabbath is the only one we revel in breaking. In many ways we treat them as nine commands and one suggestion. We wear busyness as a badge of honor and in doing so deny the rhythm of God's kingdom rest made even more available in Jesus. In truth, we are no better at presenting this world with any grander vision of the rest it so longingly desires.

So, with all of this swirling in your minds, the question should be, if rest is required, how do we now Sabbath? How do we enter God's rest? The writer of Hebrews says we should, "make every effort to enter this rest" (Heb 4:11). Sabbath Rest doesn't just happen. We don't just stumble into a rhythm of kingdom rest, it is something we must take effort in entering.

In the coming weeks, the purpose of this series will be to help develop a more robust perspective on the sabbath. We will venture into aspects as to how the Sabbath defrauds the gods of our day and the cries for more that enslave us. If anything, this series will surely challenge you, your rhythm of life and your walk with Jesus. It will convict you in the places you have caved to culture and push you towards Jesus' invitation to engage in sabbath rest. If you press into this series and begin to make every effort to enter rest, I assure you, you will find it. Sabbath rest is like gravity, you can deny it, but it is still there. God created His world to be lived in and aligned with His sabbath rest. Here is your invitation into rest.

SABBATH

CHAPTER 1

sabbath as rhythm

enter rest

CHAPTER 1

sabbath as rhythm

PASSAGE

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Genesis 2:1-3 (ESV)

ORDERED BY

God has spoken. There within the creation narrative, as provided by Genesis, everything has culminated up and to this point. Our Creator God has made the world and all that is in it. He has made all things by the works of his hands and breathed life into dust calling it "man". Amazingly enough, on the first full day God is with His creation, He chooses to establish a RHYTHM of rest. There, on the first day with His imagers, God doesn't project a proclamation of more, but of celebration and rest. God Sabbath^d, ceased, and *menhuva'd* with His creation. God literally imparted a pattern of existence in which He partied with His creation. He celebrated in His work through a Rhythm of rest and ORDERED a world according to this pattern. God built a RHYTHM of rest into His creation.

Unlike any other "religious book" or story, the Bible records one of something completely different than a slave and master relationship. All other origin beginnings have a god using humanity as leverage to more. They order their world around the pursuit of getting things done. Rulers in this proposed belief structure are empowered by these gods to carry this materialistic pursuit out on the backs of slaves. There is no equality or rest, only work. Yet YHWH of the Bible ORDERS His world based on rest as a central theme and connection to

His desire for creation. It is an upside down thought, one of great value and love.

Remember who the original audience of this writing was. They were freshly rescued slaves from Egypt and Pharaoh's tyrannical rule. Led by God, Moses wrote a visionary piece that told the Israelites of the God that had rescued them. Imparted through the story is a sense of separation between YHWY and all other gods. Unlike Pharaoh, God ordered His world through rest. Unlike the gods of Egypt, YHWY's desire for Israel was to model a different ORDER in their now freed state.

Later in Exodus, we see how God calls the Israelites to engage in Sabbath. This is a day set aside to cease, rest and party in God's good ORDER. This day was to become a reminder of God's good ORDER and design for His world. It was an invitation to once again taste of the freedom only given in grace and only found in God alone. ORDERING a life in God's rest was to hold the pharaohs of this world in contempt and to defraud their gods' cries of more.

To engage in God's good ORDER, one of rest, means we will have to make an effort to enter into it. Jesus is the one who brings the rest of God alive in our lives, yet it is something we must remember and guard. If our lives are patterned by the cries of more, we are but slaves in a land that is like Egypt. We are beholden to those lesser gods' mastery and will never find rest for our weary souls.

What does your calendar look like? How is your life ORDERED? God is calling and inviting you to enter into His rest and to see your life patterned in and after His good ORDER. Sabbath is like gravity, you can deny it but it just is.

OVERFLOWING WITH

Have you ever stopped to consider how even before all of our technological advancements and connectivity, every civilization since the beginning has operated on a 7 day week calendar? Pretty amazing right? There is only one civilization, that we know of, who tried to push against the grain of this ORDER in an effort to gain more. During the French revolution, the French authorities attempted to ramp up productivity by establishing a 10 workday calendar. To their detriment, what they found was utter chaos. Rather than productivity skyrocketing

it plummeted to record lows. People were committing suicide at rampant rates, and France found itself in the midst of a psychotic crisis. They sought to ORDER a world around their god of more and what OVERFLOWED into this world was death, destruction and a stifling of human flourishing.

God's commission of man to go into all the world ruling and subduing it in His kingdom likeness still stands. What God intended to OVERFLOW from his ORDERED rhythm of rest has in many ways become a sub human existence. When we reject the Sabbath rest of Jesus, we find ourselves OVERFLOWING with restlessness and chaos. God's kingdom marches to the beat of a different unhurried drum, and this march leads all into the OVERFLOW of His restful blessing.

In a world of untamed chaos, rest is a placeholder of grace. When we enter the SABBATH rest, when we ORDER our lives around the rhythm of rest God so desires us to experience, we will find a life OVERFLOWING with peaceful, unhurried paces. ORDERING our lives in the RHYTHM of rest means we set aside time to pattern a life after God. We stop because He stopped. We rest because He rested, and we party in the goodness of His creation. This is something contagious. It is something otherworldly. It is something others around us will be challenged and inspired by. Jesus was the embodiment of this rest. His life OVERFLOWED with the beauty of God's ORDER and calls slaves free. If you want to OVERFLOW in the paced RHYTHM of rest, it will mean you make every effort to enter it. One day a week is just a beginning, but how about at every turn?

When you are in the midst of a financial struggle, a relational decay, physical injury or spiritual battle, there you can find the SABBATH rest and ORDER of God. God hasn't stopped setting captives free. He whom the Son sets free is free indeed. How does your life OVERFLOW with the SABBATH rest of God?

ENGAGING IN

"Make every effort to enter this rest." On the seventh day of creation, God enters rest. Many Jewish scholars debated, and still do, Genesis 2:2. The issue with the original text, as you can pick up in the ESV, is that it would almost seem like God is still doing something on the seventh day, and then He rested from it. Like he was orchestrating

something before the kids woke up on Christmas morning. The general consensus is that God was creating peace. He made peace then entered it.

Speaking of Christmas morning, it is one of my most favorite days of the year. For our family, 6:30 and beyond is fair game. Anything earlier and we aren't waking up for it. The anticipation and preparation leading to this morning and day goes back weeks and months. (If you work at Walmart or shop there, it goes back up and to Halloween.) You have spent good money to buy gifts, food and all the trimmings. Everything that would be associated with work is set aside for this special occasion and day. You plan to celebrate and party hard all day. Let's be honest, laying around the house in your pajamas in no hurry for anything is simply the best. If you can't agree, well then I mourn for you.

As good as Christmas day is, it only comes once a year. Once the day is done, you have a whole 365 days to await its arrival. However, what if there was a Holy day God had called you to anticipate, prepare for and celebrate in every week? This was the Rhythm God made for His creation summed up in the sabbath. Amazingly enough, God has given us a space in time that is like Christmas morning every week, and when we ENGAGE in it we find restoration for our souls.

If we want the blessing of God to OVERFLOW into our lives then we need to ENGAGE in His ORDERED Rhythm of Sabbath rest. No matter the time or day you set aside to ENGAGE in this rest, it is there awaiting you. God has made peace and is inviting you into celebration with Him in Jesus. The blessing of God is found in and released through the peace and rest of God. When we ENGAGE IN His rest and make effort to enter into it, His blessing spills over into those around us.

For many of us, maybe we cannot find the rest and peace we long for because we resist making effort to enter into this rest. Perhaps we prepare better for Christmas day than we do to enter into a set apart time to celebrate with God. What if you actually ENGAGED IN the Sabbath God has invited you into? Quite possibly the blessing of peace you seek is only found in and flowing from the spacious time of SABBATH REST. What is stopping you from ENGAGING IN the RHYTHM of REST?

REFLECTION

How is your life patterned in Rhythm? Are you being ORDERED by the RHYTHM of God's kingdom of restful peace?

How do I respond to the areas of chaos in my life? Are these times met with anxiousness, or OVERFLOWING peace?

If I do, what gets put on the calendar? Is there too much pressing against engaging in rest?

EFFORTS TO ENTER

-ORDER: Map out your Rhythms. What takes your time and peace away?

-OVERFLOW: Where are some places I need restful peace to break into? Relationships? Work? etc..etc..

-ENGAGE: Begin to establish a time set aside to engage in restful celebration. What are the preparations you need to make so that you can enter into rest.

CHALLENGE: Disconnect from all technology for a 6 hour period this week. Use this time to rest, sit, think, reflect and admire nature.

SABBATH

CHAPTER 2

sabbath as value

enter rest

CHAPTER 2

sabbath as value

PASSAGE

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. Genesis 2:1-3 (ESV)

And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Matt 2:27 (ESV)

22 And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. 24 Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! 25 And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?c 26 If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? 27 Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. 28 But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29 And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. 30 For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Luke 12:22-31 (ESV)

Slaves get no rest. Their value is wrapped up in what they produce, and rest is not seen as production.

CREATED VALUE

Have you ever noticed the common response to the question, "How was your week?". I bet you guessed it. "Busy". And if truth be told,

you knew the answer because you yourself have used it time and time again to describe your week. We are a busy people, and busyness has become the center most driving force behind an escalation in our anxiety. We are an anxious people because we have bought into the lie that our Value is tied to our busyness. The more busy we are the more valuable we are. What we fail to acknowledge is how we begin to treat our self worth as solely a commodity to be exchanged in a demanding market of goods.

In the Genesis account we can see direct correlation between God's rhythm of rest and the way He gives value to His creation. God does not immediately send His imagers into the world to get to work. There are no screams to get busy and get things done. Instead, God calls them away with Himself, to impart peace and rest as their central drive for doing. Never do we see God equate our performance and doing with the central value of our being.

For the Israelite reflecting on this, they were to remember the cries of Pharaoh. Their value had become a commodity in the market of Pharaoh's more. The Hebrews were but a tool to be used for more buildings to store more stuff, as an effort to make Pharaoh and Egypt more important. God's call for them to once again, now as a liberated people, take part in His sabbath rest was to realign them with their CREATED VALUE. No amount of busy work, accomplishments and accumulation could ever trump their already established value in His creation.

In the gospel of Luke, we hear Jesus' words about anxiety and worry. When we hear Him connecting these with the striving for more, it is evident that our plight is on different level than it was in the time of Pharaoh. Jesus begins to call out to the misplaced value of our hearts. How we can so easily begin to find ourselves enslaved to the pharaohs of our time, crying for us to push harder, faster and for more. No matter how hard we try, more work and more stuff will not give us the value we so desire.

As a means to reorder our minds and lives around our created value, Jesus immediately points us to creation. The birds of the air and the lilies of the field, they are beautifully valued in God's creation. In a stroke of genius, Jesus begins to draw our gaze towards God's provision for these creatures. They are valuable. Then comes the question, "But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field

today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! " (Luke 12:28).

Jesus reminds us that we have CREATED VALUE which is not in direct correlation with the achievements of our lives. Anxiety is but the "canary in the coal mine" which cries out to the misplaced value of our hearts. This world would have you believe that busyness equals value, but it's a lie. No matter their promised value; hours of work, events, or suggested kid activities you drag yourself and your family to, they will treat you like a commodity and only dispose of your soul's true created value.

Sabbath rest, and our effort to enter it, is the way we, as did the Israelites, clearly differentiate between the cries of Pharaoh and the peace of God. Slaves find no rest, but those who are free in Christ find their CREATED VALUE in the rhythm of His rest.

GIVEN VALUE

Another big lie is that our production equals our value. As Americans we can easily associate "more" with our worth. More dollars, items, goods, leverage, vacations, cars, no matter the "it", if we have more of them, then we have perceived value. Fun fact, in the US alone, there are 1.7 billion square feet of storage space. Roughly estimated, that is about 5.4 square feet of storage space per person. My family owns a mini storage facility, and one day they had a long standing tenant finally close out his rental. Upon closing, the gentleman asked my mom if she could have someone come help him move a chair out of the space. My father obliged and went to help. To make a long story short, my father found out the man had kept this one unit to store one chair, of which he would now be taking to the dump. For years this man had paid for a storage unit for one chair....

In God's economy our value is not earned but is GIVEN. Again, looking at the Israelites in their exodus, we see God pull them from the cries for more and set them apart aligned with his GIVEN VALUE. The Israelites are to remember all that God has done for them. They are to engage in remembering this by, not working really hard to build an amazing kingdom for God, but in how they enter His rest. Unlike the Egypt they have been rescued from, their value will no longer be

aligned with what they produce but with what God had originally GIVEN to humanity in the garden.

In his book "Sabbath as Resistance", Walter Brueggemann brings to light God's ultimate desire for His people when they enter the land. God will bless them, and this blessing should be ordered by His GIVEN VALUE of Sabbath rest. Walter writes, "Because the land is fertile, its produce will make Israel safe and happy. And if Israel can increase its produce, it will be safer and happier. And Israel will discover that the sky is the limit! The fertility of the land and the productivity of the system will make Israel acquisitive; Israel will come to think that the goal of its life is to acquire and acquire and acquire. And in order to acquire, Israelites must compete with the neighbor. The system will turn one's neighbor into a competitor and a threat and a challenge. Moses warns Israel to "Watch out!" or the land in its productivity will transform Israelites into producers and consumers and will destroy the fabric of the covenantal neighborhood."

Jesus draws our attention in the same direction as He ends talking about anxiousness and the pursuit of more. "Seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you" (Luke 12:31). Seeking the kingdom is found in the midst of aligning ourselves with God's GIVEN value of rest. Seeking the kingdom is patterning our lives after His modeled example. Resting in Him brings His kingdom come and restores us to the fruitful blessing He so desires to GIVE.

No matter the accomplishments we gain, the stuff we store, or the money we stuff away, if it is not centered in the Sabbath rest of God then what we will find is the condemnation of Pharaoh's cry for more. We will become slaves valued by what we produce and at best a commodity devalued by the ever shifting market of Egypt. In Jesus' call to seek the kingdom first, He is calling us to find our Value where it is truly GIVEN first. From there we will find abundant blessing that matches the beauty of the birds and the lilies of the field. A blessing that is not found in the cries for more, but rests in the provision of a VALUE GIVING God.

REFLECTION

What is the pace of your life? Do you feel you are too busy to rest? Where are your priorities according to your time? What do you feel gives you value?

Do you live your life by Pharaoh's cry for more? If so, how have you become a slave to the pursuit of production? Money? Achievements? Stuff?

What is the one thing you would point to as being the hold up for you entering rest? What are some of the things you can begin changing to enter rest and find God's realigning value?

EFFORTS TO ENTER

-CREATED VALUE: *Where are the places you spend your time? Have you been too "busy" to rest? List the things that fill your time. Do they reflect your created value or just a sense of busyness?*

-GIVEN VALUE: *List the things you think give your life value and why. Now list out what they demand from your life.*

CHALLENGE: *Spend 3 hours in creation. As you sit in God's creation remember Jesus' words and seek peace from those things that bring anxiousness. Talk to God and listen for His voice.*

THE
SABBATH

CHAPTER 3

sabbath as relationship

enter rest

CHAPTER 3

sabbath as relationship

PASSAGE

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:8-11 (ESV)

27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:27-30 (ESV)

Jesus: Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Matthew 11:28 (MSG)

EASY

Have you ever entered a relationship that was just easy? Whether it be friendship, romantic love or even a business partnership, the ease of the relationship made your experiences enjoyable and life giving. My wife, Lenee', and I have had numerous times of embarking on incredible journeys, yet the thing that makes our relationship so fulfilling is its EASINESS. It is like that EASY feeling you get when you sit close to a winter fire all bundled up in no hurry to get anywhere. You are safe to be you because there is no threat of being hurt by the other person.

When God gave His command to the Israelites to "Remember the Sabbath", it was not to be seen as something else to do, or forebear, or dread. Rather, the Sabbath was to be a time of engaging in

and remembering God's EASY relationship. Unlike the gods and ruler of Egypt, Israel's God had rescued them with His promise of rest. For them to remember the sabbath, was an invitation to yet again enter in the garden presence of God once more. Through Israel, God was restoring the relationship that was so abruptly and disastrously denied by His created Adam. God's purpose was to restore humanity back into His EASY relationship.

In the midst of the verse to keep the sabbath, we see the word "Holy". This is the first time this word shows up in scripture. Holy simply means worthy, good and righteous. It wasn't the Israelites that made the sabbath holy. God had done this, but their keeping it holy was an entrance into God's good order and rest. To cease all their labors and keep the sabbath holy, was to set aside all the things they were inclined to grab for as value and release to God's good rest. In a fallen world, our pursuits can be skewed to make determinations on what is good for ourselves, but God's sabbath rest reorients us around the One true Wisdom for life.

As Jesus speaks to us in Matthew's gospel, we see His call reflecting that of God's command to Israel. Jesus invites us into an EASY yoke, an EASY relationship. In our world of striving for more, we feel the weight of the slave master's cry. Yet, Jesus' invitation calls us to bring all that is in His created world and let it go in His time of rest. The Sabbath was, and still is, a time where we release the demands of this world, and its attempt to define what is good, to God's wisdom and direction. The EASY, restful, relational pace that Adam rejected is being restored by a covenantal God.

When we enter sabbath rest, we will find safety in the EASY relationship Jesus brings us into with the Father. Wrapping up and cozying next to His presence in this cathedral of time, is a place where we find little condemnation. Here in this Holy time we find the God who walked the garden with Adam once more and come to the knowledge of His good ways. In sabbath rest, Jesus can finally teach us of the Father's ways and nature because He is the only human to have lived righteously within this relationship. Ceasing from our striving opens us to a warm embrace of God's easy relationship, and this time spent within His rest will only spill over into an ever expanding and growing faith.

Entering sabbath rest is not a burden to be added upon our list of to do's. Rather, it is a moment in time where we find true and

Easy relationship. This relationship, however, is far beyond any we could find here. The EASE of this relationship flows directly from a Creator who extends unwarranted and unmerited worth. EASY is what He brings.

LIGHT

If we examine our lives and are fully honest with ourselves, it could easily be said that we all carry some pretty heavy burdens. If you are the workaholic type, like myself, your normal reaction is to double down and push harder. The LIGHT that seems to be at the end of the tunnel never really comes, and the burden only grows weightier and weightier each day, month and year that goes by. In creating His world, God lays a ground work of sabbath rhythm for us to find life and release from things that would otherwise burden us down.

Let's face it, work isn't easy. For some, it's enjoyable. For others, it's a burden. No matter the feeling, work is a rhythm of life as well. However, quite possibly, many of us never find a release from anxiousness in our work because we never fully engage in Sabbath. Curiously enough, looking through Exodus, "Remembering the sabbath", is always a key theme. You never really see any of the other commandments thrown out as many times as the sabbath. It really makes you begin to wonder why this is the case.

Looking back to the beginning, we can see the common thread running throughout the narrative. God has good works intended for us, but these works will never be the vehicle that brings us into relationship. All the endeavors we could creatively and inspirationally engage in will never be the currency God exchanges for His affection. Starting in the Rhythm of Rest, God exemplifies for us the key component required to enter relationship with Him. It is not good work. It is not a heavy burden. But rather, a restful unhurried access into His holy favor.

In Jesus, we can hear the echoes of Eden calling us once more into this relational delight. "Come to me all who labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). In stepping into flesh, God, through Jesus, was extending the promise of His relationship once more through the call to find rest. Unlike ourselves,

God knows our work will never bring peace in relationship. Stop and consider the parameters of a works based relationship. A relationship based on works is one that never finds rest. Value is in the performance, not the performer. It is the antithesis of a relationship based on rest and paced in grace. It is the contrast of heavy to LIGHT.

Quite possibly, the continual directive to remember the sabbath, was God's continual reminder and plea for the people to enter restful relationship. Our minds can be so heavily burdened by the perceived tasks at hand, we can easily compromise to press for more. Entering the land, the Israelites would find blessing and fruitfulness, and in the rising tides of abundance, the presence of God can be regretfully refused. We can easily swap a LIGHT yolk of freedom for the sapping lures of more.

All in all, in Sabbath ceasing, when we make effort to enter His rest, we find relationship that embraces us with abundant value and a LIGHT load to carry. Needless to say, if we feel burdened by a heavy load, chances are it's not coming from an effort to enter rest. If it's rest we desire, then Jesus promises us He will give it. His relational burden and yolk are light and easy. Remember the Sabbath.

REFLECTION

What are the burdens you are carrying? Would you consider them EASY and LIGHT?

What are the worries that burden you from "Remembering the Sabbath" and entering rest?

Seeing Sabbath as a vehicle to opening relationship, how does the way we refuse to rest communicate our desire for relationship with Jesus?

EFFORTS TO ENTER

-EASY: When you seek to enter rest, what are some ways you can do so with ease? How can you make efforts to open up an easy time of rest?

-LIGHT: What are some ways you can intentionally begin to release the burdens of more in the relationship of rest with Jesus? How do you enter into rest?

CHALLENGE: Set aside a window of time this week (Two hours, half day or whole day) to enter rest. View this time as engaging in relationship. What are some things you can prepare ahead of time to make the time EASY and LIGHT? (Cook a meal in advance, run errands the day before, accomplish household chores ahead of time.)

SABBATH

CHAPTER 4

sabbath as surrender

enter rest

CHAPTER 4

sabbath as surrender

PASSAGE

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it. 2 For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, "As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest,'"

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." 5 And again in this passage he said, "They shall not enter my rest." 6 Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 again he appoints a certain day, "Today," saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God 2 would not have spoken of another day later on. 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Hebrews 4:1-11 (ESV)

LORDSHIP

"The Sabbath is an expression of Faith. Faith that there is a Creator and he's good. We are his creation. This is his world. We live under his roof, drink his water, eat his food, breathe his oxygen. So on the sabbath, we don't just take a day off from work; we take a day off from toil. We give him all our fear and anxiety and stress and worry. We let go. We stop ruling and subduing, and just be. We remember our place in the universe. So that we never forget there is a God and I'm not him." **John Mark Comer, Garden City**

Lordship: supreme power, authority and rule over.

The above quote from John Mark Comer is a reminder of what sabbath really aligns us with in God's world; His LORDSHIP. Trusting God with all that He has created is the ultimate battlefield in the war for our heart. Looking back to the Garden we see a refusal of trust within God's created "Adam". In taking from the tree of wisdom, Adam and Eve demonstrated how they felt entitled to, not only share in God's kingdom, but to dictate over it as well. At the core of rebellion lies the thought that one's own way is better than another, even if it is the Creator of them all.

In his book "Subversive Sabbath", Aj Swobodda makes the observation of how many pastors refuse to take a sabbath, let alone a sabbatical. The heavy realization behind this refusal is the fear of insignificance. It is a trust issue. Like many pastors, we have a problem with resting because it means we have to turn loose and trust God with the time we will not be actively engaged in our work. And, with a culture that is so heavily enveloped in and defined by what they produce, time away means a loss of value. This makes us feel insignificant or unimportant, and becomes the lord in the LORDSHIP of our lives.

By now, you are likely starting to tire of hearing how slaves of more find no rest. Yet, here we are once more. Lordship means authority, and each of us gives authority over willingly (at least in our context). As we pursue more, we fall into a pattern of familiar disobedience, one of which the writer of Hebrews discusses. Israel's refusal to "remember the sabbath" and enter rest enslaved them to their insatiable appetite for more. In a bit of irony, the people who were once enslaved to Pharaoh had little pharaohs themselves, and in doing so forfeited all that God had desired. This forfeit would be costly as they would exchange the LORDSHIP of YHWH for the forcible LORDSHIP of Babylon and Assyria. They would fail to enter the Sabbath rest of God, and so the Sabbath would come for them.

Engaging in Sabbath expresses our full trust in the Lordship of Jesus. The author of Hebrews understood this, and in writing to a group that was primarily Jewish, he called out to this all too familiar path. Failing to enter rest would only cast the LORDSHIP of their lives to the pharaohs of this world. To deny entering Jesus' rest was to resist SURRENDERING to His ways in favor of more.

Entering Sabbath rest is to signify your allegiance to King Jesus. It says to a world like ours that your faith is solely summed up in

God's value for you. It is so well secured in Jesus that you can rest in it. You don't need to worry about the insignificance of absence, because you have the significant presence of a rest filled and value giving God. Aligning our lives with the rhythm of sabbath rest is to honor the LORDSHIP of Jesus and present to a world of more, that He is trustworthy, honorable and the liberator of slaves.

WISDOM

Isn't it interesting how the tree Adam and Eve ate from was of the knowledge of good and evil? In ancient Aramaic, Evil is not translated in the same way as we understand it. Rather, it means bad. You make this distinction all the time. If an apple has turned, then it is bad for eating. This doesn't equate to being evil. Now, this doesn't mean there wasn't evil about, as we can easily see play out in the serpent's lure. But, what the author is communicating to us is that this tree signifies the taking of authority to "know" between what is good and bad. In other words, when Adam and Eve eat of the tree they become like God in usurping Lordship of this distinction for their lives. However, their ultimate demise is that they aren't the Creator and their "knowledge" is limited and incapable of properly Lordship over creation. We only need to revisit history to see this truth play out.

In refusing to enter sabbath rest, we demonstrate once more to God that we know what's best for our world. We have the one true WISDOM for His creation and can exercise good authority over it. So, we run harder to produce more and revel in our accomplishments of usurped authority. And this all seems to go well until the wheels fall off and our energy, mind and life are zapped of their zest and drained of any meaning. For many of us, we crash into the wall of disobedience hard and fast. As with Israel, ceasing sabbath rest comes to us one way or the other.

When we fail to enter into rest, it's like we have approached the tree once more and given into the lure of the serpent. We look at God and tell Him, "I know I need to cease and come away with you, but I have a father to bury, a bill to pay or more to gain. I'm just too busy, and I know what's best." Refusing to rest means we take wisdom into our own hands, and as God's created beings attempt to discern what is best with His creation.

True WISDOM is realizing and understanding that God is the best definer of what is good and not good for our lives. When we willingly engage in His sabbath rest, and make efforts in our lives to enter it, we can trust in His wisdom to meet every need. Those things we think are too important to cease from will find ways of getting accomplished without us. In reality, this fallacy is the hardest to release. Perceived control.

Sabbath came for the Israelites whether it was planting time or harvest time. Both times were important, and so God was sure to emphasize the continuation of sabbath during these periods. Seasons of busyness are not the times we need to forgo rest, they are the times we need it most. Why? Because sabbath rest aligns us with God's good wisdom in knowing how to handle all matters of our lives, and if we want good results then we need the WISDOM and LORDSHIP of a good Lord and Creator.

Making effort to enter rest, is once again surrendering to the WISDOM of God.

REFLECTION

Can you recall a recent situation where you felt you couldn't stop or trust God with? What made you feel this way?

How has your handling of sabbath rest been? Would you say that your pattern of rest demonstrates your practice of Lordship and reliance on God's wisdom?

How has your perspective of rest changed in seeing it as a way to walk in Lordship and properly engage in God's wisdom for creation?

EFFORTS TO ENTER

LORDSHIP: *What is one thing you need to release to the Father and rest in Him and trust in His Lordship? What are some ways you can do this?*

WISDOM: *Can you trust in the wisdom of the Father for your problems, issues and needs? How has your ways of "handling" these situations or issues either shown your trust in the wisdom of God or your attempt to control them?*

CHALLENGE: *This week take whatever it is that you are trying to handle in your own strength and simply Cease from it. This week, set aside three moments of time to take captive the worries and fears that desire to steal your rest. Read scriptures to remind yourself of God's provision and care for you during these moments, and begin to move your mind towards trusting in His provision and lordship.*

SABBATH

CHAPTER 5

sabbath as resistance

enter rest

CHAPTER 5

sabbath as resistance

PASSAGE

3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments. 7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. **8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.** 12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. 13 "You shall not murder. 14 "You shall not commit adultery. 15 "You shall not steal. 16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." **Exodus 20:3-17 (ESV)**

4 Hear this, you who trample on the needy and bring the poor of the land to an end, 5 saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great and deal deceitfully with false balances, 6 that we may buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals and sell the chaff of the wheat?" 7 The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their deeds." **Amos 8:4-7 (ESV)**

CEASE

To CEASE simply means to stop. Resisting something means to disengage in compliance with an idea, pattern of life, job,

government or philosophy of the day. Simply put, you CEASE from your willingness to flow in a common all consuming direction. Looking back to Genesis, we see God CEASING from His work. He rejoices with His creation and sets a pace and example for how His world works. Ceasing in God's kingdom is a part of resisting against the trappings of production and lures of commodity.

This pattern of resistance is re-instituted and re-established within God's chosen people, as relayed to us through the giving of the "ten commandments". The Israelites have been rescued from the clutches of a never CEASING rule. They have been treated as commodities in the economy of Egypt and have felt the oppression of an all expansive and encompassing pursuit for more production. In this economic structure, rest and CEASING is equated with laziness. In a commodities market, the commodity is only as valuable as its perceived usefulness and production.

Now, "post-exodus", God is bringing the people into the land. Yet, in this land there will be transformative changes and differences from the land they have vacated. A part of this re-constituted transformative command is to "Remember the Sabbath". This Sabbath, or rest, is not simply a pattern of so thought "laziness" or a time for just kicking back in the lazy boy, although that could be a part of it. Rather, it will serve as a form of resistance against humanity's rebellious inclinations to press for more, treating all of creation as its commodity.

The first half of the commands have to do with Israel's relationship with God. God will not be made into a commodity. No graven images, no blaspheming, all these things have to do with man trying to form and fashion God into their pattern of life and world. If God is a commodity then He operates around our rules, culture and demands. The second half has to do with treating creation as a commodity. People, animals, the earth and all that is in it, do not exist for man's exploitation. Out of CEASING, commodification meets its resistance and in so will align the people with the value system of God's kingdom.

As we stated in earlier chapters, the land would offer up its blessing and bounty to the people. They would find produce in the land God was giving them, but they would have to war against the inclinations of their flesh to treat all that was given to them as their own. As a means of combat in this war, God was gifting them once more with the freedom of CEASING. Resisting the cries of more, the desire to

conquer every hill and treasure, and the want for total domination requires that one would simply turn loose and let go of the plow. CEASING from our work, is not a call to become lazy. It isn't a license to be slothful. Rather, CEASING is, at its core, resisting the systems of the world and human depravity in favor of a life centered and paced in the way of the kingdom.

In our world now, as followers of Jesus, we are challenged to do the same. Our American way is as opposed to CEASING as any before it. We treat everything as a commodity, there to serve our wishes and desires, and once we are no longer served, the commodity is devalued and cast aside. Now, empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called to embrace a life of CEASING. We can resist the pattern and ways of our world because the kingdom way is alive and inside of us. We are still invited into this sabbath rest, because it is still the rhythm of God's world. Those believers who live in forcible slavery find rest in Jesus when CEASING is sparse. And those who exercise in liberty, (I'm talking to you, American) who discipline and take captive their lives unto Jesus, begin to make room and way for times of CEASING. In a time of commodity driven culture, there is no better way of resistance than engaging in sabbath rest. In so many ways, CEASING is learning when to say, ENOUGH is ENOUGH!

ENOUGH

Have you ever been in a situation where you said, "ENOUGH is ENOUGH!!" I can almost guarantee these times are encapsulated by moments of felt oppression, pain, mistreatment, abuse and injustice. It is easy to recognize and call out those unsavory moments when our very existence, quality and way of life are threatened. But, how about those times when these disenfranchised moments become wrapped in perceived productivity and prosperity?

Through the prophet Amos, God begins to call out clear signs of Israel's refusal to engage in the CEASING RESISTANCE of the sabbath. Oh yeah, they seem to still be "keeping" sabbath in deed, but they have been pressed into by the world around them seeking to do business on sabbath. Instead of holding firm and refusing, Israel has found ways to make compromise and still appear to keep the Sabbath. They have fallen prey to making the blessing of the land their commodity.

You can clearly hear God's tone within Amos' writing. "ENOUGH is ENOUGH!" God saw what was taking place. He saw how the Israelites gave no rest to the land and their servants. In an effort to turn more production, they had taken land, produce, and people sacrificing them on the altar of commerce. The blessing God had given them was now their heart's desire, and in so had conformed their patterns to the ways of Pharaoh. Israel's refusal to self discipline by CEASING and declaring ENOUGH to the production and accumulation of more, had led God to the disciplinary cry of ENOUGH.

A part of Israel's story, as the writer of Hebrews reminds us in chapter 4, was their disobedience to enter into rest. Walter Bruegeman says that the Israelites engaged in the sabbath like we do on Sunday service. They "attended" the service with their appearance, but their hearts and minds were every where else. To bring this close to home, we could say the Israelites invented, "multitasking". "Multitasking is the drive to be more than we are, to control more than we do, to extend our power and our effectiveness. Such practice yields a divided self, with full attention given to nothing" (Walter Brueggerman, Sabbath as Resistance).

If the Israelites found themselves condemned by their attempt at multitasking, how much condemnation, then, are we due? With "labor saving devices" such as the iPhone, iPad and anything else that beings with "I", (can we get any more self centered) one could suggest we are even further entangled by our refusal to say ENOUGH. Constant connectivity becomes our slave driver, and we pass it off under the guise of "productivity" and "necessity". Things that wouldn't be comprehensible to an ancient Israelite, or even us 30 years ago, are now commonplace. No one ever thought about taking their boss home with them on their day off, yet here we are with them in our front pockets and hands during every waking moment. We just can't get ENOUGH.

Jesus put it plainly, a person cannot serve two masters. And at the core of it, sabbath is the way we say ENOUGH. Sabbath rest and CEASING is our way of resisting the calls for more from our latest Apple device. In a time when we are willing to ignore oppression, disenfranchisement and abuse all packaged under the banner of "advancement", maybe we don't find ourselves much farther away from the disobedience of the Israelites.

There is no denying this is a hard word to hear in a world wrapped in commerce and commodity. Yet, if we proclaim to be followers of Jesus, may we be reminded that our God is the God of the Exodus. He is the God that frees slaves held captive by the pharaoh's cries for more. He is the God who invited us into His rhythm of sabbath rest and easy yolk of ENOUGH. Jesus is there calling us out from the clutches of other masters into the freeing CEASING of sabbath rest.

REFLECTION

What are the things you feel you cannot CEASE from?

Could your pace of rest be contributed to a failure of saying ENOUGH?

Does your pattern of rest help you engage in RESISTING the trappings of this world, or do you conform more to the cries of this world?

EFFORTS TO ENTER

CEASE: What are some things you never feel you can step away from and just set down?

ENOUGH: What cries for more of your attention, money and focus? What are some things you need to simply say ENOUGH to that hinder entering rest?

CHALLENGE: Stop before you are finished. Choose to step away from something that seems all too pressing. Seek the Lord's wisdom in a time where you trust in His Lordship and provision through resting and ceasing.

SABBATH

CHAPTER 6

sabbath as community

enter rest

CHAPTER 6

sabbath as community

PASSAGE

8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. **On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.** 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. 12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. 13 "You shall not murder. 14 "You shall not commit adultery. 15 "You shall not steal. 16 "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's." **Exodus 20:8-17 (ESV)**

The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, 2 "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord. 3 For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, 4 but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. 5 You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. 6 The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, 7 and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food. The Year of Jubilee 8 "You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. 9 Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. 10 And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. 11 That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. 12 For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field. 13 "In this

year of jubilee each of you shall return to his property. 14 And if you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, **you shall not wrong one another.** 15 You shall pay your neighbor according to the number of years after the jubilee, and he shall sell to you according to the number of years for crops. 16 If the years are many, you shall increase the price, and if the years are few, you shall reduce the price, for it is the number of the crops that he is selling to you. 17 **You shall not wrong one another,** but you shall fear your God, for I am the Lord your God. **Leviticus 25:1-17 (ESV)**

EQUALITY

If sabbath rest isn't already challenging enough, we have its balancing effect in how it fosters and develops community within God's kingdom. Building on a concept touched on briefly in chapter five, we are further challenged in how the idea of sabbath levels the playing field, so to speak, and brings *EQUALITY* to all people. Simply put, in a society based on commodity and what will produce the most product for the most money, a person's value is often scored on their ability to produce. Let's be real, not everyone produces the same or has the same abilities. There will always be people who out perform others on a commodity driven scale. Yet, sabbath is the counter weight and balancing effect in the ever tipping scale of commodity.

When we look back over the exodus account, we see a clear directive for all people, who are of the house of Israel, to engage in rest. Look at the *EQUALITY* sabbath brings to the land, animals and people. Sabbath isn't set apart for those who can "afford" to rest. Rather, sabbath is a good gift given to all people as an ever liberating truth to be received and engaged in. Servant and master alike, in this societal time, are to engage in the sabbath. The master cannot rest and deny it to those who serve him. Instead, God organizes a kingdom and culture far different from many around in its day. Slaves get no rest in Egypt, as Israel is well familiar with, and in the land God is bringing them into, their way of communing together will be far different.

Beyond God's calling Israel to remember and keep the weekly sabbath, we are also presented a revolutionary idea for Israel's time. In many ways it is still a revolutionary and provocative idea for our time. In Leviticus, we see God command a year of sabbath every seventh year. During this year the fields, workers and animals would all get rest. As

well, debts would be canceled and slaves set free. During this jubilee period, Israel's entire existence would bring restful EQUALITY to all people. Could you imagine this principle being found in our day and time? Could you imagine the level of EQUALITY all of this would bring to people in and around our nation and possibly world?

Much like the Israelites, who failed at the sabbath and never engaged in the jubilee years, we completely miss opportunity and invitation to find EQUALITY with those around us as we rest together in community. In God's set apart time of sabbath, the people all rested on the same day. They went to temple together, ate together, walked together and shared life together. This was the idea God was desiring. A people sharing in the goodness He had made. A flow of life that brought EQUAL value to all and rendered none as more important than the other. No matter their "societal score", rich and poor, servant or master, oxen, land, man, woman, black or white, Egyptian or Hebrew, all found EQUALITY in the invitation of restful sabbath.

Fast forward to our time, we are once again invited into these rhythms of community and freedom. By Jesus' invitation to come and find rest, the EQUALITY of His kingdom is extended to all people. This family that God began in Abraham is one we have now been grafted into by way of Jesus. This family finds EQUALITY based on the economy of restful ceasing. When we rest and make time to engage in sabbath, it is us engaging in true communal EQUALITY. Entering into rest brings us to release cultural control over those around us and invites others into the rest we have found in Jesus.

Engaging in sabbath begins to bring our focus away from who can produce more in our commodified life and into a measure of EQUALITY and value that treasures one another as Jesus does. Seeing the produce of the "fruits of the Spirit" (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control,) is the way we combat the negligences we carry out against one another. This fruit is not something we strain and strive to produce, but a fruit that is only found in the midst of sabbath rest.

"Those who refuse Sabbath produce only sour grapes, the grapes of wrath and violence and envy and, finally, death. Sabbath is a refusal of the grapes of wrath, an embrace of good fruits of life and joy, of praise and shalom." Walter Breuggeman (Sabbath as Resistance)

Entering rest is a very means of combatting the societal strain of our time and a way to see community fostered in a fruit of EQUALITY. Sabbath is a way to trade the ladder climbing and jockeying for position in exchange for an easy entrance into a kingdom that already has given us everything we need. The EQUALITY of the sabbath ushers us into the commUNION of/with Jesus and others.

UNION

With the capitalistic pursuits of our culture, we find importance in having the "edge" over another. We have proclamations of this "perfect UNION", yet find division by class, production and the want for more. The truth is, when having an edge over another person is our main focus, there is little true community found. The visions of this American dream may be an ever present reality for some and an ever eluding nightmare for others. Fact of the matter is, some ideas can "unify" people for a time, but eventually as "winners" and "losers" emerge, UNION degrades at the hands of the "haves" and "have nots."

In Genesis, we see clearly a world living in beautiful UNION with God and one another as they engage in rest. In a now severed world, God calls Israel to again engage in this sabbath. He commands sabbath as a way of His chosen, not because he desires duty, but because He desires restored UNION. In a severed world, driven by commodity and more, people are only unified in satisfying themselves. God, others, the land, animals, all eventually are only as useful as the length of their production. In this world, UNION is only a brief and temporary idea that is quickly traded in the market of consumption. Engaging community in this cultural perspective means you're only as good as what you bring. And you better bring something that improves my life.

IN God's kingdom, we are invited into sabbath, not because it is another rule to carry out, but because it is a rhythm that brings us into unfettered UNION with Him and others. Canceling debts and giving land rest is refusing any foothold of control over others. Setting slaves free and giving workers rest is not just a time of reset but of restoration, worth and value. We see this principle play out in the early church, as presented in Acts 2. It may not be directly connected to sabbath, but we see a pattern of life that has clearly found UNION with God and one other. Possessions are sold to supply need, lives are

valued equally and none is seen as more significant than the other. It is a sabbath pace that drives their life and loosens their grip.

Have you ever considered that possibly our failure to see and meet others needs around us is due to our failure to enter into rest? When you are constantly being pushed around by the demands of economy, culture and work, you only have time to see a need for more. The love for one another fades and wains, quite possibly, not because we don't want to, but because we haven't taken the time to. Our UNION with Jesus, and one another, may be more directly connected to a pace of sabbath than we would care to admit. A community brought into greater UNION may be found in a way of sabbath EQUALITY more than we have realized.

The sabbath paced life of our unhurried Jesus is something we cannot ignore from the gospels. Jesus was ever paced by a life that was solely fixed on being in UNION with the Father, and loving others in this very same manner. Jesus didn't deny UNION with others, but was always restfully engaging and inviting others into community. He canceled debts, forgave sins and called those who were "losers" friends. By refusing the commodity driven pace of the world, Jesus brought real and accessible UNION into our world. A UNION found in the Father, paced in the unhurried and leveling counter balance of sabbath. Making effort to enter rest is making every effort to enter true Jesus centered and rest filled community.

Rushing through life, paced by our ravishing appetite for more, leads to an unhealthy disconnect with those around us. When we are "too busy", it is easy to say no to engaging in true community. Even worse, when this is our hurried pace, we can simply dismiss those who could use our help, ignore the broken among us because we "don't have time" or completely use others as another rung to climb in our ladder to more. When we refuse to engage in sabbath, we follow suit with the levite and priest in Jesus' parable of the good samaritan. The Samaritan was paced in an unhurried manner, able to fully see the person that was before him and bring aide from a place of overflow. Sabbath produces the overflow of compassion that hurry and busyness rejects, ignores and deems inconvenient.

Walking in the sabbath rest of Jesus means we find rest that brings equitable union for us all. Ceasing and setting down the things which seem to rush us will open our eyes and hearts to the unhurried pace and life God so desires for us to enter. God is forming His people

around an identity of restful value. One built, not in the hurried produce of more, but in the celebration of UNION and family. The UNION of sabbath is a narrow gate in our time, but all who enter it find rest for their souls and communion with the family of God.

REFLECTION

Have you ever thought about sabbath as being the leveler of equality?

What are some of the ways sabbath could move you towards treating others as valuable?

In ceasing and resting from our labors, do you see how we can engage in a pace of unhurried UNION? How has "busyness" robbed from your engagement in community?

EFFORTS TO ENTER

EQUALITY: *How have you not treated others with equality in the ways you have refused to enter rest? Maybe on the home front, always needing to "get things done".*

UNION: *In refusing to sabbath, how have you failed to engage in true community? How have you been "too busy" to have others over for dinner or show value to someone by way of relationship?*

CHALLENGE: *Cease one evening this week and invite a friend, or acquaintance, someone from work, over to your home to have dinner. Simply attempt to rest with them and be present in the moment.*

CONCLUSION

Sabbath : to "cease" or "desist." **Shabbat**: To Rest **Menhuva**: Rest; Party; Celebrate

Well, it has been a journey. Maybe you started out somewhat skeptical over everything that surrounded the word "sabbath". Just maybe you were provoked to offense at the idea of resting or the idea of being told you need to rest. However, now having made it to the end, if honest with ourselves, could we really say sabbath is much more than we ever imagined?

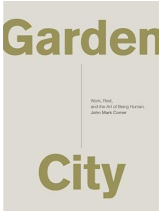
Like many of you, I have struggled with reconciling what rest could really look like for my life. For so long, I thought relaxing, vacationing and all of these things were avenues for rest. Yet, too often I found myself even more depleted by these times and still desiring restoration. I viewed sabbath as simply a "law" fulfilled in Jesus and unnecessary for me in my current context. Yet, once I reached a point of restless desperation, I was challenged to rethink every way I approached my life.

If anything, I hope this series has challenged you to stop and think about what rest really looks like. Quite possibly you have been burning the candle at both ends and find yourself in a place of burnout, exhaustion and spiritual depletion. Let me reassure you, you are in a good place. I say that because it's when you are at the end of your rope that you are at the end of yourself. And at the end of yourself is the place you find the beginning of Jesus.

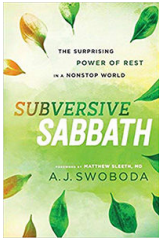
You may be left with more questions about the sabbath now than you were at the beginning. Again, this is a great place to be. I would encourage you to look into further suggested reading on the topic and to begin engaging in the rhythm of rest for your life. As we have been reminded continually through this series, let us make every effort to enter this rest. It is real. It is available and Jesus is there ready to give you rest. Will you make effort to enter?

SUGGESTED READING

These texts heavily influenced this series and are a good source to dig deeper into the principles and ideas proposed throughout this series.



"Garden City" by: John Mark Comer



"Subversive Sabbath" by: A.J. Swoboda



"Sabbath as Resistance" by: Walter Brueggemann



"Sabbath" by Abraham Joshua Herschel

