

# THE RULE OF LIFE



# SABBATH & REST



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

—

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction . . . . .                    | 1  |
| November 1 & 2 . . . . .                  | 6  |
| Week of November 3 . . . . .              | 8  |
| Week of November 10 . . . . .             | 10 |
| Week of November 17 . . . . .             | 12 |
| Week of November 24 . . . . .             | 14 |
| End of Month Reflection & Notes . . . . . | 16 |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*IF THE DEVIL CANNOT MAKE US BAD, HE WILL MAKE US BUSY."*

**—CORRIE TEN BOOM**

**The Rule of Life: A Review.** In the Holy Trinity — God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit — we witness an eternal community of love. A great mystery of Christian faith is the Triune God's desire and faithful work to welcome humanity (you and me in all our frailty) into his great love.

At the heart of the Rule of Life is an invitation to encounter and experience the Triune God and his great love. The root meaning of "rule" is pattern. We all have a "rule of life" whether we know it or not. We inhabit patterns — or habits and practices — that either move us towards God and his love or move us away. Following the rich discipleship and spiritual formation traditions of the Church, we at Grace Pasadena desire to call one another into habits and practices that cultivate a deeper and life-giving awareness and experience of God.

To that end, we are spending the year examining the Rule of Life. Each month, we are focusing on a different aspect of the Rule. This month, we're *focusing on sabbath keeping and rest.*

Each month we will offer a prayer guide, classes and gatherings to help us explore different aspects of the Rule. Each ministry area will also find ways to integrate the monthly aspect into their own events and gatherings. Our goal is to make this an individual and communal effort, for God saves us as a people.

**Our Habit of Sabbath Breaking.** Take a moment to: (1) think through your week, and (2) consider your answers to the questions: "How's

your week going?" and "How are you feeling?" Chances are: (1) your days, including Sundays and days off, are packed and your weeks always seem to fly by, and (2) you often answer "busy" or "tired." Even in laid back Southern California, we are people plagued by busyness and exhaustion. Work is demanding. Commuting is demanding. Parenting is demanding. School is demanding. Life in the church—the place that should be a refuge and a place of freedom—can also be demanding, or at least feel that way as we try to fit worship and fellowship into our busy schedules. And then we have our digital screens. As wonderful as they are, they enable us to fill our time with even more. They may help us be better connected and informed, do more work, and be well entertained, but time with our screens often leaves us exhausted.

In our non-stop milieu, we know the value of stopping and we crave rest. We rejoice on Sundays for the chance to say "no" to our regular busyness and to slow down in order to worship—to fellowship, sing, listen to the Gospel story, partake in sacraments and serve. Sunday worship is our much needed oasis, the place we can rest in God's presence and be renewed in body, heart and mind by the love of Jesus Christ and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

We affirm the goodness of stopping, yet many of us can't seem to stop for more than few hours. The very idea of resting the entire Lord's Day, or keeping the Sabbath, seems impossible or ludicrous. It's impossible because there's always too much to do. It's ludicrous because

resting for more than few hours seems like a luxurious waste of time few of us can afford. And so when Sunday worship ends, we find ourselves consumed with errands, thoughts of work or work itself, other kinds of busyness, and the looming pressures of Monday.

We crave rest, but we are in the habit of Sabbath breaking. We rest a few hours on a Sunday or here and there through the week. We forgo deep rest on a weekly basis, and then say we'll make up for it with the occasional long weekend away or vacation. But none of this is true Sabbath keeping. By and large, we have forgotten God's invitation to regular, weekly deep rest. We have forgotten what it means to delight in the work God has already accomplished and in our own. We have forgotten how to *be* with God and God's people. *We have forgotten that God is first and foremost our lover, not our taskmaster.*

**Sabbath Patterns and Identity.** When we look at Genesis 1 and 2, we see God weaving in rhythms work, delight, and rest into the very fabric of creation and into our DNA. On each of the 6 days of creation, God brings order and life, and then he stops to delight in his work. On the 7th day, God sanctifies the entire day in order to rest and delight in all his work. From the very beginning, God institutes a 7 day week and sets aside an entire day to rest.

There are two important truths in the creation story that many of us gloss over. First, God doesn't rest because he's exhausted from his work. He rests so that he may delight. Second,

God creates man and woman and gives them the task to cultivate the Garden of Eden and all of creation on the 6th day. The next day is the Sabbath. Now think about it: this means the first full day of humanity's existence isn't dedicated to fulfilling their task, but to partaking in God's rest and delight.

When we gloss over these two truths, we lose sight of God's character and our own identity. In the rhythms of creation, we see that God is not a relentless taskmaster driven by efficiency and productivity. Likewise, we see that our value is not based on what we do or how much we accomplish. And as A.J. Swoboda writes: *"The biblical story tells us that to rest one day a week is to be truly human, and to not rest is to be inhuman."* When we follow the pattern of work, delight and rest that God established in creation, we remember God's love and delight in us and his world. We also cultivate our identity as people made in God's image with the capacity to both work *and* delight.

This is all recapitulated in the Law given to Israel after their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. What God established in creation, God codifies in the 10 commandments. In Exodus 20:8-11, God tells his people: *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 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*

*"SABBATH HELPS US REMEMBER THAT NOTHING WE DO WILL MAKE  
GOD LOVE US MORE."  
—LYNNE M. BAAB*

*gates. 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.”*

After centuries of being forced to toil as slaves, can you imagine the identity crisis Israel found itself after their liberation? God gives Israel the 4th command to remind them in the deepest way possible of his love and their identity as his beloved children. They are not primarily laborers, but God’s children and made in his image. The Sabbath command is given so that God’s people can resist the lie that we are something other than God’s beloved.

**Sabbath Resistance & Remembrance.** Keeping the Sabbath is an important and vital act of resistance and remembrance. In keeping the Sabbath, in ceasing from our busyness:

- We resist the temptation to believe our worth is tied to our doing and accomplishments.
- We resist the anxiety of not having enough and the temptation to believe that we are the source of our own security, well-being and flourishing.
- We resist the notion that human flourishing is best measured by buying and consuming.
- We resist the compulsion to always be entertained, occupied, or producing.
- We resist the false belief that we are or can be in control of all our circumstance if we just worked hard enough.
- We resist injustice by considering how our activities and work might impoverish or dehumanize others and then ceasing from them. Or to put it another way, we resist commodifying people for our own gain.

And this resistance leads us to remember and embody the following:

- We are not God, and so we have emotional, spiritual and physical limits.
- Our work, no matter how mundane or grand, is a gift and invitation to participate in God’s creative work in preserving and redeeming his world. (Gen. 1:28, 2:25; Col. 3:17)
- God is the giver of all good things and is faithful to provide all we need for life; because of God’s kindness, we will always have enough even when we stop to honor the Sabbath. (James 1:17)
- God is the one who holds all time and history in his hands. The work we leave unfinished in order to rest won’t make or break our lives. (Psalm 135:6; Romans 8:28-32)
- We are made for one another and called to live in ways that affirm the image of God in others and extend his grace, redemption and freedom. (Matthew 22:36-40)
- Our chief end is not to do more for God, but to know him and enjoy him forever. (Psalm 73:24-26)

Without the Sabbath, we would forget that God’s intention for us and the world is life to the full (John 10:10; 20:31), not a life marked by slavery to busyness and full of its trappings.

**Sabbath Keeping.** So how might we keep the Sabbath or add to our current practices of the Sabbath? How might we better sanctify the Sabbath and enter into God’s rest?

*Preparation:* Sabbath keeping requires intentional preparation. For many of us,

*“SABBATH DOES NOT RECHARGE; IT REORIENTS. KEEPING THE SABBATH IS TO CAUSE US TO LIVE ALL DAYS DIFFERENTLY...”*

**—WALTER BRUEGGEMANN**

this requires resolving to keep the 4th commandment. Mark the Lord’s Day on your calendar and the hours you want to rest. Perhaps it’s from Saturday evening to Sunday evening, or Sunday morning to Sunday evening. Find ways to guard that time from other demands. This includes doing errands on Friday or Saturday and planning to leave work unfinished until the end of your Sabbath rest.

Again, many of us cherish Sunday worship, but we have trouble extending Sabbath rest past Sunday mornings. Our resolve to keep the Sabbath must include thoughtful evaluation of what keeps us from resting deeply, offering those things to God and letting the Holy Spirit reorient us into a different way of living.

*Stopping.* Enter the Sabbath with a conscious effort to stop from your work and other activities. After all, the word *sabbath* means “to cease or desist.” Begin your time with a prayer of thanksgiving for the work you have accomplished, for the time of rest you are about to enter, and for God’s faithfulness to provide for you and for the world. Pray, too, for all the work and tasks you have left undone and ask for trust your in God’s care for those things.

Consider physical rituals to help you stop and mark the Sabbath as a different time. Kneel or lie down for a few moments. Light a candle to mark the time as different and special. Take objects that could distract you and place them in a box. Eat a sweet treat to mark you time as one of delight.

*Resting & Delight.* In Isaiah 58:13-14, the prophet reminds Israel that resting, keeping the Sabbath, is a *delight*. Worship is an integral part of rest and delight. In worship, we hear the Good News that all of our striving ends in Jesus Christ and his life, death and resurrection. In worship, we feast with our Lord and church family through the Lord’s Table. In worship, we delight in good words, good fellowship, good music, and good spiritual food.

So, extend Sabbath rest and delight by taking a guilt free nap. Read a book or watch a movie that brings you joy and helps you dwell on what is good and beautiful. Go on a walk or hike. Be silly and play with abandon. Take time to listen and reconnect with friends, family, spouse or your children. For those who are married, find ways to delight in and with your spouse physically, emotionally and spiritually. Eat a good meal.

As you rest and delight, remember mercy. Sabbath rest does not preclude us from acts of mercy. We see this in Jesus. On the Sabbath, Jesus doesn’t neglect the cries of the sick, poor or hungry. He heals, restores and feeds. Likewise, Sabbath rest does not preclude us from justice. Where and how do you eat, shop, volunteer, work, and play? How do you relate to others, especially the poor, vulnerable and oppressed in these places and activities? How can your ceasing help you extend rest to your neighbors? As Walter Brueggemann comments on Isaiah 58: “*Without justice, Sabbath takes*

*the appearance of rest, but is just restlessness.”*

*Closure.* Mark the end of your Sabbath rest with thanksgiving and praise. Ask God to bless the coming days and to establish the work of your hands.

**A Word About Sundays and Legalism.** Because the resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, the Christian day of worship and rest has historically fallen on Sundays. In our current age, the reality is that many of us have to work on Sundays. Working on a Sunday is not a sin. It is a sin, however, to neglect Sabbath keeping and disregard worship and rest. If you must work on a Sunday, guard your times of corporate worship, and find another time during the week to rest deeply with God and others. And if you're choosing to work on Sunday, then take time to ask yourself why? What is motivating you to work instead of rest?

On that note, keeping the Sabbath on Sundays makes sense and is ideal. But let's avoid legalism with this practice (and every other spiritual practice). Sabbath rest is about freedom. If you can rest for a full day, wonderful. If this idea is new, then start as you are able and build towards deeper rest. Guard your Sabbath, whenever it occurs, and let the Holy Spirit work in and around you to bring greater delight.

**Sabbath as our End.** In the Gospels, Jesus holds out an invitation to rest. He says: *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28) It's no wonder Jesus calls himself the *“Lord of the Sabbath.”* (Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5). When we give ourselves to Jesus, he redeems us from our toil and slavery, from our sin, and gives us life to the full. (John 10:10)

While we wait for Jesus to return, we experience this new life in part. We will fail in our Sabbath keeping and no matter how well we rest, we will always be nagged by restlessness. The good news is that our Lord's invitation to rest is always available to us. The Lord desires to bring us to green pastures and still waters. (Psalm 23) The Lord desires this for us in the here and now and for all time. Let us press into it and be renewed. Let us press into it and remember that Jesus is coming back to redeem all things and establish his rest, his peace, forever. As the writer of Hebrews reminds us: *“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest...”* (Hebrews 4:9-11)

### **The Guide and Final Encouragements.**

We offer this guide to help you and the community of Grace Pasadena cultivate Sabbath keeping. As we learn to rest in deeper ways, may the Spirit form us into people who resist sin and the lies that our value and identity are based on what we do and produce; may the Spirit cultivate in us God's peace and justice for ourselves and the world around us.

Use this guide on your own, with your roommates or spouses, and even your family. Let's give ourselves to our God and seek God together. Let's do the work God has prepared for us, and let us rest and delight in God's work of beauty and redemption.

***With great love for you all,***

The Pastors and Staff of Grace Pasadena

---

---

## NOVEMBER 1 & 2

---

---

*As you begin, remember the good news: God is near! This is not about perfection, but about enjoying God's presence. So, pray as you are able: use the guide in its entirety or focus on a part. Take the opportunity to rest in God's presence for a few minutes or for more.*

### **OPENING SCRIPTURE — PSALM 62:5-7**

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

*What have you been resting on for your salvation? Turn your hearts to God and find true rest.*

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lord of the Sabbath, we are restless. Our hearts, minds and bodies are full of fearful, anxious and hopeless thoughts, words and plans. Restless, we have neglected true worship of you and love of our neighbor. Forgive us. Let us know the embrace of your love again and find rest. You alone are the our hope and salvation. In the name of Jesus, we pray. *Amen.*

*Pray through the confession again, remembering God's steadfast love and kindness.*

### **GOSPEL READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

|          |            |                  |
|----------|------------|------------------|
| Friday   | November 1 | Matthew 13:24-30 |
| Saturday | November 2 | Matthew 13:31-35 |

### **FOR REFLECTION:**

- Re-read the passage. Which words challenge you? Which words invite you to rest in the goodness of Jesus Christ?
- Consider the questions and practices on the next page.

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer to God prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the Lord's Prayer or with the following based on a prayer from Christina Rossetti.*

O Lord, who promises a crown of life to whom you chose and love, give us grace to love you for what you are more than for all which you bestow; and so loving you, to endure temptation and finish our course with joy. *Amen.*

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

- **Friday.** Which practices of solitude and silence would you like to continue this month? Additionally, take some time to think through your weekend plans.
  - What's on the schedule? Will you be rushing from activity to activity? How much "non-busy" time do you have planned?
  - Parents and guardians, how much time do you have dedicated to being together as a family, and what's on your children's schedule?
  - In general, are your weekends, especially your Sundays, as busy as your weekdays?
  - If you work on weekends, apply these questions to the day/time you take off.
  - Look back on your answers and consider these questions: What's compelling the shape of your weekends/time off? Is it fear of missing out? Is it competition? Is it joy? What kinds of stories about yourself is your compulsion fortifying?
  
- **Saturday.** Read Isaiah 58:13-14: *"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."* What do you notice in these verses? In what ways do you find Sabbath keeping a delight or a challenge? Do you think its possible to spend an entire day resting and delighting, and why or why not?

## WEEK OF NOVEMBER 3

*As you begin, remember the good news: God is near! This is not about perfection, but about enjoying God's presence. So, pray as you are able: use the guide in its entirety or focus on a part. Take the opportunity to rest in God's presence for a few minutes or for more.*

### **OPENING SCRIPTURE — PSALM 127:1**

Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

God, we confess the vanity of our busyness. Our compulsion to be successful, productive, efficient, never miss out on anything, and to be in control has taken over our hearts, minds and bodies. We have neglected love of you and our neighbor. Forgive us. Thank you for calling us to rest at your feet, to listen to your healing words and experience your great love. By your Spirit, re-order our lives; redeem our desires, work, and relationships. *Amen.*

### **GOSPEL READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

|           |                   |                                |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sunday    | <i>November 3</i> | Exodus 20:8-11; 1 Cor 11:23-25 |
| Monday    | <i>November 4</i> | Matthew 13:26-43               |
| Tuesday   | <i>November 5</i> | Matthew 13:44-52               |
| Wednesday | <i>November 6</i> | Matthew 13:53-58               |
| Thursday  | <i>November 7</i> | Matthew 14:1-12                |
| Friday    | <i>November 8</i> | Matthew 14:13-21               |
| Saturday  | <i>November 9</i> | Matthew 14:22-36               |

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Consider one or more of the following:*

- Re-read the passage. What words invite you to rest in God's loving kindness and faithfulness? What words invite you to delight in God, his creation and one another?
- Think about a loved one in need. Do you hear words of hope for them in the passage? How might you share these words with your loved one in both word and deed?
- Consider the questions and practices on the next page.

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer to God prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the Lord's Prayer or the following prayer from Howard Thurman.*

Open unto me, light for my darkness. Open unto me, courage for my fear. Open unto me, hope for my despair. Open unto me, peace for my turmoil. Open unto me, joy for my sorrow. Open unto me, strength for my weakness. Open unto me, wisdom for my confusion. Open unto me, forgiveness for my sins. Open unto me, tenderness for my toughness. Open unto me, love for my hates. Open unto me, Thy Self for myself. Lord, Lord, open unto me! *Amen.*

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

- **Monday:** What are your preferred ways of resting? In what ways do these activities help you feel rested or not rested in body, soul and mind? What might you change to rest more deeply?
- **Tuesday:** How might you invite your family, children, and roommates into deeper Sabbath rest for you? What rhythms and patters as a family or household need to change or be adjusted for the sake of community rest?
- **Wednesday:** Look at Genesis 1:26-2:3. God creates humanity on the sixth day and then rests on the seventh. This means humanity's first full day was one of Sabbath rest. What might this indicate about God's desire for us?
- **Thursday:** A.J. Swoboda writes: *"The Sabbath is God's stand against tyranny for always having to say yes. The Sabbath is God's gift of a no to us in our obsessive, compulsive patterns of living. The Sabbath is God's solution to FOMO [fear of missing out] anxieties. On the Sabbath, we are 'in' because we are with Jesus....The Sabbath, it turns out, is mentioned fifty-eight times in the Bible. God repeatedly invites us to say no to the world that we might say yes to God."* What are your reactions? To what are you always saying yes? How might saying no, especially on days dedicated to corporate worship, help you experience deeper wholeness and rest?
- **Friday/Weekend:** Consider your weekend. Are there any errands or work that you've planned for Sunday that you can be finished Friday or Saturday? Is there room to adjust your schedule (and perhaps your family's schedule) so that you can enter worship and rest more deeply on Sunday? *Keep these questions in mind this and every week.*

## **WEEK OF NOVEMBER 10**

*As you begin, remember the good news: God is near! This is not about perfection, but about enjoying God's presence. So, pray as you are able: use the guide in its entirety or focus on a part. Take the opportunity to rest in God's presence for a few minutes or for more.*

### **OPENING SCRIPTURE — EXODUS 20:2**

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Wondrous God, who sets suns and moons above us, mountains and valleys beneath us, and friends and strangers among us: How often have we tried to find rest apart from your presence? How seldom have we looked for your face and thanked you for your fashioning hand? Forgive us for neglecting true worship. Renew us and set our feet on your solid Word. *Amen.*

### **GOSPEL READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

|           |                    |                             |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Sunday    | <i>November 10</i> | Deuteronomy 5:15; Psalm 122 |
| Monday    | <i>November 11</i> | Matthew 15:1-20             |
| Tuesday   | <i>November 12</i> | Matthew 15:21-28            |
| Wednesday | <i>November 13</i> | Matthew 15:29-39            |
| Thursday  | <i>November 14</i> | Matthew 16:1-12             |
| Friday    | <i>November 15</i> | Matthew 16:13-20            |
| Saturday  | <i>November 16</i> | Matthew 16:21-28            |

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Consider one or more of the following:*

- Take a moment to re-read the opening verse. Our God redeems us to set us free! How is the Holy Spirit leading you into deeper freedom in this moment, this day? Likewise, what words of freedom do you hear in today's passage?
- With the words of Scripture in your hearts and minds, consider the daily exercises on the next page. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond with honesty, creativity, boldness and joy.

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer to God prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the following prayer based on the words from George Matheson.*

The fetters you impose, O Lord, are wings of freedom. There is no liberty like the liberty of being bound to you. I am never so unrestrained as when I am constrained by your love. Evermore, O Divine Spirit, guide me by this instinct of the right. Put round about my heart the cord of your captivating love, and draw me where in my own light I would not go. Bind me to yourself as you bind the planets to the sun. May I be content to know that goodness and mercy shall follow me without waiting to see them in advance of me. *Amen.*

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

**Monday - Thursday.** An important part of Sabbath rest is communal celebration and enjoyment. We see this embodied in the sacrament of the Lord's Table (or Communion) every Lord's Day, or Sunday. While the sacrament helps us remember the death of Jesus Christ, it is not a funeral. Instead, it is a celebration! In the sacrament, the family of God celebrates Jesus's victory over sin and death. And Jesus's victory means *freedom* for his people from sin and death! The sacrament is a feast and enjoyed with good bread and good wine (and in our case, grape juice). So, it's proper to continue the feast and joy of the Lord's Table all throughout the Lord's Day.

In this light, spend this week planning a Sunday feast. Invite a few friends over for lunch after the service or for dinner or dessert. Keep the food simple to minimize the busyness of hosting. (That is, unless cooking an elaborate meal is restful and enjoyable for you!) Think sandwiches, salads, or soup and, if possible, prepare it on Saturday. If you don't want to host, think about a potluck picnic or a grill out at a local park. Whatever it is, find a way to gather with others to continue the celebration and joy of worship and the Lord's Table.

A Sunday celebration doesn't have to be about food. Is there an activity that brings you delight and find restful? Invite others to enjoy that activity with you. A movie, a hike, a craft, playing a sport...? Again, whatever it is, simply gather, celebrate and enjoy the rest God gives to us.

If you work on Sundays or after the worship service, find another time this week to celebrate and rest with your community.

- If you find yourself too busy for a feast with your community, then take the time to ask yourself why. Is there something enslaving you and keeping you from Sabbath celebration?

**Friday/Weekend:** Think about rituals you can enact to help you/your family/roommates mark the start of your Sabbath rest and/or the Lord's Day. Such rituals offer visual and physical cues to help us remember that the time is indeed different, set apart and holy. Suggestions:

- Light a candle at the start of your Sabbath rest and/or say a prayer of thanksgiving for the gift of rest, community and new life in Jesus Christ.
- In addition to a prayer of thanksgiving, read Psalm 62, Isaiah 58:13-14 or others like it. Find a musical version of the Psalm and listen to it at the start of your Sabbath rest.
- Enjoy a special pastry or treat to remember the sweetness of the gift of rest. (In many Jewish homes, the first Sabbath meal includes a sweet bread called challah and many parents give children a spoonful of honey for that same purpose.)

---

---

## WEEK OF NOVEMBER 17

---

---

*As you begin, remember the good news: God is near! This is not about perfection, but about enjoying God's presence. So, pray as you are able: use the guide in its entirety or focus on a part. Take the opportunity to rest in God's presence for a few minutes or for more.*

### **OPENING SCRIPTURE — PSALM 23:1**

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. *(pause)*

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us. *(pause)*

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, grant us your peace. *Amen.*

### **GOSPEL READINGS FOR THE WEEK**

|           |                    |                  |
|-----------|--------------------|------------------|
| Sunday    | <i>November 17</i> | Psalm 37         |
| Monday    | <i>November 18</i> | Matthew 17:1-13  |
| Tuesday   | <i>November 19</i> | Matthew 17:14-21 |
| Wednesday | <i>November 20</i> | Matthew 17:22-27 |
| Thursday  | <i>November 21</i> | Matthew 18:1-9   |
| Friday    | <i>November 22</i> | Matthew 18:10-20 |
| Saturday  | <i>November 23</i> | Matthew 18:21-35 |

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Consider one or more of the following:*

- Re-read the opening scripture. To what or whom is God leading you today? Whatever it may be, take heart and rest in his gentle leading.
- How does the passage help you see and experience God's great love and presence in the ordinary moments and happenings of your day?
- With the words of Scripture in your hearts and minds, consider the questions on the next page. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond honestly.

### **CLOSING PRAYERS**

*Offer to God prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the following Collect from the Anglican Church.*

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

**Monday:** Think back to the disciplines of solitude and silence. Which habits have you continued this month? How do you see daily moments of solitude and silence working with and feeding into Sabbath rest?

**Tuesday and Wednesday.** Marva Dawn comments: *“One of the ugliest things about our culture is that we usually assess a person’s worth on the basis of his or her productivity and accomplishments.... [A] kind of ceasing for which we are freed by the practice of Sabbath keeping is the delight of quitting this endless round of trying to produce. Once we have ceased working, we might as well not feel guilty about it.”* What is your response? Do you feel guilty for resting? How might entering Sabbath rest cultivate our freedom true identities in Jesus Christ?

**Thursday/Friday/Weekend:** Look ahead to your next day off or this coming Saturday/Sunday. Consider planning and sticking to a no-tech/no-screen period of rest.

- Plan for at least a three hour period during which you turn off all screens, including the TV, tablet, mobile phone, smart watch, etc...
- During your “digital Sabbath”, resolve to cease from measuring your steps, exercise, heart rate, etc...
- If you live with roommates or have children, how can invite them into keeping a “digital sabbath” with you?
- Consider what you might do during this time. Take a nap? Go on a walk? Read a book or newspaper? Practice a craft or an art? Play board or card games? Spend time in quiet and solitude?
- Does the idea of a digital sabbath appeal to you or appall you. Why?

**After the Digital Sabbath:** How was your experience? What did you enjoy? What did you find challenging? How did your time with yourself, others and with God change?

---

---

## WEEK OF NOVEMBER 24

---

---

*As you begin, remember the good news: God is near! This is not about perfection, but about enjoying God's presence. So, pray as you are able: use the guide in its entirety or focus on a part. Take the opportunity to rest in God's presence for a few minutes or for more.*

### OPENING SCRIPTURE — PSALM 90:14

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

### PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of love: We have not loved you with all of our hearts, minds and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. Forgive us. Breathe in us, O Holy Spirit, that our thoughts may all be holy. Act in us, O Holy Spirit, that our work, too, may be holy. Draw our hearts, O Holy Spirit, that we love but what is holy. Strengthen us, O Holy Spirit, to defend all that is holy. Guard us, then, O Holy Spirit, that we always may be holy. *Amen.*

*(inspired by a prayer from St. Augustine.)*

### GOSPEL READINGS FOR THE WEEK

|           |             |                         |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Sunday    | November 24 | Psalm 8; 1 Timothy 1:16 |
| Monday    | November 25 | Matthew 19:1-12         |
| Tuesday   | November 26 | Matthew 19:13-22        |
| Wednesday | November 27 | Matthew 19:23-30        |
| Thursday  | November 28 | Matthew 20:1-16         |
| Friday    | November 29 | Matthew 20:17-28        |
| Saturday  | November 30 | Matthew 20:29-34        |

**FOR REFLECTION:** *Consider one or more of the following:*

- What do you notice about Jesus? How does he interact with those around him?
- Re-read the passage and take note of any words or phrases that stick out to you. How might the Spirit be using the passage to bring you new hope and faith?
- With the words of Scripture in your hearts and minds, consider the daily exercises on the next page. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you respond honestly.

### CLOSING PRAYERS

*Offer to God prayers for the day and its tasks, the world and its needs, the Church and her life. Conclude with the following prayer from The Church of South India:*

By the grace of God we are a pilgrim people, ever moving forward and never settling down with the status quo. We bring our commitment to unity and mission, sharing with all the fullness of the blessing of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Holy God, fill us with the power of your Spirit that we may be your witness to the ends of the earth. *Amen.*

---

---

## QUESTIONS & PRACTICES FOR THE WEEK

---

---

**Monday and Tuesday.** Read the commandment about sabbath rest in Exodus 19:8-11:

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> 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.”* What do you notice in these verses? To whom does this commandment apply? How do your current practices of Sabbath help others to rest or not to rest? How can sabbath rest cultivate God’s kingdom of justice and peace in our world?

**Wednesday and Thursday.** Sabbath rest is meant to be enjoyed as individuals and a community. In that light, are there people or families with whom you can *intentionally* “sabbath” at least once a month? Write down names of individuals and families, pray and boldly ask them to sabbath with you at least once a month. Let’s all lean into the community God has given to us in Jesus. And since it’s Thanksgiving, spend ample time thanking God for the community he has given to you at Grace Pasadena.

**Friday/Weekend.** Two things:

1. When we read the creation account, God looks at his work at the end of each day and affirms the goodness of his work. We sense this deep satisfaction on the seventh day of rest. What does this mean for us? How does Sabbath rest help us see and value our own work?
2. The season of Advent upon us. Think about ways you/your family/community can enter the season with hearts, minds and bodies eager to enjoy and season and prepare well for the celebration of Christmas. How can we resist what is often the unrelenting busyness and demands of the season? How can rest during this great time of expectation and preparation for Christmas?

## MONTH IN REVIEW / LOOKING FORWARD

Think back on the month. What has changed in your understanding and practice of Sabbath rest? How have you changed? How has your sense of work changed? How has your experience of community changed?

Use the chart below to map out daily, weekly, monthly and yearly practices of Sabbath rest. What are some practices you would like to continue or start? How can you extend Sunday worship through out the entire Lord's day? Can you find time to take a monthly or yearly retreat?

|         | HABITS OF SABBATH REST |
|---------|------------------------|
| DAILY   |                        |
| WEEKLY  |                        |
| MONTHLY |                        |
| YEARLY  |                        |

## ***NOTES & OTHER RESOURCES***

To further explore Sabbath keeping:

- “Sabbath as Resistance” by Walter Brueggeman
- “Keeping the Sabbath Holy” by Marva Dawn

*November 2019*  
*Grace Pasadena*  
[www.gracepasadena.org](http://www.gracepasadena.org)