



## Sabbath

On the sixth day God completed all the work that he had done, and on the seventh day God rested from all the work that he had done. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all the work of creation.

Genesis 2: 2-3

Remember the Sabbath day and treat it as holy. Six days you may work and do all your tasks, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Do not do any work on it—not you, your sons or daughters, your male or female servants, your animals, or the immigrant who is living with you. Because the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and everything that is in them in six days, but rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 20: 8-11 (the 4<sup>th</sup> of the “10 Commandments”)

Then Jesus said, “The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren’t created for the Sabbath. This is why the Son of Man is Lord even over the Sabbath.”

Mark 2: 27

Therefore, since the promise that we can enter into rest is still open, let’s be careful so that none of you will appear to miss it. So you see that a Sabbath rest is left open for God’s people. The one who entered God’s rest also rested from his works, just as God rested from his own. Therefore, let’s make every effort to enter that rest.

Hebrews 4: 1, 9-11

### What is a Sabbath?

“Sabbath” is another way of saying a “Day of Rest.” The word Sabbath comes from Hebrew (the language the Old Testament in the bible is written in) and means “ceasing/stopping” or “keeping/holding.” Both aspects are important for understanding Wayfarers’ concept of a “Day of Rest.” Sabbath keeping is a distinctive spiritual practice where one takes time to both rest from their normal routine as well as concentrate on enjoying God. Though some will have negative cultural stereotypes of Sabbath being a list of things you can’t do on a certain day (usually Sunday), we believe a “Day of Rest” is meant to be a gift from God that is flexible and enjoyable.

**Stopping is Important:** A “Day of Rest” requires ceasing some of our normal routine.

For Physical Rest:

The facts that our lives are too busy, we are constantly connected, and we feel tired all the time has been felt and observed by nearly everyone. Even many large corporations are trying better to help people “unplug” and actually take vacation days so they can rest. Simple rest is an important aspect of practicing Sabbath because we are physical beings as well as spiritual ones.

In our Sabbaths we do encourage people to take care of themselves physically by doing less, sleeping more, etc., but the ultimate point of Sabbath is not to make us more productive the rest of the week. Since most people desire more physical rest I won’t spend as much time on this as I will high lighting the other aspects of thinking through a “Day of Rest.”

For Perspective:

One important aspect of taking a "Day of Rest" has to do with keeping perspective on our busyness and focus on what truly gives us value. An often unspoken assumption in our culture is that if we are not working constantly, busy, or are in some way being "productive" then we aren't valuable. On some level we all feel this pressure to show we are actually doing something worthwhile with our lives and are valuable people.

Even people who are not employed often feel the need to justify how they spend their time, showing they can still be productive even when not earning money. Many people can also point to real accomplishments that they are proud of since they have worked hard to achieve them. While we believe hard work and being proud of our accomplishments is very important, we also believe these are things we can overvalue.

Ultimately our value has nothing to do with our work, accomplishments, or how we choose to spend our time. We believe we are children of God and the fact that he loves us unconditionally gives us value no matter what we do. We also believe that it is God's job to care for the world, not ours, no matter how passionately we feel the need to make the world a better place.

A "Day of Rest" is an intensely practical way to remind ourselves of these facts. We take full day each week to be unproductive and to let go of the pretend control over our lives. We will discover the world and our lives are in God's hands. We continue to be God's beloved children even without constant activity. We will discover the freedom of living this perspective.

For Community:

One implication of discovering that production does not entail value is that our attitudes toward others change. We can no longer evaluate others by their level of productivity just as we aren't able to evaluate ourselves this way. Hopefully, this can free us of much of the competition implied by our busyness.

We also believe that practicing a "Day of Rest" should be done in community since it can be so hard to do alone. Others can help us actually rest on a weekly basis since this can be a hard habit to start alone. We can also engage in activities that help us rest together, since busy activities can often interfere with our ability to take the time to actually know each other. Communal rest can help us to just be, rather than always feeling the need to do.

For Imitation and Obedience:

God both rests and commands we rest as well. Another of our beliefs is that Jesus lived the ultimate full life on earth and we can learn a lot by imitating his example. Jesus had more important work to do than any person who has ever lived, yet he rested every week and it seemed to be an important practice for his continued work and play.

God also told us to rest each week. It is actually one of the famous "ten commandments" on the same level morally as not "murdering people" or "stealing." God designed us to need serious rest each week and commands we do so since it is so easy to ignore.

**"Keeping" is Important:** A "Day of Rest" connects us with God in a special way.

For Enjoyment:

We believe that fun is spiritual and one of the gifts of practicing a "Day of Rest" is not just stopping doing things, but also making this day special by adding things that you truly enjoy and will rejuvenate you. You will connect with God in a special way when you are doing activities that are out of your normal routine, yet you enjoy. A "Day of Rest" is a gift from God and when you are doing things you really enjoy it is hard not to be thankful of the God who invented fun and desires you to enjoy the life he has given you. It is also helpful recognizing that it is a special day when you have things to look forward to outside your normal routine.

For Sacred Time:

Like in all relationships, connecting with God requires time if we want depth. In keeping a weekly "Day of Rest" we are offering to God one of our most precious resources: time. When we are willing to give up something good (our limited amount of time) for something better (his presence) we will gain a better understanding of who God is, how he wants us to live, and how he loves us.

Although keeping a "Day of Rest" is certainly not the only way to spend time with God we believe it is a great and under-utilized way of doing so. Hopefully, with an entire day set apart from normal routine we will take the time to truly enjoy God through prayer, worship, bible reading, or any other way we prefer to connect with God. We can be rejuvenated by him and enjoy his love for us.

As Foreshadowing:

Keeping a "Day of Rest" also fosters our faith and hope in the coming restored world. We believe that originally God designed a good world that was largely spoiled by people. We also believe that God is restoring his world and all relationships in it to the perfection they were meant to exist in. This restoration is ongoing and a major aspect of spiritual growth is believing/trusting that God is doing this work.

However, God's restored world is also one we can experience before its completion. Practicing a "Day of Rest" helps us connect with God as a small foretaste of the day when we will enjoy his full presence. In turn this can nurture our faith and hope. Practicing a "Day of Rest" will help us remember that we will enjoy God's full presence someday and that the story of our lives and the world ultimately has a happy ending. We experience foreshadowing of this in our weekly "Days of Rest."

## Practicing a “Day of Rest”

This section is designed to help you think through some of the ways to design a “Day of Rest” for you and your family that will be practical and a true blessing each week. In each section there will be a series of questions to help you think through the practical aspects of this practice. The questions are also all compiled at the end in a form to fill out if this is helpful to you.

### Start Small:

Practicing an entire 24 hour period of Sabbath or rest is incredibly counter cultural and counter intuitive. Although, this is our eventual goal, start with smaller and more manageable resting practices. Work your way into a full “Day of Rest” over a longer period of time as this becomes practical.

### Picking a Day:

Traditionally, Jews have celebrated Sabbath on Saturdays (since God’s “Day of Rest” occurred on the final day of the week in the Genesis 1 Creation Account) and Christians have celebrated Sabbath on Sundays (in honor of Christ’s resurrection on a Sunday). We recommend using Sunday if possible. Some practical reasons for this are gaining perspective in starting your week and that communal rest and worship are easier to build into your routine with the support of other people. This will not be practical for everyone, however, and so pick a day that will be possible to use on a weekly basis. We do recommend using the same day most weeks since it is easy to skip weeks if you are trying to do it on a different day and “fit it in” each week.

Some other considerations: taking a full 24 hour “Day of Rest” will take some preparation during the rest of the week. For example: what will you do for meals? Some people find food preparation enjoyable and restful (so for them it might be a good “Day of Rest” activity). However, many people find it to be work so having something premade will be important for protecting restfulness.

Also, traditionally Sabbath was practiced from sundown to sundown (for example: Saturday around 6 PM till Sunday 6 PM, rather than Sunday morning till you go to sleep on Sunday night) and many people find this a more useful pattern for rest than taking one full period of being awake. This seems to ease into it for many people who can have a quiet evening, go to bed earlier, sleep in, and then begin to prepare for the new week that evening. Other people find this jarring and prefer a “Day of Rest” to be a full period of wakefulness. Find what works for you!

### Rest from Production:

One of the most obvious practices of taking a “Day of Rest” is not working. Simply don’t do anything related your occupation including thinking about problems waiting for you in the coming week or taking calls/emails related to work. Some occupations require us to be “on call” and emergencies come up, but in general try to

work ahead and have the discipline to take a true break from work. This also may require some communication with your job or setting up emails to have auto-replies that you are not available on this day. If something unavoidable does come up, try to have some "make-up rest time" later in the week.

If you are not employed, try to take a rest from the things that you usually do to feel productive. Try to have errands and housework done already so they are not weighing on your mind and causing you not to rest (unless, you find these activities restful!).

If you have children you obviously can't stop being a parent, but plan ahead as best you can to have a quieter day with activities that will be restful for all. Helping our children experience a "Day of Rest" will be an amazing gift to them in the long run. The "Adding Special Activities" section below will give you more help in this area.

If you are a student, plan ahead to take a day when you are reading, writing, or studying anything related to school.

Many people also decide to not spend any money on a "Day of Rest" so they are not tempted to think about working to earn more of it. This can also be a subtle invitation to a culture that never rests from commerce and productivity to show others a better way of life. Other people find going to a movie or restaurant very special and restful and can be used to bless others who are working. Something to think through...

#### Rest from Connectedness/Technology:

We are all "on call" not just for work, but have an unprecedented amount of communication through phones, text, email, social media, etc. An unintentional effect of this connectedness is often a busyness of mind and a constant need to know what going on. We recommend cutting back on your technology use or completely unplugging during your "Day of Rest" if you are able. This can help us focus on the moment, our immediate family and friends, and God.

Some people create special boxes or baskets where they can put cell phones and TV remotes (or homework and to-do lists) to rest from their use for this time. You'll just have to figure out what works for you since watching the news or sports, checking blogs, talking on the phone, etc. can be relaxing to some people, while it simply increases the busyness in our minds for many others.

In general, try to limit communication with others you will not be seeing face to face that day and limit your intake of media. This also can be a gift!

#### Adding Special Activities:

It is also important to add special things as well as ceasing normal activities. These should be things you truly find life giving and make sense for your family. One easy way to think about these activities is thinking of things you enjoy, but usually don't have time for... Ideas might include taking long walks or hikes, picnics/brunch/tea, reading, special games with children for this day only, movies, having sex, enjoying music, making dinner, playing catch or a board game, calling family, doing hobbies, etc.

It's usually helpful to have some idea before what are some special activities you can sprinkle throughout the day so planning doesn't become stressful. If you prefer to have a schedule: make one for the day! If you prefer improvising: do so! The point is having activities set apart for your rest and nourishment.

#### Adding Worship:

Rejuvenation is not the only point of a "Day of Rest," it is also important taking time to connect with God. We really recommend including communal worship in your "Day of Rest." This is one of the reasons Sunday is an ideal day for a "Day of Rest": you will be joining many others in taking the time to focus on the bigger picture of who God is and how our lives can be lived in his ways. Whether, Sunday is chosen as your "Day of Rest" or not, take the time to pray throughout your day, read your bible, and do any other practices that help you connect with God. All the restful activities done on a "Day of Rest" can be done worshipfully and enjoyed more fully when you use them to connect you with God. This can also be good practice for connecting with God in all activities, even during a busy week.

#### Including Others:

A final question to think about is balancing time alone and time with others. People who are introverted will need to spend much of the day alone and with God, while extroverted people may want to spend the time in communal activities since doing relaxing things with others will enhance their rest. It is probably ideal to spend at least part of the day alone and part of the day with others whether you are more naturally introverted or extroverted.

## Questions:

- What day of the week will I practice a "Day of Rest?"
- Do Sundays work or will another day be better?
- What will meals look like for this day?
- Will I use the sundown to sundown formula or a full day awake formula?
- What preparations do I need to do to rest from work for this day?
  - Do I need to warn my job or prepare my email?
  - Is my "to-do" list done so I won't worry about this?
  - Are all errands and housework done beforehand?
- Is spending something I need to rest from or will this not make me think of work?
- What should my use of technology and connection be for this day?
  - Should I limit (or cease) use of phones, internet, television?
- What special activities will be added for this day?
- How much planning of the day do I want to do?
- (If you have children): What are some special activities we can do for them on this day?
- What kind of worship should we do?
  - Is there an opportunity to worship with others on this day?
  - What will prayer look like on this day?
  - When and how might I read the bible this day?
  - How might I use other activities worshipfully this day?
- What activities should I do alone and which should I do with others?