

SABBATH

Introduction

The Sabbath is sewn together throughout the entire Bible. From Genesis to Revelation, resting is an essential element within the order that God created on earth. To this day in Israel, at sundown on Friday night and all special holidays, there's a siren that blows, and Sabbath begins. Any practicing Jew is forbidden from driving, using electronics, and even heating food to prepare to eat. All businesses that are kosher are not allowed to operate on Shabbat. Everything shuts down and it is truly a sabbath day, one day every week, for those who practice it. Before we begin, we must ask ourselves an important question: "Do I believe that rest is a necessary element to spiritual growth?" God established the Sabbath intentionally because He knew that our bodies were not without limits. Therefore, if God believed it was important, so should we.

Sabbath In America

We live in a world that is 24/7/365. Especially with the Internet, everything is always going and always "on." Almost everything is open every day nowadays. They may only be open so many hours, but unless they are a bank or government run, almost every business is open every day.

One of my favorite companies that sells camera equipment is called B&H. They are a Jewish company and one of the top camera sales companies in America. In spite of being so popular, they don't ship or allow checkout to happen during Shabbat or major Jewish holidays that require a sabbath (Passover, for example). Of course, as many of you know, Chick-fil-A doesn't operate on Sundays because it's the Lord's Day. Even though both of these businesses shut down one day every week, they are still incredibly profitable and sustainable.



What are some businesses that you know of (other than the ones listed above) that have a Sabbath? Do you believe that Christian businesses should close down once a week? Why or why not.



*"Can't stop the race/
People moving in place/
Running a crooked path/
Place to place to place/
Questions on our minds/
Buildings on the rise/
Diamonds instead of our eyes/
Corporate fights/*

*Oh busy, busy bees/
Walking to and fro/
What if we close our eyes?/
What if we can't wake up?/
I hope you all rest in peace/
I hope you find what you're looking for/
But if that is all you got/
Well then there's got to be more"*

-The Chariot, The Chariot, They Faced Each Other, The Fiancee

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Oh Busy, Busy Bees

Taking rest is quite literally every person's God-given right. The "American Dream" has often corrupted that ideology and asserts you have to burn yourself out if you want to be worth anything. Many Pastors have also fallen into this same trap. Busyness makes you believe that burning yourself out for Jesus is the Lord's plan for your life. It makes you believe that if you aren't doing something, you're failing, losing, or worse – sinning. But that was never God's intention (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 23:12). You cannot be effective to anyone, including Jesus, if you are burned out (Mark 6:31-32). Spiritual transformation requires rest, retreat, and rejuvenation (Isaiah 40:30-31). Do not confuse busyness with ministry or effective work.

Busyness is not the newest fad and it doesn't seem to be going away anytime soon. Busyness has become one of the true adversaries of America and Christianity. Busyness has ended marriages and families, it's led to burnout and disaster, and it's led to drinking and drug abuse. Busyness has consumed our culture.

And the above paragraph isn't just speaking to the secular world. The life of Pastors, Missionaries, Ministry Leaders, and the everyday Christ-follower have all fallen into its seducing trap. Busyness makes you believe that burning yourself out for Jesus is the Lord's plan for your life. Busyness makes one deny their own spouses, friends, and children. There is no life in busyness, only calamity.

One of the craziest phenomena that happens in this "busyness" culture is that you become so "busy" that you become ineffective and not busy at all. Instead, you tell people that you are so busy as an excuse for not staying in contact with that person. How many times have you said, "I'm so sorry, I've just been so busy lately." When in reality, you just convinced yourself you were busy so you had an excuse. It's easier to say "I'm busy" rather than "I forgot to keep up with our relationship." This isn't to say we aren't busy. But busyness should never replace relationships

Wayne Cordeiro says in his book *Leading On Empty*, "...Rest is not a sin. Taking a break does not mean you're lazy or that you're not as valuable. Catching your breath now and then doesn't mean you're not carrying your load, or that you are somehow less committed to... your calling"

Let's read Mark 6:31:

Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."



Has busyness ever caused you to miss something or caused a disruption in a relationship? Was it too late when you realized busyness got in the way?

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The Science Of Rest

If we are thinking about this from a transformational perspective, we can look at the body. Our bodies cannot go days without sleep and rest without severe consequences. We need sleep and we need rest. According to a study and article done by Jolanta Orzeł-Gryglewska, people who didn't sleep for 90 hours began experiencing hallucinations, "disturbances in reasoning and orientation...irritability and delusions" as well as severe paranoia. The studies concluded that lack of sleep caused sleep deprivation psychosis. From a physical standpoint, your body needs rest not only to function effectively, but also in order to heal the body.

The Chicago Tribune posted an article on the benefits of sleep and suggested, "Although you may feel like your body is shutting down when you crawl into bed, sleep is actually a time when your body gets busy restoring and repairing different functions. Sleep is also the prime time for the body to get its hormones back to a healthy level." Rest isn't doing "nothing." Resting is actually an important catalyst your body needs to repair and heal itself. When you are torn between *doing* something on your day off or resting, remember that when you say yes to resting and no to other things, you're actually saying yes to a healthier and holier lifestyle.

In an article from Johns Hopkins, Dr. Mark Wu notes that when people don't sleep enough, risks of poor health escalate. He mentions, "Immunity is compromised, increasing the likelihood of illness and infection." And for those of you wanting to lose a few extra pounds, if you aren't getting enough rest and sleep, your metabolism is also compromised.

Another interesting scientific fact about rest revolves around napping. If you love to nap, like I do, this is excellent news! A study done by Sara Mednick, PhD, who is a psychologist at UC Riverside, found that both 60 and 90 minute naps help you, especially when you are learning. She notes, "What's amazing is that in a 90-minute nap, you can get the same [learning] benefits as an eight-hour sleep period. And actually, the nap is having an additive benefit on top of a good night sleep." She also found that, "an afternoon nap was about equal to a dose of caffeine for improving perceptual learning" and that it can enhance alertness, attention, and memory consolidation.

It's no wonder God established a full day of rest. Not only do we need good sleep each night, we need time for our bodies to heal themselves, which means taking a full day off once a week. This allows your body and mind to heal and not burn out, it causes you to spend time with your loved ones, and helps you appreciate God that much more.



Have you ever pushed your body so hard that you got physically ill? What were the effects and how long did you have to rest for before you were back to normal?

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The Bible On Rest

Let's read Genesis 2:2-3:

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

From the very beginning, we see God initiate this seventh day as “holy.” Every other day up until this point has been either “good” or “very good.” But God blesses that seventh day and declares that it will be set apart from all the other days. As we make our way through the Bible, the Sabbath becomes a staple in Jewish living. Following the Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 20:8-11), we see clear directives from Exodus to Deuteronomy that Sabbath must be observed. Sabbath, however, isn't only something that must be observed, but it's also a way that quite literally set apart Israel from other civilizations. Walter Brueggemann says this in his commentary on Old Testament Theology,

“...the conduct of Yahweh on the seventh day is in sharp contrast to the world of pharaoh, in which there is no rest but only feverish productivity. The command on Sabbath also looks forward: to a human community, an Israelite community peaceably engaged in neighbor-respecting life that is not madly engaged in production and consumption, but one that knows a limit to such activity and so has at the center of its life an enactment of peaceableness that bespeaks the settled rule of Yahweh. Moreover, as Sabbath became increasingly a distinguishing mark of Jews in the world, this commandment provides a way in which Jewishness can be visibly enacted, in order to exhibit the claim that Jewishness is indeed an alternative way of being in the world; alternative to the exploitative ways of the world that begin in self-serving idolatry and end in destructive covetousness.”

As we can see throughout history, rest is something that isn't practiced or respected in most civilizations. There are many Christians who think the Sabbath isn't needed anymore because Jesus said in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” However, Jesus wasn't saying, “You don't need to observe the sabbath anymore.” Jesus was dealing with pharisees and Jews who believed all kinds of extra forbidden laws about what you could and could not do on the Sabbath. They had made it so legalistic that you truly couldn't even enjoy your day off. So Jesus reminds them that God established the Sabbath for their benefit, not so they could legalize it to oblivion.

Jesus did not have this “You can sleep when you're dead” mentality and neither should you. In Matthew 14:23 we see Jesus, tired and worn down, go to the mountains to be alone and to pray. Jesus needed rest and so do you.

Let's read Hebrews 4:9-10:

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.”

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Practical Ways Of Sabbath

So God says you should rest. Science says you should rest. Do you believe that you should rest? If you're confident that rest is a commandment from God and an all around holistic element to spiritual growth, we're going to talk about some ways that you can be resting practically.

1. **Meditation.** The seventh practice that we'll be discussing is meditation. Meditation on Scripture is a great way to spend time with God when you're resting. But more on that in the seventh session.
2. **Rest. Rest. Rest.** Seminary taught me many things. But one of the main things it taught me was how to balance a holistic lifestyle. Rest is the most important on that list. Whatever your views on Genesis 1-2 are, there can be no denying the truth that our bodies need that one day of rest each week. Seminary taught us to make sure our sabbaths are sacred, make sure we're taking a long weekend every few months, and making sure we are taking a solid one to two weeks a year to do nothing but rest. Each person rests and rejuvenates differently. But however you do it, find time to "Be Still" with the Lord.
3. **Be Still.** How do we escape the shackles of Busyness? Paradoxically, we "be still." You cannot beat busyness with more busyness. You can go to every conference and Church event in the world to overcome busyness, but none of that will help you rest unless it's an intentional part of said event. Psalm 46:10 says in the midst of war and chaos, "Be still and know that I am God." It isn't just about being still and not doing anything! It's about being still and focusing your heart, mind, soul, and strength on Jesus and resting in His perfect timing. If you believe that God works out all things (Romans 8:28), then you need to trust that the Lord will do those things.
4. **Work Smart and Hard.** I am not saying you shouldn't work hard in all of this. God wants you to work hard on things that are important, whereas Busyness wants you to work hard on things that have no eternal value. But you shouldn't work so hard that everything else around you suffers. This is where working smart comes into play. In Wayne Cordeiro's book Sifted, Wayne meets a Youth Pastor and asks him how his ministry is going. The YP responds, "I have all these emails to reply to, Facebook and Twitter to handle..." and I have very little time for my relationships. Wayne responds to the YP, "Put down your computer and get to work."

Don't let busyness fool you. Work efficiently. There are different systems for enhancing and optimizing your time. Some people prefer the Pomodoro Technique which is working hard for 25 minutes with short breaks in between. I like doing the 45-15 method because I often get on a roll after about 20 minutes and have a hard time stopping.

Busyness consumes the very best of people. It overcomes our lifestyle and deceives us with lies that we aren't "good enough" or that we are "sinning" if we aren't doing more. But these aren't the words of the Holy Spirit. These are the words of your enemy coming to steal, kill, and destroy not only you, but those you love the most. This isn't to say that you should become a lazy bum and not do anything with your day. On the contrary, we must work hard and smart to maintain things that are important!

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Practical Ways Of Sabbath (cont.)

5. Examine Yourself. Whether you *feel* burned out or not, it's important that you evaluate yourself. There's a [great tool here](#) that let's you survey 15 different questions to grade your burnout level. Another great way of learning how to replenish your soul and grow spiritually is to take the time to survey what fills your tank and what depletes it. In *Leading On Empty* (pg. 87-99), Wayne Cordeiro notes that he tracked everything that filled and drained his tank. Then you can list them on a scale to see what scores highest. On your sabbath days, you should be doing everything you can to replenish and refill your tank with things that you enjoy.

When was the last time you allowed yourself to “be still” with the Lord? Did you feel renewed?



What are some things that replenish your tank? Are you already doing these on your Sabbath?

If you aren't already taking a sabbath once a week, can you start this week? What does it look like for you?

FOOTNOTES

Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (p. 185). Fortress Press. Kindle Edition.

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Naps: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19645971>

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Johns Hopkins Article: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/the-science-of-sleep-understanding-what-happens-when-you-sleep>

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