SABBATH

crosstown
COVENANT CHURCH

# Sabbath Conversation Guide




**SABBATH IS THE ESSENCE OF OUR SALVATION, WE CAN REST BECAUSE GOD HAS DONE ALL THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.**

"The weekly practice of sabbath teaches us that God sustains the world and that we don't. To make a countercultural embrace of our limitations, we stop our usual work for one day of rest. Sabbath is a gospel practice because it reminds us that the world doesn't hang on what we can accomplish, but rather on what God has accomplished for us." Justin Whimel Earley

SABBATH

1

# What is Sabbath?

Goal: To start thinking about the real definition, purpose, and meaning of Sabbath.

"HUMANITY WAS MADE ON DAY SIX OF CREATION. DAY SEVEN WAS THE DAY IN WHICH GOD, ADAM, EVE AND THE WHOLE GARDEN CEASED FROM PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFORT. STRIKING AS IT IS, ADAM AND EVE'S FIRST FULL DAY OF EXISTENCE WAS A DAY OF REST, NOT WORK. THE SABBATH TEACHES US THAT WE DO NOT WORK TO PLEASE GOD. RATHER, WE REST BECAUSE GOD IS ALREADY PLEASED WITH THE WORK HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED IN US. "
A.J. SWOBODA

- Why is Sabbathing a commandment?

- What do you think is the significance of a weekly day of rest happening from the onset of creation? It's even an instruction before the 10 commandments are given to Moses.

- Work was not a punishment for sin. Even God works. How do you feel about this concept?

# SABBATH




"OUR BODIES MOVE TO A RHYTHM OF WORK AND REST THAT FOLLOWS THE RHYTHM ORIGINALLY STRUMMED BY GOD ON THE WATERS OF CREATION. AS GOD WORKED, SO SHALL WE: AS GOD RESTED, SO SHALL WE. WORKING AND RESTING, WE WHO ARE HUMAN ARE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD." DIANA BUTLER BASS

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- In Romans 13:14 Paul instructs us to "put on Christ." Clothing ourselves in Christ's character is a daily effort. When we practice the Sabbath, it may feel a bit like we are putting on someone else's clothing. And indeed we are. Sabbath is heavenly clothing and it may not fit for a while. How well do you feel like your Sabbath clothing would fit? (Swoboda p176)

- What might keeping the Sabbath say to the world around you about the God you worship?

SABBATH




# Busyness

Goal: To reconsider our schedules, life pace, and commitments.

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"ABOUT 6 IN 10 CHRISTIANS SAY THAT IT'S "OFTEN" OR "ALWAYS" TRUE THAT "THE BUSYNESS OF LIFE GETS IN THE WAY OF DEVELOPING MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD." MICHAEL ZIGARELLI

- Have you ever wearied of doing good?

- Have you forgotten how to BE with God?

- How has the quarantine changed or challenged your ideas about busyness?

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"RELENTLESSLY ELIMINATE HURRY FROM YOUR LIFE. HURRY IS NOT JUST A DISORDERED SCHEDULE. HURRY IS A DISORDERED HEART." JOHN ORTBERG

# SABBATH




"OUR ROAD-WEARY, EXHAUSTED CHURCHES HAVE LARGELY FAILED TO INTEGRATE SABBATH INTO THEIR LIVES AS VITAL ELEMENTS OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP. IT IS NOT AS THOUGH WE DO NOT LOVE GOD ANYMORE.
WE HAVE COME TO KNOW JESUS ONLY AS THE LORD OF THE HARVEST, FORGETTING HE IS THE LORD OF THE SABBATH AS WELL. SABBATH FORGETFULNESS IS DRIVEN, SO OFTEN, IN THE NAME OF DOING STUFF FOR GOD RATHER THEN BEING WITH GOD."
A.J. SWOBODA

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- In what ways have you seen the church reward workaholism?

- What does the title "Lord of the Sabbath" mean to you?

- What do you think about Ortberg's quote? How disordered is your heart?

SABBATH

3

# Reminisce

Goal: Articulate the value and method of remembering and celebrating God

REMINISCE MEANS TO INDULGE IN
ENJOYABLE RECOLLECTION OF PAST EVENTS.

"THE SIMPLE ACT OF REMEMBERING THE SABBATH CHANGES OUR MINDS. SIMPLY THINKING ABOUT THE SABBATH BRINGS HOPE. DREAMING ABOUT IT. LIFE IS SO MUCH BETTER WHEN WE KNOW THAT WE HAVE A BREAK COMING." A.J. SWOBODA

- Is Sabbath self care?

- Some people might use Sabbath as a tool to improve their lives. How might you begin to envision Sabbath as the celebration of God's life and his work in your life rather than a pragmatic tool?

- How might Sabbath be part of reinstating Jesus as head in your own life?

# SABBATH

3

THINK ABOUT A TIME WHEN YOU SAT WITH A CHILD WHOM YOU KNOW AND RECALLED A SPECIAL TIME THAT YOU HAD WITH THEM. DID THEIR FACE LIGHT UP WITH JOY AS THEY REMEMBERED THE EXPERIENCE?

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Like anticipating a vacation break from work and then remembering a previous vacation in all its resting glory, "a pleasure is full grown only when it is remembered." C.S. Lewis

- How can we reminisce about God?

- What can we reminisce about?

"THE PROBLEM WITH A SABBATH AS A MERE DAY OF ACTIVITY IS NOT THAT THE ACTIVITIES ARE BAD; IT IS THAT THE ACTIVITIES REPLACE THE TIME-HONORED ACTIVITY OF PASSING ALONG THE STORY OF JESUS TO THOSE AROUND US. SUNDAY USED TO BE THE DAY WHEN WE WOULD HEAR THE STORY OF WHO WE ARE AS CHILDREN OF GOD." A.J. SWOBODA

SABBATH

4

# Sabbath is a Verb

Goal: Describe what a Sabbath day would look like in your life.

"JESUS AND THE PHARISEES OFTEN HAD ALTERCATIONS OVER SABBATH. (MATT. 12:1-8) TWO LESSONS CAN BE LEARNED FROM THIS STORY. FIRST, IT IS NOT THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT TO STAND AND CRITIQUE OTHER PEOPLE'S ACTIVITY ON THE SABBATH. IF WE EVER SPEND OUR DAY OF REST JUDGING EVERYONE ELSE'S ACTIVITY, WE HAVE IMPROPERLY UNDERSTOOD THE HEART OF THE SABBATH. SECOND, WHAT LOOKED LIKE WORK FOR SOME WAS ACTUALLY REST AND NOURISHMENT FOR OTHERS. ONLY JESUS IS THE JUDGE."
A.J. SWOBODA

- Is it life giving? What would be life giving to you? A walk, a hammock, cooking, sewing, painting, gardening, singing, reading, playing games, a party....

- What activities, topics, or people should be avoided on your Sabbath?

- "Sabbath prefers natural light." Justin Whitmel Earley What does that mean to you? How would you envision use of technology during Sabbath?

# SABBATH

4

"WE MUST LEARN TO PREPARE FOR REST. THE DAY OF PREPARATION GENTLY REMINDS US THAT INTENTIONALITY AND MINDFULNESS ARE PART OF AUTHENTIC REST. CONSIDER THIS: THE FIRST TIME SABBATH IS MENTIONED BY NAME IN SCRIPTURE IS IN EXODUS 20:8. **REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY BY KEEPING IT HOLY.**

WHAT DOES "KEEPING" MEAN? ABRAHAM HESCHEL ILLUSTRATES THAT "KEEPING" CARRIES A SENSE OF PREPARATION AS IN A MARRIAGE... TO KEEP WAS OFTEN USED TO DESCRIBE A BRIDE PREPARING FOR HER WEDDING DAY.

A DAY OF PREPARATION IS THE DAY THAT BETROTHS THE SABBATH. GODLY REST IS NEVER ACCIDENTAL AND CAN ONLY COME WHEN WE HAVE GONE OUT OF OUR WAY TO PREPARE FOR IT." A.J. SWOBODA

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- What might it look like for you to prepare for Sabbath?

- What does Sabbath look like or mean if you're retired, single, a student, or unable to work?

- What practical things might need to be prepared or done in advance in order for you to keep the Sabbath holy?

SABBATH

5

# Community in Sabbath

Goal: articulate how Sabbath impacts our relationships

"DR. RICHARD SWENSON MAKES A COMPELLING CONNECTION BETWEEN BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS AND OUR LACK OF REST. HE ARGUES THAT RELATIONAL STRIFE AND UNREST TAKE PLACE LARGELY BECAUSE OF OVERLOAD. WHEN WE DO TOO MUCH AND TAKE ON FAR MORE THAN WE CAN HANDLE, WE GREATLY INCREASE THE CHANCES OF NOT LIVING PEACEABLY WITH EACH OTHER. WE ARE TIRED, WE ARE UNFULFILLED, WE ARE FRUSTRATED, AND WE ARE HOPELESS." A.J. SWOBODA

- Are there areas of your family, community, workplace, or the world where you can observe that a lack of Sabbath causes strife?

- How might those around you receive rest by your Sabbath?

- How could you partner with others to Sabbath? Who might be important pillars of support in your Sabbathing?

# SABBATH




"A YOUNG WOMAN IN OUR CHURCH WHO BEGAN TO KEEP THE SABBATH...BEGAN TO EXPERIENCE TWO THINGS.
FIRST, HER FAMILY HAD NO IDEA HOW TO RESPOND. ASIDE FROM ACTUALLY CHANGING THE WAY SHE RELATED TO HER FAMILY ON A SCHEDULE LEVEL, IT CAUSED ISSUES IN HOW THEY COEXISTED, SINCE THE VALUE OF TIME WAS UNDER A NEW SORT OF SCRUTINY.
SECOND, HER SABBATHING RAISED COUNTLESS QUESTIONS. SHE DESCRIBED HOW HER FAMILY WAS INTRIGUED MORE THAN ANYTHING. HAD SHE JOINED A CULT? WHERE HAD SHE LEARNED ABOUT THIS? WHY WAS SHE DOING IT? SABBATH RAISES ALL KINDS OF QUESTIONS. THE SABBATH IS WEIRD. THE SABBATH MAKES US WEIRD. AND WE SHOULD KEEP IT THAT WAY."
A.J. SWOBODA

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- In what ways might your Sabbathing change your relationships with the people in your life?

- What questions might people ask you as they observe you keeping the Sabbath?

TRUTH IS BUT A RUMOR UNTIL IT LIVES IN OUR BONES
- AFRICAN PROVERB