



| **SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES** |

WALKING
THE TEXT

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| THE SABBATH |

SERIES SUMMARY

Desmond Tutu said, “We live in a culture in which stomach ulcers are status symbols.” Busyness is making us sick. It’s also distorting our sense of identity and value. But more than anything it keeps us from being present to God, to one another, and even our own selves. But it doesn’t have to be this way. Built into the fabric of creation is a rhythm of rest called Sabbath. This teaching series on Sabbath will guide you into a deeper understanding of Sabbath. Once finished, you’ll know the difference between life-giving work and soul-sucking toil. You’ll know how to honor your limitations and live with rhythm. But more than anything, you’ll know how to relate to time in a way that puts God at the center of your life and everything else in its proper place.

THIS CURRICULUM IS REALLY EASY TO USE

STEP 1: Click the link in each lesson to watch the video teaching.

STEP 2: Reflect on the discussion questions with your group.

STEP 3: Start cultivating a more satisfying, faithful, and restful life!

PART 1 | **A THEOLOGY OF WORK**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Genesis 2:15; Ephesians 2:8-10; Colossians 3:23-24

DESCRIPTION

Mark Buchanan once wrote, “In order to keep the Sabbath well – to embrace the rest of God – we need a right view of work. Without a rich theology of labor, we’ll have an impoverished theology of rest.” I couldn’t agree more, which is why we’re launching this Sabbath series by exploring the dignity of work, what the Bible has to say about it, and how we’re supposed to approach it in our relationship with God. Buckle up. This series is going to be quite a ride!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- In what ways has God gifted you specifically to work for His glory?
- How do you view your work? Is it a burden, where you find your significance, or a form of worship?
- Have you been allowing your work to define your identity? If so, in what ways?
- Do you love the work you do, or at least like it? If not, is there something you can do to change that in this season?
- Have you ever considered that you, in the work you are in now, are in full-time ministry? How can you live out this calling more this week as you seek to worship God with your work?

PART 2 | **IN WHOM DO YOU TRUST?**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Exodus 16:20-26; Exodus 20:8-11

DESCRIPTION

Every day we make decisions, and those decisions are based on trust – trust in ourselves, trust in others, and trust in God. But what happens when our trust is misplaced? What happens when the trust we place in ourselves is actually supposed to be in God? For one, it will prevent us from taking a Sabbath because we'll believe that if we take a break, our needs won't be met – financially or otherwise. And yet, this was precisely what God sought to address with the Israelites when we instituted the Sabbath following their slavery in Egypt. And God pressed them, and by association, us, with the question, "In whom do you really trust?"

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- How have you traditionally viewed Sabbath? Is it something that's been part of your life at any point?
- If Sabbath hasn't been part of your life, what will hold you back from engaging it?
- Does the way you conduct your work convey that you trust yourself, or God? Why?
- "Unless we trust God's sovereignty, we won't dare risk Sabbath." Do you believe this is true? Are you experiencing the ability to relax, or the pull to worry in your life when it comes to your work?
- What is one thing you will do this week to trust God anew in what He's asking you to do?

PART 3 | **DO YOU HAVE RHYTHM?**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Exodus 20:8-11

DESCRIPTION

We are not beasts of burden. We were not designed to go, go, go. And yet for most of us, we struggle to slow down. Our lives are constant noise, and we're so drowned out in our schedules that we fail to see the insanity for what it is. Sabbath teaches us that there's a rhythm and a cadence to life. It slows us down and emphatically reminds us that in order to be healthy, we must prioritize rest. Rest is not a reward. It's a necessity. But even more than that, it's the engine that's intended to power our lives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Has there been a time where you kept pushing on when you should have rested? What was the outcome? How could it have been different?
- Pause and consider the beat that is driving your life right now. Is it just frantic noise, or does it have soul?
- What is keeping you from taking these regular pauses in your life?
- Had you ever considered that Adam and Eve's first full day was a day of rest? How does the idea that we work from our rest change your perspective, if at all?
- What is one step you will take this week to embrace God's rhythm of life?

PART 4 | **DEFINING YOUR IDENTITY**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Exodus 5:10-18

DESCRIPTION

We are a culture of accomplishment. We value people based on what they can produce. It's toxic and oppressive. The Israelites experienced this in their slavery in Egypt. But God brought them out of that system and instituted the Sabbath so that they'd begin to learn that their identity and worth didn't come from their work, but from something infinitely more substantial. Until we have a proper handle on our identity, we'll miss the stunning beauty of the Sabbath and how it seeks to rescue us from one of the most destructive realities of our world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- When meeting someone new, what is the first thing you want to share about yourself?
- Do you believe that your worth and value comes from being a child of God, rather than what you do? Why or why not?
- If you were to lose your job, possessions, and/or your ability to contribute to the world, how would you feel? How do you look at others who may find themselves in this situation?
- What will you do differently this week to remind yourself that your value (and the value of others you come in contact with) is solely from God alone?

PART 5 | **CLEAN THE GLASSES**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Exodus 20:1-3; Amos 8:4-5

DESCRIPTION

Despite God's pleas and instructions for His people to observe the Sabbath, they struggled to do so. Sure, they "observed" the Sabbath, but they did so in a way that completely missed the point. They were distracted by the things of life and were completely unaware of how blurry their vision had become. Subsequently, their destructive habits went unchecked. The same happens to us as well when we fail to take a break. It's in the break where we gain perspective. But in order to see what we need to see, we need to be really intentional about what we do. And that's what this teaching helps us to unpack.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Are there any "commodities" in your life that are negatively affecting your relationship with God?
- Has there been a time when you could see your other relationships being affected by not observing the Sabbath the way God intended?
- What are some possible "smudges" on your glasses that having a Sabbath could help you recognize?
- Would you be willing to give up your phone for an entire day to observe a Sabbath? If not, what is keeping you from doing so? Are there any false desires at play?
- How can you begin walking out the truths of this teaching this week?

PART 6 | UNLEASH THE FREEDOM

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Mark 2:27; Luke 13:14-16; Matthew 11:28-30

DESCRIPTION

Thus far, we've been talking about the Sabbath in the context of the Older Testament. And now, we get to hear from Jesus! And my oh my, hang on tight. The Sabbath was ridiculously important to Jesus and he addressed it at every opportunity. He knew what an unbelievable gift it was, and emphatically demonstrated in word and deed what it was intended to do for our lives. May you unleash and experience the freedom that Jesus taught, and may you truly take his "yoke" upon you!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- As we learned about the rabbis in connection with the Sabbath, it's easy for religious people, in their zeal to be obedient to God, to make following God very legalistic. Where do you see this playing out in our world today (in general)? Where do you see this, if anywhere, being played out in connection to the Sabbath?
- How have you traditionally viewed the Sabbath – as more of a restriction or a gift?
- Were you aware of how intentional Jesus was in performing healings on the Sabbath? Why do you think these times were so explosive for Jesus, the crowds, and the religious leaders?
- How does knowing that the Sabbath was intended to bring you freedom confirm or change the perspective you've had on Sabbath?
- In what ways do you need "to take Jesus' yoke upon you" and experience the freedom and "rest for your souls" he speaks of in this teaching?
- How can you begin walking out the truths of this teaching this week?

PART 7 | **GETTING SUPER PRACTICAL**

VIDEO

[Click to Watch](#)

KEY PASSAGE(S)

Genesis 2:1-3; Deuteronomy 5:12-15

DESCRIPTION

So what does it look to observe the Sabbath in our world today? This a question my family and I have been joyfully wrestling with for about fourteen years now. And in this episode, I walk you through what we've learned and what the Sabbath looks like for us. The purpose isn't to imply that we've got it all figured out, but to provide you with practical ideas and suggestions on how to make the Sabbath a central feature in your life. Furthermore, I briefly tackle two passages we haven't tackled yet, and they're passages that I believe will utterly fascinate you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- When was the last time you woke up with nothing on the agenda for the day and you were able to ask, "How much fun can we possibly have today?"
- Knowing that observing a Sabbath isn't so much about which day but a day, what day of the week could you take a Sabbath if you don't do so already?
- What constitutes "work" for you?
- The Sabbath was intended to look and feel totally different than the other six days of the week. So what are the things you need to cease from ("work," etc.), and what are the things you need to do in order to make this a reality?
- What gets you the most excited about celebrating Sabbath in your life? What has you the most concerned?
- Are there any ways in which you're still stuck in Egypt? How do you need to be set free?
- How can you begin walking out one of these practical ideas this week?

PART 8 | **ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS**

VIDEO

Click to Watch

KEY PASSAGE(S)

John 5:15-18; Matthew 5:17-18; Colossians 2:16-17

DESCRIPTION

In John 5, Jesus makes the claim that since his father is “working” on the Sabbath, so is he. Does this undermine everything we’ve explored in this Sabbath series, or is there something deeper going on here? And what is a Christian’s relationship to “The Law?” Does one keep Sabbath out of commandment obedience or because it’s great wisdom? These are the main questions we address in this final episode on the Sabbath. May you continually find freedom and joy in celebrating this amazing gift from God!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What was your biggest takeaway from the teaching?
- Did any of the answers in this episode give you a better understanding of the Sabbath? Are there more questions that you still have?
- What is one thing you learned or were reminded of in the John 5 discussion about the importance of reading the Bible in context?
- Jesus brought healing and restoration to people on the Sabbath. What are some ways you could also practice this on the Sabbath?
- In Matthew 5, Jesus says that he did not come to abolish the law but to interpret it correctly. Does this change your perspective on not only the law but on the Sabbath? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Overall, what’s been your biggest takeaway from this series on the Sabbath?
- Are you living out the most significant truths addressed in this series in your life? If so, how? If not, what are the next steps you need to take in doing so?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

- *The Rest of God* by Mark Buchanan
- *The Sabbath* by Abraham Joshua Heschel
- *Sabbath as Resistance* by Walter Brueggemann
- *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* by Marva J. Dawn
- *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer

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