

The Sabbath: God's Answer to a Restless Age
Our Holy Refusal in a Ceaseless Culture
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Exodus 20:8–11

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Mark 2:23-27

²³One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” ²⁵He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” ²⁷Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Hebrews 4:9–11

⁹There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works,^[a] just as God did from his. ¹¹Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.

We all worship something. So, the question is never *whether* we worship; it's what or whom we worship. As Christians, God isn't simply meant to be first on a list of priorities—He is meant to be the center from which every other priority flows. Our main commission is to go out and make disciples in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We are commanded by Jesus to love God above all else and to love each other as ourselves. He says that the way we show our love for him is by following his commands. And that may sound harsh or sound demanding until you think of it this way:

When I give my kids lunch they ask to have a treat next to the plate. At first I was hesitant about this, who in their right mind would give a child a treat before they finished their lunch. But I gave it to them with the understanding that their plates had to be empty before they could open it. And then I left, I didn't hover over them or make sure they took enough bites. And to my surprise they listened - in turn proved to me a reverent loving fear of me as their mother.

It is the same way with the commands of God. He gave us free will and he isn't going to hover over you to try and make sure you make the right decision. He delights in our obedience because it reflects our love, trust, and reverence for Him. Just like us as parents knowing what is best for the child, he knows what is best for us - all of his commands are right and lead us closer to him.

The challenge is that we tend to assume obedience is hardest when God asks us to do something difficult. But sometimes obedience is hardest when God asks us to stop doing something altogether. In a culture that celebrates activity, achievement, consumption and productivity, one of God's simplest commands may actually be one of the most difficult.

When we look at the moral law or the commands not abolished in Christ's death and resurrection we may think they are simple and easy to follow - don't lie, steal, murder, covet, etc. But I think one stands out as overlooked and the hardest to follow: Remember the Sabbath and keep it Holy.

The Hebrew word for 'remember' (Zakar) carries the connotation of mental recollection, of course, but also of covenantal action. To remember is to reenact, to embody, to affirm through faithful practice. Later, we'll see how Christ fulfills the Sabbath's ultimate purpose without nullifying its significance.

Consider the place of the Sabbath within the Ten Commandments. It is not a peripheral instruction buried somewhere in the law. It is one of the Ten Words written by the finger of God Himself. Throughout the Old Testament, the Sabbath is repeatedly called a sign, a delight, a covenant, and a holy convocation. It appears again and again because God intended it to serve as a theological anchor for His people. It is one of the commands for us to follow to show our reverent love for God.

But why is it so hard to ‘Remember’ the Sabbath? I know this isn't merely a cultural problem because I've experienced it myself. There have been seasons when I felt guilty for resting, as though every moment needed to produce something. Even when I wasn't working, my mind never stopped. It was then I realized that what I lacked wasn't more time—it was trust.

That's the deeper issue. Humanity has always been busy. The problem isn't the activity itself. The problem is that we've embraced the illusion of self-sufficiency. We live as though everything depends on us. Many of the physical demands that once filled our days have been replaced by convenience, yet instead of becoming more rested, we've filled the space with constant entertainment, endless scrolling, and digital distraction.

Why is it so difficult for us to truly stop? Why do we feel guilty when we rest? Why does an unfinished task sometimes bother us more than a neglected relationship with God? Could it be that our resistance to rest reveals something deeper than a scheduling problem? **Could it reveal a trust problem?**

Every time we refuse to stop, we quietly confess that everything depends on us. Every time we refuse to rest, we imply that God cannot keep His world running without our constant effort. Sabbath exposes whether we truly believe God is sovereign—or whether we've taken His place in our own hearts.

Whatever we refuse to stop for reveals what we truly worship. Sabbath isn't ultimately about rest—it's about trust.

The Sabbath stands as a direct challenge to the idol of productivity. Every Sabbath is a weekly, embodied confession that we are created, not accidental. It reminds us that there is a Creator, and He is not us. It calls us to lay down the illusion of self-sufficiency and remember that our lives are gifts. The Sabbath reminds us that we are dependent creatures living under the care and authority of a good God. Our God who created everything and saw that it was good and complete, rested and gave us rest in His complete glory.

Rest is woven into the fabric of creation itself. Humanity's first full day was not spent laboring but enjoying God's presence in a finished world. God gives rest before He requires it. The Sabbath teaches us that our worth is not earned through endless activity and achievement. We rest because God has already provided. We rest because God is enough.

The Sabbath also reveals something profound about human dignity. When God gave this command in Exodus 20, He didn't reserve rest for the wealthy or the powerful or the righteous. Servants rested. Foreigners rested. Children rested. Even the livestock and the land were given rest. Then, in Deuteronomy 5, God adds another reason for keeping the Sabbath: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt." Israel had lived under a system where their value was measured entirely by what they could produce. Pharaoh never commanded them to rest because slaves exist to serve their masters. Every Sabbath after their freedom became what we might call a holy refusal—a refusal to believe that their value came from endless production. By refusing to work one day each week, they proclaimed that their identity was no longer found in productivity but in redemption.

The question is whether we have really left Egypt behind. We may no longer serve Pharaoh, but we still live under masters that constantly demand more from us. Career tells us our worth is found in success. Consumerism tells us we are what we own. Social media tells us we are only as valuable as the attention we receive. Even good things—family, education, or fitness—can become cruel masters when they become ultimate things.

As belief in God has declined, culturally, worship has not disappeared; it has simply been redirected. We are created to worship, so if we do not worship the Creator, we will inevitably give our hearts to something else. These modern idols promise freedom, but they never stop demanding more. Unlike Christ, they never say, "It is finished." They always ask for one more hour, one more accomplishment, one more purchase, one more achievement. In a seven-day economy where every day looks the same, every day becomes forgettable. We forget who God is. We forget who we are. We forget that life is about more than consumption, achievement, and productivity. **We are called now to 'remember' the Sabbath in mental recollection and covenantal participation.**

The Sabbath stands as a weekly act of resistance against those false gods. Every time we rest in obedience to God, we declare that He alone is Lord and that our lives are not governed by the endless demands of lesser masters.

That is why Jesus did not abolish the Sabbath. During His earthly ministry, He challenged the legalistic distortions that had accumulated around it, but He never rejected its divine purpose. Instead, He restored its original intention. The Sabbath was created as a blessing, not a burden. It was meant to promote mercy, restoration, worship, and life. Jesus continues to restore our rest daily.

Hebrews 4 speaks of that greater rest that remains for the people of God. The ultimate purpose of the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ Himself. The deepest exhaustion we experience is not physical but spiritual. Human beings spend their lives striving to prove themselves—to others, to themselves, and even to God. Yet the gospel announces that Christ has completed the work we could never accomplish. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He has secured our salvation. We are not saved by our labor but by His finished work.

This means that every Sabbath ultimately points beyond itself. It points to Jesus. The weekly rhythm of rest reminds us of the eternal rest found in Him. **It teaches us to trust rather than strive, to receive rather than achieve, and to live from grace rather than performance.**

So, let us not forget to keep it a holy time: To keep the Sabbath holy means more than simply avoiding work. Scripture consistently connects holiness with being set apart for God. Sabbath isn't merely a day to do less; it's a day to intentionally enjoy God's presence, delight in His gifts, worship with His people, and remember that our lives belong to Him. Rest without worship becomes leisure. Sabbath is holy because it is rest offered back to God.

Whether one believes Christians are obligated to observe the Sabbath in the precise way Israel did under the Jewish Oral Law in Jesus' day or not, the principle remains profoundly important. God designed human beings for rhythms of worship, rest, and delight. To ignore those rhythms entirely is to reject one of His most gracious gifts. I would encourage you to look at how Jesus spent his Sabbaths.

When we live as though we have no need for rest, worship, recovery, and communion with God, we inevitably drift toward pride, exhaustion, and spiritual weakness. When God gave the Law to Moses it was good and attainable - Moses thought so, God thought so, and Jesus taught that it was. **Do not be afraid or intimidated by what man says the Sabbath is, because God says it is a gift.**

The Sabbath is not merely a relic from the past. It is not simply a day off for religious people. It is not a burden of 'one more thing you need to do'. It is God's answer to a restless age. In a culture that never stops moving, the **Sabbath invites us to pause and remember a truth we desperately need: God is God, and we are not. We are created, not self-made. We are loved, not merely productive. We are children of God, not slaves to our labor, our devices, our stuff or our ambitions.**

As I've reflected on this command, I've become convinced that one of the greatest acts of faith in our culture is simply to stop. To set aside our work, our screens, our schedules, and our striving for a time and trust that God will sustain us. I don't say that because I've mastered it. I say it because I need the reminder every week myself.

Whatever we refuse to stop for reveals what we truly worship. Sabbath isn't ultimately about rest—it's about trust. By following God's commands for our lives we not only physically benefit, we show God love and reverence.

God is enough. The Sabbath isn't God asking for one day because He needs it. It's God giving one day because we need it. That's what the Sabbath teaches every single week. So I want to invite you to join us, in our home. We've set aside Saturday evening through Sunday evening as Sabbath. We prepare our home on Saturday by cooking and cleaning ahead. Then Saturday night we turn off what doesn't need our attention. Gather with God's people. Worship. Delight in God's creation. Rest without guilt. Because before the Sabbath was ever a command, it was a gift. God is not taking something from you. He is giving you something you desperately need. Will you trust God to sustain you if you participate in complete worshipful rest?