

S7 Ep 5 The Gift of Rest

We are well in the swing of the Christmas season. For many, that means a daily crush of gift buying, holiday parties, Christmas cards, the end of the school semester and on and on.

It's all part of that relentless rush of life, but God intends for us to honor the Sabbath and to trust Him with our time – it's His gift to us. We must allow God to guide us in incorporating rest into our lives intentionally. This includes seeking His presence, rejuvenating relationships, and finding mental and emotional rest. God wants us to live and lead in peace, joy, and health, with a deep sense of His presence and purpose in our lives.

A. Introduction

- 1) Dr. Richard Swenson in his classic book, *Margin*, writes:
 - a. We are overloaded with activities, change, choices, commitments, competition, debt, decisions, education, expectations, fatigue, hurry, information, media, ministry, noise, people, pollution, possessions, problems, technology, traffic, waste and work.
 - b. He calls margin the space between our load and our limits. It is the amount allowed beyond that which is needed. It is something held in reserve for contingencies or unanticipated situations. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating.
 - c. Margin-less is being thirty minutes late to the doctor's office because you were twenty minutes late getting out of the hairdresser because you were ten minutes late dropping the children off at school because the car ran out of gas two blocks from a gas station because you forgot your purse!
- 2) *In the Ruthless Elimination of Hurry* by John Mark Comer, we learn:
 - a. "The average American spends 705 hours on social media each year/13.5 hrs/wk."
 - b. "The average iPhone user touches his or her phone 2,617 times a day."
 - c. "The average American watches 2,737 hours of TV each year."
 - d. "The average guy spends 10,000 hours playing video games by age 21."
 - e. "A survey from Microsoft found that 77 percent of young adults said when nothing is occupying their attention, the first thing they do is reach for their phone."
 - f. "The new normal of hurried digital distraction is robbing us of the ability to be present."

 - g. We're afraid we'll be left out or left behind if we slow down.
 - h. Because we are so busy, we can avoid dealing with our life's really big issues.
 - i. Most of us don't know how to not be busy! (Jeff Shinabarger: "Busy is the new fine.")

B. The Fourth Commandment

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." ~ Exodus 20:8-11

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

~ Genesis 2:1-3

It is interesting to note that this is the only one of the Ten Commandments that begins with “remember”. There is to be a regular referencing regarding Sabbath that is to be a part of our lives. Remembering your Creator/the rest He took in creation. Remembering His ways: He did six days of work, and then rested on the seventh. He asked His people to remember to do that same.

Sabbath or “shabbat” means rest. It is related to the Hebrew word that means “to cease” – as in ceasing from our own work

On the seventh day, God rested...which if you were an Israelite would be from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. In our American culture, the seventh day is Saturday.

The Fourth Commandment told the Israelites “to keep it holy” – set apart, consecrated. Keeping the Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between Israel and God:

“And the Lord said to Moses, “You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” ~ Exodus 31:12-17

Where is Jesus in All of This?

Let’s look at the very end of Matthew 11, and into chapter 12, where we read two stories that reveals what Jesus does and says about the Sabbath:

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known

what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." ~ Matthew 11:28-12:8

- a. 11:28-29: Jesus begins with recognizing the heavy load and weariness that people are carrying due to the added regulations by the Pharisees – following the letter of the law but missing the intent behind it! He invites them to come to Him to find rest, and to make their loads light!
- b. 12:1-8: Jesus is walking with his disciples through a grainfield on the Sabbath, where they become hungry and begin to pluck heads of grain to eat.

In this story, Jesus makes three points about the Sabbath:

(1) From a story in the life of David, that we don't have time to dive into, but refers to David's experience being given the holy showbread to eat in 1 Samuel 21. *The point Jesus makes is human need is more important than observing ceremonial rituals!*

(2) Jesus then references how the priests in the temple break the Sabbath by working on that day, where animal sacrifices were doubled! Yet they remain blameless. He refers to Hosea 6:6, *expressing that He is looking for an attitude and expressions of mercy over the sacrificing of animals.*

(3) Now, Jesus gets quite offensive with these religious leaders. *He refers to Himself as the Son of Man, as the Lord of the Sabbath, and greater than the temple* – therefore Jesus, as God, has the authority to know if the disciples had broken the Sabbath!
Wow!

- c. A Second Story in 12:9-14: Right after this conversation, Jesus walks into the synagogue (a local gathering place for Jews to worship), where there was a man with a withered hand. Can you imagine the Pharisees looking to jump all over Jesus after what had just happened?! They knew, based on Jesus' track record of compassion and healing people, what may now take place. And, Jesus doesn't disappoint!

"He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him." ~ Matthew 12:9-14

- d. Jesus points out that it is "lawful" to do good on the Sabbath!
 - e. This man was paralyzed in some form in his hand.
 - f. When Jesus tells him to "stretch out his hand", something that would be impossible for him to do in his current condition – in faith and obedience to Jesus, he does so and is healed!
 - g. Jesus models what He had just stated: doing good on the Sabbath!
- 1) In Mark, we see Jesus taking this all a step further, clarifying God's heart regarding the Sabbath: "And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath." ~ Mark 2:27

1) A societal example of honoring the Sabbath. *Article in The Food Institute – August 18, 2023:*

As quick-service restaurants (QSR) navigate the changing foodservice landscape, average unit volume (AUV) is a key metric that speaks to a chain's operational efficiency and overall success. The AUV indicates the average annual sales that a brand earns per restaurant—a reflection of how consumers feel about the brand itself.

Chick-fil-A's steady but rapid growth is unrivaled. With only 2,837 stores, the brand generated \$18.8 billion in U.S. systemwide sales in 2022. The year before, that figure was \$16.7 billion. In 2020, it was \$13.7 billion, and just four years ago in 2019, it was \$12.2 billion.

“To put it plainly, no restaurant brand in the QSR 50 has come this far, this quickly, and punches that high above its store count,” wrote the authors of the 2023 QSR 50 report. Chick-fil-A trails only McDonald's and Starbucks in systemwide results despite the fact that McDonald's and Starbucks have 10,607 and 13,036 more U.S. stores, respectively.

And Chick-fil-A isn't even open on Sundays.

*In a society in which the profit motive tends to make all other interests subordinate to the almighty dollar, Chick-fil-A's founder, Truett Cathy, declared that the store would not be open on the Sabbath! He saw the importance of closing on Sundays so that he and his employees could set aside one day to rest and/or worship as they choose. Look how God is honoring this, demonstrating to the world the wisdom of His ways!

2) Personal Application

Ask God to show you what Sabbath is to look like in your life. Don't be bound by a certain day, but prayerfully consider what that is supposed to look like for you, your marriage, your family.

More stillness and quiet?

Maybe more reflection and journaling?

More renewing kinds of relationships?

More physical or enjoying the outdoors kind of activity?

More mental and emotional rest?

Ask: Lord, how would you have me honor you by doing this “unto you”?

3) Remember the frantic pace we started with at the beginning of our message? Jesus does intend for us to deliberately counter that in our lives. God modeled it for us in creation. He wants us living and leading out of peace, joy, health and an abiding sense of purpose in our lives that will glorify Him.

4) Reconnect to this Fourth Commandment within the context of Jesus' New Covenant – and let's discover afresh how to REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY.