

A photograph of a person's feet resting in a hammock, suspended over a body of water. The scene is captured during sunset or sunrise, with a warm, golden light filling the sky and reflecting on the water. The hammock's fabric is dark and textured, and the person's feet are the central focus. The background shows a calm lake and some trees in the distance.

Living the
SABBATH
A practice of fulfillment, delight, & new beginnings

Leader Guide

Study Overview

God has called each of us to practice *Sabbath*. Over the course of history, our understanding, and perceived need, of Sabbath has changed. We have gone from strict religious practice, to almost no practice at all.

However, in the course of this cultural shift, many have struggled to find the strength, energy, and joy to practice faithful discipleship in our Savior Jesus. Instead of being opportunities to grow more intimately in our relationship with Him, the practice spiritual disciplines have become one more item on our already too long to-do list.

This 3-session study is opportunity to dive into what it means to live out the Sabbath as a disciple of our Savior Jesus Christ. It is designed to be experienced in your small group, with those you are discipling, or even in your individual devotion and study of God's Word. It is my prayer that this study will help you grow deeper in the intimate relationship you have with our Savior Jesus Christ, and as He draws you closer to Himself, you will also draw others closer to Him.

May our Savior richly bless you as you experience *Living the Sabbath: A practice of fulfillment, delight, and new beginnings!*

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Session 1

Living The Sabbath: A practice of fulfillment

Introduction: Our culture has taken the Biblical concept of *sabbath* and simplified it into a time of passive resting. However, simply resting was never the full extent of the command and practice of the sabbath, but it's also not a burden of obedience that we must endure. The sabbath was created by God, for man, for rest, replenishment, restoration, and celebration. It is an active practice in our journey of discipleship. This session will dive into the purpose of the sabbath to celebrate the completion of our work and the ways God has been present throughout our life.

Engage: 15 minutes

Look up the following Bible passages and walk through the discussion questions for each.

- Read Genesis 1:1 – 2:3.
 - What does God say about each day after it is completed? *It is good/very good.*

 - As you consider this, what do you think this response to His creation every day says about God and His perspective of His creation?

 - Good in this context refers to the concept of completeness, fulfillment, nothing lacking, or even perfection. How does this help you frame what happens on the 7th day of Creation, when God rested?
 - *The work was already finished, it was complete. His rest was not out of tiredness or exhaustion, or preparing for more, it was a rest to rejoice in what He had already finished.*

- Consider what Jesus says as He was dying on the cross in John 19:30, “When Jesus received the sour wine, he said, ‘*It is finished,*’ and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.” (ESV, italics not original)
 - How have you approached this verse before? What have you generally thought Jesus meant when He said, “It is finished,”?
 - As you consider what happens next - Jesus is buried in the tomb for 3 days - do you see any connection to what God does on the 7th day of Creation?

Model: 20 minutes

- Watch Pastor Brian’s video on *Living The Sabbath: A practice of fulfillment*.
- Video reflections:
 - What did Pastor Brian say that you hadn’t heard before?
 - What did you struggle with from Pastor Brian’s video?
 - Was something shared that caused you to think differently about the Sabbath?

Challenge: 20 minutes

- As you consider your current life circumstances, would you say you struggle with work-life balance? Reflect on why...
 - Do you feel like you could do more or that you're not doing enough?
 - Are you striving for affirmation – through promotion, praise, something else?
 - Does work provide an opportunity to escape another area of your life?

- Considering the account in Genesis and what Pastor Brian shared in the video, is work wrong? If so, why? If not, then wherein lies the issue?
 - *Work is not wrong or evil. Work is good! God created us in His image, and He is a Creator Himself! It is the constant striving after work, toiling after something that will never fulfill us that becomes the struggle.*

 - Consider the curse of the fall into sin in Genesis 3:17-19. What does God draw attention to as the real struggle now?
 - *Note that work is not the curse. It is the striving for fulfillment only to be found lacking that is the curse. It is the lack of joy in our work that is the curse.*

- What do you do when you complete a task? Do you celebrate, pause or simply move on to the next one? What was the last project or task that you completed that you actually felt fulfilled?

- From Pastor Brian's video and this study, what are 1-2 things you've learned, experienced, or want to dig into further over the next week?

Next Steps:

1. This week I will practice the sabbath on...which means I will complete my work by...
2. Daily practice *fulfillment* by taking 10-minutes at the end of every day to reflect on how God showed His presence throughout your day, share your gratitude for His blessings, and pray for rest and restoration for the day ahead.
3. Create a priority list of things that must be done before you “head home” for the day and the week. Review this list before leaving as an opportunity to celebrate the work you’ve completed and be assured that all is “good” for you to go home.

Session 2

Sabbath: A practice of delight

Introduction: Our time of rest, or sabbath, is not a mindless, passive activity. In fact, it can be argued that while God rested at the end of every day and on the sabbath, He *delighted* in the work He had done. Our sabbath is an opportunity to celebrate and rejoice, to delight in the blessings God provides.

Engage: 15 minutes

Look up the following Bible passages and walk through the discussion questions for each.

- Read Exodus 20:1-17
 - What do verses 1-3 say about God's purpose in giving the commandments to the people of Israel?
 - *The commandments are given in a place of freedom – He has already brought them out of Egypt and slavery. God is preparing them to live in the freedom of the Promised Land.*

 - How have you typically approached the commandments?
 - *Most will identify them as burdens, a matter of obedience, and the like.*

 - As you consider the context of the commandments being given – in a place of freedom, in preparation for what is yet to come – does this modify or change your approach to living them out?

- Consider the order in which the commandments are written. Exodus 20:1-7 looks at God's redeeming work for Israel, and their relationship to Him. Exodus 20:8-11 discuss the sabbath. Do you believe there is purpose to this order, and if so, what would that purpose be?
 - *Might be helpful to review Session One and the concept that the sabbath is an opportunity to rejoice in the work already completed. Putting the sabbath command after the commands concerning the worship of God seems to highlight that we turn to God for our affirmation and joy, contentment and peace, not to our work.*

- Read Matthew 11:25-30
 - How do Jesus words to His disciples align with this perspective of the commandments in Exodus 20?
 - *Jesus says His burden is light, and He carries it with us. He doesn't call His disciples to passive mindlessness, but to a mission and purpose that brings delight, peace and contentment. In Him we can truly rest, sabbath and delight because His burden is light, and He carries it with us.*

Model: 20 minutes

- Watch Pastor Brian's video on *Living The Sabbath: a practice of delight*.

- Video reflections:
 - What did Pastor Brian say that you hadn't heard before?

 - What did you struggle with from Pastor Brian's video?

- Was something shared that caused you to think differently about the Sabbath?

Challenge: 20 minutes

- Did you practice a sabbath last week? If so, how did it go? What was a challenge for you?
- Pastor Brian mentioned planning out, and being intentional, about your practice of the sabbath. What are things you can do this week on your sabbath that would bring you delight and joy? What do you need to prepare for those pieces of your sabbath?
- What does the practice of sabbath look like in your household? What can you do to help your spouse/children/others, as applicable, live out the sabbath with you?

Next Steps:

1. Plan out your sabbath practice this week.
2. Begin reflecting on and planning a sabbath vacation for your household that you could practice this year, using the principles of a weekly practice of the sabbath: activity that is restoring, replenishing, focused on celebrating the blessings of God in your life, and dreaming about what's next on your journey.

Session 3: Sabbath: a practice of new beginnings

Introduction: The practice of the sabbath, as we have learned, includes rejoicing in the completed work, the fulfilling work, and being refreshed and replenished through that time of celebration. But, the sabbath is also about looking ahead and prayerfully considering what is to come. Our time of rest and restoration is so that we can move forward to what God has in store for us next in His Kingdom work.

Engage: 15 minutes

Look up the following Bible passages and walk through the discussion questions for each.

- Read John 20:1-10.
 - What day do we typically consider the *sabbath*?
 - *For most, the sabbath is considered Sunday. However, Biblically speaking, the Sabbath actually begins Friday evening and goes to Saturday evening, with the new week beginning Saturday evening.*
 - *So, the women come on Sunday morning when the sun is rising because it is safer for them, rather than the middle of the night.*

 - As we have been putting the practice of the sabbath in the context of Jesus death and resurrection, what significance or meaning do you see that Jesus rose on Sunday morning, the *first day of the new week*?
 - *It would seem that Jesus is making it abundantly clear that the work of salvation is completed with His death, He was celebrating and rejoicing in this victory while in the tomb, and His resurrection is ushering in a new day, a new age, for God's people as His Church.*

- What implications does this have for our understanding of worship on Sunday mornings?
 - *Potentially, worship is a time to be refreshed, renewed and restored, yes. But, having worship on Sunday should also signal to us that it is the start of a week, new opportunities, new work in our Savior's Kingdom.*

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.
 - What does Paul say is the new work we are now called to in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?
 - *We are ambassadors of reconciliation. Our ministry and mission is to help more people live life with Jesus every day. This is the work we should be rejoicing in and celebrating every week as we sabbath.*
 - *Because of Christ's Spirit at work within us, this is also the work we will find the greatest fulfillment in.*

 - How do you carry out this work every week?

 - As you consider what you have learned and experienced through *Living The Sabbath: a practice of fulfillment, delight and new beginnings*, how could faithful practice of the sabbath prepare you for the new-life mission Christ calls us to as His disciples?

Model: 20 minutes

- Watch Pastor Brian's video on *Living The Sabbath: a practice of new beginnings*.

- Video reflections:
 - What did Pastor Brian say that you hadn't heard before?

 - What did you struggle with from Pastor Brian's video?

 - Was something shared that caused you to think differently about the Sabbath?

Challenge: 20 minutes

- What has challenged your understanding or perspective of the sabbath the most throughout this study?

- Where do you see the greatest need for alignment with a Biblical understanding of the practice of a sabbath in your own life?

- How are you going to personally:
 - celebrate the work that has been completed throughout your day and week?
 - Practice a daily and weekly sabbath?

- What new beginning do you feel God might be calling you to at this moment in your life?

Next Steps:

1. Implement a practice of daily and weekly Sabbath.
2. Identify 1-2 individuals that you can share this study within your context – family member, friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc... - and schedule a time to meet with them.