

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES #3 – **SABBATH** – AN ANCIENT COMMAND THAT MEETS A DESPERATE NEED IN THE MODERN WORLD

God spoke to Moses and said: “*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*

Icebreaker: For vacation do you prefer to visit some exotic place and see all the sites while you are there? Do you schedule your daily activities for vacation? Or, do you just want to find a beach or some remote cabin and put your feet up lot of unscheduled loafing? Which approach do you find most refreshing? Why so?

What comes to mind when you hear the words SABBATH and SABBATICAL?

Have you ever been on an extended SABBATICAL? What was the purpose of the sabbatical? Was it a useful thing for you? Why so?

Read aloud from Genesis 1:31 – Genesis 2:3.

The Bible tells us that God created the heavens and earth and everything in them in six days. Then on the seventh day he rested. God called that day the Sabbath and decreed that humans should also observe a Sabbath day.

Ponder: Did God grow *tired* from the work of creation in the way that we can get tired as humans? (See Isaiah 40:28-31).

Did God really *stop working* on the Sabbath day? (Consider Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:16-17 and ask, “What would happen if God REALLY stopped working for even one moment?”)

So, why did God take a Sabbath day?

Discuss with your group what it really means to “rest” and to “refresh” ourselves.

Discuss these Sabbath principles and benefits with your group:

- 1) **God endorsed both work and rest as his created order for man.** God worked six days and rested on the seventh day. What happens when people don’t engage in productive work? What happens when people are unable or unwilling to take a real break from work at least once a week?
- 2) **God evaluated his own work and blessed it.** At the end of each creation day God reviewed his work and said it “was good” (“era buena”). After the sixth day, when all the work was done, God declared his work “very good” (“muy bueno”).

- a. Should we also take a Sabbath break to bless God for the wonders of nature and creation he made for our enjoyment?
 - b. Should we also use our Sabbath break to evaluate the works we have performed over the last week? Should we honestly evaluate whether we have done something “good” and “very good” during our work week?
 - c. Should we enjoy the Sabbath day as a blessing and reward for good work that make the world a better place?
- 3) **God declared the Sabbath to be a holy day.**
- a. What does the word “holy” really mean? Use a dictionary or look up uses of the word in the Bible and discuss what it means to be “holy.”
 - b. In what sense is the Sabbath a “holy day”?
 - c. God set apart the Sabbath as a special day that belongs to God – the “Lord’s day.”
 - d. God commanded his people to “*remember the Sabbath*” and “*keep it holy.*”
 - e. What are some ways we “forget” the Sabbath?
 - f. What are some acts you do on your Sabbath day BECAUSE it is a holy day? What are some ways we tend to treat Sabbath as an ordinary day, and maybe violate its holy nature?
- 4) **God also decreed Sabbath for slaves, servants and working animals.** Why did God command that his people also give a weekly Sabbath to their servants and their domestic animals? What is the application of that command to the modern world?

Dig in: In the Old Testament the Sabbath was observed on the seventh (last) day of the week. In the New Testament Jesus becomes our Sabbath rest and God’s people gather to worship him on the first day of the week. (See for instance Hebrews 4:9-11 & 14 and Matthew 12:8). Why the change?

** Consider this, God rested after his work of creation and commanded his people to remember and worship God on that rest day. Jesus finished the work of making his people a “new creation” through his resurrection on the first day of the week and commands his people to remember and worship him on that resurrection day.

Wrap it up: The title of this message is ***“SABBATH – AN ANCIENT COMMAND THAT MEETS A DESPERATE NEED IN THE MODERN WORLD.”***

Take some time to discuss why our busy modern world might need to renew the principle of a weekly Sabbath day?

What benefits might come to our world from that observation?

What challenges get in the way of such a weekly Sabbath?

What will you do to “remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy”?