



CONNECT

with

GOD

SABBATH

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INTRODUCTION

In Judaism, the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, and is considered holy because in the creation account in Genesis, God rested on the seventh day. The Sabbath lasts from Friday evening to Saturday evening, and is designated for rest from work and worship of God. So, basically, it's taking a day off—completely off—every week.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For 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.”

Exodus 20:8–11

Keeping the Sabbath was a command given as part of God's covenant with ancient Israel. Christians, whose relationship with God is defined by the new covenant instituted by Jesus, aren't obligated to observe it. But that doesn't mean keeping the Sabbath is without value.

Choosing to practice the Sabbath:

1. Increases our trust in God's provision.

Taking a day of holy rest once each week means less time to work and achieve. That was a bigger deal in ancient times when people worked the land to survive and taking a day off came with the risk of food shortages. But even today, concentrated rest can create a lot of anxiety. When you first begin observing the Sabbath, you'll probably struggle with the feeling that you should be doing *something* more productive with your time.

2. Reminds us that life is meant to be joyful.

The Sabbath isn't only about not doing work. It's about connecting with God and prioritizing things that bring you joy, like hanging out with family and friends, volunteering, playing games, doing a fun physical activity, or reading.

3. Resets the rhythm of our lives.

It's easy for our lives to become monotonous cycles of work and sleep. Observing the Sabbath creates a regular break in that rhythm. It's a reminder that life isn't organized around our busy-ness.

4. Helps us to experience that rest is good.

The days you work will benefit from a day of rest and recharging. The Sabbath can increase your focus, energy, and dedication to the work you need to do.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR DISCUSSION

If you're in a group, use these questions to have a conversation about how you can support and encourage one another as you explore the Sabbath. If you're not in a group, reflect on these questions to help you consider what it would look like for you to connect with God through observing the Sabbath.

1. Do you believe other people admire you based on how busy you are? If so, how do you think that influences your perception of time?
2. To what extent do you gauge your own value based on your busyness each day? If so, how does that influence how you prioritize and organize the things you need to get done every day or every week?
3. What concerns do you have about trying to observe the Sabbath? How can you address those concerns?
4. Observing the Sabbath in community is the best way to do it. Is there anyone who might be interested in beginning this practice with you?
5. Use the tips on the next page to begin to make a plan for Sabbath observation:
 - What day of the week will be your Sabbath?
 - What date will you begin?
 - What will you do to connect with God?
 - What will you do to make the most of community with other people?

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TIPS FOR OBSERVING THE SABBATH

Making the Sabbath a habit in your life won't be easy. It'll take a little bit of effort. And you'll probably be surprised at how strong urge will be is to get things done. Don't be legalistic. Be patient. Give yourself the time to form a habit. It'll be worth it because the Sabbath has the power to change the focus and rhythm of your life.

1. Pick a day.

The Jewish Sabbath is on Saturday. Christians often talk about Sunday as the Sabbath. In truth, you can observe the Sabbath on any day that works for you. But pick a day when you can relax, enjoy yourself, and spend time with other people.

2. Avoid work.

This is self-explanatory, right? Don't try to observe the Sabbath on a workday.

3. Don't buy stuff.

We live in a consumer culture. That means much of our lives is organized around buying and selling material goods. Take a break from it as a reminder that life isn't about consumption.

4. Focus on God.

The Sabbath is about rest, but it's not just a vacation day. It's a day to remind yourself through rest that God is the source of your provision and security. Spend time doing things that help you connect with him.

5. Focus on other people.

Your heavenly Father designed you to live in relationship with other people. Use the Sabbath to connect with the people most important to you. Have fun. Experience joy.

6. Other things to avoid doing on the Sabbath:

- Tasks associated with work
- Household chores
- Mourning/sadness

7. Other things to do on the Sabbath:

- Worship.
- Read the Bible and pray.
- Eat food you enjoy.
- Get outside.