

Leader's Guide – Sabbath Rest (Nov. 15/20)

1. What are some of the symptoms of restlessness? What about the modern world contributes to this restlessness?

This is a personal reflection question.

Symptoms will arise as they are experienced by members of your group. This will hopefully stir up a yearning in members of the groups to desire the rest of Sabbath. This could be sensitive territory – tread lightly – allow a sufficient amount of time for that deep place in our hearts to be exposed and begin to yearn.

What are the some of the things that contribute to this restlessness. Tim mentioned a number in the sermon may help fill this out a bit in conversation. The inner murmur of self-reproach. The constant comparisons with others exacerbated by social media telling us we are not enough – not thin enough, beautiful enough, cool enough, accomplished enough etc. The expectations put on us by family – society – culture – not to mention our own crushing expectations. The pandemic brings new realities of restlessness – as we are cut off from opportunities to recreate – cut off from the joy of connection with others – crushing responsibility (work from home, take care of the kids, direct their education) – the growing fears of what the future looks like financially, socially, politically...

*Hear the Invitation: **Read Exodus 2:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15***

2. In the 10 commandments – the command to keep Sabbath is the only command that includes an explanation – here is why you should keep Sabbath. Looking at both Exodus and Deuteronomy why are we told to keep Sabbath? What do we learn about Sabbath from these explanations?

For optional follow-up to help make this question more specific if it doesn't come up on its own:

These questions get after the three areas Tim waded into.

Remember you are created in the image of God. We rest because God rested. We rest to honour the divine (image) in us, to tell ourselves that there is more to us than what we do during the week – Judith Shulivitz. Discuss.

The other six days will seek to define us by our accomplishments, our titles, our accumulation of material goods – or lack thereof. The other six days will seek to define us by the opinions of others, how we match to expectations. Sabbath invites us to reflect on the reality that we are created in the image of God – in Christ recreated as his children.

Remember you are created – creature – not God. The worst hallucination busyness conjures up is the conviction that I am God. How will the right things happen at the right time in the right way if I am not watching and worrying and waiting – how can Sabbath be a way to deepen our trust that God is God and we are not?

It leads us to recognize where things are far beyond our control when we often hold to the myth that we are in control.

It leads us to begin to see the activity of God in choreographing meaning and beauty out of any mess, any mishap, any anything (Mark Buchannen)

After their rescue from slavery in Egypt the Israelites are invited to take a Sabbath to remember that they had been rescued from slavery. What slavery are we willingly putting ourselves into if we do not take a Sabbath? How does Sabbath keeping break the chains of those different kinds of slavery?

May be enslaving ourselves to:

- *A work culture that pegs status to over achievement*
- *Our people pleasing tendencies where we just can't say no*
- *Our work ethic*
- *The identity we are building from our work*
- *Our deep insecurities that work is covering over*
- *Other?*

If there is a day where we can step back from the influences of these things – coupled with the practices you will soon discuss there is the increased reality that you will see these things as the slavery that they are and in worship be brought to encounter the truth of the gospel of who you are in Christ which will break the hold of these things over your heart.

*Engage the Practice: **Read Genesis 1:1-2:3***

3. There are a number of repeated ideas and refrains that are missing from day 7. One of those repeated phrases is – it is good. A number of commentators point out that this is something we are meant say on Sabbath after reflecting upon our work. “Is it good? Is it worth doing? Is it worth continuing?” How could we bring this practice of Sabbath into our lives? What would be the benefit of such prayerful reflection?

This is mostly a personal reflection question.

Some of the ideas Tim gave in the sermon were:

- a) *Asking yourself some pointed questions. If I keep going this way will I like where I end up. Plot the trajectory will you land in a place you care to live.*
 - b) *A simple prayer of examen. Where have I seen God most this week – where has God seemed absent – where do I need his grace most for the week ahead?*
4. Another one of the repeated ideas is that God forms what is formless and fills what is void. The ancient Rabbi's said that God formed rest on the 7th day – but we never hear what fills that rest. They likened God to a king who fashioned rest as a bridal chamber which he plastered and painted and adorned – and invites us as his bride to fill that chamber. We are invited to delight in him – in his goodness – in his creation – in his good gifts on Sabbath. How could we make this breadth of worship (worth ship – seeing what he is worth – giving him what he is worth) more a part of our Sabbath practice?

I think we have been formed often in our churches to envision worship as simply corporate worship – or the worship of personal prayer and scriptural study – and while yes these are expressions of worship – this question invites us to expand what we see as worship.

Perhaps some things to tease out in this question would be:

How can engagement with friends and family on this day be lived out as worship?

How could our play be lived out on this day as worship?

What are some of the ways you can expand your understanding of what God is worth on this day such that it stirs up in you the response to give him what he is worth.

*Embrace Sabbath's Fulfillment: **Read Hebrews 4:9-16***

5. Ultimately Jesus has won for us a rest – a rest in the identity we have in him – a rest in the forgiveness of our sins – a rest in the Father's love and delight. How can resting in who we are in Jesus on Sabbath root us in deep rest?

This quote may help shape the discussion:

Richard Loveless – in his book – the dynamics of spiritual life – writes this – If we start each (week) with our personal security not resting on the accepting love of God, and the sacrifice of Christ, but on our present achievements, such arguments will not quiet the human conscious, and so we are inevitably moved to discouragement and apathy, or to a self-righteousness or some form of idolatry that tries to falsify the record to achieve some sense of peace.

But the faith, gospel faith, that is able to warm itself at the fire of God's love and what Jesus has done for us, instead of having to steal love and self-acceptance from all these other sources, is the very root of peace. Go to this fire, it is merry, it is bright.