

Week Five: *Sabbath*

Mark 2:23-28

Spend FIFTEEN – Day One

1. The theme of the Sabbath or seventh-day rest is a key theme in the Bible. You find it first in Genesis Chapter 2, and it goes all the way through to the end. The word Sabbath comes from the Hebrew word shabat, which means most simply “to stop” or “to cease from.” What comes to your mind when you hear the word Sabbath?
2. Read Genesis 2:2. How is the seventh day (or Sabbath) described here?
3. What had taken place on days 1-6? (Genesis 1)
4. A perfect place for humans to live with God was complete. The completion and enjoyment of that existence is described as blessed and holy. Yet humans rejected that life. Now the seventh day is a reminder of what was intended, a life of enjoying God’s full presence with us in his creation. What parts of your Sabbath observation remind you of Eden?
5. Sabbath observation recalls Eden and gives us a chance to recreate it in a small way until Jesus returns. What Sabbath practices recreate living harmoniously in the presence of God?
6. End your FIFTEEN anticipating the full restoration of Eden-like life. Thank Jesus for making that possible. Choose a way to make one day a week a taste of Eden.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two

7. How do you and your family observe Sabbath? If your neighbor asked you why you do what you do, what would you say?
8. Yesterday we saw that the seventh-day rest or Sabbath was an opportunity to remember and recreate Eden. There are other blessings and purposes for Sabbath in Scripture. Read Exodus 20:8-11. What does God command His people to do?
9. Exodus 20:10 says, “The seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God,” literally a rest (Sabbath) that belongs to Yahweh. In your weekly practices, who “owns” the Sabbath?
10. One scholar states, “Man normally is master of his time. He is free to dispose of it as he sees fit or as necessity bids him. The Israelite is duty-bound, however, once every seven days to assert by word and deed that God is the master of time...Keeping the Sabbath is acceptance of the kingdom and sovereignty of God.” How could the practice of a Sabbath with this understanding benefit you?

11. The structure of the Sabbath is meant to be inconvenient. God is the master of all time and he holds all the time that we think actually belongs to us. End your FIFTEEN in prayer. Ask God to correct your view of time. Ask him for ways to surrender your time to him.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three

12. Why do you think God made keeping the Sabbath one of the Ten Commandments?
13. Read Exodus 31:13. How would you define holy?
14. According to verse 13, who makes people holy?
15. We often associate holy with perfection. It actually means set apart or dedicated to God. How does observing a Sabbath set a person apart?
16. Verse 13 says observing the Sabbath will be a sign between God and his people, a way his people are different from others. How could observing a Sabbath point others to God?
17. What benefits are there in having a sign between yourself and God?
18. End your FIFTEEN in thanksgiving for Jesus, who is the one who makes us holy. Celebrate a relationship with a God who gives you ways to remember you are his.

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four

19. Some know the observation of Sabbath as restriction and deprivation. Read Mark 2:23-28. How does Jesus describe the Sabbath?
20. Read Exodus 20:8-11 again. Does the command appear to be a burden or a gift?
21. Who benefits from the keeping of the Sabbath in these verses? How does this help us with Jesus seeming to “break” the Commandment?
22. While we have seen that Sabbath has more benefits than just rest from labor, ceasing work is commanded. What are benefits associated with a break from work?

23. Since God does not need to sleep or catch a nap after a busy time of creating, what do you think it means when it says in Genesis 2:3, “He rested from all the work”?
24. Scholars understand rest to mean both a ceasing from work and a settling in to enjoy and be part of what was just created. How could this change your observation of Sabbath?
25. End your FIFTEEN with your eyes closed. Reflect on all God has done for you already today. Settle into him and rest. (Set an alarm if you might fall asleep!)

Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five

26. How hard is it for you to give up time and energy to observe a Sabbath? What factors play into your struggle (or lack of struggle)?
27. Read Exodus 16:1-5; 21-30. How did God provide food for his people? What was different on the Sabbath?
28. How did God demonstrate his trustworthiness in the provision of manna?
29. How does God’s Sabbath command in Exodus 20:8-11 test our trust? How does a chance to display trust benefit us?
30. In what way does your observation of Sabbath display your trust in God?
31. End your FIFTEEN reflecting on your Sabbath-keeping. What would you like to change? Praise God for the benefits he generously gives. Ask for his help to enjoy his Sabbath more deeply.