

Sabbath: Sacred Rest for a Hurried World

Week 2: Stop

May 17, 2026

Introduction

Aloha everyone! I'm Mark and I want to welcome you to our service. This week we are continuing, what is arguably, the most radical series we have ever done — a series on Sabbath. If put into practice, this one series will radically change the way we live, the way we love, and the way we view ourselves and God.

Because everywhere we look we see signs of chronic fatigue, discontentment, and burnout. Our lives are hurried, many feel they are even drowning in business and activity, and there doesn't seem to be an end in sight. In his book on Sabbath called, *Stop in the Name of God*, Charlie Kirk writes,

"It is one of the great ironies of our age that we are wealthier, more technologically advanced, and more medically capable than any generation in human history—yet our children are sicker in mind and soul than ever before. In a world where material abundance is everywhere—where food is plentiful, information is instant, and comfort is the default setting—we are watching a generation implode under the weight of despair. Suicide rates among teens have surged, anxiety and depression are rampant, and self-harm has become tragically common—not in war-torn or famine-stricken nations, but in the most affluent societies on earth. How can it be that in the age of abundance, our youth feel more worthless than ever? It is because material progress cannot fill a spiritual void. We have given them everything except the one thing they were made for: meaning. When a culture denies its Creator, it also denies its children the ability to know who they are, why they exist, and what they are worth. The result is not liberation—it is devastation."

Regardless of how you feel about Charlie Kirk, whether you like him or not, I'm inclined to agree with his assessment here. *"Material progress cannot fill a spiritual void."* And Jesus offers us the antidote to the sick cycle carousel of life.

In Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of the words of Jesus it says,

28-30 "Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to Me. Get away with Me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with Me and work with Me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with Me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly,"

(Matthew 11:28-30 MSG).

Jesus promises to help us recover true life, take a real rest, and learn the unforced rhythms of grace. He's inviting us to walk with Him and watch how He does it. And if we study the rhythm of Jesus' life we will find that Jesus kept the sabbath.

Sabbath (Shabbat) שַׁבָּת

To stop; to cease;

Before we unpack this, I want us to let this sink in. Do you feel the weight of this? Do you feel the tension? This is arguably one of the most radical commands God ever gave humanity. Stop. Cease. In a world of hurry, business, activity, work, buying, selling, planning, prepping,

God says, "Stop". "I'm sorry God? Stop? Stop what?" "All of it." And God does not suggest it, He commands it.

⁸ *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ 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," (Exodus 20:8-10 NIV).*

Now, before we jump to our justifications, "Well Christians aren't technically under the law so is this still binding? What constitutes labor?" and so on, why don't we pause and, take this at face value, and try to understand why God would command such a radical thing to begin with. We first have to begin with the premise that all of God's commands are for our good. God's law does not exist to limit, restrict, or restrain our joy and freedom but to empower me to live life to the fullest. So I need to start with the premise that God has my very best in mind and anything He tells me to do is from a place of love and for my very best. Even if I don't understand it, even if I don't agree with it, I know He has a reason and it is ultimately for my good.

Once I've settled that I can then ask, "Why would a good and loving Father command us to cease from all work one day out of the week?" And there is a very important clue in the very next verse!

"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 20:11).

What we see is that, before the law, and before the Ten Commandments, God established a rhythm of six and one. Six days of work and one day of rest. Did it ever occur to you that the seven-day week is not a human invention but a divine one? Somehow, throughout all of history and across cultures, it has remained to this day. Time markers like the day, month, and year are all anchored in astronomical cycles but there is no reason for the seven-day week other than it is the rhythm God put into place from the beginning of creation. That should tell us something. God is a God of order, there is a rhyme and reason to His order, and in the words of British Theologian and Philosopher H.H. Farmer,

"If you go against the grain of the universe, you get splinters."

History has proven this time and time again. During the height of the French Revolution in 1793, revolutionaries tried to secularize society and obliterate the influence of the Church and Christianity by replacing the 7-day week (rooted in the Creation account) with a 10-day week. The results were disastrous. Workers became fatigued and resentful, productivity came to a grinding halt, families and social bonds started fraying until eventually the seven-day week was reinstated in 1806.

The Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin attempted a similar experiment to erase the Biblical rhythm. Again the results were catastrophic and the seven-day cycle was reinstated.

Nazi Germany did not try to change the calendar but they instead sought to sever all connection between the seventh day and worship. Hitler viewed Christianity as a "Jewish Invention" and so co-opted the Sabbath day for his own ideological programming.

Fast forward to today and once again the Sabbath is under attack and being co-opted for a different purpose. Most of us see the Sabbath as a day to catch up on chores, errands, planning ahead, etc. We experience, what Eugene Peterson calls, a bastard Sabbath.

But could it be that we are going against the grain of the universe as God created it?

Even God's own people, the Israelites, experienced catastrophe after failing to keep the Sabbath. In Jeremiah 17 we see that their downfall was connected to their failure to keep the Sabbath. And while they were in exile God said the land would finally receive the rest it did not get while the people were living in it.

So the Sabbath is a rhythm that predates the law or the ten commandments. It goes all the way back to the beginning of creation. God instituted a rhythm of six days for work and a day of rest. And throughout history people have tried to their detriment to go against the grain of God's created order. How about today? Could it be that the chronic fatigue, the discontentment, the restlessness, and loss of motivation is connected to our lack of Sabbath rhythm? What would it look like if the Church truly followed the model of God, the model of Jesus and ceased one day out of the week? Could we trust that as we tithe our time to the Lord He will be faithful with what remains? Do we believe we can do more *with* God in six days than without Him in seven?

What would it look like for us to practically do this? First we have to understand what we're trying to do. While the Sabbath *begins* with ceasing all labor, it certainly doesn't end there.

"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 20:11).

Notice, for six days God worked and then on the seventh He ceased. Remember that man was created on the sixth day. So man's first full day would have been the Sabbath. We don't work to earn rest. We begin with rest in God and then we work from that place. God did not create us to produce. Man did not awaken to a list of to-do's. He was created and then rested with God before he had done anything to contribute to creation. Sound familiar? "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased." God said that about Jesus before He had started His ministry. Are you seeing the rhythm here? On the sabbath God admired His creation and saw that it was very good. He delighted in the work of His hands. Later in this series we will see how delight is a big part of Sabbath. On Sabbath we delight in creation, we delight in relationships, we delight in God's blessing. Sabbath is a day of feasting in which we pause from striving to simply delight in the beauty and bounty that God has surrounded us with. It is far from a somber day of religious duty. It is a day of beauty, a feast to the senses, a day of ultimate delight. Sabbath is the day we live from at the start of each week and the day we live for at the end. But it also says that God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Notice God did not bless a sacred place. There was no mountain or building. He blessed a sacred space—a space of time. If we want to meet with God and delight in His Presence, if we want to get away and experience true rest, to recover our lives, it's not about finding a place, it's about making space.

Let's do a thought experiment. What would it look like if you had 24 hours to do the things that truly filled your soul, made you come alive, re-ignited your passions, and filled your tank? What would that day look like? You might sleep in a little. Wake up with the sun, not before it, to brew a nice cup of coffee. You might take in the morning light while listening to some soul-filling music. Later you might immerse yourself in creation, drink in the sunlight, soak in the ocean, forest-bathe. That night you and some close friends might get together and share life, sing karaoke, eat delicious food and finish it off with cookies and ice cream. You might share about what you're grateful for or what you've seen God do this past week. And everyone would rest with a sense of renewed joy, contentment, and gratitude for God's blessings. Does all of this sound like a fairytale? Does it sound gratuitous or too good to be true? Can you conceive that God desires a day like this for you every single week?

Most of us could hardly fathom a day like this once a month or a couple times a year let alone every week. What would this do to your love, your relationships, your marriage, your kids? So many of us are too busy thinking, “We can’t afford to Sabbath” but in reality, we can’t afford not to. For most of us, an entire day seems entirely out of reach. But what can we start with? How can we begin to build stopping into our rhythm. And not just when the work is done (because it never is), not just because we can’t go on, but because we want to intentionally build sacred space into our rhythms in order to delight in the Lord and rest in His goodness. Next week we are going to have a conversation with Dr. Brian Misaka. For many of us, even when we stop and “rest” we don’t feel any different. Dr. Brian is going to explain what true rest looks like and why, what some of us are calling “rest” isn’t actually helping. You won’t want to miss it. But as we close I want you to think about this.

Imagine your energy like a phone battery. Most of us get down to dangerously low levels but we never actually take the time to recharge back to 100%. We usually only rest to about 60% before we re-engage with life and our work. But what if the fruit of the spirit was in the last 40%. What if love, and joy, and peace, and patience for my wife and kids, are found in a truly rested soul? What if there was a reason Jesus observed the Sabbath beyond just religious obligation. Jesus was unhurried, He was patient, He was loving, kind, and interruptible,. And you know what else He was? Rested. What would happen to our lives, our love, our relationships if we lived from a place of Sabbath rest?

[Dad Testimony]

Group Discussion Questions

1. What stood out to you? What resonated with you?
2. Is intentional Sabbath currently part of your rhythm, or not?
3. What obstacles (physical, emotional, belief, etc.) get in the way of Sabbath?