

July 1, 2007

"Weekly Sabbath" (based on *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, by Peter Scazzero)

Ex 20:8-11 NLT

"Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, 10 but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

Last week I said that between the demands of work, family, and saying yes to too many things, our lives are not only full, they're overflowing. We are over scheduled, over worked, tense, frantic and always in a hurry, preoccupied, fatigued and never seem to have enough time...to give to anything. Add to this the problems, and trials of life that come quite unexpectedly and it is no wonder that we are disoriented and disconnected to others and to God. Our lives are hectic.

Speaking of being overworked did you hear about the employee comes into the manager's office to take a day off from work. The manager replies, So you want a day off. Let's take a look at what you are asking for. There are 365 days per year available for work. There are 52 weeks per year in which you already have 2 days off per week, leaving 261 days available for work. Since you spend 16 hours each day away from work, you have used up 170 days, leaving only 91 days available. You spend 30 minutes each day on coffee break, which counts for 23 days each year, leaving only 68 days available. With a 1-hour lunch each day, you used up another 46 days, leaving only 22 days available for work. You normally spend 2 days per year on sick leave. This leaves you only 20 days per year available for work. We are off 5 holidays per year, so your available working time is down to 15 days. We generously give 14 days vacation per year which leaves only 1 day available for work and I'll be darned if you are going to take that day off!

SICK DAYS:

We will no longer accept a doctor statement as proof of sickness. If you are able to go to the doctor, you are able to come to work.

SURGERY:

Operations are now banned. As long as you are an employee here, you need all your organs. You should not consider removing anything. We hired you intact. To have something removed constitutes a breach of employment.

PERSONAL DAYS:

Each employee will receive 104 personal days a year. They are called Saturday and Sunday.

VACATION DAYS:

All employees will take their vacation at the same time every year. The vacation

days are as follows: Jan. 1, July 4 & Dec. 25

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE:

This is no excuse for missing work. There is nothing you can do for dead friends, relatives or coworkers. Every effort should be made to have non-employees attend to the arrangements. In rare cases where employee involvement is necessary, the funeral should be scheduled in the late afternoon. We will be glad to allow you to work through your lunch hour and subsequently leave one hour early, provided your share of the work is done enough.

OUT FROM YOUR OWN DEATH:

This will be accepted as an excuse. However, we require at least two weeks notice, as it is your duty to train your own replacement.

RESTROOM USE:

Entirely too much time is being spent in the restroom. In the future, we will follow the practice of going in alphabetical order. For instance, all employees whose names begin with 'A' will go from 8:00 to 8:20, employees whose names begin with 'B' will go from 8:20 to 8:40 and so on. If you're unable to go at your allotted time, it will be necessary to wait until the next day when your turn comes again. In extreme emergencies employees may swap their time with a coworker. Both employees' supervisors in writing must approve this exchange. In addition, there is now a strict 3-minute time limit in the stalls. At the end of three minutes, an alarm will sound, the toilet paper roll will retract, and the stall door will open.

LUNCH BREAK:

Skinny people get an hour for lunch as they need to eat more so that they can look healthy, normal size people get 30 minutes for lunch to get a balanced meal to maintain the average figure. Fat people get 5 minutes for lunch because that's all the time needed to drink a Slim Fast and take a diet pill. Sondra gets none.

DRESS CODE:

It is advised that you come to work dressed according to your salary, if we see you wearing \$350 Prada sneakers and carrying a \$600 Gucci bag we assume you are doing well financially and therefore you do not need a raise.

Thank you for your loyalty to our company. We are here to provide a positive employment experience. Therefore, all questions comments, concerns, complaints, frustrations, irritations, aggravations, insinuations, allegations, accusations, contemplations, consternations or input should be directed elsewhere. Have a nice week.

-- Management

We are struggling to survive and we need Someone to toss us a rope to save us. God offers us a rope to keep us from getting lost and to lead us home. It is a rope that leads us back to Him. The rope is found in taking "Sabbaths" - a time of rest and worship. A Sabbath is not meant to add more to our already busy schedules. It is meant to refocus and reset our lives on a new destination – God.

Last week we talked about taking "Daily Sabbaths" - moments taken daily to feel a rope, which is God Himself as an anchor no matter what the circumstances of our life might be.

Taking time throughout your day to pause to be with God (“Regular remembrances of God”).

Today I want to talk about a second blessing that God gives us to lead us home to Him and give us rest – the “Weekly Sabbath.”

We get the word Sabbath from the Hebrew word, *Shabath*. This Hebrew word means “to cease, to stop working, to cease from exertion, to rest.” It refers to doing nothing related to work for a 24 hour period. The English word Sabbath means a day for rest and worship, which for the Christian is Sunday. The fourth commandment says (vs8-10), “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work.”

The Sabbath Day is holy or separate, or a cut above the other six days. It is a holy day or a day set apart, especially set apart for God. When we keep the Sabbath we are imitating God. He gave us this rhythm of work followed by rest. As the remainder of the fourth commandment says (v11), “For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.” This refers to Gen 2:2-3 (NLT): “On the seventh day, having finished his task, God rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from his work of creation.”

Ever hear of the Blue Laws? These were (A.) one of a body of laws started in colonial New England designed to enforce certain moral standards and particularly to prohibit specified forms of entertainment or recreation on Sundays. (B.) It was a law designed to regulate commercial business on Sunday. When I was growing up most stores were closed on Sunday. But you can’t serve both God and money, and, unfortunately, America has decided to serve money. Commercial retailers felt they were at a disadvantage not being able to be open on a day when most people were home to shop. How much more today, when people can purchase merchandise 24/7 on the internet or on TV. And so, these laws are no longer enforced. Besides spiritual and moral reasons, America needs to allow a day of rest and worship for its own sanity. Now, I understand that to keep a command for a Sabbath rest is radical and very difficult in our culture and everyday lives. I even hear Christians complain about a 10am service, “I have to get up early all week, I want one day when I don’t have to get up early. Now, I’m sure you don’t have to get up as early to get here at 10am as you have to get up during the week. But, if more people would be here if we made the service later than 10am, I would be open to listen. Some don’t care what time the service is they just want a break from coming to church every Sunday. Yet, without the Sabbath, we lose the larger picture of God and our lives. There are two things we need to understand about the Sabbath: (A.) it is a command from God and (B.) it is an incredible invitation to grab a hold of the rope God offers us.

Keeping the Sabbath is one of the 10 commandments, right next to don't lie, murder, or commit adultery. But, the Sabbath is also a gift of God that we are invited to receive. We are created in the image of God and we live our God-given image when we imitate Him. We were created to have six days to work, then a day of rest just as God did when He created the world. God worked and we should work. God rested and we are to rest. Christians are a free people, called out from the world to be different. The world believes their worth and value is in what they do and possess. We need to show them that our true worth and value is in the fact that we are deeply loved by God, for who we are, not for what we do.

The Sabbath calls us to build time into our schedules to do nothing. "To fail to see the value of simply being with God and 'doing nothing' is to miss the heart of Christianity." (a quote from Leonard Doohan quoted by Lynne M. Baab in, *Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest*.) To keep the Sabbath is to proclaim that God is the center of our lives and that we are dependent on Him for all we need.

One of the dangers of the observance of the Sabbath is legalism. Some people because of their profession have to work on Sunday. Jesus taught that we should do good on the Sabbath, even He healed and preached on the Sabbath. Some will need another day besides Saturday or Sunday to have a day without work. I am not talking merely of having a day off (sometimes our day off is just as busy or busier than a work day). We need a day to replenish our energy to make us more effective the other six days.

There are four principles to a Biblical Sabbath:

1. Stop

The Sabbath is first and foremost a day of stopping. As mentioned earlier this is what the Hebrew word means. We don't believe we can stop. We have work to complete, projects to finish, emails to answer, phone calls to make, house work to do. We have to stop...we are commanded to stop, embrace our limits, and acknowledge that He is God. The world will continue just fine without me and my to do list will be there waiting for me when I get back to it. The Sabbath reminds us that God is on the Throne and we are to "be still" and know that He is God (Ps. 46:10). The issue is, do we trust that God will take care of us and our concerns if we obey Him and put Him first by stopping to keep the Sabbath? [Illustration]. We can trust Him enough to stop and when we do He will provide.

2. Rest

Once we stop the Sabbath calls us to rest. God rested after His work and so should we...every seven days. What should we do when we stop and rest...whatever delights and replenishes you. Peter Scazzero suggests (in *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*) that we consider resting from: work, physical exhaustion, Hurriedness, multitasking, competitiveness, worry, decision making, catching up on errands, talking, technology and machines.

Don't wait for a serious physical illness to get you to rest. Jesus said (Mark 2:27 [NCV]), "The Sabbath day was made to help people; they were not made to be ruled by the Sabbath day."

3. Delight

The Sabbath allows us to stop, rest, and delight in what God has given us. Someone has said that our culture is "delight deficient." Because pleasure has been distorted in our culture we struggle to receive joy and pleasure. We need to slow down to appreciate what God has given us. Pay attention to the things you have and can so easily take for granted. Simple things like, food, shelter, the beauty of God's creation. The Sabbath also calls us to slow down that we might delight in people. Take time to stop for unexpected conversation with family, friends, neighbors, and even strangers. The Sabbath calls us to enjoy this day that God has given us. Have some holy fun on the Sabbath.

4. Contemplate

Of course the Sabbath should include the contemplation of God. Ex 31:15 (NIV), "For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, *holy to the LORD*." The Sabbath always included a time to worship God with His people. Here we delight in His presence, we read Scripture and listen to a lesson or message, and we take time to be silent. The Sabbath is a day to ponder the love of God. Every Sabbath we contemplate something greater that awaits us in eternity. Our short earthly lives are put into perspective, we look forward to the return of Jesus and the coming of the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

Do a better job at preparing for the Sabbath, or planning for the Sabbath, and of practicing or keeping of the Sabbath.

Remember when you were a kid and prayed for a snow day. Remember the excitement to suddenly have a day off to do anything you wanted... no responsibilities, no obligations, no pressures. What a gift! Well, the Sabbath is a gift of a having a snow day every week. God gives you 52 snow days every year! And it is just possible that if you will stop, rest, delight, and contemplate for one 24 hour period each week, you just may find the other six days will be better too. No wonder God said, "Remember to observe the Sabbath..."