

Practicing the Way: Sabbath

Week 4: Delight

- Begin in Prayer (5 Minutes)
- Read: *Isaiah 58:13-14; Psalm 65:8-13; John 15:11; John 17:13*
- Leader Overview:

Note: Messages can be (re)watched shortly after Sunday gatherings on our YouTube [Page](#)

For most of us, the default factory setting of our attention is negative. In school, your parents never asked what went so *right* that you got three As on your report card. They wanted to know what went so *wrong* that you got a D in chemistry. This bias to focus on the negative permeates all of life. We rarely stop to celebrate our successes at work, but we linger for a long time over the missed opportunities or the money we left on the table. We are all pretty good at identifying (and obsessing) over the areas in which we fail to measure up, in the things we don't have, in the mistakes made, the chances blown, the futures unrealized. We think to ourselves, "I could have done better." "I should have done more." "I wish I could do it over again." "I wish I had more." And the negativity which often fuels us to chase after more, bigger, and better so that we can finally be happy usually leaves us feeling stressed, anxious, and exhausted. If a negative attitude was our only problem, things might not be all that bad. But our negative perspective on life is born from the fact that life is hard. Adversity, heartache, sickness, brokenness, and death are eventually inevitable features of the story of our lives. One of the great things about the Bible is that it never tries to hide or downplay the difficult reality of life in a fallen world. Jesus once told his disciples, "*I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*"

Don't miss that proclamation. Jesus has *already* overcome the world. And the invitation from Jesus, extended to every person who would accept the invitation to follow him, is to taste and see the fullness of life that The Overcomer has made available to us. In other words, the life that Jesus is inviting all of us to experience is unprecedented and unparalleled on this planet. There is no other person or path that can bring you the kind and quality of life that Jesus can. But—and that is a *huge* but—the life that Jesus offers is not automatic. You and I will never stumble into it by accident. This is precisely why we have been talking about Sabbath for the last four weeks. Sabbath, you may remember, is a 24-hour period of time occurring weekly where we stop, rest, delight, and worship. Over the last two weeks, we talked about 'stop' and 'rest.' This week, our focus is on 'delight.' Sabbath isn't just about what we stop doing and it isn't simply about what we rest from. We stop and rest so that we can become the kinds of people who can enjoy the goodness of God that permeates every square inch of the good world He created

and sustains. For people like us—prone to be negative, vulnerable to hardships—we *need* a day that is set aside for the express purpose of delighting in God and in creation.

For whatever reason, few of us often associate God with joy. But, as Dallas Willard notes, *"God is the most joyful being in the universe."* And joy is precisely the thing we experience when we set aside time for delight. As followers of Jesus, we have the ability to choose and experience joy in any circumstance. This is why Sabbath matters. We need space to learn how to delight in the goodness of God. We need time to simply grow in our enjoyment of God and creation. Whether you have a good week or a bad week, every seven days you come to the critical moment designed to help you experience fullness of joy. Dan Allender sums it up so well: *"The Sabbath is an invitation to enter delight. The Sabbath, when experienced as God intended, is the best day of our lives. Without question or thought, it is the best day of the week. It is the day we anticipate on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday – and the day we remember on Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. Sabbath is the holy time where we feast, play, dance, have sex, sing, pray, laugh, tell stories, read, paint, walk, and watch creation in its fullness. Few people are willing to enter the Sabbath and sanctify it, to make it holy, because a full day of delight and joy is more than most people can bear in a lifetime, let alone a week."*

- **Questions for Discussion (20-30 Minutes)**

1. What grabbed your attention/heart/mind from the weekend talk or leader's summary?
2. Last week, we added the rhythm of "rest" to our Sabbath practice. Take a few minutes to debrief as a group. How did resting go last week? What are you learning about yourself or about Sabbath?
3. On Sunday, Pastor Paul said that in our quest for fullness of life we are all beset by two things: a negative bias that colors our perspective of life, and hardships that overwhelm us. As a result, joy is often an elusive part of our life with God. Do you agree with his assessment? Why or why not? Would those who know you best describe you as a joyful person?
4. As many have often noted, sorrow in this world is inevitable, but joy is not. Joy must be chosen, cultivated, and fought for. How could *you* benefit from a scheduled day of delight every single week? How might a Sabbath day of delight change your life the other six days of the week?
5. What brings you delight? (NOTE: Share 1-3 things)

- **This Week's Practices**

Sabbath as a day of delight is when we learn to taste and see that God is the most joyful being in the universe. With that end in mind, what we want to do is identify a few practices that allow us to enjoy God and enjoy His good world and make them a regular

part of our honoring the Sabbath. As with every practice in this series, no hard and fast rules to observe here. What follows are just ideas and suggestions to help you get started.

1 – Delight in Community

An important part of Sabbath is creating alone time and down time for yourself. But we miss something vitally important if Sabbath is a solo practice only. Being with people, perhaps over a good meal, is one of the most simple and profound ways to lift and energize your soul. Whether it's 20 people for a giant cookout in the backyard or just one or two close friends out to dinner, plan out a meal together. Cook or order your favorite foods. Make sure there's dessert. If you drink wine, save your best bottle for this meal.

Also, don't forget that this is an incredible chance to practice hospitality. If you have a home or apartment, host. If you know how to cook, use your skills. If you know people who don't have community or family, bring them in. Reach across the lines that divide our society—socioeconomics, race, politics, etc. Jesus' dream is for our dining room tables to look as diverse and beautiful as the kingdom of God, where every tribe, tongue, and nation is on display.

2 – Delight in Gratitude.

One of the simplest ways to cultivate delight on Sabbath is by practicing gratitude. Think about it – a day filled by thanking God for any and every blessing you can identify or imagine. This could be as simple as sharing what you are thankful for around the dinner table, or alone through journaling, prayer, and even song. The idea is to go out of your way to see the blessings that surround us all the time and to allow this perspective to direct your words, thoughts, and actions to the God who so richly blesses His children.

3 – Delight in Creation

God has filled His world with so many things to enjoy. Sabbath is about making time to enjoy them. Consider making a list of things that you enjoy, things that bring you to life, and try to incorporate a handful of them into your Sabbath day. If you need ideas, here are a few to get you started:

- Make pancakes.
- Open a good bottle of wine.
- Have a dance party.
- Play music.
- Get coffee with your best friend.

- Make love to your spouse.
 - Take a walk.
 - Nap.
 - Eat delicious food.
 - Do your nails or favorite self-care activity.
 - Go fishing or surfing or swimming.
 - Be in nature.
 - Watch the sun rise or set.
 - Make a fire.
 - Read fiction or poetry.
 - Sing.
 - Go to an art museum.
 - Go on a picnic in a beautiful park.
 - Play a game.
 - Call a friend or family member who lives far away.
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- Close in Prayer (5-10 Minutes)