

# Practicing the Way: Sabbath

## Week 5: Worship

- Begin in Prayer (5 Minutes)
- Read: *Romans 12:1; Exodus 16:22-26; Matthew 28:1-9; Acts 20:7; John 6:49-51*
- Leader Overview:

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

For the last five weeks, we have been exploring one of the most ancient practices of the people of God, the practice of Sabbath. By way of reminder, we have defined Sabbath as a twenty-four hour period of time, marked weekly, where we do four things: Stop – Rest – Delight – Worship. With that last rhythm of worship in mind, a question arises that must be answered: What is worship? Seems like a simple enough question to answer. But throughout the history of the church Christians have often disagreed on how best to answer this question. Is worship just the songs we sing in church? If so, what kinds of songs and what styles of music count for worship? Is worship just what happens when Christians gather on Sundays for worship? What does that mean for the other 167 hours of the week? Is worship primarily about tradition, rituals, forms and patterns? Is it best to honor the past with our worship, ensuring that we stay rooted to history? Or is it best to explore novel forms of worship by paying attention to culturally relevant expressions and preferences? Each of these questions, and many others besides, go a long way to helping us understand why there are so many church traditions, denominations, networks, and local communities that vary so widely in their views and practices around worship. But looking at all of these expressions and settled opinions still doesn't quite help us answer the most fundamental question: What is worship?

According to the New Testament (see, for example, Romans 12:1), what we do on Sundays is a form of worship, but it is not synonymous with worship. Worship is surrendering all of life back to God. Worship is, at its root, a lifestyle, a way of being in the world that seeks to glorify God in all of life. But what does all of this have to do with Sabbath? Well, in one sense, worship is what Sabbath is all about. We don't just stop to stop, rest to rest, or delight to delight. We stop, rest, and delight so that we can become the kinds of people who can worship God with our whole being. Sabbath and worship are inextricably connected. Just as the practice of a Sabbath day is a proxy for the devotion and desire we should have for God every single day, so the worship we experience and express on Sundays is meant to represent how we seek to live in all of life. Which means there is something especially beautiful happening when the practice of Sabbath collides with our gathered worship on Sundays.

In the earliest days of the Jesus movement, while the church was still made up primarily of Jewish people, something pretty remarkable occurred. These communities, who for countless generations had seen Sabbath Saturday as *the* holy day set apart for God, began to gather on Sunday, the first day of the new week. Why? Well, Sunday is when Jesus was raised from the dead. In an instant, Sabbath took on a new and even deeper meaning than ever before. It was now about resurrection. It was now meant to culminate in a weekly gathering of God's people to celebrate the victory of Jesus. They broke bread, they opened the scriptures, they prayed, they loved and served one another, and they worshiped the risen Jesus *together*. Because Sabbath was so deeply ingrained in their lives, they understood the importance of this new gathering—a gathering of believers in a weekly rhythm of corporate worship that propelled them into a lifestyle of worship the other six days of the week.

Setting a day aside to focus on the worship of God often reveals what's actually going on in our hearts, the thing(s) we are actually worshiping. As David Foster Wallace famously said, "*In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship.*" The truth is, there are a lot of things in life that ask us for worship. There are no shortage of ways to find pleasure and satisfaction. But, in the end, only Jesus satisfies the deepest desires and longings of the human soul. That is why Sabbath still matters. And that is why we gather to worship every single week. Jesus is better. Jesus, and He alone, is worthy of our worship.

- **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 "delight" to our Sabbath practice. Take a few minutes to debrief as a group. How is Sabbath going? How did you explore the rhythm of delight? What are you learning about yourself or about Sabbath?
3. If a friend who doesn't follow Jesus asked *you* why you prioritize gathering with others every Sunday to sing songs and listen to a message, how would you answer? In your own words, what is the role and purpose of our corporate worship gatherings?
4. On Sunday, Pastor Josh noted that it's very easy for those of us who gather for worship on Sundays to arrive in body, but not in spirit. In other words, we show up physically, but our hearts are somewhere else. Can you relate? Why do we sometimes have trouble being present and engaged in Sunday worship?
5. As David Foster Wallace notes, "...There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship." How might a practice like Sabbath (or even weekend gatherings) help us expose the false things we worship and/or energize our rightful worship of Jesus?

- This Week's Practices

Sabbath is the capstone of every week, not just because we are invited by God to stop our labor, rest our bodies, and delight in creation. No, Sabbath is the capstone of the week because it is a day set aside for focused worship of Jesus. Of course, as we noted above, worship is not just a day, or a practice, or an event. Worship is a way of being in the world, a life fully devoted to God. But, the value of a day dedicated especially to worship, is that it ignites a passion for Jesus the rest of the week. Sabbath worship orients our hearts and calibrates our affections to the centrality of Jesus as the only one worthy of worship.

### 1 – Worship in Community

Worship is essential for Sabbath. And, as we noted on Sunday, there is nothing quite like the gathered family of God gathering for worship. The gathering of believers every week for corporate worship instructs us and inspires us to live a lifestyle of worship the rest of the week. In order to experience the blessing of corporate worship, we have to show up, of course, but more than that, we have to show up with a sense of expectation and anticipation. This is easier said than done. We all know what it's like to show up in body, but not in spirit; to be present physically, but to be miles away emotionally, mentally, or spiritually. This is why the rest of the rhythms of Sabbath are so important. We stop, rest, and delight so that we can become the kinds of people who are ready to worship the Lord.

### 2 – Worship in Silence and Solitude.

The gathering of God's people for corporate worship is important—essential—to Sabbath worship. But it is by no means the only way we can worship God on Sabbath. You may consider spending a portion of your Sabbath in the quiet with God. There is a special kind of stillness that comes on the Sabbath when our relationship to time is unhurried, and we savor more than we stress. See if you can tap into that Sabbath time and give it back to God in loving worship.

To do this, we recommend you find a quiet, distraction-free time and place. For many, first thing in the morning is the ideal time, but do whatever works best for your life.

For couples with younger children, consider breaking the day into thirds – a third spent all together in delight, a third for one parent to go be alone to rest and pray while the other plays with the children, and a third where the parents swap places.

Spend your time in silence and solitude reading Scripture, journaling, walking in nature, or just napping and prayerfully resting in God; whatever your pathway is to God's peace and presence.

### 3 – Worship in Rhythm

Some people may choose to create rituals or rhythms of worship throughout their Sabbath. A simple way to do this is to create a morning, midday and evening worship practice. The most ancient and, for many people, the most helpful way to do this is by praying a psalm, such as Psalm 23, 37, 103, or 105. You can also do this by listening to worship music or praying with a friend or going on a walk in nature—the options are endless. The end goal is to spend as much of the Sabbath as you possibly can in conscious communion with God.

- Close in Prayer (5-10 Minutes)