

SABBATH

February 25, 2018 | Pastor AJ Swaboda

This morning, I want to take the three years of work on my book on the Sabbath and present it a 30-minute message. I have found that there is a lot of resistance to the topic of Sabbath.

There is a mystery in American war history. There is a stark difference between how soldiers adjusted to returning home from WWII (came home, made babies, and there was great pride and little drug usage and low rates of PTSD) and soldiers returning from Vietnam (drug abuse, abusive family lives, high rates of depression and PTSD). Why did this happen? The theory is this: the difference is that soldiers who returned home from Vietnam came home by plane and went from battlefield to living room within two days. Soldiers who returned from WWII had a 40-day boat journey across the Atlantic. These soldiers had time to process, weep, and share stories.

Today, we don't have any time to stop and just cry and process. We are getting exhausted. There has never been a time where we have been this exhausted. We are emotionally, mentally, intellectually exhausted.

It is amazing how we have forgotten the Bible, which is a good book for exhausted people, because it starts with God creating and then resting.

Exodus 20, God sends Moses up Mt. Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments. He gave them these laws AFTER he redeems Israel from slavery in Egypt. These commandments are all something we believe in strongly, with the exception of the Sabbath commandment, which we take as a suggestion.

The fourth commandment, the Sabbath commandment, is the only commandment with the word "remember." It is as if God knew we would forget! God commands us to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. In the creation story, the Day of Rest (Sabbath) is the only thing God calls holy. The Sabbath is already Holy (we do not make it holy), and we get to enter into that.

Exodus 20:8-11, "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. 11 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."

The Sabbath is not just about rest, it is about work. It is about six days of work, and one day of rest. It is an invitation to rest, and work. Work without rest is slavery, and rest without work is laziness.

None of the members of the Trinity are described as being busy. Busyness is a demonic characteristic. People who say they will rest in heaven are right, but they will just be getting there faster.

In America, it used to be Sunday is for church, and nothing else. Everything else shut down on Sundays. Nothing was open seven days a week.

The pilgrims meant for our nation to be a Sabbath society. But now, it is the nation most hostile to it.

The one day we have reflected a Sabbath culture was on 9/11. We saw what happened, went home from work, and called the ones we loved.

In our society, we never accidentally Sabbath. But we were created with a need to Sabbath (according to the creation story). It is in our bones.

IF WE COMPARE OUR CREATION STORY WITH ALL OF THE CREATION STORIES OF OTHER RELIGIONS, THERE ARE A COUPLE OF INTERESTING DIFFERENCES:

1. The Bible describes God saying that creation is good (other religions believed matter is bad)
2. The Bible elevated women to be equal to men (both are made in the image of God).
3. Only the Bible has the Sabbath and has a God who treats His human creation as friends.

The Sabbath is the first glimpse of the Gospel. Adam and Eve's first day of existence began with a day of rest (the seventh day, the Sabbath). The Gospel is that we can rest knowing that we are first loved, and then out of that rest we work.

Most of our exhaustion is spiritual exhaustion. We feel like we need to work in order to be loved by God. But the Gospel is that we get to rest knowing that God loves us.

In the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) we see that Jesus rests a lot. Jesus needed to rest. If we follow Jesus, we need to follow him in how he works and how he rests (He is the Lord of the Harvest and Lord of the Sabbath).

In the Ten Commandments, nine of them we agree wholeheartedly to, but the Sabbath commandment we find to be an interesting suggestion. **At what point did we think we were smarter than God?**

I decided to preach at our church for three weeks on the Sabbath, and I have never had more resistance. I wondered why. Then I had an epiphany that if I break nine of the commandments I would lose my job. But if I don't take a day of rest, I will probably get a raise. We have built an entire church culture that celebrates people burning out for Jesus. There is a whole generation of pastors' kids in the world who believe the church has stolen their parents.

When we look at the Sabbath commandment, we realize it is not just about you. It is about others. It is about our families. It is about our employees. It is not just about you.

Personally, my Sabbath looks like this:

I come home on Friday night, turn off my phone, we have a family meal, and then we go to bed. We sleep in, go downstairs and make breakfast, and then feast (there is a Jewish tradition in which the father of the household gives honey to those in his house on the morning of the Sabbath so that everyone gets to remember the sweetness of God's Sabbath rest).

During WWII, Nazis learned that the best thing to do to Jews to crush their spirits was take away their Sabbath.

Sabbath is where we get our Spirit back.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your exhaustion? (i.e. Spiritual, emotional, physical) What could you identify as some of the causes for your exhaustion?
2. Describe a time in which you did not feel exhausted, but rather was full of life and joy. What were the circumstances surrounding that time? What could you bring from that season into your current season?
3. What causes you resistance to practicing taking a weekly Sabbath? What are the obstacles that get in the way of you taking a Sabbath?
4. Where have you seen rest done well? Where have you seen rest done poorly?
5. What are some life-giving things you could do on a Sabbath day? If you already regularly practice Sabbath, what does your Sabbath look like? What are the non-negotiables that you have for your Sabbath?
6. What are some practical steps you can take to make sure you take a Sabbath this week? What are some steps you can take to cause Sabbath keeping to be an integral part of your weekly rhythm?