

Satisfying Sabbath: Finding the Rest of God

“weekly wisdom” articles from Nov/Dec 2013
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2013.11.20

Let's face it: wrapping our minds, attitudes and practices around the topic of Sabbath is just plain tricky business. It's one of those things where you could study for hours and feel no closer to understanding, let alone applying! A truly "proper" treatment of the Sabbath would span way beyond the scope and length of "weekly wisdom" articles. But daunting as it may be, as was mentioned in the sermon this past week, Scripture would seem to indicate that Sabbath is of absolute paramount importance to our Heavenly Father. So we best do SOME amount of sitting up to pay attention.

At the same time, though, we must admit a certain level of disconnect between the Biblical mandated Sabbath and the general evangelical verbiage and practice. Most of the time the Sabbath seems like either the weird uncle that no one really talks about, like the creepy tasteless-looking casserole that gets skipped at the potluck, or like Sasquach -- an intriguing, intimidating idea that we're not sure even exists.

With that in mind, I plan on taking the next few weeks worth of "wisdoms" to explore and expand on some various aspects of Sabbath Rest (thanks for the suggestion Joel!). This is admittedly a work-in-progress, as I decided to do this . . . uh, yesterday. But here's a general outline of what I hope to be an honest discussion on my part that spurs conversations between you and the Lord, you and me, and you and the other people in your life with whom you are meant to "rest".

- Sabbath Gift: freedom from the "Letter"
- Sabbath Practice: what can I or should I do?
- Sabbath Un-Practice: what should I relinquish or stop doing?
- Sabbath Reflection: the art of looking forward and back
- Sabbath Magic: the priceless fragility of relationship

There they are. Like five thick, capable fingers extending from a meaty palm of Biblical ethos, I hope these topics will lay hold of the issue of Sabbath rest with a tender dexterity and yet a firm and unyielding tenacity. I want to equip us each to grab onto the Sabbath . . . or rather the Lord of the Sabbath . . . and like Jacob say, "I'm not letting go until you bless me." Pray for me as I explore and unpack this important topic for an important people (YOU!) and pray for yourself to thoughtfully, actively pursue the Rest of God.

2013.11.27

Sabbath Gift: freedom from the "Letter"

I think that Romans 12:2 is one of the most important, useful verses in the entire Bible when it comes to understanding sanctification and our daily responding to the Holy Spirit:

Do not be conformed to this pattern of this world, but be *transformed by the renewing of your mind*, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God. (emphasis mine)

I think that this verse holds an important key to unlocking the power of the rest of God in the Sabbath.

You see, one of the main threats to "Sabbath-ing" well is simply making it about the "letter of the law" -- boxing Sabbath perspective and practice into some formula to obey or not to obey. Our culture exalts individualism and achievement. Our pride exalts works over grace. Our schedules exalt efficiency in work to make room for leisure. This all leads to the Sabbath being either forgotten all together, or like many spiritual disciples, it falls into legalism.

Legalism (and religion apart from Christ) thinks like this: "I obey, therefore I am accepted." It tries to figure out the correct form to place on something in order to make it conform (see Romans 12:2 above!) to the desired outcome.

Under the Old Testament Law, this was an important function of the Sabbath in showing the people the importance of rest, of obedience and of the lack of humanity's ability to conform to God's standards. There needed to be another way to completely enter the Rest of God.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus provided this “new way.” He provided the final, perfect sacrifice for sin. And He made a way, through the torn “curtain of His flesh” (see Heb. 10:20) to enter into the very presence of God. The Gospel flips the perspective of legalism.

In Christ, “We are accepted, therefore we obey.”

To revisit Romans 12:2 again, we are to be “transformed” which literally means to be changed from the inside out. Accepted because of the Spirit of Jesus IN us, therefore the OUTside obeys. And we connect with being “transformed” (Gospel), instead of “conformed” (legalism), because we are “renewing” our minds. This means that we are putting in some effort to gain perspective and make decisions and teach ourselves often and in new/fresh ways to remember that life/faith/Sabbath is about Jesus, grace, acceptance before it is about religion, forms, and obedience.

Each item in that last sentence is important, but they all need to be given a Gospel-informed (or transformed!) order and weight. Sabbath is at its heart an invitation to intimacy with God, an opportunity to admit our deep-seated need for Him, and a chance to revel in our genuine acceptance in Christ and our freedom from empty forms.

As we continue our discussion of Sabbath and you explore integrating this important spiritual discipline into your life, constantly renew your mind to carefully arrange your Sabbath perspective and practices according to the Gospel-purchased “Spirit” of the law: you are accepted in Christ. Don’t get trapped focusing on getting the form “just right” in order to have some magical success.

Sabbath is relational time, it is grace-driven effort, it’s fluid. Elusive? Maybe. But it’s not a farce. It’s God’s invitation into continuing, dynamic restoration. Try putting a stop to worrying about what Sabbath should or shouldn’t look like, and just start doing something with God.

2013.12.03

Sabbath Practices: what can I or should I do?

Last week, in discussing the Sabbath, I focused on the freedom that we have from the “letter of the law”. I felt it was important that we begin the topic by making sure we understand Sabbath to be LESS about getting the formula correct and MORE about renewing our minds in keeping with the transformation that Christ is working in our lives from the inside out (Romans 12:2).

So in effect, a given activity *could be* completely appropriate for Sabbath-rest one week, and then the same activity could be unfit for the Sabbath and a distraction another week. Similarly, abstaining from a given activity could be appropriate one week, and another week, a similar abstaining from activity could be just plain slothful (examples below). The bottom-line is that there is a world of difference between “conforming” to the idea of the Sabbath (tends toward the “letter of the law”) and being “transformed” by the renewing of our minds through the work of the Holy Spirit (tends toward the “Spirit of the law”). But that’s all a summary of last week’s article. This week I wanted to intentionally limit myself to being very practical.

For concern of getting lost in the ideological principles of the Sabbath, I wanted to spend some time answering the question: “What can I or should I do?” I thought it might be most helpful if I just shared some tips from my own personal experience.

Can I “work” on the Sabbath?

Interestingly possibly the most contentious part of Jesus’ ministry, the thing that got Him “in trouble” with the religious leaders most often, were His actions on the Sabbath (considering only one Gospel -- Luke 4:31-37; 6:1-5, 6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6). Then you have one of the most important verses, in my opinion when taking Jesus’ actions into account is Christ’s statement in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” How does this shake down?

As I apply this to my life, Sabbath becomes an opportunity for me to order my decisions and my attitudes with an

extra level of control so that I can focus on doing things that are “life-giving” to me and my family. Sometimes this means “working” on a task; sometimes this means abstaining from “work.” Here are some examples:

I and my family draw strength from our home being nice and clean enough that it doesn't hinder our “play”. So sometimes this means that we pick up and vacuum the floor so that we can be freer to wrestle or play a game. Sometimes I pick up dog poop and cut grass because I like/need the physical activity and I want to be able to use the backyard for “stuff.”

However, sometimes I purposefully DON'T vacuum or cut grass because I recognize that my family needs physical rest, and wrestling or outdoor labour isn't going to meet that need.

OR sometimes I recognize that my desire to vacuum stems more from a place of feeling the need “to do *something*”, and it is difficult to just slow down and “be.” Usually in these times I will pray that the Lord quiet my spirit. I will tell myself, “It is okay for the floor to be dirty a little while longer.” And then I will usually make myself either sit down with my Bible or another book, or I will engage one or more of my children in some activity that they enjoy. I always feel better.

Most of the time I ignore emails and phone calls on my Sabbath day. And if I happen to see something that is important and urgent, I usually make a note/reminder to deal with it first thing on the next day . . . then I pray to trust it to the Lord, and I go back to Sabbath-ing.

However, if I happen to see something that strikes me as needing to be addressed immediately, I'll consider how to do it in a way that has minimal effect on my family's Sabbath-ing; I'll check my attitude and renew my mind, if necessary, to thank God for the privilege to work; then I'll “work” in the Spirit of the freedom I have in Christ from the “letter” of the law.

Should I go out to eat on the Sabbath?

This is a question that seems to come up often. Especially in past decades, when local laws were beginning to shift away from a cultural observance of a day of rest, it was believed that taking advantage of certain products and services that required people to be employed for others to “enjoy a break” seemed hypocritical. Here are some of my thoughts on how that shakes down.

Gone are the days when large portions of the population had any clue about a Sabbath day of rest. Probably the employees who serve us on our Sabbaths are not sacrificing their Sabbath in order to serve. Furthermore, even if they were lovers of God and took Sabbath-time, because of the freedom from the “letter” of the law, they may just be observing their Sabbath on a different day/time.

Generally my family budgets to eat one meal “out” on our Family Day (Sabbath). Primarily this is to give us a break from the work of planning, preparing, and cleaning up a meal. This in turn frees up some time to do other things that hopefully draw us together.

However, sometimes we don't eat out because a) we already spent that budgeted meal-money and it's more life-giving-in-the-long-run to be financially responsible, or b) we feel so harried by the pace of life that we just need to stay home with the door locked.

In each scenario the focus is on making choices that build us up and shaping attitudes that trust God with all outcomes.

How do I evaluate what I can/should do?

Ah, there's the question. Here are some hopefully beneficial tips in addition to the above.

If you find yourself often worrying about and/or constantly asking this question, you probably need to spend some time reading Scriptures and meditating on “freedom in Christ” and “the letter vs. spirit of the law”.

Purposeful, meaningful, sacred time in the Bible is a MUST. It is the revelation of God to humanity and therefore the primary tool that God will use to shape your experience of life and faith. The Bible will help you renew your mind to be able to answer the question of what you can/should do on your Sabbath. Often times it takes employing something like Lectio Divina in your time in the Word in order to distinguish it from other daily quiet times with God.

A good rule of thumb is that Sabbath-rest is a “break” from routine. This may mean studying extra hard the day before or after so that you can not study at all on your Sabbath. If you think you generally spend too much time alone, strategically plan some fun time with a person you trust and are comfortable around. Conversely if you are constantly around people, plan some kind of secluded activity . . . lock yourself away with a good book and journal, take a long walk in the woods, experiment with a new hobby.

You should definitely make time to be still and simply ask God to help you evaluate different parts of your life. Where are you most effective? Where are you lacking? Where do you feel the Lord moving? What plans does He have in store for you?

Over the next three weeks there will be other examples of how Sabbath-ing could translate practically in our lives. Interestingly, since life is constantly changing and shifting, and since our routines and reactions are constantly changing with it, it seems important that the reality of the Sabbath be a stalwart constant in the change while the content of the Sabbath be flexible to best meet our changing needs. Keep this in mind as you evaluate your Sabbath practices.

2013.12.11

Sabbath Un-Practices: what should I relinquish or stop doing?

Sabbath rest is a pure gift, similar to grace. We don't deserve it, we don't earn it . . . most of the time, we don't even realize that we need it. Sabbath rest is an opportunity to stop and say “no” to some things (even good things) in order to say “yes” to the best things, namely trusting more fully in God and identifying ourselves in Him. Think of it as God giving you the “gift of ‘no’”.

Pastor & author Mark Buchanan points to this truth when writing about practicing Sabbath:

I used to think the spiritual life was mostly about finding and using our gifts for God's glory – my utmost for his highest. More and more, I think it is not this, not first, not most. At root, the spiritual life consists in choosing the way of littleness. I become less so that Jesus might become greater. Its essence is “No” – No to ourselves, our impulses and cravings, our acts of self-promotion and self-vindication, our use of power for its own sake. It calls us to deny ourselves possessions, rights, conquests that we're tempted to claim just because we can. It is growing, day by day, into the same attitude that Christ had, and by exactly the same means: emptying ourselves, giving ourselves. It is refusing to grasp what we think is owed us and instead embracing what we think is beneath us. (The Rest Of God)

Saying no as Buchanan describes requires a profound trust in conducting life on God's terms. In the Sabbath, this saying “no” to some things means a richer, fuller experience and effectiveness in all things. This is what Christ desires for us.

Admittedly this is a little easier said than done. Learning to say no – relinquishing – is profoundly personal in its application, and it requires a special kind of self-awareness. Self-awareness is an important component of “Sabbath-ing” well. Most of the time we operate from a shallow self-awareness of self-perceived duty, of self-defined deadline, or of selfishly-“deserved” reward. The problem is that our time ends up filled with these pursuits that all originate from a reactionary, “me-centered” awareness that rarely touches on a “Christ-awareness”. A proper self-awareness must be informed by a sincere Christ-awareness if we are to find the freedom and rest offered in Sabbath.

For example, a shallow self-awareness sets about a task with the goal of “working well” and then subtly feels that it cannot rest until the job is done and done “good enough”, probably better than it's been done before. Suddenly we've

created unattainable standards. The jobs will never ALL be done. “Good enough” is a tough taskmaster because we will tend to always think that we ought to do better. We tie our satisfaction either to successful accomplishment or to freedom from “the grind”. One is a failure to relinquish; the other is escapism. Neither is the gift of saying no.

Self-awareness that springs from Christ-awareness does two main things. First, it seeks to let Christ define our tasks, our timelines, and our leisure. This gives us a confidence that what we do matters because Christ has put us to it, and He does things that matter. This allows us to work well. Second, it looks to Christ to define our rest and the results of our work. This gives us a freedom to work hard and then find true rest apart from certain results. We do the best we can, and then we relinquish the rest to a Sovereign, Loving God who is working all things together for good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (see Rom. 8:28). This allows us to say no well.

As you learn to employ this gift of saying no, likely the biggest/hardest thing you’ll need to relinquish is your perceived “right” to various attitudes, actions, and privileges.

The problem is that based on our work, our performance, or something that someone (culture?) has told us, we often feel that we deserve a lot. Health, a certain level of wealth, a type of leisure, a flavour of relational fulfillment, our homes, our toys, maybe even our salvation, all fall into this category of things that we feel we deserve. Then, without a healthy Christ/self-awareness, even our Sabbath is tainted by our perceived rights.

Here are two important specific examples of how this could shake down.

Singles: One of the biggest defining aspects of being single is having a lot of freedom, whether in the form of spending, saving, use of time, schedule, etc. Freedom is great, but it creates a pretty intense battle ground for self-control, a battle that many singles lose. Without much purpose or restraint, large quantities of time, energy, emotion and other resources are spent in an effort to “live to the full” and fulfill our self-perceived rights. Many assume that “it is only a phase” and that marriage is the inevitable next step to life and the threshold of exchanging “freedom” for responsibility and self-control. This is a lie.

First, the freedom of single-hood is a blessing and a precious resource in itself that you will need to account for before God. You are establishing routines and habits that will likely last the rest of your life whether you remain single or not. University and single-hood are NOT “spring training” or “pre-season”, anticipating the “real thing” that comes later. They are the early rounds in a prize fight! And if you get beat up in round one, you’re in a tough spot for the rest of the match.

Second, marriage is NOT the inevitable next step for everyone. Utilizing the freedom of single-hood is a life path that the New Testament highly values. The Spirit can focus that freedom into a laser focus on the rest and fulfillment of being united with Christ, which are the things that all our souls truly need. So whether singleness is a season or life-long, Christ calls you to relinquish your rights to freedom and rest and to Christ Him to bring purpose, strength, satisfaction and joy.

Marrieds/Families: As a husband, wife and/or parent, when considering perceived rights, there is often an inherent tension between work and rest. Even when we “work well” and pursue a self-awareness rooted in Christ throughout our week, we can arrive at a Sabbath time looking for rest, only to be met with the needs of our spouse or kids. Even though we may be justified in feeling that we deserve a break from “work,” there are still diapers to be changed, houses to be maintained, meals to be made, consumed and cleaned, and the list goes on. This care for others seems to oppose rest. This tension means that either sometimes Sabbath is impossible OR that since we have “the mind of Christ” the Spirit can help us relinquish our rights to a “typical” Sabbath and STILL find rest.

This often happens to me when I don’t want to clean up or do dishes or change diapers on my Sabbath. The Spirit reminds me of the service Christ has offered me and I begin to find joy serving my family to enable us all to enter into a spirit of rest. This kind of Sabbath renewal is absolutely attainable, where independent of circumstances we execute an acute control and renewing of the mind in the strength of the Spirit. Relinquishing my perceived right to rest physically actually opened the door for Christ to show me how effectively HE meets my needs.

Okay, look back again at the “no” list from Mark Buchanan above and ask the Lord where you need to do some relinquishing.

2013.12.19

Sabbath Reflection: the art of looking forward and back

If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on my holy day,
And call the Sabbath a delight
And the holy day of the Lord honourable;
If you honour it, not going your own ways,
Or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
Then you shall take delight in the Lord,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
For the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (Isaiah 58:13-14)

Our brief journey of considering the Sabbath and its place in our lives has taken us through both some theoretical and some practical aspects. It would seem as though making the most out of Sabbath practices requires a delicate, dynamic balance of each to help us guard against neglect and hedonism on the one hand and legalism on the other. One perspective that can help us strike this balance is what I call Sabbath Reflection.

One of the most consistent themes of the Bible is the importance of remembering. In Exodus 17:14 God tells Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it . . .”. In Deuteronomy 6, we see significant weight put on the need not only to remember God and His works and His commands, but also to plan on teaching it future generations as a way to remember. Sabbath played an important role in structuring a part of life around stopping to remember and reflect on promises fulfilled and then look forward to the fulfillment of other promises. In fact, probably the most important day for the Jews was the Passover Sabbath, remembering and reflecting on God’s greatest act of deliverance (pre-Jesus, that is!). In the act of remembering and reflecting, we see Israel commune with God and connect with the mighty works that He is still yet to do.

We shouldn’t be surprised then that Jesus institutes a vitally important parallel practice for the church: The Lord’s Supper. When Jesus leads His disciples in the Last Supper and commands them to continue the practice, He instructs them to do this “in remembrance” of Him. Today, we approach Communion with a solemn respect, remembering Jesus’ atoning sacrifice, reflecting on our own salvation. In addition, we receive the bread and the cup with a sense of anticipation for Christ’s return, making our salvation complete. Understanding these qualities of reflection, remembering and anticipation, looking forward and looking back, provides a great aid in making the most of our Sabbaths.

Remembering can be surprisingly tough. For starters, we typically fill our lives with so much “stuff” that our memories often just seem clouded and insufficient. Furthermore, many of us have dark, hurtful memories that we would prefer to forget. This makes practicing the art of remembering as a part of Sabbath all the more important. Unfortunately the negative memories tend to stick with us naturally, whether we like it or not. This necessitates a level of intentionality to remember the important, worthwhile moments in order to help combat the bad ones. Here are some ways to help you “look back” well:

- Spend some time reflecting on your testimony and how you came to give your life to Jesus.
- Journal about three times in the past where you felt most encouraged in your walk with God.
- Be honest with yourself and recall a time where you’ve felt the most despairing and distant from God. What have been some things that have kept you going?
- Keep track of prayer requests, from yourself and from your small group. Revisit the prayer items and report on how the situations have progressed.
- Give yourself reminders to encourage someone with a note praising someone for something they’ve done

well. Try it with your family, friends, and coworkers.

- Journal some of the Scriptures and lessons where you've felt God challenge/teach/encourage you. Periodically read back through some of the entries as part of your Sabbath times.

One thing that the Byers family has started doing to remember well is highlighting a family member each family day. We call it our "Barnabas Circle" time (Barnabas was an encourager in the Bible). Each week one of the family members stands up after dinner (the kids get to stand in their chairs – they love it) and, we go around and each share something special about that person. We "remember" some characteristic about them that we really appreciate, or we praise them for something special they've done recently. It is a truly wonderful time that often evokes sweet tears of joy.

Anticipating well can also be tricky. Our homes are flooded with goals, measures of success, distractions, and goodies to strive toward attaining. In the midst of this melee, true God-centered looking forward can get lost. And yet, according to Jesus, though we will have troubles in this world, the best days are still to come. And because of the troubles, the only way to keep that positive perspective is to stay connected with Him, anticipating the fulfillment of the promises of God. Here are some ways you can "look forward" well as a part of your Sabbath reflections:

- Ask God to help you be alert and discerning of spiritual, emotional, relational and physical needs that you see for yourself, your family, and other key people in your life. Make efforts to meet these needs.
- Pray regularly and earnestly for more than just "blessings". Pray for kids to have focus in school and favour with friends and teachers. Pray for spouses to challenges as opportunities to display the fruit of the Spirit. Pray for conversations with classmates and coworkers to lend themselves to spiritual insights, and pray for the courage to "lean into" those conversations.
- Meditate and brainstorm what kind of spiritual tone and identity you want to have for your personal ministry, your business, and/or your family.
- Talk about future events, goals and hopes. Where would you like to see God take you and your family? What are likely to be the hurdles that you'll need the Spirit to help you navigate?

This anticipating is an area of Sabbath reflection that I need to work on more. I'm trying to journal more, to look ahead at life-rhythms in my family and the church, to ask good forward-looking questions of my family and friends. I trust that the more I can prayerfully anticipate the work that God is doing in and around me, the more I will see Him accomplishing His work – resulting in great encouragement and even greater anticipation.

Consider setting aside some time during your next Sabbath-break to reflect well – looking back and looking ahead. God is faithful; He has proven Himself over and over again. And He is also a God who makes things new, who does new things, and is moving all things to a glorious end, including "good" for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. Step more fully into that purpose through Sabbath reflection.

2013.12.27

Sabbath Magic: the priceless fragility of relationship

As we come to the final installment in these articles focusing on the Sabbath and additionally close out 2013, we turn our attention to the most important aspect of the Sabbath. This is the lynchpin in the whole system. Without an proper, functional understanding of what I've grown to call "Sabbath magic", we will quickly and frequently find ourselves losing the battle of REST to the enemies of busyness and legalism.

To put it simply, though the Sabbath was written into the Law and was governed by the Law, Sabbath rest is all about a relationship -- which unlike law is anything but rote, clear-cut and static.

If we view God's command to take Sabbath rest as merely a rule to obey or as a recipe to follow, we miss the fresh, mysteriously complex, dynamic nature of a very-real relationship with the Almighty God. When is the last time you treated a relationship like a recipe and had it thrive? Probably never.

Relationships are fairly fragile. I don't mean that if you aren't careful, you'll drop it and have it shatter, never to be repaired. I mean that to get the most of them, you have to pay attention to them, treat them with respect, "baby" them at times, because it IS often easy to damage them. While this may be more work than some of us typically find preferential, it is none-the-less work with a priceless payoff. We were created as relational beings. You don't need to be friends with the whole world, but you were made to have healthy relationships. Healthy relationships are life-giving . . . especially when we're talking about a healthy relationship with our Creator. Truth be told, I think it is the inherent fragility of relationships that helps make them so special.

The fragility of relationships make us pay more attention. Paying more attention helps us see more of the wonder, more of the value, more of what it takes to improve. All this leads to thriving. And at the same time, the fragility of relationship means that mis-steps are a mere hair's breadth away. (Note: this fragility comes from us not God. It comes from our limited faithfulness; God's enduring faithfulness establishes promise, hope, and security.) An example of such fragility between thriving and thrashing happened in my kitchen recently.

I love my wife. She is far and away my best friend. Our relationship is as simple as a clear blue sky and as complex as a shifting kaleidoscope. We spend more time with each other than each with any other person, and yet we rarely ever tire of one another. I've studied Carrie for almost 10 years of marriage, and yet I have not figured her out. Just last week, after a heart-warming, fun-filled day, as we were cleaning the kitchen, an ill-timed sarcastic comment on my part elicited tears instead of laughter. Hurt feelings, misunderstanding, conflict management, relational nitty-gritty, resolution: priceless fragility. And yet at its core, our relationship rests on Christ, His love for us, and His calling us to be together -- this is priceless security. All of this adds up to an experience of life and love that is, well, "magic". (And by "magic" I mean the mysterious wonder that we can't quite figure out and that seems to continually capture our attention through unexpected twists and turns.)

I believe this is the kind of relationship that Christ offers His followers. I believe that this priceless fragility, this thriving, this "magic" of a relationship with the Most High God is what Christ purchased for us on the Cross and what He sustains by His indwelling Spirit. When the New Testament records that Jesus is the "Lord of the Sabbath", and that "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath", we see God pointing us toward a priority of dynamic relationship. Under the old covenant this relationship centred on temple worship, the law and fairly uniform experience of Sabbath. Under the new covenant this relationship centres on the person of Jesus, transforming and sanctifying from this inside out, leading us into a glorious reality of life (John 20:31), of love (1John 4:7-11), and of liberty (Gal. 5:1).

Since the Spirit of God is alive in the heart of each believer, we ALWAYS have access to the source of life and love and freedom. It is Christ in us, the hope of glory, the primary relationship that becomes the security. It is our losing touch with this wonderful reality which shows the fragility of relationship. Then, it is in restoring a connection to this relationship that we find the life-giving "magic" of "keeping step with the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16-26). This is the heart of the Sabbath.

Over the past 5 weeks we've talked about principles around the Sabbath. We've kicked around tips on what to do and not to do. And now we come back to Romans 12:2 and the lynchpin of the Sabbath > "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

For the born-again believer in Jesus, the Sabbath is more about being renewed and transformed than about being static and conformed. Because we can "renew our minds" through the Spirit of Christ in us, we can make ANY moment, ANY activity, ANY chore, ANY conversation, ANY inactivity a means to engage our Creator in priceless relationship. Any time can be Sabbath time, where we take a deep breath and run to God for renewal and perspective.

We still need to set aside regular blocks of time to practice this in a routine, significant, holistic way. But we realize that the effectiveness of these times still rest with the renewal of our minds NOT in the routine. Sabbath rest isn't something we figure out and then decide whether or not we practice. Sabbath rest is a priceless, fragile relationship that is valued and nurtured. A dynamic interaction between a soul and its Maker that processes through ups and downs, hard questions and exuberant rejoicing. This habit is formed and practiced systematically through a regular

Sabbath time, and it is perfected and properly enjoyed through the ongoing “magic” of constantly renewing our mind toward Christ. This is part of a living sacrifice, perpetual spiritual worship, a thriving relationship with God that pays dividends in all other aspects of life.

Go explore the potential of Sabbath-ing with God. Do it through regular set-aside time. Do it through turning your thoughts to Him throughout your day. Look for the wonder of a dynamic God and the priceless fragility of a relationship with Him.