

Sabbath Ceasing Thoughts by Nairy Ohanian, D.Min, 2015

The Hebrew word for Sabbath is “Shabbat” which means to cease; often Sabbath is translated and thought of as rest. Rest is part of ceasing but first there is a stopping from all work and productivity. Additionally there is reflection, celebration and renewal. Sabbath ceasing is first mentioned in Genesis 2:2-3; *“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”*

On the Sabbath Day, which God himself established and observed on the seventh day of the week, He rested from work. He blessed the day and set it apart from the others days as holy or special. The Sabbath observance is a day on which His people are to mimic His rest. This physical and mental rest of the Sabbath observance is only a shadow of the real rest and soul-Sabbath that God has made available to His people.

There are numerous reasons for God’s people to observe and engage in Sabbath:

- 1. God models it:** God was not exhausted but He blessed, reflected, celebrated after working six days. “So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.” Heb. 4:9-11
- 2. God commands it:** Of the 10 commandments the 4th command is the longest Command; 97 words in English! Exodus 20:8. God knows we would not choose it ourselves and hence the need to command it. Our ancestors in Egypt went 400 years without a vacation, Deut. 5:15, never a day off. They were no longer persons but slaves or work units. They were no longer persons created in God’s image. Lest anyone would do that to them or we do to others, God protects us by making it a command. Do you see God protecting you through Sabbath? But no one loves commands,...
- 3. God’s invitation to us:** “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Matt 11:28 Invitations are always valued according to whom it is who invites us. Each week the God of the universe invites us into His presence. Isaiah 28:12- 13 “This is the resting place let the weary rest, and this is the place of repose, but they would NOT listen. So then Word of the Lord- DO and Do and DO and Do rule on rule on rule a little here & a little there, so that they will fall and be capture.”
- 4. Our trust of God:** Isaiah 30:15 thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, “In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall

be your strength.” God will provide—like the manna not collected on the Sabbath, God will make time for the work and burdens we must still attend to. Can God be trusted with the time and resources needed if we cease from labor?

- 5. Our Blessing and Joy:** Isaiah 58:13-14 “If you turn back ...and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable;... not going your own ways,

...then you shall take delight in the LORD,... and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; Psalm 16:9 brings joy keeps away anxiety- My soul finds REST in God alone. Psalm 62

- 6. Our Lord Jesus lives it:** Jesus demonstrated for us the necessity to stop and pull away from service and labor. Mark 2:27, Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Are we modelling rest and reflection to our family, children and community? Some of the times in which Jesus ceased: Matt 4, Before choosing the disciples, Luke 6, grieving John’s death, Matt 14, exhausting ministry, Matt 14, Mark 1, Luke 5 Debriefing the disciples, Mark 6, preparing for the cross Matthew 26.

BUT Sabbath is not ultimately a day of the week, but a state of the soul, a posture of the heart, an attitude of the mind.

(adapted from reflections by Scott Shaum)

Practical Thoughts: Daily, Delight, Discover, Direct

(adapted from Jennifer Kennedy Dean, author)

- A. **Daily** then weekly: Each day take moments and minutes of rest and breaks; rest at all levels- body, mind, emotions. Then set a weekly time for renewal, celebration, and reflection.
- B. **Delight:** Enjoy the Lord; reflect on HIM day and night. Weekly ask *what was good, what was hard, and how I saw God’s hand throughout the last week.* Celebrate the good, grieve the hard and sad.
- C. **Discover:** There are no black and white Sabbath rules. Learn, read and personally experiment for true growth and effectiveness. Each one’s unique personality, schedule, family dynamic will determine rhythms of Sabbath. Make a list of your fears, and resistance to Sabbath.
- D. **Direct:** Reorder, and redirect your priorities. Direct your family, friends, team, colleagues to help you keep a Sabbath rhythm, and vision. Direct your focus to do on the Sabbath, whatever you do not do on the other six days and whatever promotes rest and spiritual renewal for you.