



Summer Focus: 24 / 6

Living God's Rhythm

Using the spiritual practice of Sabbath keeping

This summer we are getting back to basics with an intentional focus on living God's rhythm of 24/6 - six days of work and one day of ceasing work. Our goal is by the Holy Spirit working in us, we will develop a consistent habit, a regular rhythm of pausing every seven days to rest, reimagine our lives in Christ, and reconnect with others.

Why are we doing this? Life in Northern Virginia is intense. The pace rarely lets up. Summer is naturally one of those slowing down times, *especially after swim season!* It allows us a little more freedom to pursue things that give us joy and delight.

God knows we need rest so He gave us the gift of Sabbath to break us free from the frenetic pace and growing list of expectations. It's like He gives us a mini-vacation, a special day to stop the striving and doing to be in relationship.

We invite you to rediscover the gift of Sabbath. Choose a day to set aside to stop, rest, and reconnect. Observe the day with lighting a Sabbath candle (an ancient tradition of our Jewish heritage). Say a prayer. Enjoy the day centered on your relationship with God and others. We've offered some suggestions below.

God bless your sabbath keeping as you experience God's grace in living His rhythm of 24/6!

A Prayer to Begin the Sabbath *Adapted from the traditional Jewish prayer*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has commanded us to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy. May the Sabbath-light which shines here cause peace and joy to shine in our home and neighborhood. In the name of the Father, the Son+, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

Prayer to End the Sabbath *Based on Isaiah 12:2-3*

Behold, God is our salvation; I will trust and will not be afraid; for the Lord God is my strength and my song. With joy we will draw water from the wells of salvation. I will lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who separates the holy from the mundane, light from darkness, the seventh day of rest from the six days of work.

Blessed are You, O Lord, who gives us Jesus, the Messiah. Amen.

Sabbath Practices *Create a special day centered on your relationship to God and others*

Light a candle – To mark your time of rest, light a candle where everyone can see it. Say a prayer inviting the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide you through your Sabbath. The candle can serve as a physical, visible and aromatic reminder of your time committed to the Lord.

Ideal day - Write down a description of an ideal and achievable day of rest and recreation. Then schedule it on your calendar.

Prepare a Sabbath basket – Choose a basket (you can decorate it or label it if you like). Then each Sabbath time put all the things that distract you into that basket (phone, credit cards, work projects, homework).

Eat with friends and family – Invite people to join you for a restful meal. Resist the urge to make other plans, simply create space for caring discussions.

Read Scripture – Read the Bible for a longer period of time than you have usually allowed. For some this may be 20 minutes, for others it may be two hours.

Intentional sleep – Plan to get at least 8 hours of restful sleep as a spiritual act of worship. Enter into prayer and drop all that causes you anxiety into His loving arms. Commit your body and dreams to God.

Make preparation – Plan to do your household chores or shopping the day before you begin your Sabbath time.

Practice thanksgiving - Give thanks before meals, upon rising, when going to sleep. During Sabbath, we are less concerned with what is missing and more grateful for what has already been given.

Bless your loved ones - Place your hand gently on their heads and offer your blessing. What do you most wish for them? Self-knowledge, courage, safety, joy, and future plans? Let them hear your prayers for their happiness.

Sabbath pause - Choose one common act—touching a doorknob, turning on a faucet or hearing the phone ring. Throughout the day when this occurs, stop and take three silent, mindful breaths. Then go on.

Take a walk – Invite others to join you. Stroll slowly to nowhere in particular for 30 minutes. Let your senses guide you. Observe deeply whatever attracts you—a tree, a stone, a flower. Share your observations.

Use your talents – Express yourself through music, art, or other creative means. See that time as an expression of worship to God.

Sabbath jar - Write down a particular worry, prayer, or concern and drop it in. Just for now, let it go.

Unplug – Unplug the TV, or computer or anything that causes you distraction. Create a period of time when you will not be disturbed by what our technologies demand of us.

Journal – Write about your thoughts in a book. Allow the journal to receive your thoughts, questions and stressors.

Prepare a Sabbath meal—Even if you are alone, you can choose foods you love, put flowers on the table, take time to enjoy every dish, give thanks for all these gifts that are given to us by God.

Seek companionship - One of the most precious gifts we can offer is to be a place of refuge, a Sabbath for one another. Give quiet time and attention to others. Play a game or work a puzzle together without being concerned about competition.

Reset your inner compass - Make a list of the values and principles that guide your life—both those you follow and those you would like to follow. Speak them aloud, alone or with loved ones.

Sabbath Apps and Websites

<http://www.practicingourfaith.org/keeping-sabbath>
*Valparaiso Project on the Education and Formation of
People in Faith*

<http://www.sabbathideas.org>
Family-friendly sabbath ideas

<http://reformjudaism.org/shabbat-customs>
<http://reformjudaism.org/origins-shabbat>
<http://www.jewfaq.org/m/shabbat.htm>
Origins of Sabbath customs

<http://www.todayschristianwoman.com/articles/2004/january/lauren-winner-sabbath-holy.html?start=2>
One woman's Sabbath journey

The Book of Concord - Luther's Large Catechism
<http://bookofconcord.org/lc-1-intro.php>

Sabbath Books

[Keeping the Sabbath Wholly](#)
Marva J. Dawn

[The Sabbath](#)
Abraham Joshua Heschel

[Rest: Living in Sabbath Simplicity](#)
Keri Wyatt Kent

[Living the Sabbath:](#)
[Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight](#)
Norman Wirzba

[Sabbath as Resistance:](#)
[Saying No to Culture of Now](#)
Walter Bruggemann

[24/6: A Prescription for Healthier, Happier Life](#)
Matthew Sleeth