

# *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life*

## **Small Group Guide: “Keeping Sabbath”**

(LifelongFaith Associates)

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Begin with a simple ice-breaker activity: “A Great Day Off.” Share with your group what your idea of a great “day-off” would be.” Use the list below to select one or more activities.

**My idea of a great “day off” would be...**

- reading a good book
- getting some extra sleep
- spending time with family
- walking or hiking—alone or with someone I like
- going shopping
- watching sports—on TV or at the game
- eating a meal with friends
- playing my favorite sport
- going to the movies or a concert
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Part 1. *Yearning*: The Hunger for the Practice—Stories of Sabbath Practice**

This small group session focuses on the Christian practice of Keeping Sabbath. It isn’t easy to keep the Sabbath today. Read the two opening stories on page 7.2—7.3 in *Living Well*: “Do You Keep the Sabbath” and “Developing My Sabbath Day.” Think about how these stories reflect the challenges of keeping Sabbath and how they connect with your own experience.

Share your reflections with your small group.

### **Part 2. *Reflecting*: Reflection on the Hunger for Sabbath**

Use the following questions to discuss with the group your experience of Sabbath. This is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her story without interruptions or discussion.

#### **Remembering Sunday**

- What do you remember from childhood about Sunday activities?
- What does Sunday look like in your household today?

#### **The Meaning of Sabbath**

Read aloud following quotes about the meaning of Sabbath.

*Keeping Sabbath offers us the God-given gift of rest. It allows us time to look at ourselves and at our lives apart from the everyday world. More important, it offers extended time and space to give thanks and praise to God for the many gifts in our lives. (Living Well book)*

*Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is a day when we partake of the wisdom, peace and delight that grow only in the soil of time—time consecrated specifically for play, refreshment and renewal. Many of us, in our desperate drive to be successful and care for our many responsibilities, feel terrible guilt when we take time to rest. But the Sabbath has proven its wisdom over the ages. The Sabbath gives us the permission we need to stop, to restore our souls. As part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is already woven into the fabric of our society. Many of us still recall when, not long ago, shops and offices were closed on Sundays. Those quiet Sunday afternoons are embedded in our cultural memory.*

(Wayne Muller)

*Sabbath keeping is not about taking a day off but about being recalled to our knowledge of and gratitude for God's activity in creating the world, giving liberty to captives, and overcoming the powers of death.*

(Dorothy C. Bass)

*Sabbath is a discipline and practice in which we ask, consider, and answer the questions that will lead us into a complete and joyful life. As such, the Sabbath is a teaching that has the potential to redirect and transform all our existence, bringing it into more faithful alignment with God's life-building and life-strengthening ways.* (Norman Wirzba)

Use the following questions to reflect on your understanding of Sabbath. Then share your reflections with your group.

- What does Sabbath mean to you? to your family?
- How do you mark the Sabbath in your life today? When in your week or year do you experience real Sabbath? Where do you go, what do you do, and who are you with? How do these places, activities, and people contribute to this experience of rest and renewal?
- What makes keeping Sabbath so difficult today?

### **Part 3. Exploring: The Christian Practice of Keeping Sabbath**

Keeping Sabbath is central to the Christian faith and it has its roots in the faith of the Jewish people.

Begin by prayerfully reading the two primary texts about the command to keep the Sabbath on page 7.6. Read Exodus (20:8-11) with its commandment to “remember” the Sabbath that is grounded in the story of creation. Then read Deuteronomy (5:12-15) with its the commandment to “observe” the Sabbath that sees to it that no one, not even animals, will work without respite.

#### **1. The Jewish Practice of Keeping Sabbath**

Shabbat—the Jewish Sabbath—is the heart of Judaism. In observant Jewish homes, Shabbat begins each Friday night at sundown as a woman lights the Sabbath candles. Until the following sundown, all activities associated with work or commerce are prohibited.

Begin by reading “The Jewish Practice of Keeping Sabbath” on page 7.7 in *Living Well*.

Continue your exploration by reading the following essay from MyJewishLearning.com.

The Sabbath (in Hebrew, Shabbat, pronounced shah-BAHT—or in some communities, Shabbos, “SHAH-bis”) may be Judaism’s most distinctive and characteristic practice, as well as one of its most pervasive and long-lasting gifts to Western civilization. A weekly 25 hour observance, from just before sundown each Friday through the completion of nightfall on Saturday, Shabbat

is more than just a day off from labor. It is a day of physical and spiritual delights that is meant to illuminate certain key concepts in the traditional Jewish perception of the world.

*Themes and Theology:* Shabbat is portrayed in the Bible as the pinnacle of the creation of the universe, and its observance can be seen as a reminder of the purposefulness of the world and the role of human beings in it. Shabbat also serves as a memorial to God's act of rescuing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt by setting aside a day for personal autonomy and freedom from the harsh demands of labor. The traditional Shabbat is portrayed in Jewish liturgy, song, and story as a day of joy, a sanctuary from travails, and even a foretaste of the perfected world that will someday be attained.

*History and Development:* Shabbat, like many important facets of Judaism, has its origins in the Torah, where it is most notable as a day of complete cessation of labor. The prophetic tradition portrays it as a day of pleasures as well. The Rabbis spelled out their understanding of forbidden "labor" in a complex series of restrictions on productive activities of many sorts. They also prescribed festive meals and ceremonies for every part of the day. The varieties of Shabbat observances and customs over the ages and around the world illustrate the adaptation of Jews in many societies to new realities and new ideas.

*At Home:* One constant theme in Shabbat observance across time and territory is the centrality of home life with family members and guests. Preparation for Shabbat begins as early as mid-week in some households, and its arrival is marked by the spiritual illumination of a candle-lighting ceremony. Rabbinic tradition mandates three Shabbat meals, two begun with a special kiddush ("sanctification") recited over wine. Family meals are occasions for singing, studying, and celebrating together, as well as for consuming distinctive Shabbat foods.

*In the Community:* Shabbat observance in the public sphere is focused on the synagogue, from the lively welcoming service, Kabbalat Shabbat, to the pensive farewell ceremony, Havdalah. The daily round of prayer services is augmented and endowed with a unique atmosphere. Special melodies are used, and the familiar prayers are supplemented with passages in prose and poetry extolling God for the divine gift of the Shabbat and its delights. At the major worship service on Saturday morning, a portion of the Torah is read aloud as part of a year-long cycle, supplemented by a passage from one of the prophetic books (called a haftarah). ([http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Shabbat\\_The\\_Sabbath.shtml?PRRI](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Shabbat_The_Sabbath.shtml?PRRI))

Here are several other ways to continue your exploration of the Jewish practice of keeping Sabbath.

- Show the Sabbath segment with the "Sabbath Prayer" song from the film, *Fiddler on the Roof* followed by a presentation on Sabbath (see below).
- Have a rabbi or observant Jew (or Jewish family) explain how families keep Sabbath, the Jewish tradition of Sabbath-keeping, and what this practice means to them today.
- Conduct a demonstration of Shabbat as it is celebrated at home. Use page 7.7 in *Living Well* as a guide. Go to [www.MyJewishLearning.com](http://www.MyJewishLearning.com) (Practices – Shabbat) for more extensive information. This could be conducted by a Jewish family.

Conclude by discussing the following questions:

- Why is Sabbath so important in the Jewish tradition?
- What can we learn from the Jewish observance of Sabbath?

## 2. The Christian Practice of Sabbath

Continuing your exploration of Sabbath by reading the “Christian Practice of Sabbath” on pages 7.8—7.10 in *Living Well*.

For further background on the development of the “Christian Sabbath” read the following summary by Robert Kruschwitz.

### **Reflection of the Christian Practice of Sabbath (Robert Kruschwitz)**

Jesus’ resurrection on Sunday was the catalyst for “the eighth day” innovation in the early church. The early Christians now were convinced that God’s creative activity extended beyond the seven-day week, and so the first day, Sunday, was also the eighth day of God’s work.

Their dedication of Sunday for gathering and worship grew out of the post-resurrection appearances of the Lord. “These provided not only the proof of the resurrection (for alternative explanations for the empty tomb already were emerging),” David Capes notes, “but also the lively expectation that the risen Jesus would be present with Christians as they gathered.”

The initial resurrection appearances of Jesus took place on “the first day of the week.” On Sunday, first the women, then other men disciples, discovered that Jesus’ tomb was empty (Luke 24:1-12; cf. Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1, 11-18). Two disciples journeying to Emmaus from Jerusalem “on that same day” recognized their risen Lord when he broke bread for them to eat. Later that evening the two disciples returned to Jerusalem to share their story only to hear that the Lord had appeared to Simon, too (Luke 24:13-35). That evening, as they celebrated the good news, Jesus appeared before the entire group and commissioned them to preach repentance and forgiveness to all nations (Luke 24:36-49; cf. John 20:19-23). The gospel of John records that because Thomas was not present at this meeting, the Lord appeared at their gathering “a week later” (on Sunday) to remove that disciple’s doubts (20:24-29).

As they gathered in homes and at the Temple (Acts 2:46; 5:42) on “the first day of the week” (e.g., Acts 20:7-12; 1 Corinthians 16:2), the disciples broke bread, prayed, interpreted Scripture, rehearsed the good news, and prepared for ministry. By the end of the first century the designation “the first day of the week,” which reflects a Jewish way of reckoning time, was replaced by a uniquely Christian term, “the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10). The Didache (c. A.D. 50-150) instructs, “Every Lord’s day, gather together, eat a meal, and give thanks after having first confessed your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure (14.1, Ivan Lewis translation). These Sunday gatherings probably began early among Palestinian Jewish Christians and became common practice throughout the church by the mid-second century.

Paul warned Gentile believers in Colossae not to let others force them to keep the Jewish Sabbath, since it is only a shadow of things to come, while the substance belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). Apparently, he expected Jewish Christians to continue observing the Sabbath regulations, but he did not require the same of Gentiles who entered the church.

Though “growing anti-Judaism in the second century and beyond meant that some distanced themselves from Jews and their practices,” Capes notes that “through the fourth century there is ample evidence that some Christians, even Gentile Christians, continued to observe Sabbath.” The Christian theologian Tertullian, in *On Prayer* (c. 205), wrote as though corporate prayer on the Sabbath were commonplace, and the Apostolic Constitutions in the fourth century taught that both Sabbath and Sunday should be kept as festivals to the Lord. “Those Christians who

maintained a Sabbath practice took their cue from the Lord of the Sabbath, to whom the substance of the new creation belongs.”

Emperor Constantine decreed in A.D. 321 that workers should rest on the venerable day of the Sun. Over the next centuries, Christian believers began resting on Sunday and referring to the Lord’s Day as “the Sabbath,” attaching to the eighth day the significance that is given to the seventh day in the Decalogue.

The story of how Christians came to see Sunday as a day of rest in fulfillment of the Sabbath law is very long and complex. The lesson highlights three ways that Christians through the fourth century related Sabbath to Sunday worship: (1) an early practice of adding Sunday worship to the keeping of Jewish Sabbath on Saturday, (2) a practice of other Christians to worship on Sunday but not observe the Jewish Sabbath, and (3) a later practice of combining Sabbath rest with Christian worship on Sunday. The latter practice became widespread only after Sunday was declared a day for rest from commerce in the Roman Empire.

Conclude by discussing the following questions:

- What new insights into Sabbath did you discover?
- Why did Christians adopt a Sabbath practice?
- How does this Sabbath requirement of no work or commerce honor God and respect human needs?
- How is keeping Sabbath more than just attending church worship?

## **Part 4. *Living*: Application of the Christian Practice to Daily Life**

The “Living” section in the “Keeping Sabbath” chapter serves as a guide for reflection and discerning what actions people need to take to develop or strengthen their Sabbath practice.

Begin by reading “Celebrating the Sabbath” on pages 7.11—7.12 in *Living Well*.

### **1. Developing a Sabbath Practice: Saying “No”—What To Exclude**

Using the worksheet, *Developing a Sabbath Practice*, work through the process of discerning what you need to exclude from your Sabbath. Take time to complete the three questions.

Share with your group several of the things you need to exclude from your Sabbath practice.

### **2. Developing a Sabbath Practice: Saying “Yes”—What To Include**

Using the worksheet, *Developing a Sabbath Practice*, work through the process of discerning what you need to include in your Sabbath. Review the “Practices for a Simple Sabbath” on the handout, *What Ever Happened to Sunday* for ideas that can help in determining what to include in your Sabbath. Take time to complete the three questions.

Share with your group several of the things you need to include in your Sabbath practice.

### **3. Developing a Sabbath Practice: Sunday Worship**

Together as a group identify reasons why participating in Sunday worship regularly is an important element of keeping Sabbath.

Read "Sunday Worship" on p. 7.15 in *Living Well* and then reflect on the following two questions:

- How can you overcome the obstacles to attending church on Sunday?
- How can you prepare for Sunday worship or extend Sunday worship in your home?

Share with your group several of the ways you do (or could) make Sunday worship an integral element of your Sabbath practice.

### **5. Developing a Sabbath Plan**

Take several minutes to decide on which Sabbath strategies you will adopt to strengthen your practice of Keeping Sabbath. Then "script" your Sabbath practice for a month complete with activities (or lack of activities).

Share several ideas from your Sabbath "script" with the members of your group.

After everyone in the group has completed their "script" discuss the following question:

- If you keep Sabbath, how will the rest of your week need to change?
- What will you need to prepare beforehand in order to have a restful Sabbath?
- How might ceasing from work one day a week reshape your life and attitudes on the other six?

Use the handout, *A Month of Sundays* as a way to reflect on your "new" practice of Sabbath. Weekly, you can review your experience and seek ways to strengthen your Sabbath practice.

### **Part 5. *Praying: Prayer for the Practice***

Close the session by praying the "Prayer for the Sabbath" together as a group (on page 7.16).

# What Ever Happened to Sunday?

Wayne Muller

(Adapted from *Sabbath: Remembering the Sacred Rhythm of Rest and Delight* by Wayne Muller. New York: Bantam Books, 1999.)

## Busyness Of Modern Life

In the relentless busyness of modern life, we have lost the rhythm between action and rest. As the founder of a public charity, I visit the offices of wealthy donors, crowded social-service agencies and the small homes of the poorest families. Remarkably, within this mosaic there is a universal refrain: "I am so busy." I speak with people in business and education, doctors and day-care workers, shopkeepers and social workers, parents and teachers, nurses and lawyers, students and therapists, community activists and cooks. The more our life speeds up, the more we feel weary, overwhelmed and lost. Despite our good hearts and equally good intentions, our life and work rarely feel light, pleasant or healing. Instead, as it all piles endlessly upon itself, the whole experience of being alive begins to melt into one enormous obligation. It becomes the standard greeting everywhere: "I am so busy." We say this to one another with no small degree of pride, as if our exhaustion were a trophy, our ability to withstand stress a mark of real character. The busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves and, we imagine, to others. To be unavailable to our friends and family, to be unable to find time for the sunset (or even to know that the sun has set at all), to whiz through our obligations without time for a single mindful breath—this has become the model of a successful life.

Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that show us where to go. We lose the nourishment that gives us succor. We miss the quiet that gives us wisdom. Poisoned by the hypnotic belief that good things come only through tireless effort, we never truly rest. And for want of rest, our lives are in danger.

How have we allowed this to happen? This was not our intention; this is not the world we dreamed of when we were young and life seemed full of possibility and promise. How did we get so terribly rushed in a world saturated with work and responsibility, yet somehow bereft of joy and delight?

## We Have Forgotten The Sabbath

Most spiritual traditions prescribe some kind of Sabbath, time consecrated to enjoy and celebrate what is beautiful and good—time to light candles, sing songs, worship, tell stories, bless our children and loved ones, give thanks, share meals, nap, walk and even make love. It is time to be nourished and refreshed as we let our work, our chores and our important projects lie fallow, trusting that there are larger forces at work taking care of the world when we are at rest.

Sabbath time is a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, because it honors the necessary wisdom of dormancy. If certain plant species do not lie dormant during winter, the plant begins to die off. Rest is not just a psychological convenience; it is a spiritual and biological necessity. Perhaps this is why, in most spiritual traditions, "Remember the Sabbath" is more than simply a lifestyle suggestion. It is a commandment, an ethical precept as serious as prohibitions against killing, stealing and lying. How can forgetting the Sabbath—forgetting to be restful, sing songs and find nourishment and delight—possibly be morally and socially dangerous?

Roger is a gifted, thoughtful physician. Physicians are trained to work when they're exhausted, required to perform when they are sleep-deprived, hurried and overloaded. "I discovered in medical school," Roger told me, "that the more exhausted I was, the more tests I would order. I was too tired to see precisely what was going on with my patients. I could recognize their symptoms and formulate possible diagnoses, but I couldn't hear precisely how it fit together. So I would order tests to give me what I was missing. "But when I was rested—if I had an opportunity to get some sleep, or meditate, or go for a quiet walk—I could rely on my intuition and experience to tell me what was needed. If there was any uncertainty, I would order a specific test to confirm my diagnosis. But when I was rested and could listen and be present, I was almost always right."

Sabbath is more than the absence of work; it is a day when we partake of the wisdom, peace and delight that grow only in the soil of time—time consecrated specifically for play, refreshment and renewal. Many of us, in our desperate drive to be successful and care for our many responsibilities, feel terrible guilt when we take time to rest. But the Sabbath has proven its wisdom over the ages. The Sabbath gives us the permission we need to stop, to restore our souls. As part of the Judeo-Christian tradition, it is already woven into the fabric of our society. Many of us still recall when, not long ago, shops and offices were closed on Sundays. Those quiet Sunday afternoons are embedded in our cultural memory.

Much of modern life is specifically designed to seduce our attention away from Sabbath rest. When we are in the world with our eyes wide open, the seductions are insatiable. Hundreds of channels of cable and satellite television; phones with multiple lines and call-waiting, begging us to talk to more than one person at a time; mail, e-mail and overnight mail; fax machines; billboards; magazines; newspapers; radio. For those of us with children, there are endless soccer practices, baseball games, homework, laundry, housecleaning, errands. Every responsibility, every stimulus competes for our attention: Buy me. Do me. Watch me. Try me. Drink me. It is as if we have inadvertently stumbled into some horrific wonderland.

## **Plea For A Renewed Sabbath**

The point is not to return to some forced, legalistic Sabbath. We rightfully chafe against the dreary and humorless Sundays that obscured the more traditional healing prescriptions of companionship and laughter. A new Sabbath must invite a conversation about the forgotten necessity of rest. Sabbath may be a holy day, an afternoon, an hour, a walk—anything that preserves the experience of life—giving repose and nourishment. During Sabbath, when we take our hand from the plow and let the earth care for things, while we drink, if just briefly, from the fountain of rest and delight.

I make a plea for renewed Sabbath-keeping. As a nation, we cannot live like this, endlessly rushing about in a desperate frenzy, never stopping to enjoy the blessings of family and friends, unable to taste the fruits of life. We can change society by beginning a quiet revolution of change in ourselves and our families. Let us take a collective breath, rest, pray, meditate, walk, sing, eat and take time to share the unhurried company of those we love. Let us, for just one day, cease our desperate striving for more, and instead taste the blessings we have already been given, and give thanks. Religious traditions agree on this: God does not want us to be exhausted; God wants us to be happy. And so let us remember the Sabbath.

## **Practices for a Simple Sabbath**

- *Light a candle.* Set aside sacred time for a family meal, for prayer or meditation or simply quiet reading. Set a candle before you, offer a simple blessing and let the world fall away.

- *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 children.* Place your hand gently on their heads and offer your blessing. What do you most wish for them? Self-knowledge, courage, safety, joy? Let them hear your prayers for their happiness.
- *Invite a 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.* Stroll slowly to nowhere in particular for 30 minutes. Let your senses guide you. Stop and observe deeply whatever attracts you—a tree, a stone, a flower. Breathe.
- *Pamper your body.* Take a guilt-free nap. Take a leisurely bath with music, special scents, candles. Make love with your spouse. Walk barefoot in the grass. The Sabbath is a day of delight.
- *Create a Sabbath box.* Put your to-do list, your keys, your wallet—anything you don't need in Sabbath time—into the box. Or write down a particular worry or concern and drop it in. Just for now, let it go.
- *Turn off the telephone.* Or the computer, the TV, the washer and dryer. Create a period of time when you will not be disturbed or seduced by what our technologies demand of us.
- *Prepare a Sabbath meal—or a Sabbath cup of tea.* 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 the bounty of the earth.
- *Seek companionship.* One of the most precious gifts we can offer is to be a place of refuge, a Sabbath for one another. Ask for companionship when you lose your way. Give quiet time and attention to others.
- *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.
- *Surrender a problem.* The Sabbath reminds us that forces larger than ourselves are at work healing the world. Imagine that these forces already know how to solve your problem. Turn it over to their care.

# Developing a Sabbath Practice

## 1. Saying “No” – What to Exclude

You can begin shaping your Sabbath practice by deciding what should be excluded from this day and what should be included. There are three categories of things that we do well to exclude from our Sabbath.

1. *Work*: What constitutes work for us? We must commit ourselves to not doing these things on the Sabbath. We need to identify the challenge and temptations related to our work and establish clear boundaries to protect Sabbath time.

- *How can you say “No” to work on the Sabbath?*

2. *Buying and selling*: If we are out buying, selling and engaging in the world of commerce, it means someone has to work and we are contributing to it. It feeds our consumerism, an aspect of life in our culture that needs rest on the Sabbath.

- *How can you say “No” to buying and selling on the Sabbath?*

3. *Worry*: The Sabbath is an invitation to rest emotionally and mentally from things that cause worry and stress, such as budgets, major decisions, and planning the week ahead. If we observe Sabbath on Sunday, perhaps Sunday evening after dinner is a time when, from a place of rest, we can engage in some of the decision-making that needs to be done.

- *How can you say “No” to worry on the Sabbath?*

- **Suggestion**: Prepare a “Sabbath box” or “Sabbath basket.” Each Saturday evening, put all the things you don’t need in order to observe the Sabbath into the box or basket. This might include cell phones, credit cards, pagers, and so on. Put work projects and homework in the box, as well; you can take them out again on Sunday evening.

## 2. Saying “Yes” – What to Include

What is to replace all that we are excluding from our Sabbath practice? The simple answer is, whatever delights you and replenishes you. Consider the following three things to include in your Sabbath practice.

1. *Resting the body.* What are the activities that rest and replenish your body? The invitation of Sabbath time is to replace the time you would normally spend working with activities that you find restorative, such as a walk or other physical exercise, eating your favorite foods, reading, and listening to music.
  - *How can you say “Yes” to resting the body on the Sabbath? What types of activities can you do?*
  
2. *Replenishing the spirit.* Another invitation of the Sabbath is to pay attention to what replenishes the spirit, and choose only those activities that renew you and bring you joy. Find personal activities that replenish the spirit: silence, reading, dancing, and listening to music. Find activities for the whole family that replenish the spirit: a special meal, recreation, games, sharing stories, gathering with relatives and friends.
  - *How can you say “Yes” to replenishing the spirit on the Sabbath? What types of activities can you do?*
  
3. *Restoring the soul.* Perhaps the deepest refreshment is the invitation to renew the soul through worship and quiet reflection. This is the part of us that gets most lost during the workweek, which is governed almost completely by the value of productivity. In addition to personal activities, such as silence and prayer, identify rituals or shared activities that create a spirit of reverence for God on this day such as a special meal with a Scripture reading and time to go around the table and talk about where God seemed particularly present with you during the week. Light a candle to mark the Sabbath day.
  - *How can you say “Yes” to restoring the soul on the Sabbath? What types of activities can you do?*

# A Month of Sundays

## Reflecting on Your Sabbath Practice

### **First Sunday**

Take time at the end of the day to record your individual and/or family activities for the day.

- Which activities fit in the “exclude” category?
- Which fit in the “include” category?
- Resolve:
  - ✓ to attend Sunday worship for the next three Sundays
  - ✓ to eliminate one activity from your “exclude” list for next Sunday
  - ✓ to add one activity from the “include” list for next Sunday

### **Second Sunday**

Reflect on your activities today.

- What activities remain in the “exclude” category?
- How did the changes in your activities enhance your well-being?
- What activity from the “include” list will you add for next Sunday?
- How will these choices help you adopt a Sabbath attitude that helps keep your life in balance?

### **Third Sunday**

Reflect on your activities today.

- What remains to be excluded?
- What activity will you add or enhance to complete the “include” list next week?

### **Fourth Sunday**

After observing a month of Sundays in Sabbath attitude.

- Have your changes allowed for rest and renewal of body, mind, spirit?
- How has your spiritual life grown?
- How have your changes brought you to a new understanding of Sabbath?
- What changes will you resolve to make a permanent part of your life?

# Resources for the Christian Practice of Keeping Sabbath

## Resources for Exploring Sabbath

*Living the Sabbath: Discovering the Rhythms of Rest and Delight.* Norman Wirzba. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2006.

Our traditional understanding of Sabbath observance is resting from our otherwise harried lives one day a week. Norman Wirzba leads us deeper into the heart of Sabbath with a holistic and rewarding interpretation of what true Sabbath-keeping can mean in our lives today. Wirzba teaches that Sabbath is ultimately about delight in the goodness that God has made—in everything we do, every day of the week. He then shows how this understanding of Sabbath teaching has the potential to elevate all our activities so that they bring honor to God and delight to the world. With practical examples, Wirzba unpacks what that means for our work, our homes, our economy, our schools, our treatment of creation, and our churches.

*Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People.* Dorothy C. Bass, Editor. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Dorothy Bass and the other contributors to this multi-denominational collection show how they can shape a faithful way of life during challenging times at work, at home, and in the community. This book explores the stuff of everyday life, placing ordinary activities in a biblical and historical context, and discovering in them opportunities to realize God's active presence in life. This is the first book in the Christian practices series and describes twelve practices of the Christian life. The practices include: Honoring the Body, Hospitality, Household Economics, Saying Yes and Saying No, **Keeping Sabbath**, Testimony, Discernment, Shaping Communities, Forgiveness, Healing, Dying Well, and Singing Our Lives.

*Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time.* Dorothy C. Bass. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001.

Dorothy Bass invites readers into a way of living in time that is alert to both contemporary pressures and rooted ancient wisdom. She asks hard questions about how our injurious attitude toward time has distorted our relationships with our innermost selves, with other people, with the natural world, and with God. *Receiving the Day* offers a language of attention, poetry, and celebration. Bass encourages us to reevaluate our understanding of the temporal and thereby to participate fully in the Christian practice of knowing time as God's gift. Embraced in this way, time need not be wrestled with each day. Instead, time becomes the habitation of blessing.

*Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives.* Wayne Muller. New York: Bantam Books, 2000.

"Sabbath time can be a revolutionary challenge to the violence of overwork, mindless accumulation, and the endless multiplication of desires, responsibilities, and accomplishments. Sabbath is a way of being in time where we remember who we are, remember what we know, and taste the gifts of spirit and eternity," writes ordained minister, therapist, and best-selling author Wayne Muller. He challenges us to take a Sabbath day of rest, to set aside a Sabbath afternoon for silence, and to create Sabbath moments in our hectic weekday schedules. He is calling for a time of stillness and repose, a time for rejoicing in the goodness and holiness of life, and a time to surrender to the mystery of not-knowing. At the end of chapters on rest, rhythm, time, happiness, wisdom, and consecration, Muller includes dozens of Sabbath exercises such as

taking a guilt-free nap, blessing your children, keeping a Sabbath box, creating a family altar, and thinning or letting go of possessions.

*Sabbath. (The Ancient Practices Series)* Dan Allender. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009.

“The Sabbath is far more than a diversion; it is meant to be an encounter with God’s delight,” writes Dan Allender. He presents a rounded and robust overview of this day of delight. There are three core premises explored on these pages:

- The Sabbath is not merely a good idea; it is one of the Ten Commandments. Jesus did not abrogate, cancel or annul the idea of the Sabbath.
- The Sabbath is a day of delight for humankind, animals, and the earth; it is not merely a pious day and it is not fundamentally a break, a day off, or a twenty-four hour vacation.
- The Sabbath is a feast day that remembers our leisure in Eden and anticipates our play in the new heavens and earth with family, friends, and strangers for the sake of the glory of God.

Allender believes that the ancient art of Sabbath is practiced when we have a day of wonder, delight, and joy; or another way of putting it is “to have a play day with God and others.” Celebrating the Sabbath includes five elements which are outlined in successive chapters. In “Sensual Glory,” Allender challenges to see this day as an opportunity “to experiment with beauty that teases your hunger to know more glory.” In a chapter on “Communal Feast,” the author spells out the process of entering the joy of the Sabbath with an emphasis on beauty and communal togetherness. In the last three chapters, Allender offers ways to act out the Sabbath in ritual and symbols in order to sample peace, abundance, and joy; to open the heart to meditation and prayer as a part of silence; and to honor justice by celebrating repentance and delight in its fruit—freedom. He concludes:

*Sacred Rhythm: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation.* Ruth Haley Barton. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Spiritual disciplines are activities that open us to God’s transforming love and the changes that only God can bring about in our lives. Picking up on the monastic tradition of creating a “rule of life” that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines, *Sacred Rhythms* takes you more deeply into understanding seven key disciplines along with practical ideas for weaving them into everyday life. Each chapter includes exercises to help you begin the practices—individually and in a group context. The spiritual disciplines include: Solitude, Scripture, Prayer, Honoring the Body, Self-Examination, Discernment, and **Sabbath**. The final chapter, A Rule of Life, puts it all together in a way that will help you arrange your life for spiritual transformation.

## Resources for Sabbath Practice

(For additional Sabbath resources, see the lists for other practices, such as *Eating Well, Praying, and Reading the Bible*.)

*At Home with God: Family Devotions for the School Year.* Anne Broyles, Marilyn Brown Oden, Elizabeth Lynd Escamilla, Paul Lynd Escamilla. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2002.

Many of today’s families struggle in nurturing their children in the Christian faith beyond attending church services. Finding time at home to talk together about faith can be challenging when so much else demands attention. *At Home with God* gives families with school-age children (ages 6 to 11) solid spiritual help. Designed to bring a family together in worship at home for 10 to 15 minutes each day, the devotions require little to no advance preparation and

speak to families large and small. You'll find in this book's pages for the days from September through May:

- daily devotions based on specific scriptures
- prayers and litanies to say and learn together
- stories and activities to share
- songs to sing with familiar melodies
- colorful illustrations and symbols to direct young readers
- articles to help adult family members prepare

*At Home with the Word: Sunday Scriptures and Scripture Insights.* (Annual) Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

For each Sunday of the liturgical year the book provides the three Scripture readings and psalm, insights into the readings written by Scripture scholars, and suggestions for putting the readings into practice in daily life.

*The Blessing Candles: 58 Simple Mealtime Prayer-Celebrations.* Gaynell Bordes Cronin and Jack Rathschmidt. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000.

Each of the 58 prayer-celebrations include a gathering prayer, the lighting of two candles, a reading and a prayerful response to it, reflection questions and a sending prayer. These mealtime rituals are organized into several categories: Blessings for Everyday, Blessings for Special Needs, Blessings for Special Occasions, and Blessings for the Year.

*Bringing Home the Gospel—A Weekly Journal for Catholic Parents.* (3 Volumes: Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006, 2007, 2008.

*Bringing Home the Gospel* is designed for busy parents who want to share the faith with their family and reflect on their spiritual journey. Each week, parents will find a reflection based on a Sunday Gospel. These reflections will help bring the Word of God home and apply it to life and help parents grow in their relationship with God as individual and as parent. "Family Response" questions or suggestions give parents an opportunity to talk with children about God and the things that are important to the family. There's plenty of room for parents to journal and record on how the Gospel reading touches them in a particular way or relates to something significant happening in their life.

*Celebrate Life: Rituals for Home and Church.* Peter Young. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1999.

This book offers meaningful celebrations to help families deepen their sense of God's empowering presence and strengthen the relationship between one's own family and the larger family of faith. This guide for family worship offers rituals for times of growth, new life, significant change, uncertainty, loss, separation, and more; and rituals for milestones and other special times in life.

*Celebrating at Home: Prayers and Liturgies for Families.* Deborah Alberswerth Paden and Laura Loving. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998.

This easy-to-use, hands-on resource includes a variety of rituals, prayers, and liturgies throughout the liturgical year, organized into Prayers for Daily Life, Seasonal Celebrations, and Life Transitions. The book is designed to help families connect their everyday lives with their faith.

*FaithTalk: Four Keys.* Bloomington, MN: The Youth and Family Institute, 2008. [www.tyfi.org]

These brand new FaithTalk® cards will inspire your family to live out The Institute's Four Key faith practices every day! Designed to keep your faith active and alive, each discussion card poses a question focusing on one of these four areas of spiritual development: 1) Caring

Conversation: Sharing Our Stories, 2) Devotions: Identifying God's Presence in All of Life, 3) Rituals and Traditions: Living Out Our Beliefs, 4) Service: Actions that Honor Our Values by Caring for Our Neighbor. The packaging allows the cards to be "set up" on your table, truly making it a centerpiece for encouraging and growing faith in the home.

*The Family Cloister: Benedictine Wisdom for the Home.* David Robinson. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000.

*The Christian Family Toolbox: 52 Benedictine Activities for the Home.* David Robinson. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2001.

In these two books, David Robinson presents the key teachings and activities from the Rule of St. Benedict, adapted to the contemporary family. *The Family Cloister* explores Benedict's Rule to unearth the riches found there and offer them to parents for their holy calling of raising children. *The Christian Family Toolbox* is a companion guide, a hands-on activity book for use by parents with their children, or grandparents with grandchildren, in the daily adventure of family life together. Each book is developed around seven themes, each with a variety of activities: Family Design, Family Spirituality, Family Health, Family Life Together, Family Service and Hospitality, and Family Growth.

*HomeGrown Faith.* David and Kathy Lynn. Nashville: World Publishing, 2006.

HomeGrown Faith offers a variety of activities, research about the importance of passing on faith, and encouragement for every step of the journey. The book includes a wealth of practical suggestions for the family including chapters on: The Top Ten HomeGrown Faith Practices, Imaginative Prayer Ideas, Easy-to-Do Devotions, Creative Faith Conversations, Easy-to-do-Service Projects, Faith-Filled Family Walks, and Wacky Family Fun with a Touch of Faith!

*Making Time for God: Daily Devotions for Children and Families to Share.* Susan R. Garrett and Amy Planting Paw. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002.

This daybook engages the family in exploring the Bible, while helping children develop a strong pattern of daily devotions and prayer. The authors combine biblical teaching with engaging stories that children can identify with, as well as thoughts for personal application. The book draws from most books of the Bible, and includes both the best-loved Bible verses and the harder-to-understand passages. The 366 entries emphasize the seasons of the church year and correlate to the secular calendar as well.

*VeggieTales Family Devotional.* Cindy Kenney and Doug Peterson. Franklin, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2005. [www.bigidea.com]

The *VeggieTales Family Devotional* contains 52 devotionals organized into seven parts: The Faith Connection, The Communication Connection, The Love Connection, The Trust Connection, The Time Connection, The Joy Connection, and Holiday Lessons. Each devotion includes a Veggie story, a Bible story, discussion questions, guided prayers, family activity, and a "think-link-act" connection to help everyone find a practical way to apply God's messages to their lives every day.

## Activities for Home Use

*For Sabbath practices ideas, see the activities for other practices, especially Celebrating Life, Eating Well, Praying, Reading the Bible, and Transforming the World.*