

CORNERSTONE

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY CHURCH

SABBATH

RESOURCE PACKAGE

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FAQs

(Frequently Asked Questions)

by Pete & Geri Scazzero

Why do I need to keep Sabbath for a whole 24 hour period each week?

God created us in His image for a rhythm of work and rest. When we violate that rhythm, we do violence to our own souls. Moreover, we are not defined by what we do or what we produce. We are defined by God's unconditional love for us in Christ Jesus. Therefore, we don't keep Sabbath to earn God's love. Rather, Sabbath is God's gift to keep us centered and rooted in that amazing reality. It is not an accident that this essential spiritual formation practice is found in the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments.

How do I go about deciding what specific activities are acceptable and unacceptable on the Sabbath?

Reflect on the following questions as you sort out God's pathway for you:

1. What do I need to stop that relates to my work — paid and unpaid?
2. List the activities that create delight and rest for you.
3. How can you structure your day to cultivate a greater awareness of God in your life and in the world?
4. What might help you see God's goodness and miracles all around you today?

"Whatever we choose to do for Sabbath needs to give us rest and life over time. The challenge is discernment, experimenting to find what works for us and the people we love, what helps us catch our breath and remember who we are as God's beloved." – Lynne Baab

Do you I have to take my Sabbath on a particular day of the week?

In the fourth commandment on Sabbath-keeping, the specific day (Saturday or Sunday) is not mentioned, but instead, it's noted that Sabbath-keeping is to be celebrated every "seventh" day. There are Biblical examples of the Sabbath being kept on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 16:2), and it's true that once the Christian calendar was adopted worldwide, the first day of the week most naturally fell to Sunday. However, the heart of Sabbath is that it was to serve us (Mark 2:27), and there are certainly factors in the larger

culture that contribute to people taking another Sabbath day instead of Sunday. The important principle is not necessarily to take one *specific* day as Sabbath, but rather one *regular* day to stop, rest, delight, and contemplate unto the Lord (Col. 2:16-17, Romans 14:5-6). We're encouraging people to take either Fri night-Sat night or Sat night-Sun night because in today's culture, the breaks from work usually fall on one of those times. However, if one's break from work does not fall on one of those days, we encourage you to take another 24 hour period off.

Which day is the Sabbath? Sunday or Saturday? I have heard different views.

Paul addresses this very issue in the Jew/Gentile/multicultural church in Romans 14:1-8. He writes: "One man considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord..." I believe the key principle is keeping a rhythm for the same day of the week each week. Doing it around the Sunday gathering of worship is clearly best when possible, I believe, as this is part of our contemplation. God established the rhythm of six-days-of-work, one – day-of-rest pattern, in Genesis 1-2. It has guided Judaism ever since, celebrating Sabbath from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. With the coming of Jesus, the Sabbath took on new meaning. Not only did it point back to creation, but it anticipated the eternal Sabbath rest and peace we will enjoy once we see Him face to face. Thus, early in the church the Sabbath was shifted to Sunday – the day of Jesus' resurrection. While many Jewish Christians continued to celebrate Sabbath on Saturday, Sunday also became a day for Christians to gather for worship, prayer, and an "agape" meal that included the Lords' Supper. In 321, the Emperor Constantine decreed Sunday instead of Saturday to a day of no work, thus changing officially the Sabbath to the first day of the week.

Can I serve at church as a volunteer? Should I stop?

Yes, you can serve at church. Except for a very, very few, our work is not at church. We work as secretaries, social workers, teachers, lawyers, accountants, moms/dads at home,

students, etc. Serving at church is not our job. Hopefully, there is delight in serving Christ as a children's worker, parking lot attendant, usher, greeter, etc. It is also important to remember that showing mercy and compassion was the missing element Jesus brought back into God's original intention of Sabbath keeping. Treating people, whether children, youth, or adults, like Christ is the heart of what we seek to do at church.

Do I need a day-off and a Sabbath?

You will need at least a half-day, or several hours, to prepare for Sabbath. Part of the Sabbath experience is the preparation time. What needs to happen before Sabbath starts so you (or your family) can experience true rest on the day itself? A basic list of what needs to get done before Sabbath starts might include getting the errands and chores of life done (e.g. food shopping, laundry, errands, cleaning the house, bringing closure to your work, final phone-calls, paying bills). These things make Sabbath more restful and communicate the order and peace many of us long for.

Do I spend the Sabbath alone or with other people?

The question to ask is: What do you need for a day of rest? Time with people or time alone? Both? In what proportion? This may change for you depending on the seasons and circumstances of your life.

What do I do about my tendency to perfectionism?

We don't ever get Sabbath "right." Sabbath is a day to let go of perfectionism and let God run the universe. Inconsistencies, bad choices and learning from our mistakes are part of the point. Do your best to stop working, letting God worry about what you're not doing right, taking your focus off yourself so you can rest in Him.

Isn't Jesus our Sabbath-rest? Is this a form of works-righteousness?

Jesus reinforced the gift of Sabbath amidst all the abuses of His day. He reminds us, "The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). To keep Sabbath is to exercise one's freedom, to declare oneself to be neither a tool to be "employed" nor a beast to be burdened. Sabbath-keeping is an invitation to rest because God rested. This rest serves as a sign of contemplation and abundance. God's gifts to humanity are so generous that we are able to rest. Our rest indicates that we depend completely on the God who redeemed us from sin, death and evil.

How do I cease from the work of parenting?

You cannot stop changing diapers of course. But you can cease from tidying up, cooking, laundry, and running errands. You can do some things together as a family. You can hire a babysitter so you, and with your spouse, can get time alone. You can take time alone for yourself, leaving parenting to your spouse. Then, you take the children and give equal time to him/her.

What do I do about my children who aren't interested in Sabbath?

The important thing to remember is that this is not a day of deprivation. Sabbath is to be a delight. Rather than simply taking things away, think about things you can add (e.g. special desserts, a movie, a creative family activity – depending on the ages of your children. It doesn't have to be a forced family day. If your children are older, they are going to naturally going to want to connect with their friends. That is okay. You will go through many transitions in keeping Sabbath depending on your children's ages and temperaments. But, whenever possible, remember this is a wonderful opportunity to build rhythm, intentionality and sacred traditions into your family.

What about sports and extra-curricular activities your children may be involved in?

There may be some activities you want to eliminate because of the stress involved. But there may be others (e.g. if your child loves soccer) that you do, but you will do it in a different spirit. You may go to the soccer game but you are doing it without multi-tasking, talking on the phone, reading e-mails, or reading work-related paperwork at halftime or during time outs. You can focus on enjoying the game, other parents, or the very gift of the human body able to participate in athletics.

How, like Jesus, can we exercise compassion on the Sabbath without turning it into work?

The Jews have longed believed that showing compassion on the Sabbath reflects the glorious abundance of the day. We rest from work in order to turn our hearts toward God, and God is always concerned with human need. When we stop for Sabbath, it may happen that we become more attentive to the problems of the world around us. This ultimately leads us to show more, not less, compassion. Maybe the Good Samaritan was on his Sabbath! Just be careful that it is not a "should." Rejoice in small acts of caring, allowing them to connect us to our compassionate God.

Sabbath Experiment Planning Worksheet

**You are encouraged to try taking at least one 24-hour Sabbath.
Below is a framework to help you plan for it.**

The first step is to **identify a 24-hour block of time for your Sabbath that will work best for you.** Romans 14:5 seems to indicate that we have freedom to pick any day. However, the most common and most biblically and historically rooted times for Christians to observe Sabbath are:

- SUNDAY: From Saturday sundown (or dinnertime) to Sunday sundown (or dinnertime)
- SATURDAY: From Friday sundown (or dinnertime) to Saturday sundown (or dinnertime)

The day/time for my 24-hour Sabbath will be: _____

STOP

List what you'll need to stop that relates to my work, both paid and unpaid?

REST

Make a list of restful and replenishing things you might do on your Sabbath.

For example, sleeping in, taking a nap, having a leisurely nature walk, reading a good book, watching an edifying movie, relaxing exercise, doing a favourite hobby...

DELIGHT

Make a list of things that would bring you delight on your Sabbath—things that feel like “play.” For example, spending time with loved ones, time outdoors, intimate time with your spouse, enjoying cultural activities, a drive to see the fall colours, eating your favourite foods, watching an edifying movie, gardening, exercise, going to a play, a visit to the farmer’s market, or time with a good book in your favourite coffee shop...

REFLECT (on God)

How will God remain central to your Sabbath? If your Sabbath is on a Sunday, attending worship service might be a part of it. You might also journal, do a prayer walk, read scripture or a favourite Christian book (you may want to consider slowly and prayerfully reading a good book on Sabbath), listen to worship music, listen to your favourite Christian podcast, serving someone in need.

- What preparations need to be made BEFORE your Sabbath in order to be ready for it? When do you plan to make them?
- Will you be doing your Sabbath with others, like a spouse or your family?
- Are there any people who will be affected by your Sabbath commitment that you need to inform?

Additional Guidelines for The Sabbath Experiment (Adapted)

WARNING: Potential spiritual health hazard. Do not try this without first understanding the spirit of Sabbath!

For this experiment, Sabbath observance will begin with the evening meal on Saturday and go through the evening meal on Sunday (or you can choose another day). Please remember that following these guidelines is not the only way to observe the Sabbath. Consider this an experiment from which you may discover additions and deletions that might shape your Sabbath observances.

1. Prepare for the Sabbath

a. Choose in advance one activity that will help this day be a celebration for you and write it down here:

- b. Clean your living space.
- c. Buy all your groceries, gas, and other things on Saturday or earlier.
- d. Invite family and friends that you would like to join with you.

2. Begin your Sabbath with an evening meal on Saturday with family and/or friends.

- a. Light three candles to signify the presence of Christ, remembering the Sabbath (Exod 20:8), and observing the Sabbath (Deut 5:12).
- b. Before the meal, prepare for and read together the Sabbath liturgy. You can download the liturgy from www.TheSabbathExperiment.blogspot.com and then modify it as you wish.
- c. After the meal, spend the rest of the evening doing something fun!

3. Embrace the rest offered by the Sabbath.

- a. Take a nap
- b. Don't work.
 - i. Don't do things for which you earn money.
 - ii. Don't clean the house.
 - iii. Don't wash your car.
 - iv. Don't do laundry.
 - v. Don't organize your office/papers/books.
 - vi. Don't fix or repair anything.
- c. Married couples are invited to follow the rabbinic encouragement to make love on the Sabbath.
- d. Don't study.
- e. Don't make lists of things to do in the coming week.

4. Worship on your own and/or with your church community (if applicable, given your chosen day of Sabbath).

- a. In preparation, start thinking about this as you begin the Sabbath observance on Saturday night – pray for others in your community who will be coming together on Sunday.
- b. Plan to get to church a few minutes early and stay a few minutes late – build margins into your worship experience for preparation, conversations, and reflection.

- c. At some point during the day, take time to “count your blessings” one by one, giving thanks to God for all that he’s given you—especially the gift of Jesus. This will help you to cultivate a spirit of contentment, of “enough.”

5. Choose to opt out for the day from the economic system of buying and selling.

- a. As a conscious way of confronting the idolatries of consumption and materialism, don’t use any money or credit cards.
- b. Plan meals at home or in a park with family and friends rather than going out to eat.
- c. Don’t pay any bills.
- d. As already mentioned, buy your groceries, gas, etc. on Saturday.

6. Put aside mediated experiences and artificial units of time.

- a. Turn off your cell phone for the day, except to call loved ones.
- b. Keep your TV turned off, except for movies/programs with redemptive, uplifting themes.
- c. Keep your computer turned off.
 - i. Don’t look at your email – it will be there waiting for you after the after Sabbath is over.
 - ii. Don’t surf the internet.
- d. Take off your watch during the worship service, or for the day.

7. End the Sabbath observance with a simple meal.

- a. As part of your prayer before the concluding meal, offer a prayer of thanks for the Sabbath day.
- b. At the end of the meal, give something sweet (like a chocolate chip or a caramel) to each person and as you do so, say something like this: “May the sweet taste of Sabbath stay in your mouth all week long!”

Liturgy to Begin the Sabbath-General (Adapted)

(original available at www.TheSabbathExperiment.blogspot.com)

This is a ritual to be used prior to the Friday or Saturday evening meal (or whatever the day/time on which you're starting your Sabbath), before the food is brought to the table.¹ Position three unlit candles in the middle of the table, one to signify Sabbath remembrance (Exod. 20:8), one to signify Sabbath observance (Deut. 5:12), and one to signify the presence of Christ.

Adjust parts below as appropriate depending on how many people are participating. Even if you're not practicing Sabbath with others or beginning Sabbath with a meal, you are encouraged to adapt relevant aspects of this liturgy as is fitting to your situation in order to begin your Sabbath.

Reader 1: Light is the sign of God's presence among us. The Lord is our light and our salvation.

Lighter: Light the candles.

Reader 2: We are called to be children of the Light and to be a light to all nations.

Reader 3: May our home be made holy, O God, by Your Light. May the Light of love and truth shine upon us as a blessing from You. Amen.

Reader 1: Let us prepare our hearts to welcome the Sabbath day.

Reader 2: Our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the darkness of the tomb to bring light to the world!

Reader 3: May this and every Sabbath bring Christ's light and blessings to our hearts as our workday thoughts and toils are forgotten.

Reader 1: We thank You, God, for the blessings of this past week: for life and for love, for our health, for family and friendships, and for the gifts that have come to us from our labors.

Reader 2: Blessed are You, Lord God, King of the Universe, who gives us our daily bread and the fruit of the vine.

All: In response to Your generosity, we desire, Lord, as Your chosen people, holy and dearly loved, to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. To bear with each other and to forgive whatever grievances we may have against one another. To forgive as You forgive us, and over all these virtues, to put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Reader 3: Blessed be our home and all who share at this table. Blessed be God and blessed be those who live in the Sabbath rest of God's love. Amen.

Reader 1: The peace of the Lord be with you!

All: And also with you!

¹ Much of this is adapted from Edward M. Hays, *Prayers for the Domestic Church: A Handbook for Worship in the Home* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Forest of Peace, 2007), 112-113. Part is adapted from the traditional Jewish Kiddush prayer recited before the evening meal at the start of Sabbath. The first response by "All" is adapted from Colossians 3:12-14 (NIV).

Christian Sabbath Liturgy for Families with Children (Adapted)

(original available at www.TheSabbathExperiment.blogspot.com)

This is a ritual to be used prior to the Friday or Saturday evening meal (or whatever the day/time on which you're starting your Sabbath), before the food is brought to the table.² Position three unlit candles in the middle of the table, one to signify Sabbath remembrance (Exod. 20:8), one to signify Sabbath observance (Deut. 5:12), and one to signify the presence of Christ.

Re-assign parts below as appropriate depending on the presence of children and guests. Even if you're not beginning Sabbath with a meal, feel free to adapt this liturgy to suit your situation.

Parent 1: Light is the sacrament of God's presence among us. The Lord is our light and our salvation.

Light the candles.

Child 1: We are called to be children of the Light and to be a light to all nations.

Parent 2: May our home be made holy, O God, by Your Light. May the Light of love and truth shine upon us as a blessing from You. Amen.

Parent 1: Let us prepare our hearts to welcome this Sabbath day.

Child 2: We remember how our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the darkness of the tomb to bring light to the world!

Parent 2: May this meal bring blessings to our hearts as our workday (and school day) thoughts and toils are forgotten.

Parent 1: We thank You, God, for the blessings of this past week: for life and for love, for our health, for family and friendships, and for the gifts that have come to us from our labors. *If children are present:* We especially thank You for these young ones whose lives You have entrusted to us and we pause to ask Your blessing upon them. *Starting with the youngest child, parents put their hands on each child's head and offer a blessing. If guests have children present, those parents may be asked in advance if they would like to offer blessings for their children, or one blessing may be said over all the children.*

Examples:

- "Kate, I pray God's richest blessings upon you. May you have the courage of Esther and the devotion of Mary, and may you walk in the ways of Christ all the days of your life. Amen."
- "Greg, I pray God's richest blessings upon you. May you grow in your compassion for those in need, may you grow in kindness to love your friends well, and may you be filled daily with the joy of Christ. Amen."

Parent 2: Blessed are You, Lord God, King of the Universe, who gives us our daily bread and the fruit of the vine. We thank you for this meal that we are about to share.

All: In response to Your generosity, we desire, Lord, as Your chosen people, holy and dearly loved, to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

To bear with each other and to forgive whatever grievances we may have against one another. To forgive as You forgive us, and over all these virtues, to put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Parent 1: Blessed be this home and this table; blessed be this family and all who sit around our table. Blessed be God and blessed be those who live in God's love. Amen.

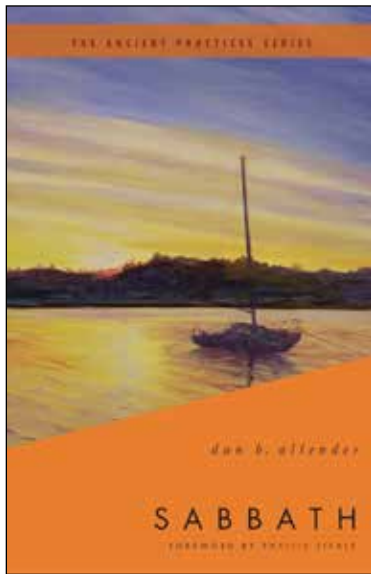
Child: The peace of the Lord be with you!

All: And also with you! *Each person is encouraged to share the peace of the Lord with every other person present.*

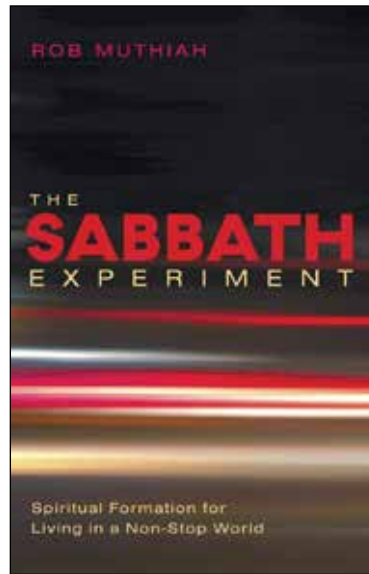
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Books About Sabbath

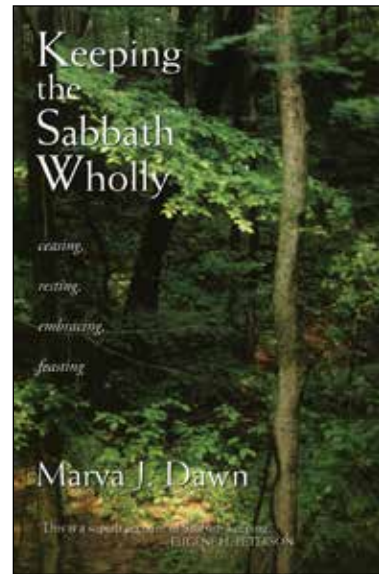
Keep learning and growing in your Sabbath practice by reading a bit about the Sabbath each week on your Sabbath Day. Here are some recommendations!



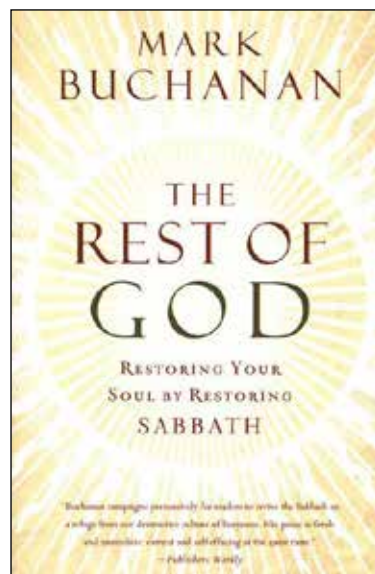
Sabbath
Dan Allender



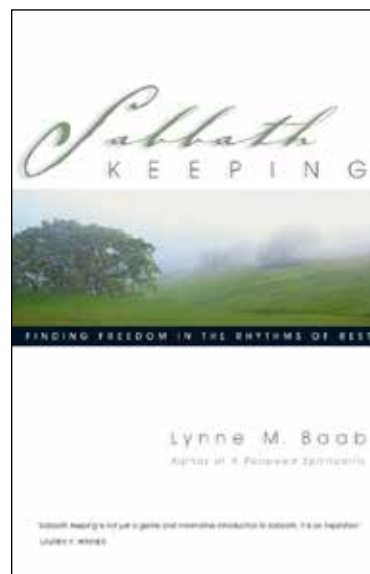
The Sabbath Experiment
Rob Muthia



Keeping the Sabbath Wholly
Marva J. Dawn



The Rest of God
Mark Buchanan



Sabbath Keeping
Lynn Baab



9680 Ninth Line, Markham, ON L6B 1A8 \ \ 905-294-3554 \ \ cornerstonechurch.ca