

Grace Leaders Network -- Presenter: CHRIS HAY

Nov 14, 2017

Simi Valley Grace

10:30- 1:00

Title: Seeking Sabbath for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Pastor

30-40 minutes speak about Sabbath and rest. Dawn and Cstone staff welcome.

### **Intro**

Dawn, 2 kids, married last year, first grandbabies coming!!

30 years ago last week we left Winona Lake after graduating from Grace Sem and landed in Anchorage AK to begin pastoring ERGBC—started by John Gillis who was here at Simi!!

- We went on to pastor Kenai GBC
- Then on staff at Waldorf GBC under Jeff Thornley
- Then Leesburg GBC
- Then burnout!
- Moved to Orange County to work construction – 5 years
- Then on staff at EBC, then 2 years ago to Cornerstone—full circle back in pastorate.
- BTW—no longer doing ZM retreats.....

I burned out after 18 years; dad did not get it—he never burned out. I have encountered pastors now as few as 1-2 years into ministry who are burning out.... What gives?

- Smart phones
- Media—anyone can get a great sermon
- Expectations esp of a small church pastor....
- Modern issues (dad having an unwed mom!...)
- All the modern devices to save time are killing us – Swenson says we each need to know how to operate 20,000 devices!!

There is no white space—we frantically run from one thing to the next, then collapse into bed at night. As pastors, we operate way too often out of emptiness and exhaustion, and we are doing our people a grave disservice!!

It's not supposed to be this way!

### **Sabbath**

Burnout and busyness are complex issues, but I want to suggest today is that our neglect of Sabbath is one of the reason we are so stressed out. So I hope to convince you from scripture that we need to go back to God's creation principle of resting one day out of 7.

We simply do not have time to explore all the implications of the theology of Sabbath, but let me make a few statements:

- I am NOT suggesting a return to legalistic sabbatarianism.
- Of course Jesus is our Sabbath rest, and of course heaven is our eternal Sabbath rest (Heb 4).
- But that does not mean we should now be working 7 days per week and ignore taking one day out of 7 to rest.....
- That does not mean the creation principle of stopping one day out of 7 is no longer to be practiced...

PROPOSITION:

Walk through the entire Story of God—creation/Eden to Israel to the church to New Creation—and see how Sabbath is unpacked in Scripture. Because if we are not convinced it is Biblical, we are not going to do it. Period. We are men and women of the book—the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible. But I am suggesting we have neglected the Sabbath, misunderstood it, relegated to Israel and orthodox Jews—to our detriment.

**1. Sabbath at Creation.**

Gen 1 tells us all about how God created the universe in 6 days. Pick it up in 2:1--

*Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.*

Notice a few things here....

God established a life rhythm for all time.

He doesn't call this Sabbath here [although Exod 20 and Heb 4 tie Sabbath to creation week, and the word for 'rest' is *shabat*], but He is clearly modeling a rhythm on how to live: a 7-day week. Regardless of other culture's attempts to try different rhythms, God's rhythm is 7 days, and the 7<sup>th</sup> day is the day to rest.

BTW—there is no 7 day rhythm in nature. Day, month, year all are based on natural rhythm—rotation of the earth, etc. But not the week. God established that rhythm.

What God did on the 7<sup>th</sup> day was to **stop**. Hebrew word *shabat* = to cease or stop.

In other words God stopped creating the universe. Obviously His ongoing work of sustaining His creation wasn't done, and He didn't rest like He was tired, but He quit the normal 6 day work of creation and established a life cycle rhythm that He eventually coded into law for Israel.

APP: So too a Sabbath for us is we stop doing the normal work of 6 days—preaching, studying, visiting, counseling, admin, emails, etc, etc, etc—and for one day live like God is in control of things, and not us!! The point of Sabbath is to Stop.

- Stop working, stop earning money,
- stop trying to get ahead,
- stop building, cleaning, washing clothes,
- stop being a control freak, stop trying to fix everyone's problems.
- JUST STOP!!

ILL: I remember as a young pastor, the day it dawned on me that I needed to just QUIT and go home. My work wasn't done, there was more piled up on my desk, visits I needed to make.... but I just needed to stop. That is Sabbath thinking.

DA Carson "Don't fritter. When you work, work hard; when you are not working, quit entirely."

The Sabbath day is to look different, unique, holy...

Gen 2:3 -- <sup>3</sup> *So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy...*

We will see this again in the Ten Commandments.... That the Sabbath day is holy.

The idea of something being holy is that it is set apart for a different purpose, a unique and special purpose. So the Sabbath day is not to look like the other days of the week. Six days will look pretty similar—but one out of seven is to be holy, different....

So that is Sabbath as established in creation week—a 1-out-of-7 rhythm. Now let's see....

## **2. Sabbath in Israel.**

We don't really know anything about Sabbath from creation up to the formation of the nation Israel, but of course the Sabbath is in the Decalogue. These 10 'laws' are a statement of God's moral character and moral will for mankind. All 10 of them!! So in the same way that God's moral will for mankind is that we value life is also His moral will for us that we stop one day each week!!

We do see Sabbath in Ex 16 (gathering of manna) which is prior to the Decalogue, so there was some understanding of this weekly rhythm prior to the law, which I think is significant—Sabbath is NOT just an OT ceremonial law....

God also established a Sabbath year, and the year of Jubilee. He took the creation week one-out-of-seven principle even further.

And Israel didn't do so well with the Sabbath year. They got greedy, didn't want to miss the income on that 7<sup>th</sup> year, failed to trust God to provide. .... So God punished them for 70 years....

TRANS: ...and by Jesus' day, the Sabbath had become a legalistic chain around people's necks... it was awful trying to keep track of what you couldn't do or could do. It was NOT a day of refreshment, of relationship, of rest.....it was a day of slavery...but in fact the Sabbath is designed to prevent slavery in us!!!

## **3. Sabbath in the New Covenant**

So Jesus comes along, and he kept doing things on the Sabbath that the Jewish leaders thought were illegal! But Jesus was demonstrating the original purpose of the Sabbath, and throwing out all the legalistic stuff. There are many passages in the gospels about Sabbath

(e.g. Matt 12:1-14; Mark 2:27; and John 5:16-18), and we simply do not have time to look at them all. But note Mark 2 where Jesus summarizes His approach to Sabbath:

*<sup>27</sup> And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. <sup>28</sup> So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

Sabbath is for us; we are not slaves to it, we get to enjoy it and benefit from it. We are not out to save the Sabbath; the Sabbath is there to save us. It is not that we have to do Sabbath, it's that we get to do Sabbath!

Then there is Paul's teaching on Sabbath (e.g. Rom 14:5-6; Gal 4:10; and Col 2:16-17). Again, not enough time to look at all this, but note Rom 14:

*<sup>5</sup> One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. <sup>6</sup> The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. Rom 14:5-6*

I think what Paul is doing is removing the obligation for Sabbath to be Saturday, or Sunday.... for pastors neither of those days are really Sabbath rest. Paul tells us it doesn't matter which day it is! And he removes Sabbath from some legalistic ball and chain....

APP/DISC: Currently, our Sabbath is Monday. We light a triple wick candle on Sunday evening and begin our Sabbath.... my phone goes off. Dawn's phone is the emergency contact. I simply cannot imagine sabbathing well if I am constantly looking at my phone.... it's OK.....

ILL: .....you can be found if needed!!

Before cellphones—we were on vacation at a remote cabin in Alaska. One evening a State Trooper car pulls into the driveway—one of our church members had died, and one of our elders knew where we were, so he called to the troopers to come get us! There are ways to find you if an emergency arises!!

Point is: Sabbath is still a life-rhythm we need to do, but it doesn't matter if it's Saturday or Sunday or Tuesday or Friday....

Lest we think Sabbath goes away in heaven, or that heaven is completely our future Sabbath, there are a few hints that the Sabbath rhythm continues in New Creation....

#### **4. Sabbath in New Creation**

Listen to Isa 66:22-23:

*<sup>22</sup> "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. <sup>23</sup> From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.*

Then in Ezek.... 40-48 describes the Millennial temple—I know there is disagreement about this—but I personally think it is literal—and there is Sabbath keeping there!!

Ezek 44:24--

*They shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy.*

Also Ezek 46:1—

*Thus says the Lord GOD: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day it shall be opened, and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened...*

Not sure what that looks like, but apparently there is a one week rhythm in the Millennium and in New Creation—we will work for 6 days then have a Sabbath!!!

‘The Sabbath is the link between the paradise which has passed away and the paradise which is yet to come.’ *Andrew Wylie*

APP:

At this point, we have to ask some pretty serious questions:

- Since God established the Sabbath Rhythm at creation, coded it into law for Israel, then Jesus freed it from the chains the Jews had wrapped around it, and since there will be Sabbath in the new creation.... Do we really think that we in 21<sup>st</sup> century America are exempt and can ignore Sabbath keeping?
- Do we really think that God designed this Sabbath rest for the first 10,000 years of history, and for some reason it doesn't apply to us today?
- Do we realize that in the 10 commandments, Keeping the Sabbath is in the same list as don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, or place any other gods before Him!?!?
- Do we truly believe that the Decalogue is a statement of God's moral will for mankind? ... and that statement includes Sabbath!!!
- Do we realize that Sabbath is not bondage, it is not burdened down with rules and regulations and do's and don'ts.... But in fact is freedom, it is a gift, it is a blessing, it is a joy and delight????
- Are we convicted that ignoring Sabbath is sin?

Lest we think Sabbath is an act of laziness, or that my work is too important to not do it for a day... there are some serious theological and spiritual reasons for Sabbath keeping:

#### 1. Taking a Sabbath day demonstrates belief and trust in God's provision and control

Doing Sabbath, taking a day of rest, is not so much about our activity or lack of activity, but about an attitude of trust and dependence. It is so hard to stop working because there is so much to do, and we are somehow convinced that it all depends on ME!! If I don't do it, then it won't get done... and that thinking might even reflect a Messiah complex that I am the one that is important, not God.

Taking a Sabbath is a statement that God is the One Who does the work; God is the One who is in control; that I can trust God's faithfulness to accomplish what He wants to accomplish while I stop and for one day do NOT produce, do NOT perform, do NOT work....

Perhaps refusing to Sabbath reflects a lack of trust in God's sovereignty.....

God is in control every day, we know that. But taking a Sabbath is a reminder that He is perfectly in control, I am not, and I can trust Him....

ILL: like communion—we appreciate every day the cross work of Christ, but when we do communion we are visually reminded. We appreciate our rest in Christ everyday, but one day a week we actually demonstrate Christ is in control by us letting go...

2. Taking a Sabbath demonstrates contentment with what I can do in 6 days.... It created a social equality in Israel where EVERYONE stopped working for one day—no one was working overtime to try and outdo others.

Of course as pastors there is always more to do. Our work is never done. And maybe our pursuit of work is to make us feel indispensable... we need to be needed.... and we feel guilty or unneeded if we stop for one day...

But Sabbath demonstrates that I am content with what I can do in 6 days. Period. Sabbath allows us to recharge so we can work the other 6 days out of fullness...

3. Sabbath is about building relationships.

Taking Sabbath creates white space in our lives to pursue relationships, to love one another, to spend time with friends, with our family, with God. Having the white space to just hang out... with spouse, kids, family, good friends...

I think there is a huge relational, community aspect to Sabbath. It's not just a 'me day'....

4. Freedom in Sabbath Keeping

Sabbath is NOT a law!! I am not a sabbatarian!!! I do not believe that we need to observe Saturday as the Sabbath PERIOD. Nor do I believe that Sunday is exclusively the New Covenant Sabbath. Probably neither of those days are Sabbaths for pastors!

Church history demonstrates a morphing from 7<sup>th</sup> day to 1<sup>st</sup> day, and the shift was murky and took hundreds of years. At one point, Sat was day of rest and Sunday was day of worship....

Sabbath keeping is a timeless, universal creation principle that can be contextualized to each era and culture. We don't do communion exactly the same as the early church did... and probably not like our grandparents did.... So we are not going to Sabbath like Israel did, like Jesus did, and like Constantine did when he ordered Sunday the new Sabbath!

Conclusion

So what might Sabbath look like? Certainly different for each of us....

ILL: Eugene Peterson would go hiking/bird watching on his Sabbath—he and his wife would hike in silence all morning, then stop for lunch and share their observations....

We each need to work it out. Experiment. Try things. Fail. Try again. But DO NOT go right to rules and create a new legalism!

I see Sabbath similar to spiritual disciplines. Prayer, Bible reading, meditation.... these are not things we are to legalistically do, but they are means of growing in grace and Christlikeness.... so too Sabbath....

#### Ideas:

##### My Sabbath:

- Dawn and I sleep in, relight the Sabbath candle, breakfast and coffee together, talk, read Psalm 92....
- Leave my phone on my desk....
- I like to read on the patio couch.... what I like to call 'read myself to sleep'!!
- Maybe a house project.... work in my garage....
- We tend to NOT use it to build relationships—we are peopled out and need some alone time....

We are still learning!

##### With kids:

- Sabbath Toys
- Sabbath clothes
- Play legos on the floor with your kids for hours! Or tea parties....

Questions?????

#### Group Exercise

A weekly Sabbath is only one piece of taking care of yourself, keeping your tank full so you minister out of fullness, not emptiness.

I passed out Rhythm of Rest worksheets. Use this as a guide [*talk through this...*]

Then...

Share at your tables—

- How do I take care of myself—what is my plan?
- Do I really believe that Sabbath is still something we should do?

If you have a good plan and rhythm, share it with others. If you don't, what steps will you take THIS WEEK to change?

