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A Reintroduction of Sabbath as a Biblical Practice for the Spiritual Formation of Inman First Baptist Church Inman, South Carolina

Jeremiah Vance Childers

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A REINTRODUCTION OF SABBATH AS A BIBLICAL PRACTICE FOR THE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF INMAN FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
INMAN, SOUTH CAROLINA

A PROJECT
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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JEREMIAH V. CHILDERS

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APPROVAL FORM

A REINTRODUCTION OF SABBATH AS A BIBLICAL PRACTICE FOR THE
SPIRITUAL FORMATION OF INMAN FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

INMAN, SOUTH CAROLINA

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ABSTRACT

Inman First Baptist Church received Sabbath as a biblical practice through a three-stage project. The project is adapted from James Brian Smith's components for spiritual transformation. A control group received the first stage through narrative teaching in a Sabbath Study. An experimental group received the first stage, along with second (Sabbath practices) and third stages (Sabbath discussion). The thesis stated, "Members who received all three stages of the experiment would have a higher appreciation of Sabbath for Spiritual Formation." The study measured appreciation of Sabbath through a Sabbath Survey. The evaluation of the quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the experimental group's rise of Sabbath appreciation was greater than the control group's.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Visualize someone sitting at a potter's wheel. Picture this person as they take wet clay and lay it on the spinning wheel. The hands of the creator begin to shape the formless clay into a vessel. As the potter works, within their imagination they hold the end goal. It might be a jug, a cup, or a bowl. With the shape in mind, every action taken is intentional. If the vessel's shape goes against the potter's ideal image, then the potter can stop shaping the vessel at any time. The wet clay is still malleable and if needed can be reshaped anew. The process of formation takes time, but is purposeful.

As followers of Christ, we are like wet clay in the hands of God. God is the potter and God's people are the clay. Too often, we as the clay allow other things to shape and form our lives. This formation leads us away from God's ideal image for our lives. The process of Christian spiritual formation addresses the need for each of us to grow in Christlikeness through learning, becoming, and doing as was intended by our Creator. Before we can grow in this formative and transformative process, we need to stop and examine what we have become. We must ask, "How have we been shaped and formed by the culture, the systems, and the world around us today?"

Karoshi and Systems of Overwork

A recent Forbes article attributed the death of a Japanese woman to an extreme case of overwork. If you only had that small amount of information you might assume the woman worked in a highly labor oriented profession such as a factory, a mill, or on a farm. Your assumption would be wrong. The woman worked in a "white collar"

profession. She was a reporter. She died in 2013 with her mobile phone in her hand as she worked. The article reported, “Her name was Miwa Sado and she worked 159 hours of overtime with only two days off in one month.”¹ Sado’s death is a symptom of a larger problem in Japan. Japan’s overworked culture is leading to health issues and deaths of young professionals. This overworked culture has even led to a new word in the Japanese lexicon: *karoshi*.² *Karoshi* means to die from overwork. A BBC article related the rise of this phenomenon to a culture where “companies have employees working more than 80 hours of overtime a month, often unpaid”³

Why should *karoshi*, a foreign phenomenon, concern Christians in the United States? The reason is Japan and the United States share many similarities. Like the United States, Japan is a “First World” economic power, with the world’s third largest economy.⁴ It would be safe to assume that working conditions would be more amiable in a first world culture, but Japan, like the United States, is capitalist. Capitalism as a system drives production and consumption of goods and services. While many Americans may feel relieved that we do not have a term for “overworked to death” like our Japanese allies, we do share a similar culture of overwork and overconsumption. Capitalism is not

¹ Jake Adelstein, “Japan is Literally Working itself to Death: How can it Stop?” Forbes, October 30, 2017, accessed November 20, 2017, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/adelsteinjake/2017/10/30/japan-is-literally-working-itself-to-death-how-can-it-stop/#29243e012f14>.

² Ibid.

³ Edwin Lane, “The Young Japanese Working Themselves to Death,” BBC, June 2, 2017, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-39981997>.

⁴ “Japan Country Profile,” BBC.com, October 10, 2017, accessed November 20, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-14918801>.

a bad system. However, like any system where human greed enters, it can have negative consequences.

Samuel Clemens, or as you might know him, Mark Twain, is credited to have said, “History does not repeat itself, but it often rhymes.” This statement is true of the abusive systems of today, just as they were true in the ancient world. The economic systems that fueled the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Romans are not the same as today. Yet, both ancient and modern systems of economics are similar in the problems that arise out of human voracity. The biblical narrative offers a response to the systems of greed, overwork, and overproduction. God gave a mandate to the system of Egypt, characterized by slavery and oppression, “Let my people go!” (Exodus 9:1). The echo of that declaration still reverberates today.

The God of creation and the Exodus is not a God of overwork, overconsumption, or overproduction. Greed, excess, and gluttony do not characterize God. Only through this liberating God can we find a different way of living in the midst of the abusive systems of Pharaohs, Caesars, and Wall Street. God’s unique solution to the destructive systems we as humans create is the liberating gift of rest, the Sabbath.

Project Statement

Characterizations of life in American culture in the twenty-first century are work, production, consumption, activity, and entertainment. Rarely is rest included in such a description. This description of modern life is true within the families who are a part of any church in America; my church included.

As the Minister of Education at Inman First Baptist Church, one of my responsibilities is fostering spiritual growth and development among the congregation. True spiritual formation for a Christian is growing in Christlikeness. This formation occurs in the heart and mind and moves outward into action and community. Challenges to spiritual formation have always been present. Finding time and space to grow in Christ is difficult in a culture of production and consumption. However, new challenges are arising in the age of smart phones and social media. The prevalent use of mobile and internet based technology is creating new avenues of formation. The church must address this formation for the current generation and for generations to come.

On the surface, the technological and online social networking may seem like innovations that are helping people grow through information and communication. However, the digital and wireless technology we use every day for communication, social activity, and consumption of entertainment, information, and online shopping is having negative consequences on human formation. Each of these spheres of life that technology touches promise to bring purpose and fulfillment by making life easier. Nevertheless, the perpetual use of this technology can lead to burnout, overwork, over-connection, overconsumption, and little rest.

All activities we do as humans create habits or “grooved pathways” that feed and nurture a person’s life. Once these habits are formed, they tend to remain a part of a person’s life. Rich Melheim said, “In other words, the more you expose yourself to something—whether bad or good- the more easily it becomes a part of you.”⁵ This

⁵ Rich Melheim, *Holding Your Family Together: 5 Simple Steps to Help Bring Your Family Closer to God and Each Other* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2013), 79.

includes the use of internet-connected technology like smart phones, tablets, and laptop computers. Many people have discovered the phenomenon of separation anxiety to be true when they forget or lose their mobile phones. How many times have you heard or said, “I feel lost without my phone.”

The discovery of internet-based technology’s effects on human formation is emerging in the social sciences. The influences on users are real. These impacts need addressing through a biblical perspective. Additionally, the church must also offer an alternative means of formation. Before describing a ministry project to address these issues, a thorough examination of spiritual formation must occur.

The Challenge: Formation in the 21st Century

Numerous advances in the understanding of the human body and mind have come through the biological and social sciences over the last century. The science of brain development has given us an awareness that human brains, which at one time were thought to be malleable only in childhood, are not set at any age. Adult brains have “plasticity” about them. Nicholas Carr, writing on this subject said, “This plasticity can create new ways of learning, thinking, and reflecting in adults as they adapt to environmental pressures, physiologic changes, and experiences.”⁶ This means everyone, no matter his or her age, is always forming. This knowledge is raising concerns and

⁶ Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010), 31.

questions about recent human formation in response to the rising use of internet-connected technologies are mounting.

Carr addressed these concerns in his book *The Shallows: What the Internet is doing to Our Brains*. Carr wrote:

Dozens of studies by psychologists, neurobiologists, educators, and Web designers point to the same conclusion: when we go online we enter an environment that promotes cursory reading, hurried and distracted thinking, and superficial learning.⁷

The consequences of these kinds of changes to the way people think and reflect have significant expressions in their spiritual formation. If Christians are beginning to think in a hurried, distracted, and superficial manner, in what ways will it affect their reflections on God? Will followers of Jesus develop a superficial spirituality? How will these changes affect people's love of "neighbor?" For those developing curriculum for spiritual formation in this distracted and superficial age, the curriculum will need to be intentionally counter-cultural.

Another aspect of the use of the internet on human formation comes in the promise of connectivity. The internet, through social media, offers up avenues for connecting people in large social networks. Social networks are a dominant part of today's culture. The energy spent breezing through social posts, photos, and messages consumes a lot of time. Teenagers and young adults are not the only age group who are relinquishing their time to technology. The use of the internet and social media is shaping

⁷ Ibid., 115-116.

every generation. The time people spend on the internet has spiritual consequences in the way they think.

Carr noted, “The repetition of looking at information online creates a high-speed system for delivering responses and rewards.”⁸ This repetition creates addictive behaviors based on instant gratification. When users are not receiving those instant updates of information, they often become anxious and feel withdrawn. This feeling of withdrawal, like any addiction, lures people back to the delivery system of “social or intellectual nourishment.”⁹ The fact that church members are stuck in an endless cycle of information consumption creates unrest in their lives. At what point do people “disconnect” from the digital world and find rest? How do spiritual practices offer another way of formation?

Lastly, research around how technology is shaping our society has characterized Americans as “increasingly insecure, isolated, and lonely.”¹⁰ Decades of people’s lives are consumed in the pursuit of education and work. The gain of more wealth and security comes at the cost of losing time. This pursuit of stability comes at the expense of building community. Sherry Turkle wrote about this problem in her book, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Turkle commented that while people are feeling more isolated and seemingly have no time for real relationships, “technology offers substitutions through which you can have companionship and

⁸ Ibid., 117.

⁹ Ibid., 117.

¹⁰ Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 157.

convenience.”¹¹ The seduction of replacing human relationship with technology or “virtual relationships” has the potential to “hide us from each other, even as we are tethered to one another.”¹² To reclaim authentic community must be a goal for any curriculum for Christian spiritual formation.

Responding to the Challenge: Defining Christian Spiritual Formation

Before arriving at a solution to the negative formation occurring in today’s over-connected, overworked, and overconsumed world, defining Christian spiritual formation is paramount. People are being shaped and formed all the time. On the surface that may not seem problematic. The problem lies in the awareness that everyone is forming through his or her culture, economic practices, and use of technology. This formation may not be in the way God intended. Dallas Willard, in *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, stated the problem as:

The greatest need you and I have-the greatest need of collective humanity-is a renovation of our heart. The spiritual place within us from which outlook, choices, and actions come has been formed by a world away from God. Now it must be transformed.¹³

For Willard, spiritual formation for the Christian “refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Jesus.”¹⁴ This is a process that “is focused entirely on Jesus and has a

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 1.

¹³ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., 22.

goal of obedience and conformity to Christ.”¹⁵ This formation is “not a project of ‘life enhancement’ ... it is ... the process of developing a different kind of life, the life of God himself, sustained by God as a new reality in those who have confidence that Jesus is the anointed One, the Son of God.”¹⁶ Thus, Christian spiritual formation is not a quick fix or an instant process, but one that takes a lifetime to develop.

If anyone is prepared to live this “new life,” he or she must be prepared to enter into a process of change. The development of this different kind of life comes by changing the influences on our will. In *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with The God Jesus Knows*, James Bryan Smith stated:

The will is neither strong nor weak. Like a horse, it has only one task: to do what the rider (the mind, influenced by the body and the social realm) tells it to do. Therefore, change - or lack thereof - is not an issue of will at all. Change happens when these other influencers are modified. The good news is that we have control over those influencers. When new ideas, new practices and new social settings are adopted, change happens.¹⁷

For Smith, Christian formation begins when we “adopt Jesus’ narratives about God.”¹⁸ When this happens “we will know God properly and right actions will follow.”¹⁹ Smith argued that change occurs when:

We examine what we think (our narratives) and how we practice (the spiritual disciplines) and how we are interacting with others (our social context). If we are able to change those things then change will come

¹⁵ Ibid., 22-23.

¹⁶ Ibid., 59.

¹⁷James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 22.

¹⁸ Ibid., 23.

¹⁹ Ibid.

naturally to us. This is why Jesus said his “yoke” was easy. If we think the things he thought and do the things he did and spend time with likeminded people, we will become like him, and it will not be difficult.²⁰

For Smith, forming our minds to be in tune with the mind of Christ (our narratives) is just the first step in our spiritual formation towards Christlikeness. The other steps include “engaging in new practices (spiritual discipline), spending time in reflection and dialogue with others who are on the same path (participating in community), and recognizing the leading of the Holy Spirit.”²¹ For those seeking formation that offers a counter narrative, practices, and communal identity in contrast to that of overconsumption, over-activity, overstimulation, and overwork of today’s world, they must follow a different path. The formative path to counter-cultural formation is joining Jesus in what he has to offer. As disciples learn from Jesus, they become like him in their own lives. What does that look like for today’s Christian? Smith offered a glimpse:

For those of us “in whom Christ dwells,” the rhythm (of balancing contemplation and action, rest and labor) should be the same. As we spend time in quiet rest and contemplation, sitting at the feet of Jesus, we gain strength to act in wisdom in the hustle and bustle of a busy world. In slowing down we can hear the Spirit whisper that we are loved, and then we begin to reflect on the glory of the Christ who is within us. We become the kind of people this frazzled and frightened world needs most.²²

The biblical solution for Christlikeness in a “frazzled and frightened world” is present in God’s creative and redemptive work, Sabbath. Sabbath offers an alternative

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 23-24.

²² Ibid., 182.

path for formation. As an ancient practice, Sabbath rest is relatively unknown in today's society, but it still has the potential for spiritual transformation and renewal.

A Solution - Sabbath as a Spiritual Practice

The problem this project addresses is “Church members at IFBC are being formed and shaped not by spiritual practices consistent with biblical principles, but with cultural, economic, and technological expectations.” Sabbath as a spiritual practice has the potential to address and reshape habits of overwork, overproduction, and overstimulation. Sabbath as a biblical practice offers an alternative direction to resist the negative formation Christians face in today's world. In addition, Sabbath connects directly to the teachings and work of Jesus. It is through learning from Jesus and connecting to Him that church members can find rest. Thus, Sabbath offers an alternative practice that addresses the problem of formation in the ministry setting of Inman First Baptist Church.

Rationale for Choosing the Project

As a husband, a father, and a minister I have become aware of how I am being shaped and formed in both positive and negative ways by culture and technology. There have been times I have found myself on the verge of burnout, like so many others in our society. If the sense of overwork and over-connection is shaping and forming me, it is likely having similar effects on those at Inman First Baptist Church. The constant feeling of being on call and on demand from smartphones often leads people to reply to work e-mails late at night. Families often eat at the same table, but never communicate because their eyes are constantly on screens. These activities, along with so many others, are not

healthy practices. Sabbath as a spiritual practice and discipline has the potential to help shape and form those who practice it to be counter-cultural and find rest for their souls.

This ministry project aimed to help church members rediscover Sabbath from a biblical perspective. Since many Christians in today's world do not know the power of Sabbath practice for their spiritual formation, a rediscovery of Sabbath has the potential to lead them to grow in Christlikeness. The project's design incorporated a transformation of thinking, action, and community participation around Sabbath.

Project Overview

The ministry project implemented at Inman First Baptist Church was a three-stage experiment designed to reintroduce and reeducate participants about Sabbath as a biblical practice for the purpose of spiritual formation. The three-stage experiment design is an adaption of James Bryan Smith's components for transformation.²³

Components for Transformation



Illustration 1.1

²³ Smith, 23-24.

The implementation of the project came through a control group and an experimental group. The goal of the project was to determine if there could be an increase in appreciation of Sabbath for spiritual formation through an offering of Smith's components of transformation. For a more detailed overview of Smith's components of transformation, see Chapter Three: Detailed Project Description.

Project Setting: "A Place and a People"

Inman First Baptist Church was the setting for this ministry project. Inman First Baptist Church is located in Inman, South Carolina. Inman is a small town in Spartanburg County. Historically, Inman was a farming and textile town situated on the railroad. Much of the character of the town derived from those two sources of income. However, the economy began changing in the last quarter of the twentieth-century. Today, the once vibrant Inman Mills has downsized. The old textile building is undergoing repurposing for apartments.²⁴ In addition, many of the former peach fields that populated the local landscape have become residential communities.²⁵ Inman has not had the same success in revitalization like many of its neighboring towns. This reality has seen a recent shift in

²⁴ Bob Montgomery, "Former Inman Mills to be Converted to Apartments," GoUpstate.com, April 18, 2016, accessed January 30, 2018, <http://www.goupstate.com/news/20160418/former-inman-mills-to-be-converted-into-apartments>.

²⁵ Spartanburg.com, "Historical Retrospective of SC's Peach Industry," Spartanburg.com, July 23, 2014, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://www.spartanburg.com/news/historical-retrospective-scs-peach-industry/>.

Inman's elected and community leaders working to revive the town. The new town motto and goal is "Inman Moving Forward."²⁶

A Place: Inman, South Carolina

The town of Inman has an approximate population of 2,500 people.²⁷ The number of people living in Spartanburg County with an Inman address is around 30,000.²⁸ The Inman community is predominately white. Inman First Baptist Church, like much of the churches in Inman, is predominantly homogenous.²⁹ Racial barriers still exist in Inman like much of the rest of South Carolina. The data collected from a recent polling shows that the perception of race relations differs between the majority (whites) and minority (African Americans). Winthrop University reported:

Half of S.C. African American respondents said their race contributes to their personal identity. About 40% rated the country's race relations as poor, while 57% of whites rated it as either good or only fair. In the Palmetto State, things were a bit better as 37% rated relations as poor, while three-fourths of whites rated it as excellent, good or only fair.³⁰

For these reasons, Inman still lives segregated, unlike more urban areas of South Carolina. This segregation still occurs in most local churches, including Inman First

²⁶ Liz Lohuis, "Small Upstate Community Plans Revival," WYFF4 Greenville, October 29, 2014, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://www.wyff4.com/news/small-upstate-community-plans-revival/29421608>.

²⁷ City-Data.com, "Inman, SC," accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Inman-South-Carolina.html>.

²⁸ City-Data.com, "29349 Zip Code (Inman, SC) Detailed Profile," accessed March 25, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/zip/29349.html>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Winthrop University, "Racial Issues," Current Findings: Winthrop Poll February 2017- General Population in South Carolina, accessed April 2, 2017, <http://www.winthrop.edu/winthroppoll/default.aspx?id=9804>.

Baptist Church. Because of the racial divide, often many people within the community do not know their neighbors. This lack of knowing often continues to create unhealthy relationships between the church and the community.

A People: Inman First Baptist Church

Inman First Baptist Church organized as a body of believers shortly after the American Civil War. IFBC celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2015.³¹ Over those fifteen decades the church has changed its name, built and rebuilt its sanctuary, and added to its campus.³² The makeup and identity of the church has changed with time and culture. However, through its long history the church has remained active in both ministry and missional outreach. The church motto adopted in the 1990's was "Giving Hope." The people that make up IFBC work towards that motto each week. Some of IFBC ongoing ministries include: the Back Pack Ministry (feeding hungry school children each weekend), the Corner of Hope Furniture Bank (helping to make houses homes), Youth Common Ground Food Pantry, the Haiti and International Ministry Teams (supporting missionaries beyond our community and national borders), and the Habitat House initiative (bringing affordable housing to an Inman). Each of these ministries is volunteered, and each of these ministries offer hope beyond the walls of the church building.

³¹ Dan Armonatits, "Inman First Baptist Church Plans 150-Year Celebration," Spartanburg Herald-Journal, July 23, 2015, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://www.goupstate.com/article/20150723/ARTICLES/15072986>.

³² Inman First Baptist Church, "Our History," accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.ifbc.net/#/about-us/our-history>.

IFBC is one of the only moderate Baptist churches in Spartanburg County. One of IFBC's distinguishing characteristics is the support of women in ministry and the ordination of women to the deaconate. IFBC is dually aligned with Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention. This uniqueness has attracted members from denominations other than Baptist. These denominations include Methodist, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic.

IFBC has a weekly worship attendance of 275. The church has a larger ratio of members who are over fifty-five years of age, but overall the church has a healthy proportion of generational diversity. This generational diversity has led the church to embrace a blended worship style. The music from week to week balances traditional hymns, contemporary, southern gospel, and Christian blue grass.

The vocational makeup of church members reflects the general makeup of Spartanburg County. Many of the residents of Inman, including members of Inman First Baptist Church, commute to work.³³ Many adults at IFBC work in the fields of education, health care, and manufacturing. These occupations mirror the census data of Spartanburg County.³⁴ The movement of people from home - to school - to work is an everyday activity. Commuting can lead to anxiety, stress, and a "decline in overall happiness" as reported in a 2014 health article by TIME.³⁵

³³ United States Census Bureau, "Selected Economic Characteristics: 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates," American FactFinder, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Carolyn Kylstra, "10 Things Your Commute Does to Your Body," TIME.com, February 26, 2014, accessed November 30, 2017, <http://time.com/9912/10-things-your-commute-does-to-your-body/>.

IFBC is a medium sized church with generational diversity. Many of the families within the church are multi-generational. Some of these families include up to four generations actively worshiping each week together. The organization of families in the church is not uniform. Families range from the traditional two parent households to family consisting of single parents, divorced parents who share custody, remarriages, and grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Most of the families with children in the church are engaged in activity throughout the week. These activities include work, school, sports, and many extracurricular activities. With so much activity, families have competition for how they will spend their time. This activity results in families regulating time at church to another optional activity. In this mindset, spiritual formation becomes part of the extracurricular calendar rather than a priority of life.

Work, school, and the simple activities of life can become burdensome for every family. Time together is important. What time families do carve out of their busy schedules is often interrupted by technology. Smartphones, tablets, and other devices are creating avenues of separation. This digital separation can lead families to feel isolated and distant even while being in the same physical space. Families need a solution. They need the Sabbath.

Project Goals

The goal of reintroducing Sabbath to Inman First Baptist Church through a Sabbath study was to allow members to grow in their appreciation of Sabbath as an avenue for spiritual formation. The project sought to achieve this goal by offering three

distinct ways of learning about Sabbath. The project utilized three of the four components of transformation and spiritual formation listed by James Bryan Smith in *The Good and Beautiful God*. The components are: “(1) changing the stories in our minds, (2) engaging in new spiritual practices, (3) in reflection and dialogue with others who are on the same path, (4) all under the role leading of the Holy Spirit.”³⁶ Allowing church members to grow deeper in their appreciation and understanding of Sabbath occurred through four strategic goals.

The first goal of the project was to educate church members about Sabbath through biblical and theological teaching. The teaching occurred in a classroom setting. The teaching offered a narrative about God and Jesus in relation to Sabbath. Both the control group and experimental group received this component of the project (See Appendix B).

The second goal was for the experimental group to engage in spiritual practices. The role of the spiritual practices or “soul training” exercises was to reinforce the narrative of Sabbath beyond the mind but also “to their bodies and souls.”³⁷ The four spiritual formation exercises offered the experimental group an opportunity to engage with the Sabbath lessons. Each of these exercises allowed the experimental group to dig deep in personal reflection, self-awareness, and application of Sabbath in everyday experiences (See Appendix C).

³⁶ Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God*, 23-24.

³⁷ Smith, *The Good and Beautiful God*, 26.

The third goal involved bringing together the knowledge and practice of Sabbath through a guided discussion. The intention of this goal was to create an environment for the social context of transformation. The experimental group experienced this social context in four guided discussion sessions. The experimental group had the opportunity to move deeper into reflection about Sabbath through discussion, encouragement, and affirmation (See Appendix D).

The final strategic goal for the project was a synthetization of the narrative teaching, practice, and community learning into one shared activity for the experimental group. This goal occurred through a Sabbath meal (See Appendix E).

Literature Review

A literature review for reintroducing Sabbath for spiritual formation incorporated an interdisciplinary approach. Resources utilized for the project came from the following categories of research: biblical commentaries, Christian and Jewish works on Sabbath, resources on Christian formation, and research on technology's effects on human development.

First, I applied biblical commentaries in understanding key scripture passages on Sabbath. These commentaries, along with key biblical passages, examined the theological and historical development of Sabbath in the Old and New Testament. Special attention to words or phrases connected to Sabbath, especially in the original languages of Hebrew or Greek, ensued. Walter Brueggemann's commentaries on Genesis, Exodus, and his work *Sabbath as Resistance* were insightful in gaining a deeper appreciation for Sabbath (See Cited Bibliography). Brueggemann's work helped to construct a relationship

between Sabbath and God's liberating work of the Exodus. This understanding helped shape the project's emphasis on Sabbath's role in forming a "counter cultural" community that is resistant to the "systems of Pharaoh."

Next, I examined theological resources relating to Sabbath from Jewish and Christian perspectives. A review of these sources sought to understand Sabbath practices historically as well of modern Sabbath practices of Judaism and Christianity. A survey of the similarities and differences of Sabbath practices helped in seeing Sabbath in a new light. Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath* and Pinchas H. Peli's *The Jewish Sabbath* assisted in a gaining a new perspective on Sabbath. These two authors offered a perspective on Jewish spirituality that connected Sabbath as the essence of the Jewish faith. A deeper understanding of Sabbath came from learning that Sabbath is as much a day of rest as it is a constant state of mind.

Similarly, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, edited by D.A. Carson served as the primary lens in understanding the historical shifts in the Christian perspective of Sabbath. Developing a historic timeline for Sabbath practices in Protestant Christianity helped contextualize how and why a biblical Sabbath is different from the practiced Sabbath of today. Both Jewish and Christian understandings of Sabbath were helpful in communicating the different interpretations of Sabbath based on its relationship to culture, location, and historical situation.

After examining both Jewish and Christian practices of Sabbath, I reviewed Christian formational resources. These resources offered a better understanding of how the biblical practice of Sabbath can be transformational in Christian spirituality. James Bryan Smith's components of spiritual transformation found in *The Good and Beautiful*

God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows played a central role in the design of the curriculum for introducing Sabbath to IFBC. Dallas Willard's, *Renovation of the Heart* was insightful in relating Sabbath to growing in Christlikeness. Lauren F. Winners' *Mudhouse Sabbath* helped in understanding what Christians have lost and gained in their understanding of Sabbath compared to the Jewish practice of Shabbat. These three authors helped to connect the biblical perspective of Sabbath with practical ways of adapting Sabbath for spiritual formation.

Lastly, I examined research concerning technology's effect on human formation. These resources helped to describe more accurately the outside pressures and demands that occur in the lives of church members who are connected daily to mobile devices and the internet. Nicholas Carr's *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, was paramount in my understanding of the physiological changes that happen when people are constantly connected to the internet. Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* offered a clear understanding to how technology is gradually replacing. These insights helped to connect Sabbath's role as a factor in resisting these changes both for the individual and for the community.

Reasons for Reintroducing Sabbath as Spiritual Practice

What happens when a growing child misses an important nutrient? If deprived of the proper nutrients at the right time a child's body will not develop the right way. When our bodies lack vital nutrients we become vulnerable to sickness and fatigue. Our spiritual lives are similar. God has offered us spiritual nutrients for our formation and development. Often times we deny ourselves the very thing that has the potential for

making us spiritually whole. R. Alan Culpepper, in his commentary on Matthew 2:23-38 (Jesus plucking grain on the Sabbath), wrote:

The issue of Sabbath observance has lost significance for most Christians. Sabbath observance was replaced early on by worship on Sunday, and the day of Jesus' resurrection. Perhaps it is time that the church rediscovered the gift of the Sabbath, the creation of a day of rest. Even in generations when the pace of life was much slower, the Sabbath was a gift that gave individuals and families the opportunity to be at home together, to rest from the week, to worship and pray, and to walk, talk, and to eat together. Is it not ironic that in a time when more people take tranquilizers and antacids to relive the stress of the pace of modern life, so many Christians neglect the gift of Sabbath?³⁸

To know that God's gift of rest is available in our journey of faith as Christians and deny it as a discipline undermines the essence of Sabbath. Sabbath is a graceful gift from God. As a gift, rest offers time and space to grow and heal from the negative formation we experience throughout the week.

Sabbath has various positive ways of forming and shaping people of faith. Marva J. Dawn, in her book *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, the Church, and The World*, wrote of the many aspects of rest. These aspects of rest are described through our relationship to God who is in Psalm 23 described as a shepherd. The kinds of rest Dawn described as God's gift are: spiritual rest, physical rest, intellectual rest, emotional rest, and social rest.³⁹ It is in the ceasing of work and the resting in God that Dawn said, "we can know our worth does not lie in how much we

³⁸ R. Alan Culpepper, *Mark* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2007), 95.

³⁹ Marva J. Dawn, *The Sense of the Call: A Sabbath Way of Life For Those Who Serve God, The Church, and The World* (Grand Rapids, MI, William B. Eerdmans Publishing, Co., 2006), 38-46.

accomplish in that work, but in how much we are God's beloved, chosen to partner with the Trinity in that to which we are called."⁴⁰ To know God's rest is to accept God's love.

Another reason for reintroducing Sabbath as a practice for spiritual formation is in response to the consumerism and restlessness of our American culture. In *Sabbath as Resistance*, Walter Brueggemann pointed out reasons for a reeducation of Jewish Sabbath in response to the "systems of Pharaoh" in our day and time. It is these systems that "champion anxiety and affirm restlessness." For Brueggemann, the departures from these systems are an act of counter-culturalism. This occurs in Sabbath practices that are "emotional, liturgical, and economical." To engage in the Sabbath as described in the fourth commandment is to have faith in the "subversive, exodus-causing God of the first tablet of the Decalogue."⁴¹ It is Sabbath that properly helps us engage our neighbor rather than production and consumption as primary definers of our lives. As Brueggemann also commented, Sabbath offers resistance to the systems of anxiety and intimidation, but Sabbath is more than just resistance. Sabbath is the alternative.⁴² "It is the alternative to the demanding, chattering, and pervasive presence of all the things that devour our rest time."⁴³ As both resistance and alternative, Sabbath allows individuals and the community to refocus attention on God rather than the systems of Pharaoh.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 49.

⁴¹ Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Yes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 18.

⁴² Ibid., xiii-xvi.

⁴³ Ibid., xiv.

Spiritual formation through Sabbath occurred in the Sabbath project by allowing the practice of rest to penetrate the heart and will of those who practiced it, specifically the experimental group. The need for Sabbath was self-evident, as people are burned-out in our culture and at Inman First Baptist Church. Matthew Sleeth, MD noted:

Subtracting a day of rest each week has had a profound effect on our lives. How could it not? One day a week adds up. Fifty-two days a year times an average life span is equal to more than eleven years. Take away eleven years of anything in a lifetime, and there will be change.⁴⁴

The need for the divine rest of Sabbath is a hunger all people have. As followers of Jesus, we must recognize that God hears our soul's laments and offers us hope for our lives. As Dallas Willard noted:

Jesus heard the cries of a wearied humanity he saw around him. He saw the soul's desperate need in those who struggled with the overwhelming tasks of their life. Such weariness and endless labor was, to him, a sure sign of a soul not properly rooted in God – a soul in effect, on its own.⁴⁵

As disciples of Jesus we are to learn from him how to rest our soul in God. As Willard stated, "Rest to our soul is rest in God. My soul is at peace only when it is with God, as a child with its mother."⁴⁶ He then concluded:

In summary, then, transformation of our soul requires that we acknowledge its reality and importance, understand scriptural teachings about it, and take it unto the yoke of Jesus, learning from him humility and abandonment of "outcomes" to God. This brings rest to our soul. Then our soul is reempowered in goodness by receiving the law and the Word into it as the structure of our covenant fellowship with God in grace.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Matthew Sleeth, *24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2012), 8-10.

⁴⁵ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 209.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 215.

Thus, we must become students of Jesus for reeducation on Sabbath. To accomplish this through the ministry project meant to consider spiritual formation around the whole person. A reinstruction of Sabbath had to incorporate spiritual formation that touched all aspects of the person. Willard described *the person* as an interplay of six basic aspects of human life: “*thought* (images, concepts, judgment, and inferences), *feelings* (sensation and emotion), *choice* (will, decision, and character), *body* (action and interaction with the physical world), *social context* (personal and structural relations to others), and *soul* (the factor that integrates all the above to form one life).”⁴⁸ A curriculum for spiritual formation to reeducate church members on the meaning, purpose, and practice of Sabbath needed to include each of these six aspects of the person in preparing for true spiritual formation. The wonderful quality about Sabbath as a biblical principle and spiritual practice is that it connects to each of these aspects of life in real and meaningful ways. Thus, Sabbath became a natural avenue in providing spiritual formation for those at Inman First Baptist Church.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

CHAPTER TWO: DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An implementation of a project to reintroduce Sabbath as biblical practice at Inman First Baptist Church occurred by using the three components of transformation described by James Bryan Smith. The project had three stages: a Sabbath study (narrative), Sabbath Exercises (practices), and intentional discussion sessions (social context). The control group attended only the Sabbath Study. The experimental group received all three stages.

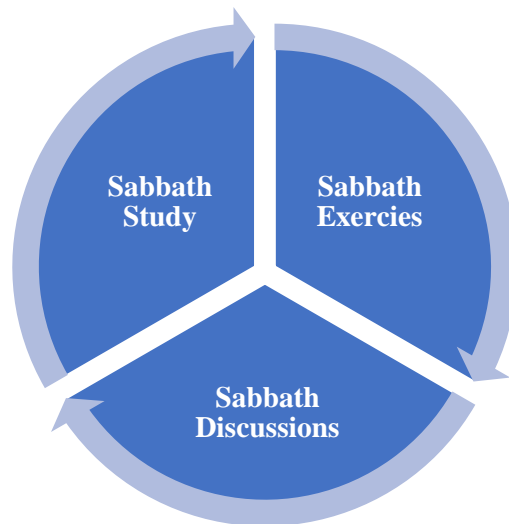


Illustration 1.2

Description of the Sabbath Study

The first stage in the project for rediscovering Sabbath was a four-week Sabbath study. Every participant of the project attended the four-week study together. The Sabbath study introduced church members to a biblical and theological understanding of Sabbath. The study was broken up into four hour-long sessions. The biblical and

theological rationale presented in this project report became the outline for the Sabbath study.

The goal of the study was to raise participants' understanding of Sabbath. The lessons connected Sabbath to the narrative of God's creative order, Sabbath's role in liberating people from systems of production and greed, and the interpretation of Sabbath from Jewish and Christian traditions.

A large classroom at Inman First Baptist Church became the setting for the four lessons. All participants met from 5:00 - 6:00 PM on September 10, September 17, September 24, and October 1, 2017. The classroom arrangement offered room for fifty-five seats. Each of the four lectures was given from a podium at the front of the classroom. Provisions of refreshments, pens, and an outline of the lesson came prior to each session. The session outlines offered participants a tool for remembering topics covered in each lesson. Each outline also contained reflection questions for participants to consider following the class (See Appendix B). Each session provided time for questions during the major transitions in the material and at the end of each lecture. Following the last session, the control group completed the post Sabbath survey.

Description of Sabbath Exercises

In addition to the four-week Sabbath lesson, the experimental group received another level of understanding Sabbath. This stage was Sabbath practices. The experimental group engaged Sabbath beyond the classroom setting through interactive and reflective exercises. These exercises incorporated the concepts taught in the Sabbath lessons (See Appendix C). By incorporating Sabbath narrative into actions, the

experimental group experienced Sabbath in a deeper way. Each of the four exercises was intentionally designed to move participants to evaluate their habits, to come to understand Sabbath as counter-cultural, and to reflect on how these new actions lead to spiritual formation.

The experimental group returned each Sabbath exercise for evaluation. Each exercise had open-ended questions. The responses to these questions helped garner qualitative data for the project. These opened-ended questions helped to measure a rise in Sabbath awareness. This data was essential in clarifying reasons for measured deviations of change between the pre- and post-Sabbath surveys. This data explained why the experimental group's measurements differed at times from the control group.

Description of Sabbath Discussion Sessions

The last stage of the experiment came in the form of three guided discussion sessions. This was the social context of the project. The experimental group met for an hour before sessions 2-4 of the Sabbath study for a time of guided discussion (See Appendix D). Each of the discussion sessions had questions that guided the experimental group into talking about their experiences with the previous week's Sabbath exercises. The questions guided members to talk with one another. The goal of these sessions was to give the experimental group a community setting for understanding and encouraging one another about Sabbath.

The questions were asked in the order they were written. Everyone was given an opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions. The discussion was fruitful and often went in positive directions that were not intended. Each session brought new

thoughts and connections to Sabbath. The interplay of age and gender often opened up new insights for members. These sessions offered a deeper level of appreciating Sabbath through community dialogue. Documentation of the discussion sessions occurred through audio recordings and field notes. This added to the qualitative data generated by the project.

Description of the Sabbath Meal

Beyond the three stages of the Sabbath project, the experimental group met one additional time. This meeting was for a shared Sabbath meal. The Sabbath meal occurred at 5:00 PM on October 8, 2017. The gathering was in the Fellowship Hall at Inman First Baptist Church. The experimental group shared an adapted Christian Shabbat Seder. The meal's design synthesized all three stages of the process for transformation into one experience. As the facilitator, I provided meat, a side dish, and drinks for the meal. Each member of the group brought a side dish to share.

The Sabbath meal included a lighting of the Christ candle, an invitation to rest, a time of blessing, Old and New Testament scripture readings, an observance of the Lord's Supper, and a prayer of thanksgiving (See Appendix E). The experimental group completed the post-Sabbath survey following the Sabbath meal.

Recruitment for the Sabbath Project

I chose to reintroduce Sabbath to members of Inman First Baptist Church through a spiritual formation class for the Doctor of Ministry Project. All participants in the project were members or regular attendees of Inman First Baptist Church. Recruitment

from the church came through advertising in the church newsletter, the church bulletin, on the Inman First Baptist Facebook page, and the church website (See Appendix G). Additional recruitment came through personal invitations to church members.

Recruitment began in August of 2017 in preparation for the Sabbath study to begin the Sunday after the Labor Day weekend. My intentional goal was to have 10-12 members in the experimental group and 15-20 in the control group. My expectations were more than met with an abundance of participation. The experimental group began with 17 members and the control group with 29. There was some decline in participation by the end of the project but attendance was still above my initial target.

Description of the Control Group

The control group served as the standard base for the project. They received the minimum requirement of the three-fold process of transformation: the first stage - a change in narrative. The first stage happened by means of four hour-long lessons on Sabbath. The control group received a pre-Sabbath survey prior to the lessons and a post-Sabbath survey at the conclusion (See Appendix A). This survey measured the change in understanding and appreciation of Sabbath based solely on attending the four-week class on Sabbath. The results from their survey were compared with those of the experimental group. The experimental group received the intervention of stages two and three of the project. The survey instrument included questions about demographics. This data helped define the group in more detail. The control group consisted of 29 taking the pre-survey and 27 taking the post-survey (See Tables 1-4 for the demographics). Most of those who participated in the control group were over 55 years of age. The control group divided

almost evenly between men and women. Many of those who were a part of the control group were retired or working only part-time. The largest group of those who worked had a traditional 40-50-hour work schedule.

Those in the control group were encouraged to attend every session but were not required. Each participant signed a consent form prior to participating in the first Sabbath lesson (See Appendix G).

Description of the Experimental Group

The experimental group received all three stages of the three-fold process of transformation. Stages two (practices) and three (social context) served as the “intervention” or “treatment” in the experiment. The experimental group met for all four Sabbath lessons (narrative), committed to do four Sabbath spiritual formation exercises between each lesson (practices), and engaged in guided hourly discussion sessions (social context) prior to lessons 2-4. Lastly, the experimental group shared a Sabbath meal at the conclusion of the study. The meal incorporated all three stages of the experiment into one activity. The intervention of stages two and three and the Sabbath Meal allowed the experimental group to dig deeper into Sabbath as a formative experience as compared to the control group. Like the control group, the experimental group completed the pre- and post-Sabbath surveys (See Appendix A). They also completed a consent form before entering into the project (See Appendix G).

Church members who formed the experimental group divided evenly between male and female; however, the participants were younger overall in comparison to the control group. More than half of the experimental group worked 40-60 hours a week.

With a variety of ages, genders, and work schedules, the experimental group offered a realistic cross-section of the church. The diverse dynamic of the experimental group allowed for good discussion and encouragement between participants. The diversity of age and gender allowed multiple perspectives and pressed everyone to dig deeper into Sabbath.

Tables 1-5 below give a detailed description of the demographics for both groups.⁴⁹

Table 1: Age of Participants

	18-25	26-35	36-50	55-65	Above 65	Below 18	Grand Total
Control	2	9	7	14	24		56
Post	1	4	3	7	12		27
Pre	1	5	4	7	12		29
Experimental		4	16	6	10	3	39
Post		2	8	2	5	1	18
Pre		2	8	4	5	2	21
Grand Total	2	13	23	20	34	3	95

⁴⁹ For each table all numbers and percentages listed are mean values. The values listed are combined values for both surveys and a mean value for the pre and post-Sabbath survey by the control and experimental groups. This format is presented throughout the project report.

Table 2: Gender of Participants

	Female	Male	Grand Total
Control	28	28	56
Post	14	13	27
Pre	14	15	29
Experimental	18	21	39
Post	9	9	18
Pre	9	12	21
Grand Total	46	49	95

Table 3: Marital Status of Participants

	Divorced	Married	Single		Widowed	Grand Total
Control	2	44	4		6	56
Post	1	21	2		3	27
Pre	1	23	2		3	29
Experimental		36	3			39
Post		17	1			18
Pre		19	2			21
Grand Total	2	80	7		6	95

Table 4: Participants with Children

	No	Yes	Grand Total
Control	17	39	56
Post	8	19	27
Pre	9	20	29
Experimental	9	30	39
Post	4	14	18
Pre	5	16	21
Grand Total	26	69	95

Table 5: Average Amount of Hours Worked Each Week

	(no answer)	20-30 hours	30-40 hours	40-50 hours	50-60 hours	Above 60 hours	Below 20 hours
Control	14.29%	8.93%	10.71%	28.57%	8.93%	3.57%	25.00%
Post	18.52%	7.41%	11.11%	29.63%	7.41%	3.70%	22.22%
Pre	10.34%	10.34%	10.34%	27.59%	10.34%	3.45%	27.59%
Experimental	15.38%	0.00%	2.56%	51.28%	10.26%	2.56%	17.95%
Post	16.67%	0.00%	5.56%	50.00%	11.11%	0.00%	16.67%
Pre	14.29%	0.00%	0.00%	52.38%	9.52%	4.76%	19.05%

Means of Evaluation: Description of the Sabbath Survey

Each participant completed a Sabbath survey at the beginning and the end of the Sabbath project. The design of the Sabbath survey measured each person's appreciation and understanding of Sabbath. The survey also garnered demographic information. Both the control group and the experimental group completed the same surveys (See Appendix A).

The Sabbath survey included both quantitative and qualitative questions. Many of the quantitative questions were based on a Likert Scale. This tool measured responses on a spectrum from 0-10. The Likert Scale allowed participants to answer questions about behaviors, actions, and attitudes. These responses were in connection to work, habits, relationships, and Sabbath. Other questions were designed to measure frequency of actions, practices, and community involvement. The Sabbath survey was the primary tool in evaluating participants' growth of understanding and appreciation of Sabbath.

In addition to the quantitative measurements, the survey instrument had open-ended questions to help measure qualitatively how individuals responded to Sabbath. These questions aimed to see a rise in description of Sabbath and Sabbath practices following the implementation of the project. Each of these measurement tools helped to understand what happened as a result of reintroducing Sabbath to church members at Inman First Baptist Church.

CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Sabbath as a counter-cultural expression of faith has its roots in both Jewish and Christian traditions. Those traditions have their origins in the biblical narrative of the New and Old Testament. Sabbath traditions have changed with time and culture. Many people have forgotten the theological and biblical roots of Sabbath. The ministry project around Sabbath offered members of Inman First Baptist Church a theological understanding of Sabbath as they rediscovered it through the biblical narrative. The following rationale became the basis for the curriculum used in the four-week Sabbath study. Both the control group and the experimental group received this “Sabbath narrative” during the ministry project.

Overview of the Biblical Rationale

Sabbath as a day, a practice, and an ideal image of rest is found throughout the Old and New Testaments. For this project, the biblical rationale examined Sabbath rest through selected biblical viewpoints. These viewpoints include the seventh day of the creation story of Genesis, the two versions of the fourth commandment in Exodus and Deuteronomy, and the New Testament’s interpretation of Sabbath as the fulfillment in Christ in Matthew and Hebrews.

Genesis 2:1-3: God Rested on the Seventh Day

Rest in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible has its origins in God's creation.

Terrance Fretheim observed that in the creation story of Genesis 1:1-2:4, creation was completed not in another activity of God's creative process but in God's rest from work.⁵⁰ Genesis 2:1-3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.⁵¹

The word Sabbath is not recorded in the creation story of Genesis, but the divine resting on the seventh day of creation embodied the fullness and the importance of Sabbath in the created order. Fretheim remarked on this importance, "In the act of sanctifying, God sets aside one day as different from others, the full significance of which becomes apparent only later in the Pentateuch."⁵² As a part of the created order, the seventh day discloses something unique about the God of Israel.

Walter Brueggemann commented about the uniqueness of Israel's God, "The creator does not spend his six days of work in coercion but in faithful invitation. God does not spend the seventh day in exhaustion but in serenity and peace."⁵³ Israel's story of creation, which differed greatly from other Ancient Near Eastern creation myths,

⁵⁰ Terence E. Fretheim, "The Book of Genesis." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, edited by Leander E. Keck vol. 1, 319-674 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 346.

⁵¹ All Scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version.

⁵² Fretheim, 347.

⁵³ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 35.

offered more than just an explanation of how things came into being. Israel's creation story offered something unique about the character of Israel's God. Brueggemann went on to note, that unlike other gods of the Ancient Near East, this God (Yahweh) was not anxious about creation. Yahweh was "at ease with the well-being of his rule, and out of this ease was able to rest."⁵⁴ The uniqueness of Israel's restful God would embody the character of Sabbath observance for Israel.

If rest was unique to Israel's God, then Sabbath as a practice became unique to Israel. Sabbath rest became embedded in the religious and cultic observance of time. Rest, as noted by George Guthrie, was practiced by Israel beyond the seventh day. Rest was practiced in intervals for the land (See Exodus 23:10-11; Leviticus 25:4). Rest was also applied to the year of Jubilee (See Leviticus 25:8-55). In this observance debts were forgiven, land restored, and slaves and prisoners freed.⁵⁵ Sabbath as a practice was entrenched into the nature and fabric of God's intention for Israel's life together with God, others, and creation.

Exodus and the Decalogue

The book of Exodus is roughly divided into two equal parts. William Johnstone noted that these two parts are connected by what is found at their center. Johnstone stated the first part, Exodus 1-19, acts as the "prologue." The first half of Exodus looks back and describes "God's great act of deliverance of Israel from the crushing slavery in

⁵⁴ Ibid..

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Egypt.” The second part, Exodus 21-40, looks forward to what “God will expect from Israel as the redeemed community.” The Decalogue (Exodus 20) is centered in the middle of the book. Johnson’s concluded, “God’s gift of the Law at Sinai stands at the center of the book of Exodus and at the heart of Israel’s history and identity.”⁵⁶

The deliverance act of the Exodus did not require a prior commitment from Israel. The Exodus was a divine act. In contrast, the Decalogue required Israel to enter into a covenant relationship with God. Brevard Childs noted, “The law spelled out what God required from a covenant people.”⁵⁷ In this unique covenant relationship, Israel was expected to keep a number of covenant obligations. One of these unique commands was the Sabbath.

Exodus 20:8-11: Remember the Sabbath, and Keep it Holy

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it (Exodus, 20:8-11).

The Sabbath command was part of the first of two tablets given to Moses at Sinai. The ten commands spoke to how the covenant people were to relate to the liberating God of the Exodus (tablet one) and to one another in their new covenant community (tablet

⁵⁶ William Johnstone, *Exodus 20-40* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2014), 1.

⁵⁷ Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), 401.

two). Brevard Childs described the unique character of the Decalogue as more than another redemptive act. He wrote:

The giving of the law does not stand in direct line with the deliverance from Egypt. It is not simply another gracious act of redemptive history. Rather, the giving of the law presupposes the deliverance from Egypt while at the same time serving another function. God made himself known in his name. Now he will enter into a covenant with his people. The Decalogue reveals the other side of God's nature which now lays special claim upon Israel. The law expresses the will of God for Israel.⁵⁸

The Decalogue became the basis for Israel's transformative identity as God's uniquely chosen people. The two tablets concerned themselves with proper worship (i.e. love of God) and proper relationship with others (i.e. love of neighbor). As the fourth commandment, the Sabbath command held a unique position in the Decalogue. Brueggemann wrote that this unique position is held "because it enjoins rest for humanity as well as honoring the creator."⁵⁹ It may seem unusual that a command to rest is included in the law, but further investigation into Exodus 20:8-11 reveals the unique character of this commandment.

The fourth commandment in Exodus is the longest in the Decalogue and it received more reapplication and defining than any of the other commands.⁶⁰ The fourth commandment begins with an imperative *remember*. John I. Durham wrote of the uniqueness of the command:

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Walter Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Ed. Leander E. Keck vol. 1, 675-982 (Nashville: Abingdon Press), 844.

⁶⁰ John I. Durham, World Biblical Commentary: *Exodus* (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 187), 288.

זָכַר (zakar), a qal infinitive absolute is the equivalent of an emphatic imperative. It means, “remember,” as always in context of covenantal obligation, in the sense of “observe without lapse” or “hold as a present and continuing priority.”⁶¹

Why does the command put such and emphasis on remembering the Sabbath day? The most logical reason was that it was difficult for the people of Israel to keep the Sabbath day holy. Examples of this difficulty include warnings from the prophets. These warnings came to Israel based on their inability to remember and keep the Sabbath. For example, the book of Amos gave a warning to those who neglected the Sabbath while commerce continued at the exploitation of the poor:

Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
saying, “When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,
buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat (Amos 8:4-6).

Similarly, Isaiah recorded God’s displeasure with worship as it neglected to remember the Sabbath day. However, God offered redemption for those who would honor the Sabbath:

If you refrain from trampling the sabbath,
from pursuing your own interests on my holy day;
if you call the sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,

⁶¹ Ibid., 289.

and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Forgetting the Sabbath often led to social and economic problems for the covenant people. Exodus 20:8-11 included remembering not as a suggestion, but as an imperative. Johnstone noted: “Remembering is not just a mental act to recall but also involve physical participating in an appropriate ritual act of commemoration.”⁶² To remember the Sabbath means to cease from labor and to be a part of the divine order of rest enacted by God in creation. As Brueggemann defined it, “Sabbath remembering is setting aside time to be fully devoted to Yahweh.”⁶³ Thus, remember incorporates more than mental reflection, it pushes for discipline and practice. The act of remembering is not done individually, but in community.

The form and structure of the fourth command also offers insight into its meaning for Israel. As noted by Brueggemann, the command was expounded into three parts. First, the command acknowledges six legitimate days of work (v. 8). Second, the command gifts a day of rest (v.9-10). Third, the motivational clause (v.11) is given: Israel rests because God rests. The command makes no mention of structured or organized worship and is primarily concerned with rest.⁶⁴ However, rest, when done in relationship to putting God first (commandments 1-3), and being in right relationship with one’s neighbor (commands 5-6), is at the heart of doing God’s will. This spiritual centeredness

⁶² Johnstone, 34.

⁶³ Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” 845.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

found in Sabbath has the formative potential of preparing a person to be ready to approach God in worship as the psalmist declared “with clean hands and pure hearts” (Psalm 24:4).

In the narrative context of Exodus, why was resting so important to God and to Israel? The unique quality of rest came through Israel’s newly found freedom from slavery in Egypt. Now that Israel was free from Egypt’s harsh labor, how would it live with God and others? William Johnstone noted, “Israel owed its freedom to Yahweh. For that reason, the day of rest was not just a day off work. In Yahweh’s honor, Israel was to keep it holy.”⁶⁵ Sabbath tied together the remembrance of what God did in the departure from Egypt and what God had in store for God’s people in the Promised Land. Rest was also a characteristic of God. As Brueggemann rightly observed, “If Israel’s God “was not a workaholic,” then God would not require Israel to be one.”⁶⁶ For Israel to follow God into the future, it had to be formed and shaped through God’s commands. This future could only be accomplished by reflecting God’s nature and ethic in the world.

Israel’s mistreatment at the hands of Pharaoh taught Israel a narrative of abuse and suffering. Following the Exodus, Israel had to learn a new narrative. This new narrative for life was filled with grace, rest, and divine purpose. For those who participated in the Sabbath study, this narrative is as counter-cultural and liberating now as it was millennia ago.

⁶⁵ Johnstone, 34-35.

⁶⁶ Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” 845.

Exodus 31:12-18: Sabbaths as a Continual Sign

Outside of the Decalogue, the book of Exodus spoke of Sabbath not only as a command to “remember and keep holy” but also as a sign.

The LORD said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: “You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God (Exodus 31:12-18).

Exodus 31:12-18 belongs to the entire instruction that God began in Exodus 25:1.

This pericope included divine commands for offerings (Exod. 25:1-9), the construction of the ark to house the Covenant (Exod. 25:10-22), the ceremonial objects used in worship (Exod. 25:23-40), the instructions for building and use of the Tabernacle (Exod. 26:1 – 27:21), the vestments and role of the priests (Exod. 28:1-29:37), and the role of the altar (Exod. 30:1-10). As these passages reveal God’s intention for Israel’s covenant responsibility of worship it is important to note that Exodus 31:12-18 was the addendum.

Durham noted, “Sabbath is referred to as a sign of the perpetuity of the covenant with Yahweh.”⁶⁷ If Israel kept this sign of perpetuity generation after generation, it guaranteed the experience of every generation “to know the nearness of Yahweh.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Durham, 414.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 413.

Thus, Sabbath as a repeated day of remembrance brought each generation back to the moment of liberation in the Exodus, and required each generation to take the covenant up for themselves. As a sign, Sabbath also offered a lens into true worship of God. This worship brought Israel a new narrative of living in relationship with God and others. Worship could not be fully realized until each generation kept its covenant obligation of rest.

Since Sabbath was so integral to the vitality of Israel's identity and future, the violation of Sabbath came with great penalty. To neglect the Sabbath was to ignore God. Durham noted that to disregard Yahweh meant to disregard the "possibility of Israel's existence as a people."⁶⁹ Ignoring the Sabbath was ignoring God's liberation and a return to what came before. Brueggemann stated that Pharaoh represented "a life lived for productivity," and to profane the Sabbath meant to value the system of Pharaoh over God. To do such would ultimately end in slavery. To disregard the Sabbath was to "jeopardize all that was most precious and definitional about Israel's existence in the world and its loyalty to Yahweh."⁷⁰

For those who participated in the Sabbath study, this point was a crucial. It was important for both the control and experimental group to comprehend how forgetting the Sabbath, and its context in God's liberating narrative, can lead to dire consequences. One of those consequences is becoming a part of a narrative that is full of exploitation, greed,

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Brueggemann, "The Book of Exodus," 923.

and production. Relearning the narrative of Sabbath in the context of the Exodus became crucial in recognizing Sabbath's importance in our relationship with God and others.

Lastly, Exodus 31:17 also spoke to a unique character of Yahweh that is not seen often in scripture; God was "refreshed." For what reason did God need refreshing? If God was tired and in need of rest, what does that say about God's nature, especially in the Priestly tradition of Exodus? Brueggemann noted that the word translated refreshed, נִפְּשׁ-*nephshed*, has the meaning of, "given back God's own diminished self." He commented further:

With either a passive or a reflexive translation, the point is still the same. The inescapable inference is that in six days of creation God worked very hard, and God's own self had been diminished through the exertion. This usage is all the more astonishing in the Priestly tradition, which tends to present God primarily in terms of majestic transcendence. For a moment here, the text lets the reader see God from another side, the side of frailty and vulnerability.⁷¹

What did it mean for Israel to see God as needing to be refreshed? If God was greater than Pharaoh, who was in constant production, and God was in relationship through covenant with Israel, whom God freed from Pharaoh's system of production, then if rest was important to God it was vital to a freed Israel. Israel needed to heed greatly to God's command to "remember and make holy the Sabbath," for God's strength came not from the power of production, but from the reality of an ordered creation in need of rest. The future of Israel was not determined by its past. Israel's future would be guided by God's new reality where Sabbath became the goal.

⁷¹ Ibid., 924.

As an end to God's long speech to Moses in Exodus 25:1-31:18, Sabbath came as a conclusion to what Brueggemann classified as the "final question of faith and goal of existence: *What is the meaning of worship?*" He also reasoned, "In the context of Sabbath, worship is God's creation engaged in joyous rest." It is only in this kind of worship that Israel can truly be in a place to "enjoy God."⁷² Worship, rest, and enjoying God's presence are the goals of creation. Thus, Sabbath in the Exodus account was to be remembered and function as a sign. Sabbath stands as a sign of God's eternal presence in the life of God's people then and now. For those who participated in the Sabbath study it was central for them to consider what it meant for Sabbath to be missing in their lives.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15: Observe the Sabbath

The fourth commandment is found in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and Exodus 20:8-11. Both accounts share many similarities. The two share a common origin but were written with unique perspectives. The Exodus account traces its origins to a Priestly tradition. However the account in Deuteronomy had its origins in the Deuteronomistic tradition. In both representations, the Sabbath command bridged the two tablets as it connected Israel's relationship to God and the "responsibilities in the human sphere," as noted by Patrick Miller.⁷³ However, the character of the fourth commandment in Deuteronomy has

⁷² Ibid., 925.

⁷³ Patrick D. Miller, *Deuteronomy* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 72.

its own unique differences from the Exodus version. Deuteronomy's Sabbath command states:

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

In Deuteronomy, *observance* became the Sabbath requirement, rather than

remembering. The difference between *remember* (*zachor*) in Exodus' fourth commandment of the Decalogue and *observe* (*shamor*) in Deuteronomy was described by Asher Eder as:

While in English, the word remember means to get all the disconnected members of our memory together again, the Hebrew *zachor* means actually to penetrate through the darkness of forgetfulness into the original, back to the origin, to the beginning, in order to establish the sabbath on earth. *Shamor*, observing the sabbath day, tells Israel to put this remembrance into practice, especially after the experience of liberation from the bondage of Egypt and in view of Israel's settling in the land.⁷⁴

The observance aspect of Sabbath in Deuteronomy has deep theological implications. Patrick Miller in his commentary on Deuteronomy listed eight major implications:

Sabbath is a gift of God as much as it is a command. ... As a gift, the primary character of Sabbath is rest. ... Sabbath looks backward to the exodus redemption and God's liberation from toil and bondage. ... Sabbath also looks forward to the promise rest of God, both as the promise land and an eschatological rest. ... The sanctifying of the Sabbath serves to

⁷⁴ Asher Eder, "The Sabbath: To Remember, To Observe, To Make," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 34, no. 2: 104-109. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost, accessed January 4, 2017.

guard the first and second commandment by not putting work as an idol to be worshiped. ... The setting apart one day regularly to the Lord inhibits the human inclination to justify oneself by work, and points toward the reality of justification by faith. ... Sabbath is one of the marks of God's people and is a gift for all people. ... Sabbath relates to social justice.⁷⁵

As Miller highlighted, Sabbath as defined in Deuteronomy has a deep relational concern for how God's community would treat others. Mark Biddle noted that the Sabbath command in Deuteronomy differed from Exodus. The difference is located in Deuteronomy's unique "humanitarian interest." Biddle also surmised that in Deuteronomy the theme of Yahweh's "partisanship on behalf of the downtrodden, in particular the widows, orphans, and sojourners," may be the reason for God's requirement of Israel's slaves to experience rest.⁷⁶

The motivational clause in the fourth commandment also differs in Deuteronomy. The clause required Israel to remember when it was enslaved in Egypt. Biddle noted, "Sabbath highlighted the inherent contradictions between the institution of slavery and the theological implications of Yahweh's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage." This contradiction "offered a prime example of the way the best and truest elements of Sabbath can subvert and criticize cultural practices and norms."⁷⁷ God's will for Israel was not to become like its former master, Pharaoh. God will for Israel was to reflect God's liberation from oppression. Thus, Sabbath as a practice was a transformational observance that created an opportunity for Israel to understand social justice by

⁷⁵ Miller, 81-83.

⁷⁶ Mark E. Biddle, *Deuteronomy* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2003), 110-111.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 111-112.

remembering the justice of God. Israel had to model God's gracious gift of rest by allowing God's rest to be granted to all people. This provision included slaves and domestic animals.

Sabbath as a narrative offered a new way of thinking about God and neighbor as highlighted in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Sabbath also offers a new way of living and behaving. These new practices reinforced Sabbath's narrative of liberation. Both of these Sabbath accounts are written to Israel as a community, and the expectation was that Sabbath would be remembered and observed as a community. This rationale from the Old Testament's understanding of Sabbath was important in designing curriculum for the ministry project. This was done by relating how Sabbath helps people learn a new narrative about God, about ourselves, and about our neighbors. A Sabbath narrative was offered to both the control and experimental group. This Sabbath narrative developed from the Exodus, the fourth commandment, and God's social justice also aided in designing practices and community engagement for the experimental group.

Sabbath and the New Testament

The Christian movement of the early church found its origins deeply rooted in Judaism. The New Testament writers, like Jesus, were shaped and formed by learning and practicing Jewish Torah. This project sought to give the control group and the experimental group a better understanding of how Jesus related to the Sabbath. This was accomplished by examining Jesus' relationship to the law in the Gospel of Matthew and Hebrews' interpretation of Jesus as the eschatological fulfillment of God's rest.

Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets

Matthew's Gospel offered an interpretation of how many in early church understood Jesus' relationship with the Jewish Law. Brevard Childs observed, "Jesus radicalizes the law of Sinai, however, not in the sense of replacing it with another, but of bringing its original intent to fulfillment. For Jesus, the Messiah, the law of Sinai is still unquestionably the will of God for Israel and for his disciples."⁷⁸ This fulfillment can be observed in Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount:"

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:17-20).

As Jesus taught his disciples a *kingdom ethic*, he proclaimed that he did not come to abolish the law or the prophets, "which is presumably shorthand for the Old Testament," but to fulfill them.⁷⁹ In this passage the Greek translated *abolish* and *fulfill* in v. 17 are καταλύω (katalyō) and πληρώω (plēroō) respectively. The evangelist made clear in the Gospel that Jesus did not replace, take away from, or get rid of the Old Testament law, but he exhibited true covenant faithfulness for his disciples. Jesus opened up the true meaning of the scriptures and required a different hermeneutical approach than that of his contemporaries. N.T. Wright commented that Jesus' teachings were revolutionary.

⁷⁸ Childs, 429-430.

⁷⁹ Ben Witherington, *Matthew* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2006), 126.

Wright argued that the scribes and Pharisees taught being faithful to God came through right actions and behavior. Jesus was revolutionary, because he called for a “change of heart.”⁸⁰

Jesus’ hermeneutic created a different way of being shaped and formed by the law and scriptures. Jesus taught his disciples a different way of spiritual transformation. Rather than a person being conformed to the law, the opposite was true, the law had the power of transforming a person from within. For those who are disciples of Jesus the outward behavior conforms to God’s law when the inward life is in right relationship with God and neighbor. Dallas Willard in *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ*, described this inward transformation when he wrote:

Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness is the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it takes on the character of the inner being of Jesus himself. The result is that the “outer life of the individual increasingly becomes a natural expression of the inner reality of Jesus and of his teachings.”⁸¹

Jesus took seriously how he and his disciples were to interpret the writings of the Hebrew Bible. Ben Witherington wrote, “Matthew 5:19 makes clear to Jesus’ disciples that the commands of the Old Testament cannot simply be dismissed.”⁸² Witherington continued to remark on Jesus’ hermeneutical approach to the law when he stated, “Discipleship certainly involves obedience and righteousness, indeed a righteous life both

⁸⁰ N.T. Wright, *Matthew for Everyone: Part One Chapters 1-15* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 41.

⁸¹ Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 159.

⁸² Witherington, 127.

in character and action that requires more than lip service to the Old Testament.”⁸³ For a disciple of Jesus to live truly in faithful witness to the law, he or she needs more than just right outward action. A disciple of Jesus must be changed from within. Transformation begins deep within us. The Letter to the Romans spoke to this inward transformation when Paul wrote:

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2).

Jesus’ strong hermeneutic of the Old Testament law brought his disciples, then and now, to the core of what the law intended. An example of Jesus getting at the core of the Old Testament law can be observed in Matthew in 22:34-40:

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

When Jesus’ antagonists confronted him to prioritize the commandments, Jesus responded by addressing the intention of all of the Old Testament teaching to Deuteronomy 6:5. He recalled the *Shema* and added a second command that “is like or equal to it, to love your neighbor as yourself.” Jesus’ interpretation of the law at its core is the essential command to love God and to love neighbor. David Garland commented,

⁸³ Ibid.

“These are the fundamental principles by which all other commandments in Scripture are to be interpreted and applied, as majestically demonstrated by Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount.”⁸⁴ If the underlying interpretation of Jesus’ hermeneutic of the law, including the Decalogue, had to do with love of God and love of neighbor, it should also apply to how Jesus interpreted and practiced the fourth commandment.

Jesus’ understanding of transformation offers a lens into spiritual formation today. The ministry project around Sabbath communicated this inward transformation as a lifelong process. Sabbath is just one practice that helps us attune our will to God’s. However, Sabbath as a practice can only truly occur with the right inward motivation. During the Sabbath study, the narrative offered to the control and experimental groups was a non-legalistic understanding of Sabbath. This approach was intentional. The rationale was that participants needed to come to appreciate Sabbath and the Old Testament law from Jesus’ perspective, as a gift.

Jesus, Rest, and the Sabbath

In the context of a legalistic system of religious law, Jesus offered an alternative way of living. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus declared:

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

⁸⁴ David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2001), 228-229.

When Jesus spoke about finding rest, it was in relation to himself and the yoke he offered. Garland noted that the idea of yoke was attributed to the crosspiece that was put on draft animals or prisoners of war, and it was a “common metaphor for toil, submission, discipline, duty, and obedience.”⁸⁵ He elaborated that in Jewish literature yoke expressed a paradox. “It represented labor and obligation, but also could symbolize freedom and life.”⁸⁶

For Jesus, the interpretation and practice of the law by the Pharisees was a heavy yoke. Those that followed the Pharisees’ interpretation could not find true rest with God. However, Jesus’ yoke was from a humble and gentle teaching. To take on Jesus’ yoke meant more than just following Jesus’ teaching, but taking on Jesus’ yoke meant entering into a deep and fulfilling relationship with him. Witherington noted, “This relationship between teacher and student bonded Jesus to his disciples personally.”⁸⁷

In the continuing verses of Matthew, Jesus highlighted further how his teaching was not a burden but a source of freedom. This occurred in relationship to the Sabbath and is broken into two back-to-back accounts. The first account is Matthew 12:1-8:

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something

⁸⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Witherington, 240.

greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.”

In this passage, Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees. They chastised him for allowing his disciples to pluck grain and eat it as they passed through the grain fields on the Sabbath. Jesus defended his actions by highlighting two incidents from scripture. The first was the story of David violating the Law by eating the *show-bread* in 1 Samuel 21. Witherington noted that in his defense, Jesus saw “hunger as a valid reason for superseding or overriding the rule on this occasion.”⁸⁸ Matthew elaborated further than the parallel account in Mark 2:23-28 and cited a passage from Numbers 28:9-10. Jesus highlighted that it was permissible for priests to work on the Sabbath. Jesus ended the encounter with a quotation from Hosea 6:6. In doing so, he declared that he was Lord over the Sabbath. Garland summarized:

In Jesus’ arguments he implies that he is greater than David, greater than the temple, and concludes that the son of man is Lord of the Sabbath, who alone determines what does and does not conform to God’s merciful will for Sabbath. One can infer from this incident that the Sabbath was not made to occupy the casuist but for human wellbeing.⁸⁹

In other words, Matthew expanded on Mark 2:23-38 by demonstrating further what Jesus said to the Pharisees in Mark’s account when he declared, “The sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath.” In both Mark and Matthew, Jesus’ intentions were not to disregard the

⁸⁸ Ibid., 241.

⁸⁹ Garland, 138.

Sabbath but for those who practiced it to understand its true meaning; Sabbath is a gift that offers life and wholeness.

The second passage linking Jesus as rest and Lord of the Sabbath came in the proceeding passage of Matthew 12:9-14:

He left that place and entered their synagogue; a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

As Garland noted, in this passage, the same antagonists approach Jesus so that they might accuse him.⁹⁰ Jesus responded to their question with his own question, ending with "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" Already within the gospel narrative Matthew stated that Jesus is "gentle and kind" and a source of rest. If this is true, then Jesus had no reason to wait for the end of the Sabbath to offer restoration to this crippled man.

In Matthew, Jesus embodied the meaning of Sabbath. Jesus understood Sabbath and the essence of its role as providing rest and restorative redemption to those who are broken, weak, enslaved, and needing justice. The yoke of Pharaoh was heavy for the Exodus generation. In contrast God's yoke was light. Likewise, the yoke of the Pharisees had become burdensome and lost the gentle and humble spirit of its intention. Jesus, like God in the Exodus, came to offer a more liberating and abundant life.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 139.

For this project, it was important for both the control and experimental group to understand that Jesus reinterpreted Sabbath practice for his day. With Jesus, Sabbath as a liberating practice moved beyond a legalistic mandate and became a source of hope, freedom, and nourishment in the life of his disciples. For Jesus' disciples today, his hermeneutic offers permission to reimagine Sabbath practices for a modern context. A true contextualization of Sabbath can only happen when guarded from peoples' inclination toward legalism.

Hebrews 4:1-11: Rest in the Past, the Present, and the Future

The early church began developing theological connections to the Old Testament as they reflected on Jesus' life, teachings, ministry, death, and resurrection. In the New Testament, the book of Hebrews offered a high Christological view of Jesus as it connected him to Old Testament scripture and motifs. Edgar V. McKnight and Christopher Church contended that the author of Hebrews used a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament to address faithfulness.⁹¹ Within this Christology, the writer of Hebrews used many phrases, images, and themes of the Old Testament to reveal more clearly the importance of being faithful to Jesus. The book begins with recognition of God's work through Israel's past, while also connecting Jesus as a reflection for understanding God and God's revelation.

Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He

⁹¹ Edgar V. McKnight and Christopher Church, *Hebrews-James* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys Publishing, 2004), 20.

is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs (Hebrews 1:1-4).

Hebrews asserted that God's fulfillment came in Christ. McKnight and Church commented, "What God has said in the past to Israel's ancestors has interpretative and contextual relevance for the contemporary audience."⁹² They went on to note, "For Hebrews, however, this relevance grows out of the fact that the Old Testament speaks of Christ and is spoken by Christ (see 2:12-13; 10:5-7) as well as by God and the Holy Spirit."⁹³ Rest is one of the relevant motifs that Hebrews addressed from a Christological perspective. A contextualization of rest through the lens of Christ offered the audience of Hebrews a new perspective on Sabbath. Hebrews 4:1-11 offered an interpretive and contextual understanding of Sabbath:

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said,

"As in my anger I swore,
'They shall not enter my rest,'"

though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this place it says, "They shall not enter my rest." Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted,

⁹² Ibid., 29

⁹³ Ibid.

“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts.”

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs (Hebrews 4:1-11).

As Harold Attridge indicated, the book of Hebrews can be “a hard text to understand.” Attridge reminded the modern audience that the author of Hebrews “combined various Jewish and Hellenistic traditions in subtle and intricate ways that often redefined the material from the traditional interpretations.”⁹⁴ This is true of Hebrews understanding of rest and the role in which Jesus played in the rest of God’s people. For the modern reader, he or she must recall the Old Testament narrative to find a deeper understanding of the text.

In Hebrews 3:1-6, the author portrayed Christ as superior to Moses, because God chose Jesus to lead and be in charge of God’s house. Jesus was faithful to God’s house not as a servant but as a son (See Hebrews 3:5-6). Moses’ role was to lead the people of God into the Promised Land. In a more profound way, Jesus will lead the church into its eschatological future. For the writer of Hebrews, the journey taken by the Israelites to the Promised Land was accompanied with unfaithfulness. Being unfaithful was also a danger within the setting and the context of Hebrews’ original audience. They, like ancient Israel, were tempted to drift away from being faithful (See Hebrews 2:1-3). For this reason, the author of Hebrews may have used the Israelite journey through the

⁹⁴ Harold W. Attridge, “Let us strive to enter that rest, the logic of Hebrews 4:1-11,” *Harvard Theological Review* 73, no. 12 (January 1980): 279-288. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed March 7, 2017).

wilderness as a way of describing the journey of the early church, who, like the Israelites, may have felt a desire to turn away from God and return to their former lives.

Hebrews 3:7b-11 and Hebrews 4:3 cite Psalm 95:7-11 based on the Greek Septuagint. In Psalm 95, the Psalmist remembered a time in Israel's past when the wilderness generation's hearts hardened and they were not able to enter into God's rest, the Promised Land. As A.T. Lincoln commented, "the 'today' of Hebrews must be on guard not to have hard and rebellious hearts."⁹⁵ Those who received the good news and remained faithful are able to enter into κατάπαυσις (katapausis), rest. If, in the Exodus, God was leading his people to a redemptive work that reached its fulfillment with the faithful generation coming into the Promised Land, as reflected in Psalm 95, what then was the character of the rest found through Christ?

The writer of Hebrews shifted focus concerning rest from Psalm 95 to Genesis 2:1-3. In Hebrews 4:4 a connection to the creation story is also connected to God's rest in Christ. Rest, like the preexistent Christ reflected in Hebrews 1:2, has a part in God's purpose for the faithful. For Lincoln, connecting the character of rest to the Sabbath allows an emphasis of rest to become one of both the experienced rest of the here and now and the eschatological rest of the future.⁹⁶ Thus, in Christ the true rest of God is the now and future "completion of God's redemptive work."⁹⁷ True rest comes in receiving

⁹⁵ A.T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament", *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 206-207.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

that redemptive work of Christ into a disciple's life, and allowing rest to transform and shape the disciple's faith. To be at rest is to find faithfulness to God in our spiritual journey, now and into the future. However, the faithful must be aware of the dangers present in their journey with Christ.

Hebrews made a connection to those who were faithful in the past (see Hebrews 11:1-39), to the faithfulness of Jesus (see Hebrews 12:3-6), and to the challenge of faithfulness in the present generation (see Hebrews 12:7-13). Lincoln commented, "The invitation for rest is an invitation to salvation, to be in the presence of God now and in the future."⁹⁸ The danger for Hebrews' audience then and now is the same as that of Psalm 95's audience: we can drift away, shrink back, become lost, or too weak to carry on in our journey of faith (See Hebrews 2:1; 10:19-39; 12:1-13). In this context, awareness that God provides rest here and now, and in the age to come, is a source of strength and encouragement for those who are tempted not to continue on the journey of faith with God. For the modern audience, recognition of what makes us shrink away and turn back from this journey of faith is crucial in preparing curriculum for spiritual formation.

Therefore, Hebrews uniquely connected the tradition of rest in the Old Testament as it applied to the covenant community and the creative order with Sabbath rest in a Christological perspective. Rest in Hebrews is a source of peace and strength that offers stability and hope for those struggling in their journey of faith in Christ.

Hebrews offered a word of encouragement and a word of warning to those who participated in the Sabbath project. The word of encouragement was to persevere and

⁹⁸ Ibid., 110.

keep faith even when cultural and societal pressures make disciples tired. Our source of strength comes not from our work, our society, or ourselves but from Christ alone. In him, we have rest. This was a crucial point for both the control group and the experimental group to understand. Additionally, both groups received a word of warning from Hebrews, “those who do not keep their faith in Christ will not find rest.”

Jewish and Christian Interpretations and Practices of Sabbath

Sabbath as understood in the Old and New Testaments has shaped both Jewish and Christian spirituality for thousands of years. A project that reeducated Sabbath as a spiritual practice needed to address the theological interpretations of both Jewish and Christian practices. An overview of the historical and theological adaptations of Sabbath in both traditions offered participants in the ministry project a larger theological foundation for Sabbath practices beyond their local traditions. The control group only received the instruction of these traditions, while the experimental group was able to adapt some of these practices into Sabbath Exercises.

Jewish Interpretation and Practice of Sabbath

Sabbath has been a central aspect of faith for the Jewish people. Sabbath as a practice has been rooted Judaism past, present, and future with God. For Jewish theologians there have been many ways of interpreting and connecting Sabbath to a Jewish life of faith. Even with differing interpretations, Sabbath remains a continuing practice for Jewish spirituality today.

Abraham Joshua Heschel's *The Sabbath* offered a view of spirituality that is connected to the Sabbath. Sabbath for Heschel took on not just the biblical commands and instructions of the Old Testament but also a deeper and mysterious aspect of Jewish spirituality. Like the mystery and power of the Eucharist for Christians, the Sabbath was seen as reflecting and holding power beyond the physical act of rest. Heschel wrote, "The seventh day is like a place in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere."⁹⁹ For Heschel, Sabbath was a day of harmony and peace.¹⁰⁰ Sabbath was a reminder of both this world and the world to come.¹⁰¹ Heschel also stated, "Sabbath was like a symphony for all things, a participation in the spirit that unites what is below and what is above."¹⁰² Sabbath at its essence means "all that is divine in the world is brought in union with God."¹⁰³ Thus, Sabbath in a Jewish spirituality, as described by Heschel, is the heart of what it means to be in relationship with God and creation.

Sabbath's importance in Jewish practice and spirituality is further demonstrated in Pinnachas H. Peli's book, *The Jewish Sabbath: A Renewed Encounter*. Peli wrote, "If we were to condense all of Judaism – its faith, thought, life, poetry and dreams into a single word, there is but one word which could be used- Shabbat."¹⁰⁴ For Peli, Sabbath was

⁹⁹ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951), 21.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 18.

¹⁰² Ibid., 31-32.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 32.

¹⁰⁴ Pinchas H. Peli, *The Jewish Sabbath: A Renewed Encounter* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 3.

more than just an observance of a day of rest, but the heart of what it meant to be a part of God's covenant community. Peli noted that the root of the Hebrew word from which Sabbath derives closely resembles another root in Hebrew, carrying the connotation of "returning" or "home coming." The story of God's people, who came out of slavery in Egypt and captivity in Babylon, is in many ways everyone's story because humankind is in exile. For Peli, there is a threefold exile which plagues the world to which Sabbath offers a hope of homecoming. The first exile or displacement is from God Himself (the Divine Presence). The second exile is that of the people from its land. The third exile is of the person. Peli wrote, "In this last exile everyone is estranged from his or her immediate environment, unsure self, and feels lost and caught up in the hostile and meaningless existence."¹⁰⁵

For Peli, Sabbath rituals and observances have the power to help people return home to God through the formative experience of Sabbath rest. One spiritual practice many Jewish families engage in is the *Shabbat Seder*. "The Shabbat Seder is the ordered set of rituals and blessings that welcome the Shabbat in the home."¹⁰⁶ In Ron Wolfson's *Shabbat: The Family Guide to Preparing and Celebrating Sabbath*, insiders and outsiders of Judaism are instructed in the ten steps of a traditional Jewish Shabbat Seder. Each of the ten steps has theological meaning associated with the symbolic act. The traditional Jewish Shabbat Seder is carried out in these ten steps:

¹⁰⁵ Peli, 75-76.

¹⁰⁶ Ron Wolfson, *Shabbat: The Family Guide to Preparing and Celebrating the Sabbath*, 2nd Edition (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003), 30.

1. ***Hakahana leShabbat*** (Preparing for Shabbat): “In the first step the house, the meal, and the people are prepared for the Sabbath’s arrival.”
2. ***Hadlakat Nerot*** (Candle lighting): “In the act of kindling the Shabbat candles, the Shabbat begins. With the act of blessing along with the physical act of lighting the candle, time is symbolically transformed.”
3. ***Shalom Alleikehm*** (Peace be with you): “Jewish legend states that every Jewish home is welcomed by visiting angels with a greeting of peace.”
4. ***Birkhot Hamishpahah*** (Family blessing): “Sabbath is a time for family, a time to bless daughters, sons, and spouses.”
5. ***Kiddush*** (Sanctification of the Day): “Through the recitation of a blessing over a full cup of wine, the Shabbat is sanctified by recalling creation, the fruit of the vine, and why the Shabbat is to be remembered.”
6. ***Netilat Yadayim*** (Washing the Hands): “The Shabbat table in the Talmud was compared to the Altar in the Temple. To emphasize this, many of the activities surrounding the meal are designed to remind the participant of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. Washing hands is a symbolic act of purification.”
7. ***Hamotzi*** (Blessing the Bread): “Bread is the staff of life. In the Jewish tradition, the Hamotiz, the blessing over bread, marks the beginning of the meal.”
8. ***Se’udat Shabbat*** (The Shabbat Meal): “The Shabbat meal involves special food, special songs, and a special tone that makes it unlike any other meal of the week.”
9. ***Zermirot*** (Shabbat Songs): “The singing of Shabbat songs is often part of the meal, bringing an extra sense of Shabbat joy. Sometimes, Torah study is added.”
10. ***Birkat Hamazon*** (Blessing after Food): “The meal is concluded with a series of berahot, thanking God for the food that was eaten.”¹⁰⁷

The Shabbat Seder provides an experience for spiritual formation and transformation as the family gathers to welcome the Sabbath. In the context of the Shabbat Seder, the meal itself allows time for theological reflection over the meaning of God’s creation and God’s provision. The meal also offers sacred time for families to

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 30-31.

share gratitude for the blessings they share. It becomes a time of intentional focus on the moment. David A. Cooper wrote:

Very few people appreciate the meditative experience of eating. We are almost always doing something else in addition to experiencing our meal. As a result, although we sometimes appreciate our food, we miss most of the sensual, deeply satisfying aspects of nourishing our bodies.¹⁰⁸

To reclaim an understanding of an Old Testament Sabbath in a Christian context one needs to look no further than how the Jewish faith has continued to hold onto and adapt their traditions. The Shabbat Seder is just one example of how the Sabbath allows spiritual formation to be directed toward God.

Christians can gain much insight by learning about Jewish practices of Sabbath. Lauren F. Winner, in her book *Mudhouse Sabbath: An invitation to a Life a Spiritual Discipline*, wrote about her experiences growing up in a Jewish home and her transition from a Sabbath way of life to a Christian way of worshiping on the Lord's Day. For Winner, the Christian Sundays are lacking in an important area of spiritual formation. She wrote:

There is something, in the Jewish Sabbath that is absent from most Christian Sundays: a true cessation from the rhythms of work, the world, a time wholly set apart, and perhaps above all, a sense that the point of Shabbat, the orientation of Shabbat, is toward God.¹⁰⁹

Although Winner noted the loss of Sabbath in a separation from Jewish spirituality, she also noted the gains from a Christian understanding. Winner wrote,

¹⁰⁸David A. Cooper, *The Handbook of Jewish Meditation Practices: A Guide to Enriching the Sabbath and Other Days of Your Life* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2000), 103.

¹⁰⁹ Lauren F. Winner, *Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Life of Spiritual Discipline* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2003), 10.

“Sabbath holds something unique, it offers an understanding not just of the Exodus liberation, and rest embedded in creation, but also of the Jewish hope of Messianic expectations, the Resurrection.”¹¹⁰ As Christians, we have inherited so much from our roots in Judaism, but at times we have neglected to understand those roots. When we adapt Jewish Sabbath practices to a Christian perspective, we will develop a fresh approach to Sabbath. This approach has the potential to offer a bounty of spiritual nourishment for Christian formation.

With this understanding, the ministry project to reeducate and reintroduce Sabbath aimed to help church members appreciate a modern Jewish understanding of Shabbat. By examining a Jewish theology and practice of Sabbath, Christians can develop a deeper understanding of Sabbath’s role in formation. A Jewish understanding of Sabbath offered participants in the ministry project an understanding that Sabbath is more than just a day; Sabbath is a state of mind. Sabbath has the power to transform ordinary events, like meals, into formational practices. By seeking to understand Jewish spirituality around Sabbath, the project was able to adapt these practices to a Christian context. The experimental group accomplished this goal through a shared Sabbath meal. This Sabbath meal incorporated both practices and community context with the goal of raising awareness of Sabbath’s importance in spiritual formation.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 10.

Christian Interpretation and Practice of Sabbath

Sabbath evolved from a uniquely Jewish practice of rest by early Jewish Christians in the first century to a practice of Sabbatarianism. This new Sabbath was associated with the Lord's Day in Christian worship. M. Max B Turner offered a linear understanding of the historical transition from Jewish Sabbath to Christian worship the early Christian movement. This timeline began with the early church's struggle to identify itself with both Jewish and Gentile converts. Although there were many disagreements in the early church about circumcision and dietary regulation for Gentiles, Turner made the observation, "it is striking to notice that there were no Sabbath controversies."¹¹¹ As Jewish Christians continued to adapt to the early Jesus movement, they continued practicing Sabbath.

There may have been several reasons why Sabbath continued in Jewish Christianity. For Turner, some of these reasons included: "habit and religious conservatism, social pressure, fear of stronger forms of sanctions from more radical Jews (i.e. the Zealots), avoiding offense to Jews that were the target of evangelism, theological conviction, and the leadership in Jerusalem of the early first century church was strongly conservative (see the book of James.)"¹¹² This did change, as it changed with other institutions of a Jewish Christianity. Over time, with the Gentile influx into the early

¹¹¹ M. Max B. Turner, "The Sabbath Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 127.

¹¹² Ibid., 124-126.

church, many of the traditional Jewish expressions of Christianity were adapted, lost, or rejected. This included Sabbath practices.

The transition from Jewish Sabbath practices to Christian worship on the first day of the week came about by the end of the first century. Christian worship on Sunday became known as the “Lord’s Day” (κυριακός ἡμέρα). The oldest written account of this day traces back to Revelation 1:10. The Lord’s Day was used frequently in the church of the second century in works like *The Didache*.¹¹³ *The Didache* was an early Christian manual for understanding the teachings of the Apostles. It instructed early Christians to “assemble on the Lord’s Day, break bread, and offer the Eucharist; but first make confession of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one.”¹¹⁴

As the church grew further away from the Jewish roots of the first century, the nature of worship and practice changed. R.J. Bauckham noted that a need for a distinctly Christian worship may have been a reason for the origin of Sunday worship, as the early church commemorated the Resurrection weekly.¹¹⁵ In doing so, by the end of the second century there were many Gentile Christians who were rejecting Sabbath observance along with other Jewish practices. One reason, as noted by Bauckham, may have been due to the problems associated with Judaizing. Judaizing was associated with Jewish

¹¹³ R. J. Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 222-223.

¹¹⁴ *The Didache* 14:1, Maxwell Stainforth and Andrew Louth, trans., *Early Christian Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 197.

¹¹⁵ Bauckham, “The Lord’s Day,” 238.

Christians requiring Gentiles to take on all of Jewish law.¹¹⁶ A resistance to Judaizing can be seen in the second century letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians, a church near Ephesus. Ignatius wrote against a “specific denunciation of the ‘old leaven’ Jewish doctrines and observances.”¹¹⁷ He wrote:

We have seen now former adherents of the ancient customs have since attained to a new hope; so that they have given up keeping the sabbath, and now order their lives by the Lord’s Day instead (the Day when life first dawned for us, thanks to Him and His death. That death, though some deny it, is the very mystery which has moved us to become believers, and endure tribulation to prove ourselves pupils of Jesus Christ, our sole Teacher.) In view of this, how can it be possible for us to give Him no place in our lives, when even the prophets of old were themselves pupils of His in spirit, and looked forward to Him as their Teacher.¹¹⁸

Although the early church worshiped on Sunday, rest did not become associated with Christian worship until the fourth century. In the fourth century, the emperor Constantine promulgated a law requiring total public rest from work, “on the most honorable day of the Sun.” This came on March 3, 321 A.D. and is the earliest reference to Sunday as a day free from work.¹¹⁹ However, this rest differed from a Jewish Sabbath. Unlike a Jewish Sabbath, agricultural work was not prohibited on Sunday.

Over time, worship became the primary motivator for resting from work on the Lord’s Day. This is a Sabbatarian view. In this view, the Jewish notion of Sabbath rest

¹¹⁶ R. J. Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 259.

¹¹⁷ Maxwell Stainforth and Andrew Louth, trans., *Early Christian Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 70.

¹¹⁸ *The Letter to the Magnesians* 9:1-6, Maxwell Stainforth and Andrew Louth, trans., *Early Christian Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 73.

¹¹⁹ Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 280.

was not the ultimate meaning for Sunday. A cessation from activity was the intention of Sunday worship. As Bauckham noted, by the fourth century Christians were encouraged to observe Sunday as a day of worship and commemoration of the creation, but they were prohibited from “idleness.”¹²⁰ In this view, not working gave Christians an opportunity to devote their time to public activities of worship. This was not synonymous to the rest of a Jewish Sabbath.

The Christian progression of divergence from Jewish practices did not end in the Post-Apostolic Church. As noted by Bauckham, Augustine’s view of Sabbath was a spiritualization of the meaning of the Decalogue, and he saw Sabbath rest as eschatological rather than a weekly norm. In Augustine’s perspective the idea of a cessation from activity was deemed idleness. This spiritualization of Sabbath as it pertained to Sunday carried over into the Medieval Church in the West. Bauckham wrote, “In this period, medieval Sabbatarianism grew in the context of theocratic kingship and church discipline of an increasingly juridical character.”¹²¹ Over time, Christian Sabbath practices became increasingly rigid and legalistic.

In later medieval theology, two developments transformed the grounds for obligation of the Lord’s Day observance on scriptural revelation and ecclesiastical authority. Bauckham suggested, “The distinction between moral and ceremonial aspects within the Sabbath commandment, and the treatment of the Decalogue as Natural Law

¹²⁰ Ibid., 282.

¹²¹ R. J. Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 300-303.

conceived in terms of classical and moral philosophy.”¹²² For Aquinas, the Sabbath commandment contained both ceremonial and moral aspects. For its ceremonial aspects, it was reasoned that Christ had fulfilled the ceremonial aspects of Mosaic Law. However, the moral aspects were to be kept but not with the rigor of the Mosaic Sabbath. Sabbath, in the Thomist view, became grounded in Natural Law and found itself ingrained in the catechism at the Council of Trent. This Sabbath view has been held in the Roman Catholic doctrine ever since, and it stated that “Sunday is a day of *rest for worship*.”¹²³

The Protestant Reformation saw a break from the Sabbatarian tradition of the late middle ages. However, this transition was short-lived as later Protestant theologians returned to the theological resources of the pre-Reformation period. Bauckham observed:

The Reformer’s break with medieval Sabbatarianism was not complete; neither Luther nor Calvin held that the fourth commandment requires Christians to rest on Sunday, but both held that, as a matter of convenience and order, a weekly day of rest for worship was needed. The individual Christian must rest and worship on the day prescribed by human authority (in practice, Sunday); he is at liberty only to exceed this requirement. Moreover, both Luther and Calvin placed their teaching about Sunday within the treatment of the fourth commandment, and in their commentaries on Genesis, though not elsewhere, both taught that a weekly day of *rest for worship* was ordained at creation.¹²⁴

In England during the mid-sixteenth century, a “new Sabbatarianism” arose and became associated with the Puritans. Bauckham described the view as:

A creation-ordinance Sabbath was taught and was integral to the whole doctrine. It was generally thought that this made Sabbath observance

¹²² Ibid., 304-305.

¹²³ Ibid., 307.

¹²⁴ R. J. Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1999), 317-318.

binding to all men at all times, though opponents pointed out the weakness of this conclusion.¹²⁵

Not every Puritan held to the same thought about Sabbath, but by the seventeenth-century many Puritans began pushing for extreme Sabbath observances. They prohibited all recreation and some even advocated for harsh penalties. The harshest penalty was death for Sabbath breakers. Bauckham made the point that the day was not set aside in Puritan homes for rest but rather developed into a whole day set aside for religious duties.¹²⁶

It was out of Sabbatarianism and the Puritan model of Sabbath that many Protestants developed their expression of rest and worship on Sunday. It was out of these expressions that the church in America was born. Many of these views of Sabbatarianism still apply to the modern Christian observance of Sunday worship. Of this view, Brueggemann described contemporary Christian Sabbath:

We more or less know that the day came to reflect, in the U.S. culture, the most stringent disciplinary faith of the Puritans which, in recent time, translated into a moralistic prescription for a day of quiet restraint and prohibition.¹²⁷

This view of restraint grew into prohibitions that are visible in the Blue Laws that have been dominant in Christian communities of the American South. Some even remain in effect today. Blue Laws gave restriction to businesses like stores and restaurants. These laws instructed when businesses could open and what they could serve on

¹²⁵ Ibid., 324.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 326.

¹²⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Yes* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2014), ix.

Sundays. However, these cultural and religious practices are receding from the cultural and religious landscape.

Sabbath as seen through the biblical narrative has been adapted, evolved, and become increasingly rigid over time in the Christian tradition. A reeducation of Sabbath is critical. Before church members could return to a biblical practice of rest, they need an understanding of their modern practice of Sabbath. For this reason, the Sabbath project offered both the control group and the experimental group a historical lens that described how Sabbath practices evolved. Participants received a lesson that presented the disparity between Jewish and early Christian practices of Sabbath and today's Sabbatarian practices. Both the control group and the experimental group reflected over what gains and losses in Sabbath understanding came through their historical context. A central point of the lesson emphasized the focus of Sunday worship centered on the Resurrection. This focus did not emphasize rest. Over time, the Sabbath's connection to the puritan work ethic strengthened in American churches. The control and experimental group received permission to rediscover Sabbath from a biblical perspective by learning how and why current Sabbath practices differ from ancient Sabbath practices.

Neglecting Sabbath

Sabbath is a beautiful and life affirming gift from God. Unfortunately, modern American culture has universally neglected Sabbath as a biblical concept, practice, and command. This neglect has found its way into the spiritual formation of the church. Church leadership has not effectively taught or modeled divine rest. As a result of this neglect, cultural norms and expectations have replaced God's gift; where God's gift of

rest offers wholeness and renewal, the cultural expectations of modern society offer brokenness and consumption. An over worked and burned-out culture would be wise to hear the cautions of the biblical prophets.

The biblical prophets offered a word to Israel in seasons of their forgetfulness of the Sabbath. The neglect of Sabbath then and today leads to unjust economic practices (See Amos 8:4-6). These unjust practices have negative effects on the poor and vulnerable in society. In a culture where a small percentage of the population holds the majority of the wealth, these warnings are as ever true today as they were in Israel's past.

When God's people forget God's gift of rest they are often tempted to become more like the modern Pharaoh than the risen Christ. In forgetting, the church becomes vulnerable to drift away from God's promised future. Like the wilderness generation depicted in Psalm 95, who disregarded God's commands and did not enter the Promised Land, or Hebrews audience who were warned that they too could drift away, the church needs to understand the consequences for ignoring God's Sabbath. These consequences lead to a less than full life.

With the neglect of promoting and protecting rest as a cultural norm, the concept of rest is not appreciated in culture that values production and consumption. Rest is a luxury and is only permitted to those who have worked hard, met goals, or purchased it through wealth. In this mindset, only the ill are permitted luxury of rest without guilt. For all others rest becomes associated with laziness or sloth. This is counter to the humanitarian interest of God, who through the divine command of Sabbath offered rest to everyone (See Deuteronomy 5:12-15).

The cultural misconceptions about rest and work but they have shaped and formed my theological rationale for many years. How could they not. These misconceptions are taught in school, in media, and in church. Much of this negative view of rest stems from the “Puritan work ethic” that was inflicted on our culture centuries ago. The effects of this view still linger on both Christians and non-Christians in America. It was not until researching Sabbath for this project that my perspective changed. Only by learning a new narrative, the liberating narrative of God through Sabbath, can any of us find rest and contentment.

Theological Significance for Inman First Baptist Church

Every church needs intentional spiritual formation. Many churches are lacking this intentionality. For many American Christians there is a minimal expectation for spiritual formation. The common expectation many Christians have is, “All I need is an hour in Sunday School and an hour in worship to grow and form in Christlikeness each week.” There are those who go beyond these expectations, but many accept this as the standard.

In reality, spiritual formation is a lifelong process done intentionally every day. Christlikeness does not come without effort, time, and humility. This ministry project offered an opportunity to allow church members to self-discover their own deficiencies in spiritual formation while offering an alternative process for transformation, Sabbath.

Designing a New Curriculum for Spiritual Formation

The planning and implementation of the Sabbath study gave me an opportunity to rethink how to guide and evaluate spiritual formation through a shared study. James Bryan Smith's components of transformation were critical in bridging the traditional way of teaching or preaching (narrative) and incorporating both practices (disciplines) and community (social context). The addition of spiritual practices and discussion sessions revealed the need for more structured and nuanced ways of discipleship formation. The Sabbath study allowed space to experiment with intentional formation. The experiment revealed to me the success by the experimental group in how practices and community dialogue played in exploring deeper the narrative of Sabbath for spiritual formation.

For Inman First Baptist Church, this project offered an alternative model for spiritual formation. Attempting to incorporate teaching (cognitive learning), spiritual disciplines (practices/actions), and community participation (discussions) may be challenging for the whole church. This way of growing in Christlikeness has the most potential through participating in small group discipleship studies. These type studies could foster deeper spiritual transformation if offered throughout the year.

Discovering Sabbath's Importance

For those who participated in the Sabbath project and self-discovered areas of overwork, overconsumption, and over-connection, Sabbath proved to offer a solution for their spiritual formation. This was especially true for the experimental group. In their Sabbath exercises and discussion sessions, they expressed how Sabbath offered alternatives to the negative formation of culture and technology. In the Sabbath Exercise

“Reflection on Time” one member from the experimental group honestly responded to the open-ended question of “How does Sabbath serve as a resistance to negative formation?” The member’s response was:

I think negative formation is happening a lot, and I think I am now trying to start positive formation to build healthier habits in my spiritual life. The Sabbath class has helped me see these patterns and how desperately I need to rest in God. While the changes I’ve already made have been small, I feel the differences in my life and relationships.

This observation, along with others, validated the need for Sabbath as a formative experience for Inman First Baptist Church. The experimental group also developed a greater awareness of Sabbath’s role in connecting them to others. They understood this connection in relationship to their everyday consumption of good and services.

In the second Sabbath Exercise, “Reflecting on Your Neighbor,” the experimental group reflected over one day in their week. Each person considered all the items used or consumed. Next, they chose one item. They reflected on all the labor that went into the item. In reflection, they became aware of the “invisible” workers that served them. An example of this awareness came through one member’s response to step three of the exercise:

The shirt I am wearing was made by many different people, such as: the farmer who planted the cotton, the workers who harvested the cotton, the person who turned it into fabric, the person who stitched the fabric into a shirt, the people who worked to transport the shirt, and the person who sold it to me. Without all these people’s contributions, I would not have a shirt to wear. I am thankful for them doing the work for me to have a shirt.

To the next question, “How do I consider these people important to God and to me?” The same person responded, “God created each person who served me. Therefore, each person who served me is important to God and should be important to me as well.”

The following question, “How does taking a day out of the week to not engage in others serving you change your perspective on the people that serve you?” The same member wrote, “If I took one day of the week to not be served by others, I hope that I would feel inner peace and satisfaction in knowing I was following God and obeying the Sabbath.” The conclusion to the exercise asked the experimental group to write a prayer to God. This prayer was on behalf of the people they considered during the exercise. The same respondent wrote the following prayer:

God please give rest and comfort to all the workers who serve us, whether we know them or not. They are all a part of this world you created. Please allow them to find the time for rest and rejuvenation whether physical, mental, spiritual, or all the above.

The theological implication to these new understandings of Sabbath came through engaging spiritual formation exercises (practices) and discussion (social context). These fresh understandings were evident in participants’ new descriptions of Sabbath. Sabbath became more than just “a day of rest.” Sabbath awareness and an appreciation for Sabbath’s complexity was a result of the experimental group’s engagement of practices and discussion of Sabbath. Growing in Christlikeness happens when we become more aware of God, others, and ourselves. Sabbath as an entrance into spiritual formation allowed the experimental group to discover more about God, others, and themselves, as they took intentional time to rest and reflect.

Another aspect of growing in Sabbath awareness for the church was growing in relationship to God and neighbor. Sabbath models for the church a characteristic about God, namely God is good. If the church is to model that same goodness, they must also model God’s invitation. Sabbath’s is as an invitation to join in God’s goodness. This

goodness is connected to both creation and the fourth commandment. Lauren Winner wrote of this connection:

Creation is the ultimate expression of God's hospitality to His creatures. In the words of one rabbi, everything God created is a "manifestation of His kindness. The world is one be hospitality inn." As church historian Amy Oden has put it, "God offers hospitality to all humanity ... by establishing a home ... for all."¹²⁸

If Sabbath is as Peli noted, "a coming home to God, to creation, to others, and to self;" when the church models that same homecoming they are responding to God's hospitality as they invite others to share in this return.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Winner, *Mudhouse Sabbath*, 46-47.

¹²⁹ Peli, *The Jewish Sabbath*, 75-76.

CHAPTER FOUR: CRITICAL EVALUATION

The stated goal of this ministry project was to raise appreciation of Sabbath for spiritual formation through a shared Sabbath study. The curriculum for the study was adapted from James Brian Smith's stages of transformation. The control and experimental group received the first stage (narrative). I hypothesized that the experimental group would have a deeper appreciation of Sabbath at the end of the study, as compared to the control group, by receiving the intervention of stages two (spiritual practices) and three (social context). The evaluation of the experiment came through a pre- and post-Sabbath survey. The survey acquired both quantitative and qualitative data. This primary evaluative tool measured the level of understanding and appreciation of Sabbath. An assessment of the survey allowed for a comparison of the control group and the experimental group. This assessment evaluated the level of success stages two and three had in raising appreciation of Sabbath as a discipline for spiritual formation. In addition, the Sabbath survey generated demographic data. This demographic data was helpful in making connections between work, family, and age in connection to Sabbath.

The experimental group also garnered qualitative data in the form of completed Sabbath exercises, field notes, and audio recordings of the experimental group's discussion sessions. This information helped to clarify reasons why the experimental group's responses in the post-Sabbath survey varied from the control group's responses. What follows are findings from the collected data.

Work, Family, and Rest

The demographics collected from the Sabbath survey are valuable in understanding the correlation between age, family dynamics, and work. Those who were younger, had families, and worked full time jobs were often more likely to find work interfering with rest. Questions 20-22 of the Sabbath survey generated the following mean values:

Table 6: Work, Rest, and Time with Family

	<i>How often do you check your emails when you are not working?</i>	<i>Do you ever feel like your work interferes with your ability to rest?</i>	<i>Over the last month I have spent quality time with my family.</i>
Control	3.38	4.35	8.23
Post	3.71	5.48	8.00
Pre	3.12	3.48	8.43
Experimental	3.92	5.60	8.64
Post	3.69	5.63	9.17
Pre	4.10	5.58	8.19

The data from Table 6 examines work habits and time spent with family. The values represent responses before and after the ministry project. The control group responded to how often they checked e-mails when not at work on a scale from 0-10 where zero = never, five = sometimes, and 10 = most of the time. Responses of the control group had a mean value of 3.12 prior to the Sabbath study and 3.71 following the study. For those who were a part of the experimental group, their mean value decreased by 0.41. A possible reason for this decline could be associated with the experimental group's engagement of the Sabbath Exercise on "Reflecting on Time." In this exercise,

they evaluated their actions in a given day. One part of the exercise guided the experimental group to measure how much time they spent on screens (i.e. computer, phone, or tablet). This exercise of theological reflection, based on routine actions, may have allowed the experimental group to be intentionally self-aware. This awareness could be a motivation for a difference in practice, even if small in value as compared to the control group.

In response to the question of “work’s interference with rest,” the control group had a pre- mean value of 3.48 and a post- value of 5.48 on a 10-point scale. Although the experimental group had a 0.05 deviation increase between pre- and post-surveys, the growth in awareness of work’s interference for the control group was very significant, a 2.0 rise in mean value. Learning about the narrative of Sabbath as response to overwork may have been a corresponding factor in understanding work’s relationship with rest. Another reason may have been a change in definition of rest between surveys. Almost all of the respondents, both control and experimental, had more detailed definitions of Sabbath following the experiment in the open-ended questions of the survey. However, this explanation does not clarify why the experimental group had such a marginal change.

For the question concerning how participants have “measured quality time with family,” those in the control group had a decrease in agreement to the statement, while those in the experimental group grew to a larger agreement. The experimental group had growth of 8.19 to 9.17 on a 10-point scale. This increase may be attributed to the makeup of the experimental group. Many in this group participated in the Sabbath study along with their spouses and children. Spiritual formation done as a family may have added

value to the time spent with one another. If this were true, it would reinforce Sabbath's role in family formation.

An interesting observation about the data came by examining quantity and quality of family time. Most respondents had a highly positive view of their time with family even when quantity of time did not always correlate. The different levels of time spent with families around the table (See Table 7) and their assessment of time spent with family (See Table 6) helps to clarify quality and quantity.

Table 7: Frequency of Shared Meals around the Table with Children or Parents in the Past Week

	(no answer)	1-2	2-3	4 or more	None
Control	7.14%	23.21%	12.50%	25.00%	32.14%
Post	7.41%	18.52%	11.11%	29.63%	33.33%
Pre	6.90%	27.59%	13.79%	20.69%	31.03%
Experimental	5.13%	20.51%	10.26%	48.72%	15.38%
Post	0.00%	22.22%	11.11%	44.44%	22.22%
Pre	9.52%	19.05%	9.52%	52.38%	9.52%

It was surprising to see that most families did not share many multi-generational meals together around the table, with the exception of the experimental group who had a mean average of 48.12% sharing four and more meals together throughout the study.

This may be due to the experimental group being younger than the control group.

Sharing meals in our culture may have lost its significance as a bonding exercise. If so, it would reason that quality time together may have shifted to another activity. This was

true of several from the experimental group who shared that their time unwinding with spouses and family often occurred while watching television shows.

Screens, Social Media, and Formation

Meals are important pauses in the regular activities of the day. They are breaks for nourishment. Nourishment comes in the form of food and social interaction. An interesting assessment of the data was finding out how much time was spent on a screen (smart phone, tablet, or television) while eating a meal. Many answered none, but the striking numbers were those who answered in the affirmative and to the number of meals paired with their devices. For those in both the control group and the experimental group who used screens during a meal, two-three meals a week was the majority. However, an unexpected observation came in percentage of participants using digital devices with more than seven meals per week. The experimental group had an 18.25% drop in those who answered having used screens seven or more times between the pre- and post-test, in contrast to the control group that saw a 7.91% rise (See Table 8). This increase may be due to the control group noticing this behavior more since beginning the study.

Table 8: Usage of a Smart Phone, Tablet, or Television during a Meal in the Past Week

	(no answer)	1 meal	2-3 meals	4-6 meals	5-7 meals	More than 7 meals	None
Control	3.57%	7.14%	26.79%	5.36%	5.36%	10.71%	41.07%
Post	0.00%	11.11%	33.33%	3.70%	3.70%	14.81%	33.33%
Pre	6.90%	3.45%	20.69%	6.90%	6.90%	6.90%	48.28%
Experimental	0.00%	2.56%	25.64%	7.69%	7.69%	15.38%	41.03%
Post	0.00%	0.00%	33.33%	5.56%	11.11%	5.56%	44.44%
Pre	0.00%	4.76%	19.05%	9.52%	4.76%	23.81%	38.10%

The use of screens during meals creates two difficulties in relation to Sabbath.

First, the meal is not a communal event and becomes a background to the consumption of entertainment or information. Secondly, no real reflection occurs. To have a distraction while eating negates reflection of gratitude and remembrance for God's provision.

Given the opportunity to write the survey again, I would have included a follow up questions to see if participants ate alone or with others, and how many of those at the table focused on a screen. The experimental group had a Sabbath meal experience that excluded screens from the table and focused on incorporating worship into the meal. This Sabbath meal may have helped participants understand that meals are formative experiences that can only happen when God receives the proper attention. A corresponding evaluation of social media comes from the data generated from questions relating to distractions of internet-connected devices and the use of social media. Tables 9

and 10 present the data. Table 9 reflects mean values on a scale from 0-10 with zero = never, five = sometimes, and 10 = most of the time. Table 10 represents percentages.

Table 9: How often Internet Connected Devices were a Distraction

Control	4.52
Post	4.69
Pre	4.36
Experimental	5.66
Post	5.72
Pre	5.60

Table 10: Time Spent on Social Media in the Past Week

	(no answer)	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	Less than an hour	More than 4 hours	Not at all
Control	3.57%	21.43%	23.21%	5.36%	10.71%	16.07%	19.64%
Post	3.70%	18.52%	29.63%	7.41%	11.11%	11.11%	18.52%
Pre	3.45%	24.14%	17.24%	3.45%	10.34%	20.69%	20.69%
Experimental	0.00%	28.21%	15.38%	17.95%	7.69%	10.26%	20.51%
Post	0.00%	22.22%	22.22%	16.67%	5.56%	5.56%	27.78%
Pre	0.00%	33.33%	9.52%	19.05%	9.52%	14.29%	14.29%

Although both the control and experimental groups responded to distractions by mobile devices as “sometimes,” the time engaging social media for both groups fell

between 1 and 3 hours a week. This may not seem like much time. What is alarming is that the time members spent reading and reflecting on Scripture (See Table 11) and time spent at church (See Table 15), are equal to the time spent on social media. If time is equal, when are people taking time to resist negative changes associated with culture and technology?

The Sabbath project offers good news. The good news from the data collected shows those who participated in the Sabbath study, especially those in the experimental group, saw an increase in their time engaging Scripture. The data also saw a greater mean value for those who did not spend any time on social media following the Sabbath study (a rise of 13.49% for the experimental versus 1.12% for the control). This change may have been in response to the Sabbath Exercise “Reflection on Time.” One of the activities in this exercise asked the experimental group to consider, “How much time was spent in front of a screen (for work and pleasure)?” They reflected on whether this time offered rest and connection or disconnection from others. Many respondents stated their attention on a screen averaged a third to half of a day. One respondent from the experimental group offered an insight into this pervasive habit. They stated that screens help fill time and are “something to do.” This person also claimed screen time was an “escape from the chaos of the day and world.” Unfortunately, many Christians mirror this escapist view when talking about time spent with technology. However, Sabbath is the biblical practice that offers resistance to this chaotic world. Sabbath is the divine alternative to chaos, a place and time to grow in peace.

Reflecting on Scripture

As Baptist, Inman First holds the centrality of Scripture in the life of the church. This is evident in the physical layout of the sanctuary. The pulpit stands at the center and the proclamation of the Word is the centerpiece of each worship service. However, how has the church, both local and universal, modeled Scripture as a source of Godly rest?

The pre- and post-survey evaluated time spent by the control group and the experimental group in reading and reflecting on Scripture. A correlation of this data, employed with respondent's self-assessment of how time with Scripture added to their sense of rest, helped define a relationship. For those who were a part of the experimental group, they completed the Sabbath Exercise "Reflecting on Scripture" to help guide them into a restful meditation of Scripture. The pre- and post- Sabbath surveys evaluated time spent in the previous week reading and reflecting on scripture (See Table 11).

Table 11: Time Spent Reading and Reflecting on Scripture in the Past Week

	(no answer)	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	3-4 hours	Less than an hour	More than 4 hours	Not at all
Control	1.79%	53.57%	8.93%	7.14%	12.50%	16.07%	0.00%
Post	3.70%	51.85%	3.70%	14.81%	11.11%	14.81%	0.00%
Pre	0.00%	55.17%	13.79%	0.00%	13.79%	17.24%	0.00%
Experimental	0.00%	38.46%	12.82%	12.82%	15.38%	12.82%	7.69%
Post	0.00%	44.44%	5.56%	16.67%	16.67%	16.67%	0.00%
Pre	0.00%	33.33%	19.05%	9.52%	14.29%	9.52%	14.29%

Both the control group and the experimental group increased in areas of time spent with Scripture. This may be attributed to the time spent reading and reflecting on passages highlighted from the Sabbath Study. Even with significant shifts in time spent with scripture, the control group did not see a significant change in how they found reading and reflecting on Scripture restful (See Table 12).

Table 12: Perception of Time Reading Scripture as Restful

Control	7.78
Post	7.96
Pre	7.61
Experimental	7.61
Post	8.33
Pre	6.95

A significant growth in appreciation for Scripture as source of rest came through experimental group. On a scale of 0-10, with 10 affirming that Scripture is a source of rest most of the time, the control group had a rise of 1.38 in the mean value. The control group only experienced a 0.35 rise. The correlation between the experimental group's dramatic increases in appreciating Scripture as a source of rest may connect to the Sabbath Exercise "Reflecting on Scripture." In the exercise, the experimental group received a *Lectio Divina* reading of Scripture to complete. The exercise gave the experimental group an experience of reading a passage of scripture slowly. This intentional exercise offered deep reflection questions to move members beyond a superficial reading. In doing so, many expressed the value of finding rest through

intentional reading and guided meditation. One respondent from the experimental group wrote about this exercise:

This was the most difficult exercise by far. I enjoyed the part asking me to read like Jesus was sitting with me. That was a very new experience for me. I am realizing more and more that I go to the scriptures to find rest when I hit a rough time or breaking point. I need this rest all the time. The scriptures offer me a dose of perspective. This world is temporary. My purpose is not my job. I often need the scripture to refocus my energy and attention.

Other responses included: “If scripture gives you rest, that is part of the Sabbath and is anytime and anywhere” and “Slowing down and listening, reading, reflecting, allows me to catch things I might miss otherwise.” Each of these responses came as new insights into reading Scripture with an understanding of how it can lead to resting in God.

Understanding Sabbath

Another area of evaluating Sabbath’s growth as a concept for spiritual transformation came in questions 10-13 on the Sabbath Survey. Table 13 displays the mean values to the answers of agreement on a 10-point scale. Two of the three questions dealt with a basic understanding of Sabbath. This understanding came in the form of the narrative Sabbath from a biblical and historical framework. Both groups received the first stage of the project (narrative) and both groups had a rise in understanding (See Table 13).

Table 13: Understanding Sabbath

	<i>The Sabbath plays a role in my spiritual formation.</i>	<i>My Christian tradition (Baptist) holds a Christian view of Sabbatarianism.</i>	<i>The Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue was influenced by the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.</i>
Control (Average)	7.96	7.84	7.78
Post	8.42	8.68	8.58
Pre	7.55	7.00	7.00
Experimental (Average)	6.82	6.87	6.47
Post	7.94	7.76	7.89
Pre	5.86	6.14	5.20

The crucial question to the success of the ministry project came in the response to how participants saw “Sabbath playing a role in spiritual formation.” In the response to Sabbath’s role in spiritual formation the experimental group had a larger growth of agreement to the statement than the control group (See Table 13). The experimental group had a mean value increase of 2.08 compared to the control group’s 0.87. The value of Sabbath’s role in spiritual formation is directly tied to the experimental group receiving the intervention of stages two (practices) and three (social context) of the ministry project. By having the experimental group engage in Sabbath practices and discuss their experiences in a group setting, their understanding of Sabbath’s power in formation grew dramatically in comparison to the control group. In all the data evaluated, this data displays the clearest evidence that Sabbath’s role in formation is understood more truly when members receive all three components of transformation. The experimental group’s rise in appreciation of Sabbath for spiritual formation, through

narrative, practice, and social context, reinforces the need for intentional spiritual formation in the life of the church.

Data collected from the Sabbath survey saw a decrease in defining Sabbath as merely “going to church on Sunday and participating in worship.” The data also showed an increase in both the control group and the experimental group making regular time away from work a priority (See Table 14). The experimental group had a 1.24 mean value increase in agreement to making time off a priority, while the control group had a 1.35 mean value rise. The similarity in growth leads to the conclusion that a change of narrative about Sabbath was effective in communicating rest as an important part of life.

Table 14: *Connecting Sabbath to Life*

	<i>Practicing a biblical form of Sabbath is the same as going to church on Sunday and participating in a worship service.</i>	<i>Taking regular time away from work is a high priority in my life.</i>
Control	3.46	6.82
Post	3.40	7.48
Pre	3.52	6.13
Experimental	4.41	6.83
Post	4.33	7.50
Pre	4.48	6.26

Table 15 offers a glimpse of time spent at Inman First Baptist by both the control and experimental groups. Within the data set, there is a varying degree of commitment among church members to time spent at church.

Table15: Time Spent at IFBC in an Average Week

	(no answer)	1-4 hours	12-15 hours	5-8 hours	9-12 hours	More than 20 hours
Control	1.79%	76.79%	1.79%	14.29%	5.36%	0.00%
Post	0.00%	74.07%	3.70%	14.81%	7.41%	0.00%
Pre	3.45%	79.31%	0.00%	13.79%	3.45%	0.00%
Experimental	0.00%	66.67%	0.00%	25.64%	2.56%	5.13%
Post	0.00%	55.56%	0.00%	33.33%	5.56%	5.56%
Pre	0.00%	76.19%	0.00%	19.05%	0.00%	4.76%

Table 15 offers a glimpse of time spent at Inman First Baptist, but it does not offer a perspective of rest. If the question could asked again, it would include the follow up question, “Did you find your time at IFBC restful?” This would help in defining whether members saw church activities as “work” or “a Sabbath practice.”

Defining Sabbath

The Sabbath survey also included open-ended questions as part of its evaluation of Sabbath. One of those questions asked respondents to define Sabbath (See Appendix A). The control group’s responses to this question on the pre-Sabbath survey were as follows: six members gave no response, seven members offered a simple definition of Sabbath connected to rest and worship, and others defined Sabbath as “time with family”

or “attending church.” The post-Sabbath survey by the control group had an increased description of Sabbath. These descriptions mirrored more accurately Sabbath as presented in the Sabbath study (narrative). Only two from the control group did not respond in the post-survey. Thirteen members of the control group responded “rest with God,” seven members responded “family time in relationship to God,” others responded using language of “homecoming,” “peace,” “renewal,” and “devotion.” Clearly, the control group’s understanding of Sabbath grew through learning a new narrative of Sabbath.

Similarly, the experimental group grew in their description and definition of Sabbath. Each of the experimental group defined Sabbath in the pre-survey, with over half connecting Sabbath to “rest.” In addition, eight experimental group members connected Sabbath to “worship” and three connected it to “family.” A more nuanced definition of Sabbath occurred following the Sabbath Study with the experimental group. The growth in definitions may be a result of the interventions (practices and social context) the experimental group received. Some of the more nuanced descriptions of Sabbath made by the experimental group in the post-survey include: “A time to reflect over what God has done for us and to find rest in Him,” “A holy time that is a special focus on renewal and reflection. The outcome of rest from work and life distractions. The manifestation is love as Christ focused,” “Something practiced daily,” “A time to praise and reflect on the Lord and those around us,” “A time to think of those we impact, though we may never see them,” and “It is not a day of the week but a frame of mind.”

The ability of members to redefine Sabbath shows that Sabbath as a concept grew in meaning because of the project. Narrative changes allowed growth, but the addition of

practices and social context gave Sabbath a deeper value to the experimental group than it gave to the control group.

Participants' Evaluations

All participants of the ministry project received an anonymous Course Evaluation to complete at the end of the study (See Appendix F). The following are the mean value to the answers given from all the completed Course Evaluations: (1) 9.67; (2) 9.70; (3) 9.82; (4) 9.89; (5) 9.48; (6) 9.78; (7) 9.59; (8) 9.59; (9) 9.61. For those who gave additional feedback, comments included: "This study definitely reminded me to take a deeper approach to all things – instead of taking so much for granted," "I enjoyed my time spent in class. I feel like I was able to gain a new perspective on what Sabbath is and the importance on my life," and "The weeks learning about Sabbath were very meaningful and thought provoking. I have a long way to go, but I have a clearer understanding of Sabbath now." Other comments mirrored these sentiments. Overall, members at Inman First Baptist Church received the Sabbath project with positive affirmation.

Strength and Weaknesses

The design of the project is its greatest strength. James Brian Smith's components of transformation helped in designing a project around spiritual formation. The control group only got one of the three components of transformation (narrative), while the experimental group to receive the full transformative experience (narrative, practices, social context). By having two groups, one receiving the intervention of two additional

components, there were measurable differences between the groups. This is visible in their appreciation of Sabbath at the conclusion of the project. Smith's components of transformation will be a valuable resource in the design of other spiritual formation classes in the future.

The survey instrument accumulated valuable data but had areas of deficiency. The weakness of the Sabbath survey was its lack of evaluating the distinctions of the three components of transformation. If I had a chance to redesign the survey, it would include questions that measured Sabbath's role in relationship to practices and social context. Questions that are more direct would be a part of a new survey. The questions would help in linking the intervention of practices and community with the experimental group's increase in Sabbath appreciation for spiritual formation. Additional questions may offer a clearer understanding of how the Sabbath Exercises and discussion session grew Sabbath awareness.

Lastly, Sabbath was offered through both cognitive and practical experiences in the ministry project. However, these experiences created work for the control and experimental groups. Participants had to make time and use energy to be a part of the Sabbath study. Could there have been another way of doing the project where rest as a cessation from activity was a goal? This would be an area of exploration if there were another opportunity to offer Sabbath through a spiritual formation study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

A minister cannot honestly teach a theological subject unless she or he believes it to be true. I could not teach Sabbath until I was able to understand it. This understanding came not just from a cognitive sense but through both practice and community. Like those who took the pre-Sabbath survey and defined Sabbath simply as “a day of rest,” my initial concepts of Sabbath were also inadequate. My spiritual formation around Sabbath was limited. Too often, I fell into the same traps of production and greed. Even in ministry my internal voice said, “More!” “More work!” “More things need to be produced!” “More things need to be accomplished!” Failing to do “more” resulted in personal feelings of failure and inadequacy. In my years of education, work, and ministry there was little celebration of achievements and rarely time of resting between activities. Time was often available to rest, but like so many other people I discarded it for doing “more.” The feeling to have, do, and be more leads to a life filled with anxiety. The invitation Jesus gave his disciples was to live non-anxiously:

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ (Matthew 6:25-31)

Once any of us are trapped in the cycle of “more” it is hard to get out. This cycle leads people to become self-reliant, self-centered, and self-motivated. Too often, the mentality we have is “the work drives us,” rather than “we drive the work.” Being driven by work often results in burnout. Burnout can spill over into relationships. These relationships include horizontal (with others) and vertical (with God). When burnout enters into these relationships it creates conflict. This conflict can lead to alienation. This alienation is as Pinchas H. Peli described it, “exile.”¹³⁰

The gift that Sabbath offered me was a liberating and life affirming, “No!” I said, “No, to the cycle of more,” and “No, to the degrading effects of burnout!” This new resistance to these burdensome systems provided a better way of living in God’s providential care. To not be non-anxious about life leads people away from the traps of “more.” Walter Brueggemann wrote about this resistance when he commented on Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:25-31 paralleling God’s divine command in Exodus 23:12-13:

The “other gods” are agents and occasions of anxiety. But we, by discipline, by resolve, by baptism, by Eucharist, and by passion, resist such seductions. In so doing we stand alongside the creator in whose image we are made. By the end of six days God had done all that was necessary for creation ... so have we!¹³¹

Beyond the temptation and anxiety of “more,” I have realized technology’s role in shaping my formation. While reading Nicholas Carr’s *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, I began noticing his observations were true in my life. My attention was constantly going back to my mobile phone for updates on social media, namely

¹³⁰ Peli, *The Jewish Sabbath*, 76.

¹³¹ Brueggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 33.

Facebook. Unlike a decade ago, my reading for work and school was distracted and hurried. The internet was changing how I thought and gathered information. In addition, I developed an addiction to the delivery system of instant gratification based on all the constant updates to news feeds, recent pictures of friends and family, and social posts. Anxiety came in the form of withdrawal when I was not “connected” to the internet.

Recently Sean Parker, one of the founders of Facebook validated these concerns. In the last year, Parker has become a vocal critic to social media’s negative formation. In a recent news article Parker is quoted as saying:

The thought process that went into building these application, Facebook being the first of them, was all about: ‘How do we consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible?’ ... And that means that we need to sort of give you a little dopamine hit every once and awhile, because someone liked or commented on a photo or a post or whatever. ... The platforms built a "social validation feedback loop" that exploits "a vulnerability in human psychology."¹³²

Like the cycle of “more” that results in a system of production and greed the use of social media becomes a never-ending loop of “more.” My sensitivity to the dangers of this formation occurred during the 2016 Presidential Election. This was during the same time I was reading and researching this project on Sabbath. During this politicized period, I noticed myself, along with others, becoming more hostile to “friends” on social media. This hostility came from political comments, harsh personal attacks, and ill-humored jokes. Although I refrained from making online comments, I grew hostile with each

¹³² “Sean Parker: Facebook takes advantage of “vulnerability in human psychology,” CBS News, November 9, 2017, accessed December 13, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/sean-parker-facebook-takes-advantage-of-vulnerability-in-human-psychology/?ftag=CNM-00-10aab4i>.

friend and family member's post I deemed to be negative. My view of people often changed based on a single post. This was not a Christ like response.

When the consumption of information changes the way we see, value, and respond to others, especially through judgement, the words of Jesus need to be recalled:

Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye (Matthew 7:1-5).

Like the Pharisees in Jesus's day, I viewed others through a legalistic lens. I began judging people based on external expressions of piety around the way they publicly shared their theology. Like the Pharisees and Puritans before, I too was not coming from a gentle and humble spirit. In doing so, I increasingly did not see my own hypocrisy. Stopping social media was the only alternative to this kind of formation. I began resisting these addictive behaviors and mental changes. Sabbath became a renewing space for me to put down anything that would tempt me to view anyone else as a product, a meme, or an object on a screen. Over the last year, I have turned completely away from Facebook. Giving up social media was one step in finding rest for my soul. In this day and age, we all need to hear Jesus' word:

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).

This year has been a Sabbath, resting from that "digital" world. Since I began this extended Sabbath I am less anxious, less hostile, and more appreciative of the "face to

face” interactions of each day. By saying “No!” to an addictive system of validation and objectification God’s gift of rest has given me new hope for how I view others and even myself. During this project my concept of Sabbath has grown into a way of life. Sabbath is a daily practice of gratitude and reflection. It is a centering time that connects me to God and to others in significant ways. For me, Sabbath has become a wonderful gift!

Beyond the Sabbath Project

The temptation for every Christian is to resist positive formation by God. This resistance comes in the unwillingness to allow God’s gift of rest to enter into our weekly and daily practices. Too often, followers of Christ fall into the systems overwork, overproduction, and overconsumption. For those of us who can relearn Sabbath as a spiritual practice for formation are given a glimpse at Sabbath’s transformational potential for our lives. Sabbath offers an alternative to the negative formation and a means to resist.

The goal of reintroducing Sabbath was a step in the right direction. Many who attended the Sabbath study affirmed that they left with a new perspective of Sabbath. This included both the control and the experimental group. For the control group, a narrative understanding of Sabbath was enough to change their ideas about Sabbath. However, those within the experimental group were able to experience Sabbath in more profound ways.

The experimental group had the opportunity through Sabbath Exercises to become more self-aware as they reflected deeper on God’s creation, their neighbor, scripture, and the constant activity of modern life. The experimental group shared a Sabbath meal and

through group discussions were encouraged by others to dig deeper into Sabbath's meaning for their lives. This Sabbath project gave the experimental group new insights into not only Sabbath but also what it means to be "formed together."

My desire is that members of Inman First Baptist Church will continue learning how Sabbath's counter-cultural purposes embody God's gifts of grace and freedom in their lives. I pray they will offer this grace and freedom to others in our local community as they continue to "Give Hope." One future goal would be to offer a weekend retreat to anyone in the church who would like to grow further in his or her practice of Sabbath.

For those who were a part of the experimental group and appreciated spiritual formation through spiritual exercises and discussion, I hope that they will share their newfound attitudes. A holistic approach to spiritual formation was new and exciting. My goal is to continue offering similar spiritual formation experiences of study, practices, and discussion in the future. I envision having two short-term spiritual formation classes each year.

Lastly, Sabbath's role in spiritual formation can only occur through the power of the Holy Spirit. James Brian Smith included this as the fourth component in spiritual transformation. A ministry project cannot regulate the Holy Spirit or report on its contribution through analysis; however, I do believe God's Spirit was active throughout this ministry project.

APPENDIX

A. Sabbath Survey

Please circle the answer that describes you most accurately.

1. What is your gender?

Male	Female
------	--------

2. How old are you?

Below 18	18-25	26-35	36-50	55-65	Above 65
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- If you are above 65 years old, are you retired?**

Yes	No
-----	----

3. What is your marital status?

Single	Married	Divorced	Widowed
--------	---------	----------	---------

4. Do you have children?

Yes	No
-----	----

If you answered yes to the previous questions please answer the following questions:

- What are the ages of your children?**

0-3	19-25
4-8	25-35
9-13	35-50
14-18	Above 50

- Do any of your children live in your home?**

Yes	No

5. How often did you share a meal around a table with your children or parents in the past week?

None	1-2	2-3	4 or More
------	-----	-----	-----------

6. In the past week how many times did you look at your smart phone, tablet, or television while eating a meal?

None	2-3 meals	5-7 meals
1 meal	4-6 meals	More than 7 meals

7. What is the average amount of hours you work each week?

Below 20 hours	30-40 hours	50-60 hours
20-30 hours	40-50 hours	Above 60 hours

8. If you are married, what is the average amount of hours your spouse works each week?

Below 20 hours	30-40 hours	50-60 hours
20-30 hours	40-50 hours	Above 60 hours

9. What is the average amount of time you spend at Inman First Baptist Church each week? (This includes time spent in worship, Sunday School, choir practice, youth group, or any activity connected with IFBC both on and off campus.)

1-4 hours	9-12 hours	15-20 hours
5-8 hours	12-15 hours	More than 20 hours

For the following statements and questions, indicate where you find yourself on the scale provided.

10. Sabbath plays a role in my spiritual formation.

Never True Rarely True Neutral Sometimes True Always True

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

11. My Christian tradition (Baptist) holds a Christian view of *Sabbatarianism*.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

12. The Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue was influenced by the Exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

13. How much time in the past week did you spend reading and reflecting on Scripture?

Not at all	1-2 hours	3-4 hours
Less than an hour	2-3 hours	More than 4 hours

• Did you find your time reading and reflecting on Scripture restful?

Never

Sometimes

Most of
the time

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

14. Practicing a Biblical form of Sabbath is the same as going to church on Sunday and participating in a worship service.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

15. In the last month I have felt overworked, stressed, and burnout.Strongly
disagreeNeither
agree nor
disagreeStrongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

16. Taking regular time away from work is a high priority in my life.

Untrue

Neither
untrue or
trueVery
True

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

17. If you have free time in the day will you spend it watching television.Not at
all
likelyNeither
likely or
unlikelyExtremely
likely

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

18. In the last week did you find yourself distracted by your use of internet-connected devices, like a smart phone?

Never

Sometimes

Most of
the time

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

19. In the last week how much time did you spend on social media (like Facebook, Twitter, etc.?)

Not at all	1-2 hours	3-4 hours
Less than an hour	2-3 hours	More than 4 hours

20. How often do you check your work e-mails when you are not working?

Never					Sometimes					Most of the time	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

21. Do you ever feel like your work interferes with your ability to rest?

Never					Sometimes					Most of the time	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

22. Over the last month I have spent quality time with my family.

Strongly disagree					Neither agree nor disagree					Strongly agree	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

For the following open-ended statements provide an answer that best reflects you.

23. I define Sabbath as...

24. Sabbath practice for me is ...

25. I often find it difficult to rest and be renewed in God because of ...

26. I know that I have rested and been renewed when I ...

B. Sabbath Lessons

All graphics found in the Sabbath handouts came from Sharefaith.com. A subscription by Inman First Baptist Church gave access to the graphics from Sharefaith.com.

Session One

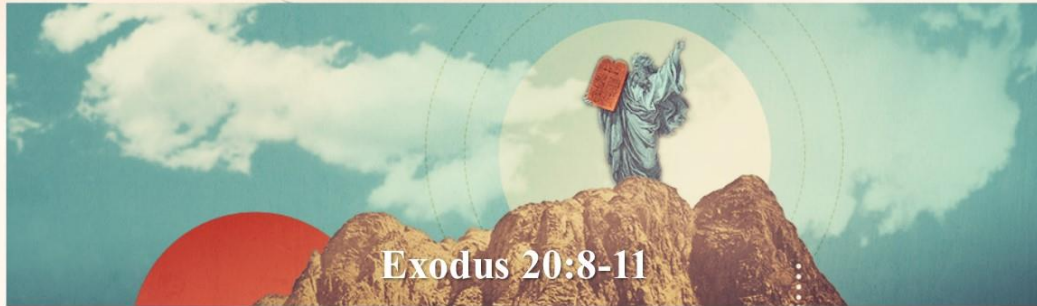


Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. (NRSV)

Notes on Genesis 2:1-3

- The word Sabbath does not appear in this passage, but the essence of what would become Sabbath is embodied in the last day of creation.
- God's creative work did not end in more activity. *God ended creation in rest.*
- The significance of Genesis 2:1-3 is not fully realized until later in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) when God offered the Law (Ten Commandments) to Israel.
- Genesis 2:1-3 offers a description about Israel's God in comparison to other Ancient Near Eastern gods. *Israel's God is different. This difference shaped and formed Israel in unique ways in comparison to other people.*
- Rest (Sabbath) has its origins in God. Rest played a tremendous role in how God's people (Israel) related to God and others.



Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. (NRSV)

Notes on Exodus 20:8-11

- The first half of Exodus, *is a story of God's liberation of Israel from a life of slavery under Pharaoh* in Egypt to a future salvation under God's reign.
- The Exodus was a formative event in the life of Israel and became a symbolic memory of God's divine gift of liberation.
- The Decalogue (the Ten Commandments) was a divine covenant between God and Israel. It was God's *instruction* for living in relationship with God and one another.
- *The two tables of the Decalogue offer a vertical (love of God—commandments 1-3) and a horizontal (love of neighbor—commandments 5-10) instruction for relationships.* The fourth command (Sabbath) connected the two tables by offering a command that guides both divine and human relationships.
- The character of the fourth commandment (Sabbath) is characterized by the phrase *"Remember and keep it holy."*
 - What happened when Israel forgot to remember and keep the Sabbath? (see Amos 8:4-6; Isaiah 58:13-14)
 - *Remembering through keeping the Sabbath is an act that recalled God's liberating work in the past while living out that freedom through rest in the present.*
 - The character of Sabbath rest found its character in God. God modeled a day of rest in the creative order (Genesis 2:1-3). *By modeling rest God demonstrates that God is not a "workaholic" nor does God wish or permit God's people to overwork.*

Exodus 31:12-18

The LORD said to Moses: You yourself are to speak to the Israelites: “You shall keep my sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. You shall keep the sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall be put to death. Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

When God finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the covenant, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God. (NRSV)

Notes on Exodus 31:12-18

- Sabbath is a sign between God and God’s people.
- Sabbath as a sign marks each generation as faithful. It also moves each generation to remember and live out God’s liberating power from the systems of bondage and exploitation in their day.
- Violation of the Sabbath came with great penalty. Everyone was to hold each other accountable. To profane the Sabbath was to elevate the systems of Pharaoh (greed, production, and slavery) over God’s will for Israel.
- As a completion to Moses discourse in Exodus 25:1-31:18 the role of Sabbath highlighted the purpose and meaning of worship—“*Worship is God’s creation engaged in Joyous rest.*” (Walter Brueggemann, “The Book of Exodus,” 925)



Conclusion

- Genesis's creation account in Genesis 1:1-2:3 culminated with God resting and blessing the seventh day and setting it apart. Thus, rest characterizes God and God's creative order.
- Sabbath as a command in Exodus 20:8-11 remembered God's unique character of rest by instructing Israel to keep the seventh day holy.
- Sabbath as a sign in Exodus 31:12-18 created a generational marker on God's people. It was a sign of covenant faithfulness. Each generation must take up the Sabbath for themselves.
- *Rest is an attribute of God and a Divine expectation of God's covenant people.*



Reflection Questions

- God is portrayed in Genesis 2:1-3 as resting from creative activity rather than a “workaholic.” How does this understanding of God shape your view of work and activity?
- How does seeing Sabbath as a reminder of liberation and freedom from slavery in Egypt change your perspective on remembering and keeping a day of rest?
- What areas of your life do you need rest from obsessive systems of production, greed, and work?
- What is one thing you can do this week to help you “remember” the Sabbath?

Session Two



Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. (NRSV)

Notes on Deuteronomy 5:12-15

- Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and Exodus 20:8-11 share a telling of the fourth commandment in the Decalogue. The differences are worth noting.
- Exodus' account of the fourth commandment begins with זָכַר - *zachor* (remember). "The Hebrew *zachor* means to penetrate the darkness of forgetfulness into the original, the origin, to the beginning." (Asher Eder, "The Sabbath: To Remember, To Observe, To Make.") Exodus 20:8-11 remembers Sabbath in connection with God's resting on the seventh day.

Notes on Deuteronomy 5:12-15

- Deuteronomy's account of the fourth commandment begins with שמר- *shamor* (observe) "Observing the Sabbath day requires Israel to put this remembrance into practice." (Eder, "The Sabbath")
- Sabbath requires a remembrance of God's liberating exodus power through the actions or observances of Sabbath. It is these actions that kept God's liberation in practice.
- In comparison to Exodus, Deuteronomy had a unique "humanitarian" interest. "Throughout Deuteronomy the theme of God's partisanship on behalf of the downtrodden, the widows, orphans, and strangers." It is this social justice on God's behalf out of the experience of Egyptian slavery that the command adds emphasis on God's requirement of Israel's slaves to experience rest. (Patrick Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 81)
- For examples of God's "humanitarian" interest see Deuteronomy 10:12-22; 12:14-15, 17-22; 26:8-13.



Theological Implications of Sabbath

- "Sabbath is a gift of God as much as it is a command. As a gift, the primary character of Sabbath is rest."
- "Sabbath looks backward to the exodus redemption and God's liberation from toil and bondage in Egypt."
- "Sabbath also looks forward to the promise of rest of God, both as the promise land and an eschatological rest."
- "The sanctifying of the Sabbath serves to guard the first and second commandment as not putting work as an idol to be worshiped."
- The setting apart of one day regularly to the Lord inhibits human inclination to justify oneself by work and points toward the reality of justification by faith.
- "Sabbath is one of the marks of God's people and is a gift for all people."
- "Sabbath relates to social justice." (Patrick Miller, *Deuteronomy*, 72)

Deuteronomy 6:20-25

When your children ask you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?” then you shall say to your children, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right.” (NRSV)

Reflections on Deuteronomy 6:20-25

- The Ten Commandments stand at the heart and the purpose of God’s intention for the people of Israel, to offer life. This life is one that is free from enslavement and bondage. It a life characterized by liberation and wholeness.
- What does this life look like? It is a life lived in right relationship with God others (community).
- Sabbath as a command remembers God’s actions in the past, while observing God’s goodness in the present, and looking forward to God’s continued promises for the next generation.



Sabbath as Resistance

Walter Brueggemann in his book, *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Yes*, states that a reeducation of Sabbath is need in response to the systems of Pharaoh in our day. These systems “champion anxiety and affirm restlessness.” For Brueggemann, the departures from these systems are an act of **counter culturalism**. They occur in practices that are “emotional, liturgical, and economical.” To engage the Sabbath as described in the fourth commandment is to have faith in the “subversive, exodus causing God of the Decalogue.” Sabbath offers resistance to the systems of anxiety, coercion, exclusivism and multitasking. In each of these ways, Sabbath allows individuals and the community of faith to refocus, through rest, the attention on God, rather than the systems of Pharaoh. (Walter Bruggemann, *Sabbath as Resistance*, 18).

Making Connections

- **Sabbath at its core is a counter cultural expression of faith in response to oppressive systems.** How was Sabbath counter-cultural for Israel? How is it counter-cultural today?
- **In what ways have you experienced God's liberation?**
- **In what ways do you remember and observe God's freedom each week?**
- **In what ways do you offer the gift of rest to others?** In what areas does our local community, nation, and world need Sabbath as a source of liberation?
- **In what ways can you observe Sabbath as a way to resist they systems of Pharaoh in today's culture?**



Something to Consider

“Subtracting a day of rest each week has a profound effect on our lives. How could it not? One day a week adds up. Fifty-two days a year times an average life span is equal to more than eleven years. Take away eleven years of anything in a life time, and there will be a change.” (Matthew Sleeth, 24/6: A Prescription for a Healthier, Happier Life, 10)



Session Three

Rediscovering *Sabbath*

Sabbath and the New Testament

Session Three

Sunday, September 24

Matthew 5:17-20

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (NRSV)

Jesus as the Fulfillment of the Law

- In Matthew, “Jesus radicalizes the law at Sinai, however, not in the sense of replacing it with another, but of bringing its original intent to fulfillment. For Jesus, the Messiah, the Law of Sinai (the Decalogue) is still unquestionably the will of God for Israel and for his disciples.” (Brevard Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary*, 429-430)
- Jesus did not call for a replacement of the Law, but he opened up for his disciples what true covenant faithfulness looked like. For Jesus, to be faithful to God was more than right action but a change in heart. This change of heart was not a conforming to behavior but a transforming from within. See Matthew 5-7, “The Sermon on the Mount”).
- “Spiritual transformation into Christlikeness is the process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that takes on the character of the inner being of Jesus himself. The result is that the “outer life of the individual increasingly becomes a natural expression of the inner reality of Jesus and of his teachings.” (Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, 159.)
- *Jesus’ interpretation of the Law can be observed fully in Matthew 22:34-40.*

Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (NRSV)

Matthew 11:28-30 — *Jesus and Rest*

- When Jesus spoke about rest it was in the context to himself and his teachings.
- “The idea of yoke is attributed to the crosspiece that was put on draft animals and was a common metaphor for toil, submission, discipline, duty, and obedience. In Jewish literature yoke expressed a paradox: it represented labor and obligation, but also could symbolized freedom and life.” (David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 134.)
- For Jesus, the yoke or teachings of the Pharisees was burdensome to live out. To carry their interpretation would not lead to rest. To protect the Sabbath from being broken ended up keeping Sabbath’s true rest out of reach. Jesus’ yoke however was from a gentle and humble heart. To take on Jesus teaching was to be given relief, life, and rest in a system of legalism.
- The following two Sabbath accounts in Matthew highlight this relationship to Jesus, the Law, and rest.



Matthew 12:1-8

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.” (NRSV)

Matthew 12:1-8 — *Jesus Lord of the Sabbath*

- Jesus' was confronted by the Pharisees for plucking grain and eating on the Sabbath. Jesus defended his actions by highlighting two incidents from scripture. The first was the story of David violating the Law by allowing his hungry soldiers to eat the *bread of the Presence* (1 Samuel 21:1-6). Jesus also highlighted the passage from Numbers 28:9-10, which instructed the priests on how to make offerings on the Sabbath. Jesus ended the encounter with a citation of Hosea 6:6 and declared his authority over the Sabbath. In the parallel account of Mark 2:23-38, Jesus stated, ***"The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, so the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."***
- Jesus did not disregard the Sabbath but presented a deeper understanding of Sabbath as a gift that offers life and wholeness. The continuation the story in Matthew 12:9-14 will highlight this understanding.

Matthew 12:9-14

He left that place and entered their synagogue; a man was there with a withered hand, and they asked him, "Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath?" so that they might accuse him. He said to them, "Suppose one of you has only one sheep and it falls into a pit on the sabbath; will you not lay hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a human being than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and it was restored, as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him. (NRSV)



Matthew 12:9-14 — *Doing Good on the Sabbath*

- Jesus has been presented already in Matthew as "gentle, kind, and a source of rest" (Matthew 11:28-30). As his antagonist attempted to push his buttons so as they might force him to do something they can accuse him with, he responded to their questions with another question. His question and action hinted at the essence of Sabbath. The man with the withered hand was not in a life and death situation but was in bondage to his malady. Jesus would not wait for the end of the Sabbath to offer this man rest and healing. By offering the man restoration, Jesus provided rest to a man who was broken, weak, enslaved, and needing freedom. ***Jesus embodied the essence of Sabbath.***
- The yoke of the Pharisees was heavy and hard to maintain. Jesus, like God in the Exodus, came to bring a more abundant life. To be like Jesus means to offer Sabbath to those who are in need of its restorative power, as a gift!

Hebrews – Connecting the Past, the Present, and the Future

- “The book of Hebrews used a Christological interpretation of the Old Testament to address faithfulness to the church of its day. (Edgar V. McKnight and Christopher Church, *Hebrews-James*, 20). This is highlighted in the opening verses of the book, Hebrews 1:1-4.
- Hebrews asserted that the promises God had given to Israel in the past had been fulfilled in Christ. This fulfillment had both interpretive and contextual relevance to the church of its day. (McKnight and Church, *Hebrews-James*, 29)
- Hebrews 3:1-6 portrayed Jesus as superior to Moses. Moses’ role was to lead Israel out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Jesus’ role is far greater. Jesus will lead the church into its eschatological future.
- Like the wilderness journey of the Israelites that was accompanied with unfaithfulness, Hebrews sensed the same dangers with in its own setting and context. This was a danger of being tempted to drift away from being faithful. Psalm 95:7-11 offered a lens into Hebrews’ understanding of the danger of not entering into God’s rest.

Hebrews 4:1-11

Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest is still open, let us take care that none of you should seem to have failed to reach it. For indeed the good news came to us just as to them; but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, “As in my anger I swore, “They shall not enter my rest,”” though his works were finished at the foundation of the world. For in one place it speaks about the seventh day as follows, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” And again in this place it says, “They shall not enter my rest.” Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he sets a certain day—“today”—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted, “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God; for those who enter God’s rest also cease from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs. (NRSV)

Hebrews 4:1-11 — *Rest on the Journey of Faith*

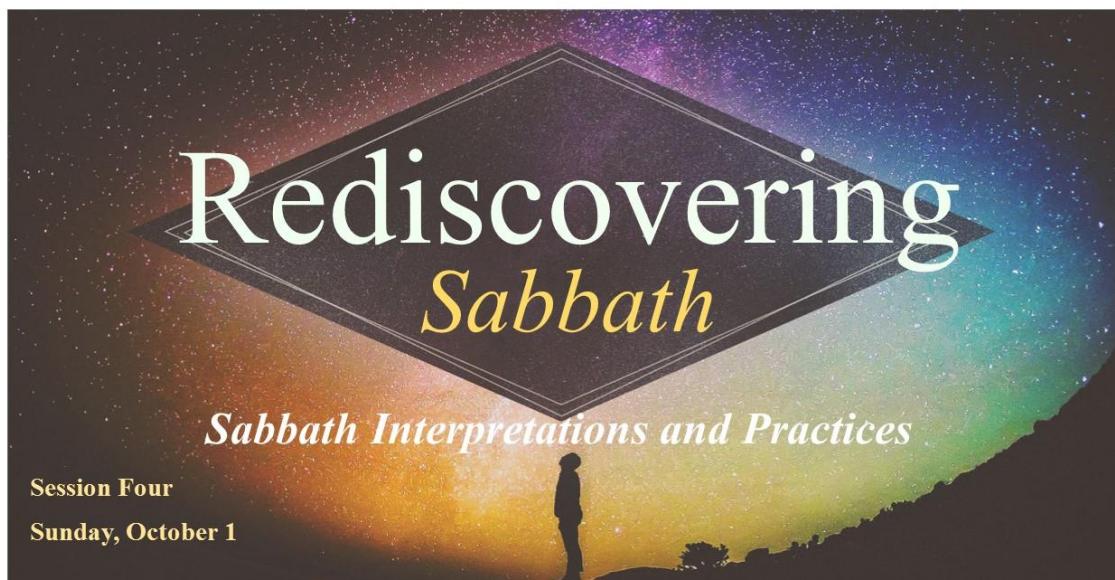
- The original audience of Hebrews had to be on guard not to develop hard and rebellious hearts. Those who received the good news of Christ and remained faithful were able to enter into κατάπαυσις (*katapausis*), rest. If in the Exodus, God was leading Israel to a redemptive work that reached its fulfillment in the Promised Land (as reflected in Psalm 95), what then was the character of rest found through Christ?
- The writer of Hebrews shifted from Psalm 95 to Genesis 2:1-3. Rest, like the preexistent Christ reflected in Hebrews 1:2, had a part in God's purposes since creation. Rest as a gift has and will continue to be offered to God's people who follow God's direction. In Christ, this rest took on new meaning.
- For Hebrews, rest in Christ is experienced both in the present and in the future. Rest may be described as "the completion of God's redemptive work" in Christ. (A.T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology of the New Testament," 206-207.) *Thus, the invitation to rest is an invitation to salvation—to live as God's people now and in the age to come.*
- The danger for Hebrew's audience then and now, is that like the wilderness generation of Psalm 95, to be tempted to drift away, shrink back, become lost or to weak to carry on in our journey of faith (see Hebrews 2:; 10:19-39; 12:1-3).
- *In what ways are Christians tempted to drift away or shrink back today?*

Rest in Hebrews is a source of peace and strength that offers stability and hope for those struggling in their journey of faith.

Reflection Questions

- In what ways does Jesus reinterpret Sabbath practice for his day?
- Following Jesus means putting the essence of the Decalogue into more than actions but a change of heart and mind. What can Jesus teach us about the Sabbath command in our day?
- In our following Christ, what are some of the dangers we face in getting off track from finding rest?
- In what ways does understanding both the Old and New Testament interpretations of rest and Sabbath deepen your appreciation and your desire to seek out God's rest?

Session Four



An Overview

Sabbath as a spiritual practice has been a part of Jewish and Christian spirituality for thousands of years. As Christians living in 2017 it is important to understand both the historical and theological developments of Sabbath from a Christian perspective. It is also helpful for us to learn about Sabbath from Jewish practitioners. This knowledge can inform and deepen our understanding of Sabbath. In this lesson we will examine some of modern Judaism's' reflections and practices of Sabbath, as well as, examine the historical development of Sabbath in the Christian tradition. Lastly, we will end with some reflections on rediscovering and reclaiming Sabbath for our lives.

The Shabbat in Jewish Spirituality

The Shabbat, or Sabbath, in Judaism is deeply woven into Jewish spirituality. Sabbath, like the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) in Christianity, has been interpreted and applied differently among Jewish groups through the ages. For many Jewish theologians Sabbath is a central part of Jewish faith and identity.

Abraham Joshua Herschel wrote in his book, *Sabbath*, an understanding of Sabbath that was deeply spiritual and mysterious. He wrote, "The seventh day is a like a place in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere. (Herschel, Sabbath, 21) For Herschel *Sabbath was: "a day of harmony and peace as a reminder of this world and the world to come, but it was also like a symphony of all things, a participation in the spirit that unites what is below with what is above."* (Herschel, 18; 31-32) At its core Sabbath is all that is divine in the world brought into union with God." (Herschel, 32) Sabbath in a Jewish spirituality is the heart of what it means to be in right relationship with God and creation.

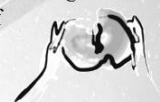
Shabbat as Homecoming

Another Jewish theologian, Pinnachas H. Peli, wrote in *The Jewish Sabbath: A Renewed Encounter*; “If we were to condense all of Judaism—its faith, thought, life, poetry and dreams into a single word, there is but one word which could be used—Shabbat.” (Peli, *The Jewish Sabbath*, 3) The root of the Hebrew word for which Sabbath derives closely, as noted by Peli, resembled another root in Hebrew. This root carried the connotation of “returning or homecoming.” For Peli the Exodus story is everyone’s story. *All of humanity is in a three fold exile: an exile from God (the Divine Presence), an exile the land (creation), and an exile of the person.* In this last exile, “the person is estranged from his or her immediate environment, unsure self, and feels lost and caught up in a meaningless existence.” (Peli, 75-76) *Sabbath offers a return home to God, to creation, and to a meaningful life through the transformative experience of rest.*

The Shabbat Seder

The Shabbat Seder is an ordered set of rituals and blessings that welcome the Sabbath in the home. This is a weekly practice in many Jewish homes. The following are the ten steps from a traditional Shabbat Seder as adapted from Ron Wolfson’s *Shabbat: The Family Guide to Preparing and Celebrating the Sabbath..* (Wolfson, 30-31)

1. **Hakhana leShabbat: Preparing for Shabbat** — “Preparing the house, the meal, the people, and giving (alms).”
2. **Hadlakat Nerot: Candle Lighting** — “The act of kindling the Shabbat candles actually begins the Shabbat. Lighting candles is a physical act, yet with the recitation of the berakah (blessing), time is symbolically transformed. Weekday time enters a new state of being –Shabbat.”
3. **Shalom Aleikhem: Peace be with You** — “Jewish legend states that every Jewish home is welcomed by visiting angels with a greeting of peace.”
4. **Birkhot Hamishpahah: Family Blessing** — Sabbath is a time for family, a time to bless daughters, sons, and spouses.”
5. **Kiddush: Sanctification of the Day** — “Through the recitation of a blessing over a full cup of wine, the Shabbat day is sanctified by recalling creation, the fruit of the vine and why the Shabbat is to be remembered.”
6. **Netilat Yadayim: Washing the Hands** — “The Rabbis of the Talmud compared the Shabbat table to the Altar in the Temple. It was a holy place. To emphasize this, many of the activities surrounding the meal are designed to remind us of the practices of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. We wash hands as symbolic act of purification.”
7. **Hamotzi: Blessing the Bread** — “Bread is the staff of life. In the Jewish tradition, the Hamotiz, the *berakhah* over bread, marks the beginning of the meal.”
8. **Se’udat Shabbat: The Shabbat Meal** — “The Shabbat meal involves special food, special songs, and a special tone that makes it unlike any other meal of the week.”
9. **Zemirot: Shabbat Songs** — “The singing of special Shabbat songs is often part of the meal, bringing an extra sense of Shabbat joy. Sometimes, Torah study is added to the meal.”
10. **Birkat Hamazon: Blessing after Food** — The meal is concluded with a series of berahot, thanking God for the food that has been eaten.” (Wolfson, 31)



Learning from the Shabbat Seder

The Shabbat Seder provides an experience for spiritual formation and transformation as the family gathers to welcome the Sabbath. In the context of the Shabbat Seder, the meal itself allows intentional time for the whole family to reflect over the meaning of God's creation, God's provisions and gifts, and what it means to rest in God's nourishment.



David A. Cooper wrote:

Very few people appreciate the meditative experience of eating. We are almost always doing something else in addition to experiencing our meal. As a result, although we sometimes appreciate food, we miss most of the sensual, deeply satisfying aspects of nourishing our bodies. (David A. Cooper, *The Handbook of Jewish Meditation Practices: A Guide to Enriching the Sabbath and Other Days of Your Life*, 103)

The Shabbat Seder is just one example of how an intentional Sabbath practice can help direct people toward God through a shared spiritual formation experience.

A History of Christian Interpretation of Sabbath

The Early Church

- The early Apostolic church founded in Jerusalem continued to practice Sabbath. Reason for practicing Sabbath included: “habit and religious conservatism, social pressure, fear of stronger forms of sanctions from more radical Jews, avoiding offense to Jews that were the target of evangelism, theological conviction, and leadership in Jerusalem on the early first century church was strongly conservative (see the book of James).” (M. Max B. Turner, “The Sabbath Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts,” *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, Ed. D.A. Carson, 27)
- Unlike other early church controversies, there is not evidence that Sabbath was controversial for the early church. Sabbath continued to be practiced. However, changes did occur as the church grew from a Jewish movement into a Gentile church.
- ***The transition from Jewish Sabbath practices to a uniquely Christian worship on the first day of the week (Sunday) came early in the Christian tradition. Christian worship became known as the “Lord’s Day” (κυριακός ἡμέρα). The term Lord’s Day is first recorded in Revelation 1:10 and is the only occurrence in the New Testament. By the second century the Lord’s day became used frequently for the unique day of Christian worship.*** The *Didache*, an early Christian manual for understanding the teachings of the Apostles, instructed early Christians to “assemble on the Lord’s Day, and break bread and offer the Eucharist; but first make confessions of your faults, so that your sacrifice may be a pure one.” (*Didache*, 14:1)

From a Jewish to a Gentile Movement

- As the church grew away from its roots in Judaism of the first century, the nature of worship and practice changed in the second century. A need for a distinctly Christian worship may have been a reason for the origin of Sunday worship as the church commemorated the Resurrection weekly. In doing so, by the end of the second century there were many Gentile Christians who rejected Sabbath observance along with other distinctly Jewish practices. A reason for this may be due to the problems associated with Judaizing. Judaizing was the requirement of some Jewish Christians on Gentiles to take on all of the Jewish Law and regulations (i.e. circumcision, dietary regulations, and special observances) in order to be a part of the church.
- A resistance to Judaizing can be seen in the second century letter of Ignatius. He wrote to a church near Ephesus. In the letter he wrote against specific Jewish doctrines and observances:

We have seen now former adherents of the ancient customs have since attained to a new hope; so that they have given up keeping the sabbath, and now order their lives by the Lord's Day instead (the Day when life first dawned for us, thanks to Him and His death. That death, though some deny it, is the very mystery which has moved us to become believers, and endure tribulation to prove ourselves pupils of Jesus Christ, our sole Teacher). (*The Letter to the Magnesians* 9:1-6)

A Christian Day of Worship and Rest — A Sabbatarian View

- Although the early church worshiped on Sunday, rest did not become associated with Christian worship until the fourth century. In the fourth century, the emperor Constantine promulgated a law requiring total public rest from work. He declared this to occur “on the most honorable day of the Sun.” This decree came on March 3, 321 A.D. This Sunday rest differed from a Jewish Sabbath. Unlike a Jewish Sabbath, agricultural work was not prohibited. This is the earliest reference to Sunday as a day free from work. (Bauckham, “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 280)
- Worship became the primary motivator for resting from work on the Lord's Day. This became known as “Sabbatarian view of Sunday.” In this view, the Jewish notion of *Sabbath rest* was not the ultimate meaning for Sunday. A cessation from activity was the intention of Sunday worship. By the fourth century, Christians were encouraged to observe Sunday as a day of worship and commemoration of the creation, but they were prohibited from idleness. In this view, not working gave Christians an opportunity to devote their time to public activities of worship, not pure rest. (Bauckham “Sabbath and Sunday in the Post-Apostolic Church,” 282)



- The progressive diverging from Jewish practices did not end in the Post-Apostolic Church. Augustine's view of Sabbath, as noted by R.J. Bauckham, was a spiritualization of the meaning of the Decalogue. He saw Sabbath rest as eschatological rather than a weekly norm. *The idea of a cessation from activity was deemed idleness. These concepts of Sabbatarianism, or a spiritualization of Sabbath as it pertained to Sunday, carried over into the Medieval Church in the West. "In this period, medieval Sabbatarianism grew in the context of theocratic kingship and church discipline of an increasingly juridical character."* (R.J. Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," From Sabbath to Lord's Day, 300-303)
- In later medieval theology, two developments transformed the grounds for obligation of the Lord's Day observance on scriptural revelation and ecclesiastical authority. Bauckham suggested, "the distinction between moral and ceremonial aspects within the Sabbath commandment, and the treatment of the Decalogue as Natural Law conceived in terms of classical and moral philosophy." *"For Aquinas, the Sabbath commandment contained both ceremonial and moral aspects. For its ceremonial aspects, it was reasoned that Christ had fulfilled the ceremonial aspects of Mosaic Law. However, the moral aspects were to be kept but not as in the rigor of the Mosaic Sabbath. Sabbath, in the Thomist view, became grounded in Natural Law and found itself ingrained in the catechism at the Council of Trent. This sabbath view has held in the Roman Catholic doctrine ever since, and it states that "Sunday is a day of rest for worship."* (Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Medieval Church in the West," 304-307)



Protestant Reformation and the Puritans

- "Neither Luther nor Calvin held that the fourth commandment required Christians to rest on Sunday, but held that, as a matter of convince and order, a weekly day of rest for worship was needed. The individual Christian must rest and worship on the day prescribed by human authority (in practice, Sunday); he is at liberty only to exceed this requirement." (Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition," From Sabbath to Lord's Day, 317-318.)
- In the mid-sixteenth century, a "new Sabbatarianism" arose and became associated with the Puritans. This view held extreme Sabbath observances. Many Puritans prohibited all recreation and even advocated harsh penalties for violations. These included the death penalty. Sunday was not set aside for rest, but rather developed into a whole day set aside for religious duties. (Bauckham, "Sabbath and Sunday in the Protestant Tradition," 317-318)
- The American expression of Sabbath has its roots in the Puritan experience. Much of life became associated with the "Puritan work ethic." The view of Sunday as a day for worship led to blue laws and restraints on Sunday. These historical developments reach back into the early church's transition from Jewish Sabbath to a new way of worshiping on the Lord's day. Often these expressions became legalistic.

Rediscovering and Reclaiming Sabbath

Consider R. Alan Culpepper's on Mark 2:23-28 (Jesus' disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath):

The issue of Sabbath observance has lost significance for most Christians. Sabbath observance was replaced early on by worship on Sunday, and the day of Jesus' resurrection. Perhaps it is time that the church rediscovered the gift of the Sabbath, the creation of a day of rest. Even in generations when the pace of life was much slower, the Sabbath was a gift that gave individuals and families the opportunity to be at home together, to rest from the week, to worship and pray, and to walk, talk, and to eat together. Is it not ironic that in a time when more people take tranquilizers and antacids to relive the stress of the pace of modern life, so many Christians neglect the gift of Sabbath? (Culpepper, *Mark*, 95)

We are reminded how our culture creates restlessness in our lives. Another Christian writer also helps us understand the need to reconsider Sabbath. Lauren F. Winner grew up in a Jewish home that practiced Shabbat. After converting to Christianity and beginning to worship on Sunday, she noticed something was missing. Her transition from a Shabbat to Christian worship made her rethink how Christians view Sabbath. She wrote in her book *Mudhouse Sabbath: An Invitation to a Spiritual Discipline*:

There is something, in the Jewish Sabbath that is absent from most Christian Sundays: a true cessation from the rhythms of work, the world, a time wholly set apart, and perhaps above all, a sense that the point of Shabbat, the orientation of Shabbat, is toward God. (Winner, 10)

We have much to gain by rediscovering Sabbath. Sabbath is God's gift, a time and place for everyone to enter into rest. *Will you accept this gift?*

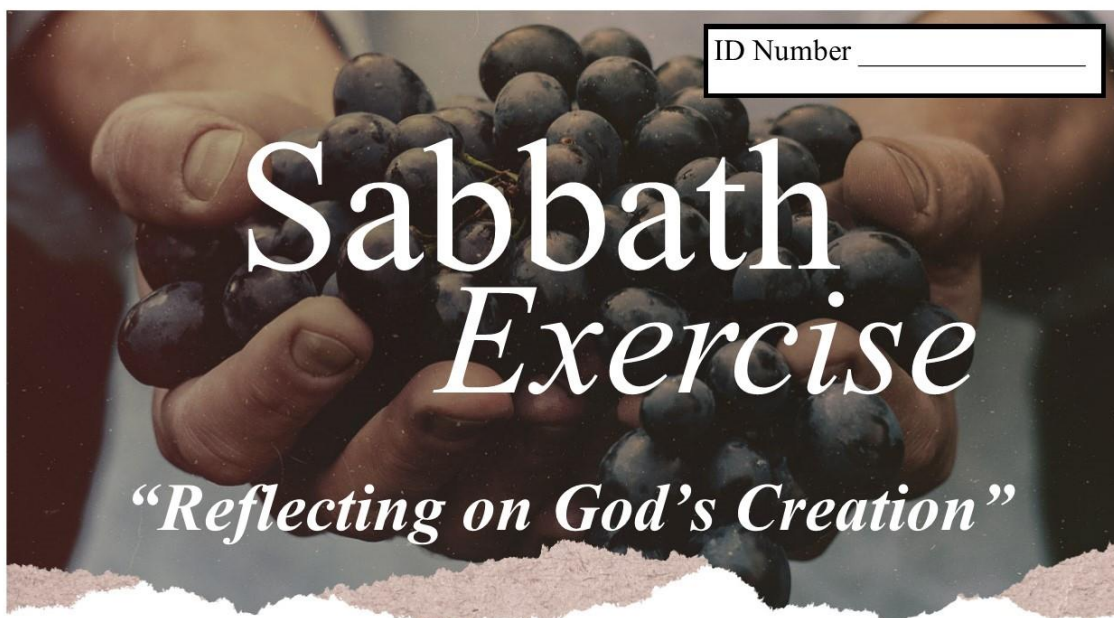
Reflection Questions

- *In what ways can you begin to learn to practice Sabbath in a way that offers rest and time for family formation?*
- *In what ways is a Jewish expression of Sabbath in the Shabbat Seder a resource we as Christians can learn from and adapt?*
- *In what ways are we formed by tradition and culture rather than the biblical narrative in relation to Sabbath?*
- *Where do you need to reclaim a Sabbath way of living in your life?*

Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly (Matthew 11:28-30, The Message).

C. Sabbath Formation Exercises

Exercise One



Exercise Description

This week you are asked to reflect over God's creation as you eat a meal. Choose one meal this week where you can have time to reflect through this activity. Please utilize the steps as you prepare and eat your meal. Allow these steps to help you rest and be renewed by Good's goodness in your meal. Please complete all steps and write your responses in the spaces provided.

Step One

- **Choose an item from your meal and list it in the space provided.** An item can include a vegetable, a fruit, bread, or meat. Please limit the exercise to one item from your menu. If you are preparing the meal please read **Step Two** prior to cooking.

Step Two

If you are preparing the meal please follow the instructions for this step. If you are only eating the meal please skip to **Step Three**.

- **Hold the item you have selected in your hand.** Think about how the item feels to your touch before it has been cooked or prepared. Describe your observations in the space provided.

- **What word or phrase comes to your mind as you held your item?**

- **Where did you purchase or retrieve the item?**

- **How much time will it take you to prepare this item for consumption?**

- **What will be your steps for preparing this item?**

Step Three

- **Examine your food item after it has been cooked but before you eat. Think about how the item has come to be on your plate.** In the space below imagine backwards the steps this item took before it came to your meal. Begin with the item from your plate and move back in time to the kitchen, the grocery bag you carried the item in, the grocery store, the delivery truck that brought the item to the grocery store, ... all the way back to the origins of this item. Go as far back in time as your imagination will allow. Write those steps beginning with the item on your plate in the space provided.

Step Four

- **As you consider the origins of the item from you menu did you move all the way back in time to when God created the world?** Consider God's creative process. How does knowing the item on your plate originates from God's creative work affect how you reflect over your food item? How will you allow this item, whose source comes ultimately from God, nourish you today? Write your response to these questions in the space provided.

Step Five

- **Eat your meal and be nourished by God's good creation.** Take time following your meal to write out a prayer of thanksgiving in the space provided.

Step Six

What one word comes to your mind following this exercise:

Please return this exercise next week to Jeremiah Childers.

Exercise Two

ID Number _____



Sabbath *Exercise*

“Reflecting on Your Neighbor”

Exercise Description

This week you are asked to choose one day out of your week to spend in reflection. Choose a day where you have been active outside your home. Take a few moments before engaging the steps below and mentally walk back through your day. Where did you go, what did you do, and with who did you interact? Allow this exercise to help you reflect more deeply about your neighbor.

Step One

After you have reflected back over your day think about all the people with who you have interacted. ***Who served you today?*** In the space provided list everyone in your day who you interacted with based on your identity as a consumer. For example a cashier or a bank teller.

Step Two

As you continue to reflect over your day think about all those people *who served you, but to who you did not encounter in person*. List them in the space provided. For example the mail carrier or someone who processed your online purchase.

Step Three

As you look back over your day again think about everything you used or consumed. Ask yourself, *Who made my clothes, grew the food I ate, or helped produce the electricity that runs my air conditioning*. As you think about all those things you used or consumed that were produced with other's labor, choose just one or two products from your day and imagine all of the people who helped produce the item. Reflect on how these "invisible" workers make you feel once you consider their labor. Write your reflections in the space below.

Step Four

After reflecting about all the people who served you today, ask yourself, ***How do I consider these people important to God and to me?*** Write your reflections below.



Step Five

As you consider all the people who serve you on a daily basis take a few moments and consider the following questions:

- ***What would happen if I took one day out of the week not to engage in having others serve me?***
- ***What would happen to my perspective on others?***

Write down your response in the space provided.

Step Six

Spend a few moments reading over Deuteronomy 5:12-15 from The Message translation provided below. Ask yourself, ***How should I respond to the Sabbath command concerning my neighbors and those who serve me today?***

No working on the Sabbath; keep it holy just as God, your God, commanded you. Work six days, doing everything you have to do, but the seventh day is a Sabbath, a Rest Day—no work: not you, your son, your daughter, your servant, your maid, your ox, your donkey (or any of your animals), and not even the foreigner visiting your town. That way your servants and maids will get the same rest as you. Don't ever forget that you were slaves in Egypt and God, your God, got you out of there in a powerful show of strength. That's why God, your God, commands you to observe the day of Sabbath rest.

Step Seven

Sabbath rest was intended to impact not only those who practiced it, but also others who worked for and lived near those who practiced divine rest. ***Take time to think about all the people you have listed today in this exercise. Picture them in your mind, whether you know them or have only consider them today, are they in need of rest?*** Take time and write a prayer to God for everyone you have listed today in the space below.



Please return this exercise next week to Jeremiah Childers.

Exercise Three

ID Number _____

Sabbath *Exercise*

“Reflecting on Scripture”

Exercise Description

For this exercise you will be asked to spend time in a reflective reading of Matthew 11:28-12:8. The reflective reading will follow steps adapted from a traditional *Lectio Divina* or “divine reading.” This exercise will allow you to intentionally read the scripture slow and thoughtfully. It may be helpful to read the passage aloud. The exercise is designed around five steps. As you follow the steps write your responses in the space provided. Allow this exercise to bring you to a restful state as you are nourished by the *Word*.

Scripture Focus

Matthew 11:28-12:8

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.” He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests. Or have you not read in the law that on the sabbath the priests in the temple break the sabbath and yet are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath.” (NRSV)



Step One

Find a quiet place. Read the scripture passage slowly . Circle or underline any word or phrase that catches your attention. After reading the passage take a few moments to reflect on the word or phrase that grabbed your attention. Write them down in the space below provide. Take a few moments to repeat the words or phrases to yourself aloud.

Step Two

Read the passage again. As you read slowly meditate on the words that caught your attention from your first reading. Reflect over these words or phrases. How do these words or phrases comfort or challenge you? What questions are raised by this passage? Write your thoughts in the space provided.

Step Three

Read the passage a third time. Imagine Jesus is sitting next to you. Speak prayerfully to the living Lord about what has stood out to you in this passage. What do you need to say to Jesus? What do you need to ask him? Take time to sit in silence as you listen. Write down in the space provided what you feel you are in hearing from God's Spirit.

Step Four

Read the passage a final time. Read it slowly and aloud. Rest and relax as you read. What is God saying to you through the scripture passage? Take nourishment from God's *Word* and like a baby relaxes in its mother's arms after being fed, rest in God's presence. In the space provided write a prayer in response to this exercise.

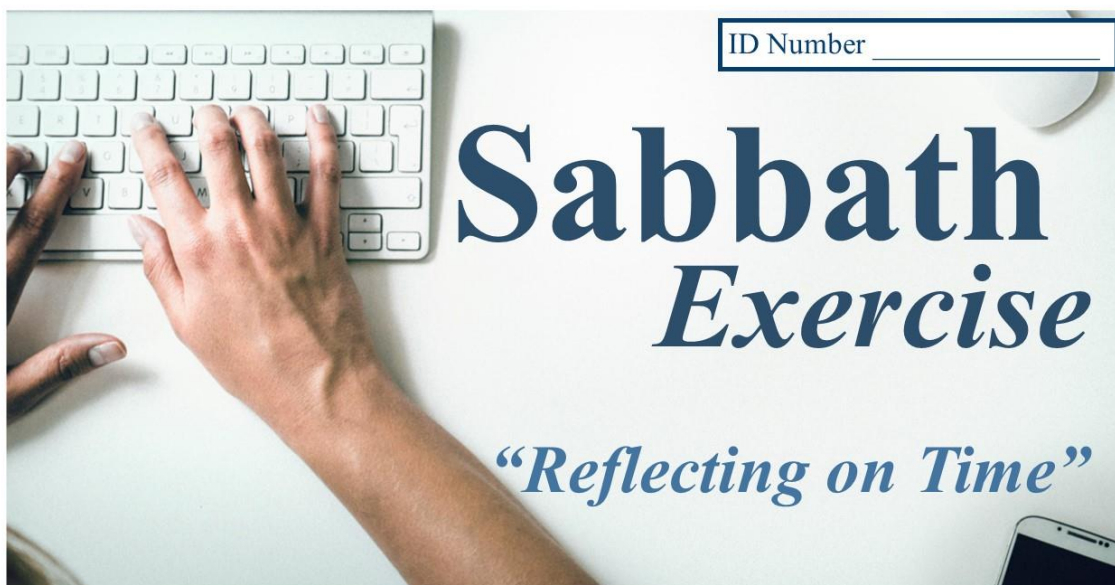
Step Five

Take a few minutes following your *Lectio Divina* exercise and journal your thoughts and feelings associated to this activity. *What did you discover about yourself through this Sabbath exercise? How can reading and reflecting on Scripture offer you rest?*



Please return this exercise next week to Jeremiah Childers.

Exercise Four



Exercise Description

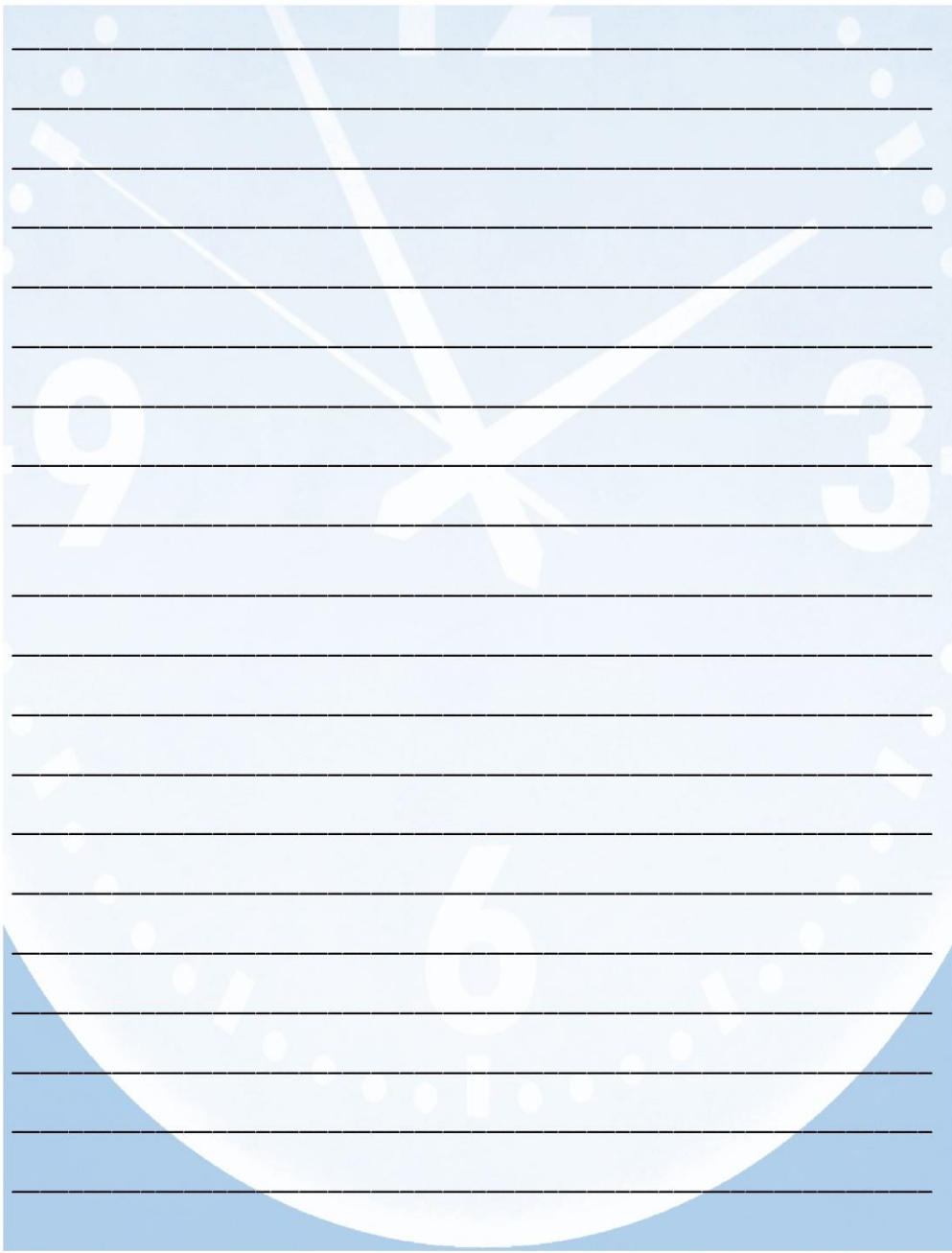
Everything we do forms and shapes us spiritually. Another way of putting this maxim is: *everything we do either helps or hinders us in loving God and loving our neighbor as our self.* Being aware of what we do and how it shapes us is difficult. To be aware takes intentional time of stopping, resting, and reflecting on ourselves. For this activity you will be asked to stop and take intentional time to reflect on how you have been shaped by a day.

For this exercise you will choose a day in your week that what you would consider a *normal or average* day to do this exercise. At the end of the day go back and chart each activity you did and how much time you spent engaged in the activity. Every activity — whether small or big — short or long — is important. This exercise will guide you in reflecting over your day.

Use the space on the on the next page to chart your day. Feel free to leave out any parts of your day that are personal, but be reminded they are important. After charting your day respond to the *seven steps* of this exercise.

Please return this exercise next week to Jeremiah Childers.

Charting My Day



A large, light blue clock face with white numbers and hands, serving as a background for a writing chart. The chart consists of 18 horizontal lines, with the bottom half of the clock face visible behind them. The numbers 9, 3, and 6 are clearly visible on the clock face.

Step One

Write down those activities in your day that were part of your every day routine.

Step Two

Write down activities in your day that you felt were outside of your everyday routine.

Step Three

How much time in the day did you spend looking at a screen. A screen can include a computer monitor, mobile phone, tablet, or television. As you reflect over your screen time respond to the following questions:

- *What activities were associated with looking at a screen?*
- *How did it connect you or disconnect you to others?*
- *Did it offer you rest?*



Step Four

How much time did you spend with your family? Do you feel like the time you spent with your family was quality time? Please describe your responses to these questions.

Step Five

How much time did you spend thinking, reflecting, or praying to God? What spiritual formation activities did you do today?"

Step Six

What activities during your day did you find restful, nourishing, or renewing? Please describe how these activities renewed you.

Step Seven

How did you view your day as a gift? In the space provided write out of list of things you are thankful for from your day.

Step Four

How much time did you spend with your family? Do you feel like the time you spent with your family was quality time? Please describe your responses to these questions.

Step Five

How much time did you spend thinking, reflecting, or praying to God? What spiritual formation activities did you do today?"

Step Six

What activities during your day did you find restful, nourishing, or renewing? Please describe how these activities renewed you.

Step Seven

How did you view your day as a gift? In the space provided write out of list of things you are thankful for from your day.

Making Connections


As you reflect over your day ask yourself, “*How has my work, my relationships, and the way I spent my leisure time shaping and forming me?*” In spaces below reflect on both positive and negative ways your are being formed spiritually today.

Positive Formation:

Negative Formation:

Sabbath as Resistance to Negative Formation

How often are we formed negatively and never know it? How would the regular practice and reflection of Sabbath help you resist the negative formation you experience daily? As you reflect over the past four weeks what have you learned about Sabbath that can help you grow deeper in relationship to God, to others, and become more like Christ in your daily life? Write your reflections below and say a prayer as a benediction to this exercise.



D. Sabbath Discussion Questions

Guided Discussion Session One

- I. What did you learn about God, creation, and yourself from your spiritual formation exercise?
- II. How did the exercise make you feel? (What were your emotions or feelings?)
- III. How did you connect last week's Sabbath lesson with your spiritual formation exercise?
- IV. If you had to explain to someone else Sabbath's importance in creation, what would you say?

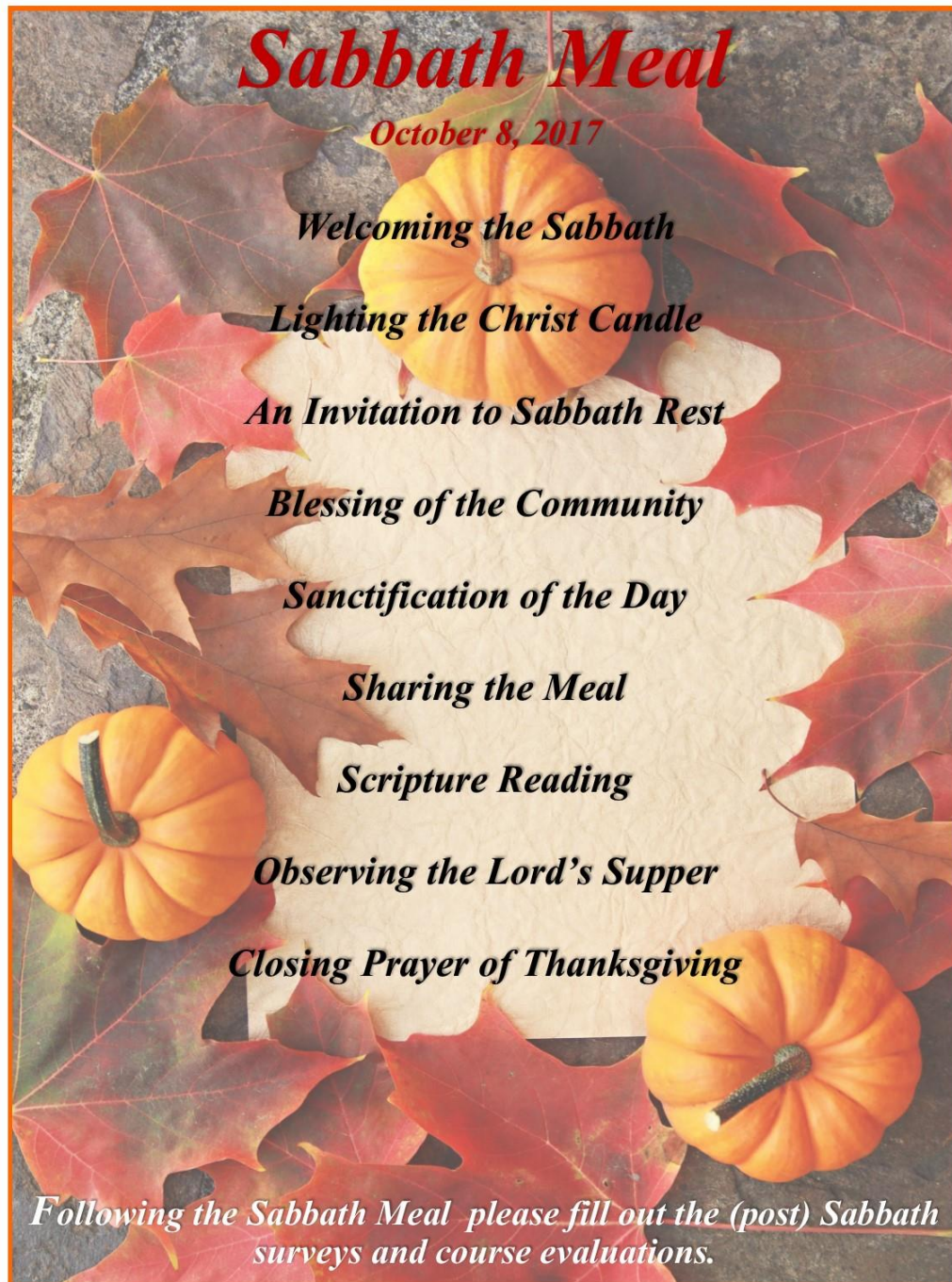
Guided Discussion Session Two

- I. What did you learn about God, your neighbor, and yourself from your spiritual formation exercise?
- II. How did the exercise make you feel? (What were your emotions or feelings?)
- III. What did the exercise reveal about your relationship with those who serve you?
- IV. How would practicing Sabbath affect your relationship with those who serve you?

Guided Discussion Session Three

- I. What did you learn about Jesus and yourself from your *Lectio Divina* exercise?
- II. How did the exercise make you feel? (What were your emotions or feelings?)
- III. What did the exercise reveal about your relationship with Jesus and rest?
- IV. Did spending time in a slow reading of scripture nourish you spiritually?

E. Sabbath Meal Outline



F. Course Evaluation

Rediscovering Sabbath -Course Evaluation

Please respond to each item by circling the number that best describes your opinion.

1. The class was well organized.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

2. The instructor encouraged my interest in Sabbath.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

3. The instructor managed the class time well.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

4. The instructor was organized and prepared for every class.

Strongly
disagree

Neither
agree nor
disagree

Strongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

5. The instructors teaching methods were engaging and kept me stimulated.Strongly
disagreeNeither
agree nor
disagreeStrongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

6. The instructor appeared enthusiastic and interested in the subject matter.Strongly
disagreeNeither
agree nor
disagreeStrongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

7. The setting of the class was conducive to my learning.Strongly
disagreeNeither
agree nor
disagreeStrongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

8. I found the manner of the presentation of the material was clear.Strongly
disagreeNeither
agree nor
disagreeStrongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

9. The instructor was sensitive to my learning needs and my questions.Strongly
disagreeNeither
agree nor
disagreeStrongly
agree

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	----

10. Additional Comments:

G. Consent Forms

Control Consent Form

REDISCOVERING THE SABBATH - DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

Jeremiah Childers

Consent Form

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a ministry project on rediscovering the Sabbath from a biblical and theological perspective. The project will be offered through a four-week study. You will be asked to complete a Sabbath Survey on September 10 prior to our first lesson and again on October 1 following our last lesson. All data will be used for assessing how you view Sabbath as a biblical concept and practice in your life.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The dates for the study will be September 10, September 17, September 24, and October 1. All sessions will be from 5:00-6:15 pm.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no foreseeable risk associated with this project. The benefits include a better understanding of Sabbath.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without consequences. All information gathered from assessment surveys will be held anonymous unless otherwise given permission by the subject to share their identity. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions. The results of this project will be presented to Inman First Baptist Church, Gardner-Webb University, and other churches or ecclesial bodies.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this project, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact Jeremiah Childers at 864-472-9069 or jchilders@ifbc.net.

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print name of participant _____

Experimental Consent Form

REDISCOVERING THE SABBATH - DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROJECT

Jeremiah Childers

Consent Form

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a ministry project on rediscovering the Sabbath from a biblical and theological perspective. The project will be offered through a four-week study, spiritual formation exercise, discussion sessions, and a shared Sabbath experience. You will be asked to complete a Sabbath Survey on September 10 prior to our first lesson and again on October 8 following our last meeting. During the discussion sessions an audio recording will be made. All data will be used for assessing how you view Sabbath as a biblical concept and practice in your life.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: The dates for the Sabbath study and discussion sessions will be September 10, September 17, September 24, and October 1. You will be asked to meet at 4:00 pm for a hour discussion session prior to each Sabbath lesson. Sabbath lessons will be from 5:00-6:15 pm. On October 8, you will be asked to participate in a Sabbath Experience from 5:00-7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no foreseeable risks associated with this project. The benefits include a better understanding of Sabbath.

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without consequences. All information gathered from assessment surveys and discussion sessions will be held anonymous unless otherwise given permission by the subject to share their identity. The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer any questions. The results of this project will be presented to Inman First Baptist Church, Gardner-Webb University, and other churches or ecclesial bodies.

CONTACT INFORMATION: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this project, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact Jeremiah Childers at 864-472-9069 or jchilders@ifbc.net.

Indicate **Yes** or **No**:

I give consent to be audiotaped during this study.

_____ Yes or No

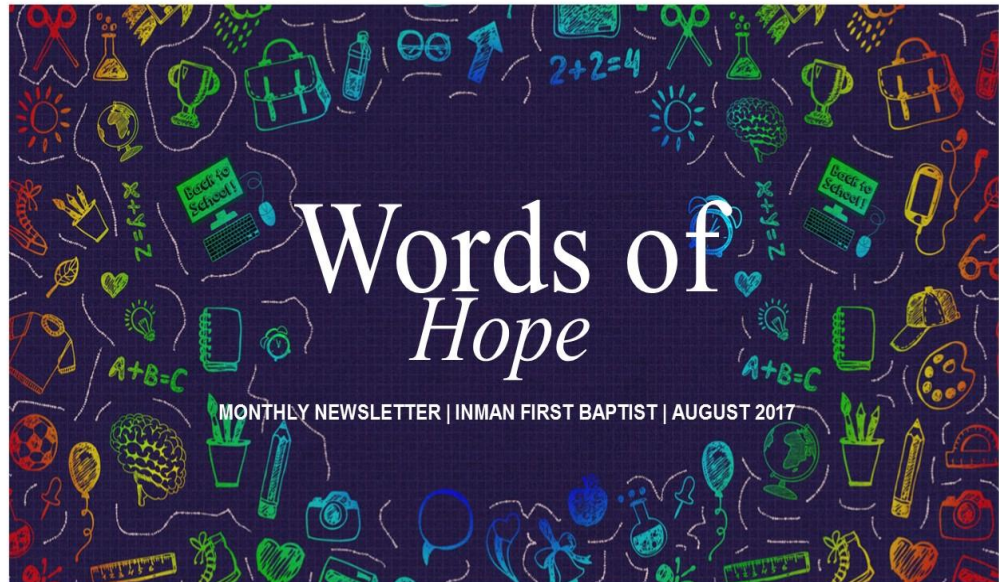
The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print name of participant _____

I. Church Wide Promotion and Recruitment

Inman First Baptist Church - August 2017 Newsletter Article



Rediscovering Sabbath A Doctor of Ministry Project

Have you received a generous gift and wanted to return the favor with a gift in kind? In 2015 during a church conference you gave your blessing for me to pursue a Doctor of Ministry degree. Over the last two years I have worked hard to honor your blessing. I am now finishing the last phase of the program. Your kindness of allowing me to take time to attend classes and grow as a minister has given me the opportunity to design a ministry project specifically for Inman First Baptist Church.

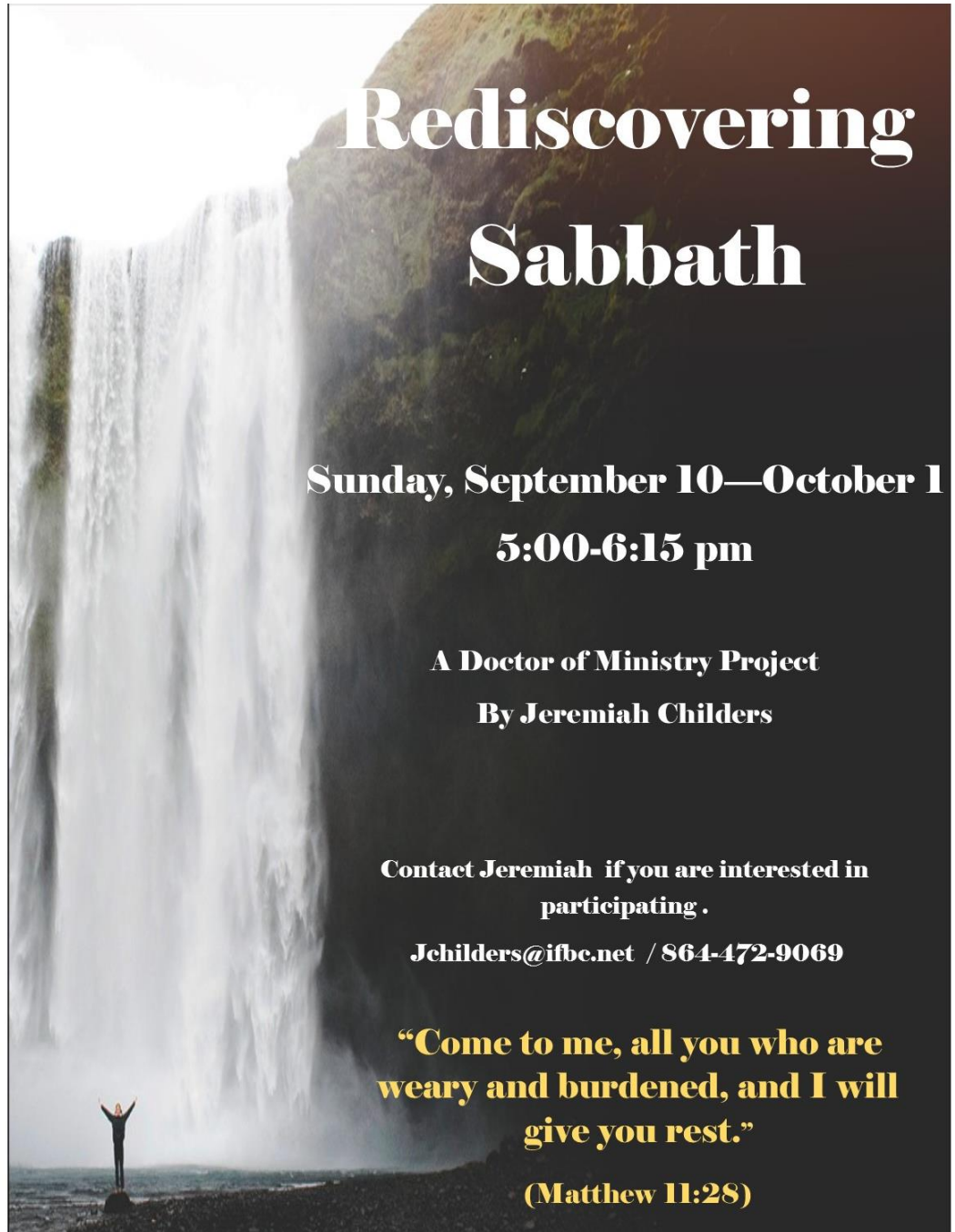
The gift I offer to you is to join me in an experiment to *Rediscover Sabbath*. Many of you, like myself, are in need of a biblical understanding of Sabbath in our 21st Century lives. I am excited to offer this project to you, my church family.

The project will comprise of a four-week study, and will meet on Sundays starting on September 10 - October 1, from 5:00-6:15 pm. I would love to have as many church members who are able and willing to participate, from youth age - to adult. I also need a smaller group of participants, out of the whole, who are willing to dig deeper into *Rediscovering Sabbath* through additional meeting times and activities.

If you are interested in participating this ministry project please contact me as soon as possible jchildrens@ifbc.net or 864-472-9069 ext. 107. I look forward to sharing Sabbath with you!

Jeremiah Childers

Church Wide Advertisement



Rediscovering Sabbath

Sunday, September 10—October 1
5:00-6:15 pm

A Doctor of Ministry Project
By Jeremiah Childers

**Contact Jeremiah if you are interested in
participating .**
Jchilders@ifbc.net / 864-472-9069

**“Come to me, all you who are
weary and burdened, and I will
give you rest.”**
(Matthew 11:28)

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