



### Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Introduction: Jesus said, “I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” St Irenaeus is famous for saying, “The glory of God is the human person fully alive.” We are made for fruitfulness – not just existence - and the fruitfulness God wants to sow in our lives is in things that last forever, in character, in work, in discipling others. But fruitfulness that doesn’t spring from being with God is impossible. We are not gifted, talented, or eternal enough to be fully fruitful in ourselves. Instead, God’s partnership with us as disciples is a life of balance – between being with God and doing; between listening and responding; between being active and stopping, between giving out from what we have first received. These two sessions are about two rhythms in our daily lives and each week which enable this kind of balanced life.

### Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

When was the last time you felt completely rested?



### Understanding the information (30 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

God’s work in us is incompatible with hurry, but the culture we live in makes the idea of taking time to be with God or to remain in Jesus seem like a mountain to climb. The world we live in is mentally and spiritually crowded in a way that can work against us being attentive to God, being able to put Him at the forefront of our minds. The screens we watch (4 hours of TV a day if we are over 16), the advertising messages we receive (six hundred a day), the bits of information from disconnected sources we absorb daily (more than at any time in history) and the years of our lives we spend on social media (6 years and 8 months on average) can have a profound effect: unsatisfied desires, FOMO, anxiety and hurry, workaholism, restlessness and overbusyness.



“Hurry sickness” is a recognised phenomenon. This makes a balanced life all the more necessary. But it also makes it all the more difficult. The practices we will explore in these two sessions are about intentionally making space for being with God in our daily lives. We cannot get more time than we have. But we can make choices to shape time differently around the things that matter for ever.

Why is Sabbath so important for being with God?

The Sabbath (meaning rest) is a complete day of rest in Scripture. In Genesis, even God rests from His work. Right from the start there is a regular weekly practice in the way the world is that sets out both work and rest. The Sabbath is first named as an explicit commandment by God – the fourth of ten - after He rescues His covenant-partner people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. It is a holy day – to be set apart as vital and important – on which the people specifically remember that they are free – they are not slaves any more. (Deuteronomy 5: 12-15). Being able to rest on Sabbath is about freedom from slavery – from overwork, from being defined only by being productive, from other people’s expectations or control.

It is a gift, as well as a commandment, because it says there are limits on how much is expected of us. The word Sabbath can also be translated as to worship or delight. God establishes a regular time when, together, we offer praise to Him. The Sabbath is also a taste of what is to come in our experience of eternal life, when we see God face to face. God gives it as a way of remembering the freedom He has already given us, but also looking forward to our ultimate freedom.

What are the benefits of Sabbath?

**Rest to refresh the whole week.** Whereas for some a day off may be a time to escape, or recover after a busy period, for disciples Sabbath as God intended can offer the possibility of working from rest, as opposed to resting from work. We cannot be fruitful without rest. This reflects the first experience of Adam and Eve in the book of Genesis. As Mike Breen writes, “God created man and woman on the sixth day, setting them in a garden full of wild, wonderful creatures and delicious foods. He gave them instruction on caring for the animals and plants in the garden. He told them to be fruitful. But on the first full day of existence for Adam and Eve, God rested. All of creation took a well-deserved break in activity. This was our first full day, a day of rest. Then the work began. From this we see an important principle of life: we are to work from our rest, not rest from our work.” Breen, Mike. Building a Discipling Culture. 3DM. Kindle Edition.

**Not having to be in control, and knowing our limits.** Sabbath is taking a day a week to remind ourselves that we did not make the world and that it will continue to exist without our efforts. It reminds us as well that many of the things we may strive to attain are only loaned to us. When the businessman John D. Rockefeller died his accountant was asked by a curious person, “I know that Mr. Rockefeller was an immensely wealthy man, just how much did he leave behind?” The accountant quickly replied, “Everything.” Through Sabbath we can find out how much of our efforts can be about earning something we already have.

**Being re-created.** Sabbath can create space so that we can “taste and see that the Lord is good.” One of the translations of the word is to delight. Part of being with God is being able to slow down to a speed in which we can notice and enjoy His goodness, and do things we enjoy with gratitude.

## How do I practise a fruitful Sabbath?

There are four translations of the Hebrew word Sabbath which give a framework for a fruitful Sabbath: stop, rest, delight and worship. It is not necessary to include all these elements in a structured way, but none of them should be completely missing.

**Stop.** Even if in the midst of busyness Sabbath means stopping from working, and, as much as possible, from all the thinking and worrying that work can mean.

**Rest.** This can be physical – simply enjoying sleep. It can be mental and emotional – giving ourselves time to process things that are happening. It can be spiritual – deliberately resting in a sense of God’s love and closeness.

**Delight.** Doing unplanned things as they come into your mind or heart. Or doing things that create joy, happiness and gratitude – meals, music, games, fun, friends, nature.

**Worship.** While we can worship God in all the above, Sabbath gives us the opportunity to share in praise and adoration of God, offering our life and the coming week to His glory.

**Preparation.** The key thing is to seek a 24 hour period every week to practise Sabbath – it doesn’t need to be a particular day of the week. The idea of a full day’s rest to be with God may seem hard, and may be something we have to work towards, rather than arrive at in one go. We may need to acknowledge that there is never a moment when all our work feels done. The Jewish people had to have a day of Preparation for the Sabbath. It’s interesting that even in a culture where it was so established, there was a recognition that a full day to stop and be fully present to God and others required effort and choices.

Discuss: What are the main challenges to having a full Sabbath for you? What might be the first step to overcoming them?

## Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Deuteronomy 5: 12-14 in which God reminds His people of the command of Sabbath.



Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:  
What does this passage teach me about God?  
What does this passage teach me about people?  
How does this passage call me to obey God?  
What might I do in response to this this week?

## Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

[https://youtu.be/O\\_09u8Sdn2c](https://youtu.be/O_09u8Sdn2c)

What struck you as important in the video?



## Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



## Group prayer (5 minutes)

God of rest,  
Today I make the active choice  
To enter into your rest,  
And to join with you  
In delighting in this good world you have made,  
And dreaming of the perfect world you will remake.  
I choose to tune out,  
Of demands and deadlines,  
Of performance pressures,  
Of flickering screens,  
Of that which robs my soul of joy,  
And the ways in which the world  
Seeks to define and shape my identity.  
I choose to tune in,  
To your affirmation and love,  
To the celebration of freedom,  
To worship and your word,  
To the enjoyment of that which fills my soul with joy,  
And reminds me of my identity in Christ,  
As a deeply loved child of God.  
Amen



<https://christchurchlondon.org/2021/05/a-prayer-for-sabbath/>



## Balanced life: Sabbath

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