



LIKE HIM

A 90 DAY STUDY OF MARK

Choose Rest

February 4-10, 2024

90 DAY MEMORY STATEMENT

I am His child, deeply loved, totally forgiven, fully pleasing and complete in Christ.

MAIN POINT

To be like Jesus, we must recognize the value of quiet and rhythms of rest.

INTRODUCTION

How important is sleep to you? How many hours of sleep do you try to get per night?

Why do you think God made us to need to sleep?

The current world record for staying awake on purpose is held by Randy Gardner. In 1965, he stayed awake for 264 hours, almost 11 days, for a science fair project he was doing. Though 11 days may seem like an eternity, it is really a rather short amount of time. This demonstrates how very much we need rest. Most of us have trouble functioning the next day after a single sleepless night!

We need rest. We need relaxation. And we don't need it just for our mental sanity—our bodies need rest, or we will perish. In today's lesson, we will look at the Old Testament Sabbath and see if we can learn why rest is so important, and why God would command rest for His people.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [EXODUS 31:12-13](#).

The Lord refers to the Sabbath as a "sign." What does it mean for the Sabbath to be a sign for God's people?

Why do you think that working on the Sabbath was punishable by death?

We often take our weekends for granted. In our culture, we usually take off on Saturday and Sunday, but in the ancient world, the weekends weren't very different from any other day. The Israelites lived in a world where most people were farmers. They grew wheat or raised livestock. This was hard work, and it required constant attention. If they took a break over the "weekend," their crops suffered—and thus their livelihood. Yet the Lord anticipated the needs of His children; He gave them a Sabbath day so that they could rest and recover from their labor.

It is rather amazing that God would have to enforce a day of rest through the death penalty! God wanted His people to take time off to rest and to worship, and He knew that if it weren't strictly enforced, people would disobey and work. We are a greedy people, and Israel was no different. We will often put work ahead of our health, our family, and even our God so we can make just a little more money.

READ [EXODUS 31:14-16](#).

What did it mean for Israel to be dedicated to the Lord on the Sabbath?

Why was the Sabbath a perpetual covenant?

Not only did the Lord want Israel to recover physically, but also He wanted them to take that day to worship. It is difficult to concentrate on anything else when one is doing difficult manual labor. The Lord wanted His people to take the Sabbath to both rest and worship.

God gave the Sabbath to Israel as a gift, not a punishment. Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” ([Mark 2:27](#)). The Sabbath promoted rest and spiritual health by forcing Israel to take a day off from labor, and to contemplate the things of God and worship Him. Like the other laws of the Old Covenant, the Sabbath “was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith” ([Galatians 3:24](#)). The Israelites had to keep the Sabbath until the Messiah came so that they would not forget the Lord in the meantime.

READ [EXODUS 31:17-18](#).

Why did the Lord rest on the seventh day?

The Israelites would have observed the Sabbath on a Saturday, but American Christians typically take a Sabbath on Sundays. Does it matter which day of the week you observe the Sabbath? Why or why not?

The Hebrew word for Sabbath can mean “to rest” or “to cease.” The Lord God “rested” on the Sabbath, not because He was tired as we get tired, but because He had finished His initial work of creating. The Lord gave His rest for us as an example to rest from our work, and to contemplate what we have done and what God has done for us. Some Christians believe that Sunday is the Sabbath for Christians, and they will do no labor on that day. Others believe that the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ, and so no one day is exalted over another. Nevertheless, the principle remains that we must take time off during our week not only to rest, but also to worship the Lord our God. We should meet with the church to worship. We should take time to rest and contemplate the things of the Lord. If we neglect the “work” of rest, our bodies and souls will suffer for it.

APPLICATION

How can we as a group help one another with the spiritual discipline of rest?

How are you doing making sure that you take time off to rest and to worship with the people of God as a congregation? What things tempt you to neglect rest and worship?

PRAYER

In a time of group prayer, thank the Father for reminding us of the goodness of rest and worship. Ask the Lord to help us be disciplined enough in our lives to seek rest and time apart for Him. Pray that our being busy will not distract us from things of eternal importance.

COMMENTARY

EXODUS 31:12-18

Shabbath, related to the verb shavath (“cease, rest”), designates the day in the week when work must cease. There is no clear parallel for the Sabbath in surrounding cultures. God first mentioned shabbath shortly before giving the Mosaic law, as if to anticipate it ([Exodus 16:23-29](#)). The Sabbath became the fourth and most elaborated of the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 20:8-11](#)). God associated shabbath with His sanctification of the week’s seventh day when He ceased His work of creation. He later gave His deliverance of Israel from Egyptian slavery as a motive for keeping the Sabbath ([Deuteronomy 5:15](#)). Even slaves and animals were to rest that day ([Exodus 20:10](#)). The Sabbath was a sign of God’s covenant with Israel, so that they might know He set them apart as holy ([Exodus 31:13](#)). Consequently, the penalty for breaking the Sabbath was death ([Exodus 31:14](#)). Related shabbaton (11x) means complete rest ([Exodus 31:15](#)).

31:12-13 Here again action leads to knowledge, but this time it is what the Israelites must do—observe My Sabbaths—that will lead to knowing the identity of the Lord and of themselves. The term translated sets you apart can also be translated “consecrates you” or “sanctifies you.” The Israelites were to have a unique identity, distinct from other nations and closely associated with the Lord.

31:14-15 Anyone who profaned the Sabbath by working was in willful rebellion against the Lord. They refused to recognize His past provisions or to trust Him for present and future provisions.

31:16-17 To observe the Sabbath would be a sign forever of the covenant between the Lord and the Israelites, reminding them of the Lord’s provision as the One who had made the heavens and the earth and as the One who had made Israel a new nation ([16:24-30](#); [20:8-11](#)). As part of their loyalty to the Lord, their Sovereign, the Israelites could participate in the rest that He enjoyed.

31:18 The two tablets of the testimony contained the Ten Commandments and were to be placed inside the ark in the most holy place in the tabernacle to remind the people of the covenant that the Israelites had promised to keep ([25:16](#)).