

**Intro:**

We begin a new series here today... Rhythms of Spirituality...

One-third of Americans feel they are living with extreme stress.

- About half of Americans (48%) feel that their stress has increased over the past five years.
- Money and work are the leading causes of stress (mentioned by three quarters of Americans).

*American Psychological Association study, 2007.*

Stress impacts lives in a dramatic way:

- About one half of Americans say that stress has a negative impact on both their personal and professional lives.
- About one-third (31%) of employed adults have difficulty managing work and family responsibilities.
- Stress causes more than half of Americans (54 percent) to fight with people close to them. One in four people report that they have been alienated from a friend or family member because of stress.

*American Psychological Association study, 2007.*

The Bible has something to say about this. Its called a Sabbath. What I want to do today is define what a Sabbath is, discuss the big picture of how the Sabbath relates to our spirituality, and then talk about some practical application.

**Sabbath: introductory definition**

- Literally it means to rest, or cease, from work. Its not necessarily the same as a vacation, as we will see- it's a much more purposeful and life-giving, I think. And it's different from the work hard, play hard perspective that we have. It involves good vacation and play. But there's more- we'll hit on this in our talk.
- It became the word used to refer to the once-a-week day of rest in the Jewish calendar.
- This once-a-week day of rest was quite serious. It was part of the 10 commandments, it was the sign of the Mosaic covenant, and infraction was punishable by death. (Ex. 31)
- For us today, we are not obligated to follow the Mosaic covenant, for two reasons: 1) it was written for specifically for the Israelites as they occupied the promised land; we are not in that situation. 2) Jesus has "fulfilled" the Mosaic Law- meaning he has lived it perfectly on our behalf, and also stated the intent of the Law for us, to be lived out by all. (Matt. 5:17)

Yet we have a lot to learn from the Law about God and the way of the Sabbath. In fact, as we'll see, the idea of Sabbath comes from the way God created the world, and so there are some important principles to catch. We need not apply it in a literal way as the ancient Israelites had to, but something ought to change in the way we live out our lives.

What then should we know about the Sabbath? How does it apply to us and our spirituality today?

**The Sabbath and Spirituality**

There exists an ultimate rest- an ultimate life of joy, peace, satisfaction, bliss- that the Sabbath rest points to. This is what we long for. This cannot be experienced until we come to Jesus.

Let's take a look at how this is played out in the Bible. First, in the creation narrative we have in the Bible: Gen 2:1-3. We see here clearly that God rested from creating; not from other types of work- we know He is at work in the world. John 5:17. But from creating. Now, some unique things about this day. 1) This day of rest was unique and special- it is described as blessed and set apart (holy). We can imagine that this day was one of joy and satisfaction for God (he reflects on all other days of creation). 2) This day was not said to have ended- all the other days are said to have gone through an evening and morning. This one is not.

This is interesting to note, because the Bible takes this on and says that there is a rest, a Sabbath, that is actually here for us today.

Heb 4:1, 3, 9

There is a rest that is available to us today. What is it? It is the state of joy and satisfaction, the state of bliss. It is a way of speaking of God's reign, His kingdom, heaven- It is of life as it was meant to be, free of evil and death and full of life and bliss because God is over all and seen by all. It's a way to talk about, I believe, the sort of life we are all striving for. It began in Gen. 2, is available for us today, and is a reality of our future.

But please note: this is received through coming to Jesus. This is what v.3 and the believing is about, especially as you note the context. Belief is about hearing God's call to be the master of our lives, and responding to Him with trust and obedience. This is the missing ingredient in all our striving to find rest. We miss out on finding it fully because we miss out on Jesus.

This is what Jesus talked about when He was here- Matthew 11:28-30.

There exists an ultimate rest- an ultimate life of joy, peace, satisfaction, bliss- that the Sabbath rest points to. This is what we long for. This cannot be experienced until we come to Jesus and put Him at center.

On a side note, this is what the Old Testament practices before Jesus emphasized as well- that Sabbath was a time to realize God's rightful place as creator and redeemer, the one who brings us the bliss we long for (Exodus 16, Exodus 20:8-11, Deut 5:12-15)

This of course, was meant to point us to Jesus. Colossians 2:16-17.

How does this apply to us today?

### **The Sabbath: Practical Steps.**

How can we practice?

As I mentioned earlier, there are no hard and fast rules to this, especially given that the most explicit rules were written in an era and context that we are now not in. But there are great principles and practices to be had as we reflect on the way God's people lived out the Sabbath.

#### **Routine.**

Weekly, and also larger chunks of time (Monthly, Quarterly, Yearly, More).

(seven years, Ex. 21, 23; Lev 25; Deut 15, 31. Seventy years: Lev. 25).

(NT Lord's Day practice: Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2)

Get out your calendar, block out 3 hours every week.

#### **Retreat.**

Get away from your day job, of money and making a living. Get away from the grind of money in general (beware of shopping!). Get away from the places that could create stress. Get away from technology. (replace)

#### **Reflect.**

- Look back: reflect, as God probably did

- Look up: remember God, how He is God, He is the one who saves, He is the one who provides. Not us.

- Look forward: Remember the call and mission of God, especially to restore.

Ex. 23:10-12

### **Questions and Comments?**

#### **Closing Challenge**

1. Try something new- try taking a Sabbath this week.

2. Come to Jesus