

I. Advanced Organizer - Time

A. Have you ever felt like you were out of sync with time?

1. You fly across the planet. When you arrive it's a totally different time of day than your body thinks. You want to be awake when you should be sleeping, or the other way around. Disorienting.
2. As a parent of newborns - 3 am feedings. Anytime between 1 and 5 am felt WRONG.
3. Sensory deprivation - form of torture in prisons around the world. Either deprive you of light, or keep the light on all the time. Either way, it becomes very hard to keep track of time and is maddening.

B. On the other hand, have you ever had an experience when you were so present to an experience that time became irrelevant? Time didn't matter?

1. You're in a really rich conversation with people you care about, and you're sharing deep truths, and stories, and opening your lives and your souls to one another, and then somehow somebody looks at a clock and you realize it's one in the morning. You had no clue.
2. On a good vacation that's a real departure from the rest of your life, and by day three or four, you can't remember what day it is.
3. You find yourself so captivated by the story you're reading that you can't put your book down; eventually you realize you've been reading for five hours.
4. **We often call that "losing track of time". And in there, there seems to be a bit of a judgement.** Like it's our job to track time, and to not always be aware how we're spending our time is some sort of lapse or momentary failure.

C. After all, time is a commodity.

1. **"Time is money"**. Time is a limited resource. We have this perception often as adults that we never have enough. We "race against the clock" to get our work done.
2. **In our age of hyper-connection, even when we leave the office, maybe we haven't really left the office.** Our phones vibrate in our pockets. We're at dinner with our kids when an email comes up or a voice mail or a text, and our kid notices that we've stopped listening to their story about what their teacher read them at school that day, and instead we're firing back frantic messages from the restaurant.
3. We're on vacation, but we're still "available". Because we're so busy. **When people ask us how we're doing, we say busy, and it feels good.** It feels like that's an assertion that life is hard, but it's a good kind of hard, it's the way it's supposed to be, it means what we're doing must be important, that we matter.
4. Dark underbelly of being always busy just might be dissatisfaction with everything. **We're busy, but are we satisfied?** An under-the-surface awareness comes up when we slow down enough to think about life. And we can get depressed with our dissatisfaction.
5. We might find ourselves thinking: "I'm working really hard here...but is it ever gonna pay off?" "What's the point of this exactly?" "Where am I going again?" **"Does any of this matter anyway?"**
6. And those are frightening questions to sit with very long, **so we numb them with idle activity** that kind of distracts us but doesn't stir us or speak to our heart's longing. We binge Netflix. We play computer games. We watch stupid cat videos or read BuzzFeed feeds about celebrity cars or the best way to impersonate a dog...weird stuff that's inane and pointless but distracting. And then we go to bed, numb, exhausted enough to sleep so hopefully we can reenter the grind the next day, but not connected to what really brings meaning and hope and joy.

7. Maybe this resonates with you more than you'd like to admit. Maybe you're in one of those spells in which, if you're honest, **time feels repetitive**. It feels like in essence, every day is the same. There's a change of scenery perhaps, but not really change of content. And this is how Rob Bell defines despair: **the belief that every day is gonna be exactly like today, and yesterday, and the day before. That this is all there is.** There's no hope for anything else.
- D. **Talking about our relationship with time**, because it's at the core of the concept we're discussing today. Part of our series called "Cultivate", looking at things we'd ideally like to characterize us - self-awareness, generosity - and practices we can take to get there.

Today's: "Cultivate Sanity". Focusing on developing a healthier relationship with time.

A relationship when we are not fighting it, or out of sync with it, but entering it in a way that brings freedom from despair, joy and restoration as a regular part of our week, and fun and peace and hope and connection to God as a regular part of our lives. Wouldn't that be great?

- E. **Sabbath - law most ignored with impunity by Christians.** This has included me. Something I'm trying to grow in, and as I've been doing research for this talk, reading and listening to podcasts and so on, realize how little I know and practice and do this well.
(Recommendations: Dan Allender, Rob Bell) **So this teaching is about what I too am learning and hoping to grow in. I could use more Sanity.**

II. Where does the Sabbath come from?

- A. **Story of Exodus. A story of liberation.** God setting people free from a life of slavery in Egypt. This is the primary story of identity that forms the Hebrew people. (Genesis is like a prologue; background info.)

1. **At the heart of this Story: slaves in Egypt live a despairing life.** Making bricks and building buildings with them day after day. Bricks. Bricks. Bricks. God uses signs and wonders to convince Pharaoh to let them free, leads them into the desert and in the desert gives them the Sabbath. Even before the law.

- a) **Their "labor" in the beginning is gathering manna.** They're supposed to gather every morning, and they're not supposed to save it for the next day. If they do, it gets filled with maggots and smelled bad. But he tells them once a week, there won't be any. On the 6th day they'll get enough for both days. See Exodus 16:21-30

(1) 21 After this the people gathered the food morning by morning, each family according to its need. And as the sun became hot, the flakes they had not picked up melted and disappeared. 22 On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much as usual—four quarts for each person instead of two. Then all the leaders of the community came and asked Moses for an explanation. 23 He told them, "This is what the Lord commanded: Tomorrow will be a day of complete rest, a holy Sabbath day set apart for the Lord. So bake or boil as much as you want today, and set aside what is left for tomorrow."

24 So they put some aside until morning, just as Moses had commanded. And in the morning the leftover food was wholesome and good, without maggots or odor. 25 Moses said, "Eat this food today, for today is a Sabbath day dedicated to the Lord. There will be no food on the ground today. 26 You may gather the food for six days, but the seventh day is the Sabbath. There will be no food on the ground that day."

27 Some of the people went out anyway on the seventh day, but they found no

food. 28 The Lord asked Moses, “How long will these people refuse to obey my commands and instructions? 29 They must realize that the Sabbath is the Lord’s gift to you. That is why he gives you a two-day supply on the sixth day, so there will be enough for two days. On the Sabbath day you must each stay in your place. Do not go out to pick up food on the seventh day.” 30 So the people did not gather any food on the seventh day.

III. “The Sabbath is the Lord’s Gift to You.” Not supposed to be an **onerous** burden but a gift. What’s the gift?

A. First Gift: Gift of rhythm.

1. From the beginning, the Sabbath was a radical break from the identity of slavery. It was a break from the despair of monotony; from Bricks and Bricks. They weren’t just to go from Bricks to manna and manna and manna. Instead, **God is instituting a new rhythm: Work (x6). Rest.**
2. Calls this a **Holy Sabbath**. Holy simply means “set apart” Distinctive. Unique. Of it’s own. There is supposed to be a day of rest that is set apart and called different. This is core to the rhythm.
3. **What is rest?** Is it just a nap? we get more of clue of what is meant by this by God when the Sabbath is described in the 10 commandments. Commandment number 4 says this:
 - a) Exodus 20:8-11
“**Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 You have six days each week for your ordinary work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.**”
 - b) Here we’re reminded of the foundation of the Sabbath: **God’s own rest** at the end of the Creation story. **God didn’t need a nap.**
 - c) Hebrew word for rest, *menuha*: **joyous repose, tranquility, delight**. God needed a chance to revel in the goodness of all he had made. God needed the opportunity to bask in the glory of what he had create. To appreciate it, to savor it, to fall in love with it. God needed to inhabit his creation so He could not just produce, but he could appreciate and experience and be moved by the thing he has made. Dan Allender describes God’s “rest” after creation this way:
(1) *“In many ways, God’s rest on the seventh day of creation is paralleled by the birthing process and the period after birth, when the labor is finished yet the bonding begins. The mother and father gaze endlessly at their child, who is distinct from the parents because she is no longer merely in the mind and the womb of the mother, but external and separate. She is no longer solely in the imagination or deep in the womb; she is finally released to be held in the arms of the parent. This attachment brings mother and child into a bond that, if secure, will last through thick and thin, heartache and loss, and provide the child with an assurance that all will be well.”*
 - d) More than a nap. More than sitting quietly. It’s doing that which gives you joy and peace and comfort and fills you with a sense of life’s goodness. It’s that which connects you to what your work is really about. It’s that which connects you to the life it is you’re making. It’s locking eyes with your Father and letting him revel in you.

- e) Rest is when you can stop tracking time. Rest is that moment when we lose track of it. When we stop racing against the clock and we can simply be in time instead of working against it. We can have that long conversation. We can get lost in a game of chat with our kids. We can hike in the mountains or swim in the ocean and enjoy our day. Rest is an invitation not just to sleep but to play.

B. Second Gift: Gift of delight

1. For Allender, **this sense of revelry in creation and of entering the delight of our God is core to experiencing the Sabbath.** He calls the Sabbath, “a day of delight”, a day when we are free from the constraints of work to experience the things that bring us true pleasure, and delight, and joy, and thus connect us with our joyful, generous, loving God. And Allender doesn’t seem to be just making this stuff up.
2. Look at the words of the Prophet Isaiah, regarding how the people of God should experience the Sabbath. (Message translation, Isaiah 58:13-14)
**“If you watch your step on the Sabbath,
and don’t use my holy day for personal advantage,
If you treat the Sabbath as a day of joy,
God’s holy day as a celebration,
If you honor it by refusing ‘business as usual,’
making money, running here and there—
Then you’ll be free to enjoy God!
Oh, I’ll make you ride high and soar above it all.
I’ll make you feast on the inheritance of your ancestor Jacob.”
Yes! God says so!**
3. God wants us to experience a break from the monotony, a break from the need to secure what we can for ourselves, and **experience what we already have.** The break is for **joy.** The break is for delight. For celebration, For play. For feasting, for partying. For **fun.** Allender’s question he asks his students and readers on Sabbath: **“What would I do with a 24 hour period if my only criteria was to pursue my deepest joy?”**
4. Jesus gets frustrated with the religious people of his day because they seem to have lost touch with this part of the Sabbath. (Mark 2: 23-28)
“23 One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grainfields, his disciples began breaking off heads of grain to eat. 24 But the Pharisees said to Jesus, “Look, why are they breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?”

25 Jesus said to them, “Haven’t you ever read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? 26 He went into the house of God...and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests are allowed to eat. He also gave some to his companions.”

27 Then Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!”
5. Talk about an exercise in **missing the point!** The religious people had gotten **so concerned with keeping Sabbath correctly**, with figuring out what qualifies as work and what doesn’t, what you can and can’t do, that they’ve **forgotten the joy.** They’ve forgotten the delight. They’ve forgotten the GIFT. Sabbath keeping has become a way of proving yourself to be a good Jew. How well you keep the Sabbath has become a means of testifying your devotion, and identifying the heretics who don’t keep it as well as you. **But**

this, too, is WORK. They've just traded the God's pattern for an old familiar one. **Work(x6) and then...religious work.**

- a) **This can be a temptation for us too.** Many of us who grew up in the church understood going to church or serving in church on Sunday as being fulfilling the Sabbath. And sure, it could be part of it, but clearly what Jesus intended for us was more than simply what we experience in an hour on Sunday, as good as that hour might be.
- b) **The Pharisees and other religious leaders of Jesus day missed it because they put the emphasis in the wrong place.** As they outwardly proclaim the importance of the law, and focus on the minutia of its lettering, they decimate the Spirit of it. And Jesus is frustrated because it was never supposed to be that way.

C. Third Gift: the Gift of Inclusive Community.

1. **Jews of Jesus' time are using the Sabbath as a means of division;** a way of demonstrating who is in and who is out. Jesus and his followers must be out because Jesus heals people on the Sabbath. And he picks grain and eats it. **But that very act of Division is also counter to the spirit and the heart of what Sabbath practice was about.** Sabbath was never supposed to be about an individual taking a day to build up their own self-righteousness. **Sabbath is about holistic inclusive community.** It's about relationship. It's about laying down division and coming to feast at the same table. It's about connection.
2. Sabbath was for EVERYONE. **"no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you."** (from Ex. 20). No one excluded: no slaves, no foreigners, kids and adults, no animals work - everyone parties on the sabbath. Everyone plays on the sabbath. All at the same table: master and servant eating together. We all do this together. We're all in it together. For a day every week we're all the same class.
3. **This even included the land.** They were supposed to give the land a sabbath every 7 years, once they got to the Promised Land. Work the land for 6 years, and then take a 7th year off. **Sabbath is an inclusive concept: everyone needs to rest. Even the land.**
4. **Sabbath looks ahead to New Creation.** To the time we all enter into the **Shalom of God;** God's **peaceable hospitality.** A well-being of our community that is marked not be division, but by reconciliation. It is one table, with many guests dining. Liberals and conservatives. Bernie, Hilary, and yes, Trump supporters. Sabbath is a time to look ahead to the banquet of God that we will all feast at, and then to anticipate that day by feasting there in some fashion today.

IV. Sabbath Practices to Cultivate Sanity (and Joy and Peace and Hope...)

A. Find your rhythm.

1. Doesn't have to be religious. Could be Saturday, could be Sunday, could be Wednesday. Whatever you can do to have a consistent day a week that is set apart for connection with God and the world around you. (If possible, a whole day, but if need be, could be less. Parents of small kids, we have to be creative.)

B. Engage your senses

1. Allender believes the Sabbath **must be a sensual experience**, allow us to connect with God in creation through our senses. To "taste and see that the Lord is good".
 - a) what are the sights, sounds, tastes, touches that make you feel most alive, full of delight, connected to God and the universe around you? Engage them with intentionality.

- (1) hike, swim, take long walks in beautiful places
- (2) eat good meals, drink good wine or beer - feast with abundance
- (3) enjoy the feel of soft pajamas, warm blanket, and coffee in the morning
- (4) If you're partnered, make love in a way that doesn't just fulfill a biological need but connects you with your partner and the gift that God has given you with one another and with your sexuality

C. Intend the Day

1. **Plan.** Think about it ahead of time. Anticipate. Prepare so you can enjoy it without work. Get what you need done before hand so you can fully enter in during your protected day.
 - a) If cooking feels like work, plan to cook in advance, or eat out.
 - b) If cooking feels like a gift of life, clean the kitchen before your sabbath; do the shopping to prepare.
 - c) For us: clean the house before 2nd Saturday so we can enjoy the day and enjoy opening up our home without the stress of just cleaning.
2. **Incorporate rituals that will bring meaning and enhance rhythm**
 - a) lighting candles to begin the sabbath (perhaps you start, as the Jews do, with the evening proceeding the day)
 - b) reflecting with your partner on the week
 - c) listening to a kind of music that opens your spirit to God
 - d) smoking a pipe, drinking fine wine
3. **Consider a digital Sabbath**
 - a) Rob Bell - do we own our phones or do our phones own us?
 - b) No phones, no computers, no email, no texts, no Facebook, no twitter
 - c) At our retreat this summer - device free

D. Don't forget this is a gift. Don't lose touch with the gift.

1. as soon as you feel yourself getting legalistic about when can you do what, turn to Jesus. "Where's the gift for me in this? Where's the joy?"

V. End by Praying a Psalm for the Sabbath. I'll pray it for us, I invite you to pray with me. - Psalm 92

What a beautiful thing, God, to give thanks,
 to sing an anthem to you, the High God!
 To announce your love each daybreak,
 sing your faithful presence all through the night,
 Accompanied by dulcimer and harp,
 the full-bodied music of strings.
 You made me so happy, God
 I saw your work and I shouted for joy.
 How magnificent your work, God!
 How profound your thoughts!...
 You, God, are High and Eternal.
 Look at your enemies, God!
 Look at your enemies—ruined!
 Scattered to the winds, all those hirelings of evil!
 But you've made me strong as a charging bison,
 you've honored me with a festive parade.
 The sight of my critics going down is still fresh,
 the rout of my malicious detractors.

My ears are filled with the sounds of promise:

“Good people will prosper like palm trees,

Grow tall like Lebanon cedars;

transplanted to God’s courtyard,

They’ll grow tall in the presence of God,

lithe and green, virile still in old age.”

Such witnesses to upright God!

My Mountain, my huge, holy Mountain!