

Overview

Work can exhaust us mentally, emotionally and physically. Rest is vital if we are to be sustained and fulfilled. What is a good rest and how is rest different from leisure? Is there a Christian perspective on the subject of rest and how did it emerge? How might we develop a way of living that values rest? We will explore these questions and hopefully find ways to think about rest in fresh ways.

This is your worksheet; for notes, ideas and questions

Facilitator

Offer a quick overview of this session and note that there are other Topics in this series that relate to the wider question of work and how we connect our faith with our work. Some issues that may come up in discussion will need to be dealt with in another session.

Remind people that the worksheet is for their use and notes only. Ensure introductions if there are new group members

Facilitator

Ask the group to consider the following question and compare the three terms

How would you define the following terms?

Work

Leisure

Rest

Facilitator

Ask the group members to share their views and pull out common threads and summarise the discussion. Introduce the Perspective

Perspective

Work, Leisure and Rest

Leisure is not the opposite of work – rest is. For it is as we seek to be renewed and re-energised that we are able to re-enter the rhythm of work

“It’s important to note the distinction between rest and leisure. Rest and Sabbath are not the same as leisure, although they may certainly overlap. Rest is all about recovering our equilibrium – with God, with ourselves, with others and with creation. Leisure has as its goal personal enjoyment –which may well be a by-product of rest, but not its purpose. The goal is quite different.

In fact, leisure can frequently divert us from our rest. For many people it either becomes so dependent on frenetic activity that is it just another form of work (like the old ‘work hard, play hard’ maxim), or so caught up in personal pleasure that there is little room to reconnect with God, our inner selves and others.”

*From ‘Where’s God on Monday’ by Alistair Mackenzie and Wayne Kirkland,
(NavPress, 2002)*

Facilitator *Lead a discussion to explore the ideas of work, leisure and rest and compare the ideas that came from the group's earlier discussion with the thoughts in the Perspective. Come to a shared understanding of the purpose of rest in terms of our relationship with God, creation and others. Introduce the next question to help the group to share their experiences of rest.*

Question **What are the challenges of resting?**

Facilitator *Ask the group to share their experiences of the challenges of resting. Responses might include practical challenges (time, space etc.), emotional challenges (guilt, motivation etc.) and personal challenges (boredom etc.)*

Facilitator *Introduce the perspective on Sabbath from OT and NT viewpoints. The focus for this discussion is to help the group to explore the freedom and right relationship with God that Sabbath offers can be built into every part of daily life. For some, Sunday may not offer much rest and is more about family leisure time. Some people dread Sundays.*

Perspective **Sabbath Rest**

We use the term Shabbat in the title. The Hebrew word Shabbat is best translated as "period of rest," and is the basis of the English words "Sabbath" and "sabbatical."

The origins of Sabbath (all Bible extracts taken from the NRSV):

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

Genesis 2:2-3

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God.

Exodus 20:8-10

Jesus' view of Sabbath:

Then he said to them, 'The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath'.

Mark 2:27

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.'

Matthew 12:11-12

Ways of thinking about Sabbath:

Sabbath is:

- A Gift – of a break from routines of life
- A Door – opening a new dimension, taking us beyond the necessary, urgent and the everyday
- An Attitude – an invitation to take Sabbath principles (resting, thanksgiving, justice and generosity) into the whole of life to enlarge our vision and reduce our stress

- A Surprise – unexpected time, following the surprise at the end of the creation story
Adapted from 'Life Balance' by Robert Warren and Sue Mayfield (2005, Church House)

Facilitator *Introduce the following question to help the group to reflect on how Sabbath rest can be part of everyday living.*

Question **Are these suggestion a way of overcoming some of the challenges of resting?**

Facilitator *Introduce the following summary of how the idea of Sabbath rest might be approached in daily life*

Perspective **Approaches to Sabbath in Everyday Life**

Sabbath days – devoting a whole day to Sabbath activities of resting, enjoying, receiving, sharing, celebrating

Sabbath moments – taking the opportunity to be still, to receive, to appreciate, simply to enjoy

Sabbath attitudes – practising Sabbath moments helps us to develop attitudes of thanksgiving to God, appreciation of others and enjoyment of life

Sabbath seasons – extended resting / stopping / waiting periods

Sabbath simplicity – finding new ways to live more simply

Sabbath freedom / liberty – bring some freedom or liberty to yourself or others

Adapted from 'Life Balance' by Robert Warren and Sue Mayfield (2005, Church House)

Facilitator *Freedom and liberty are important elements of Sabbath rest for people, animals, land and the whole creation. Use this image to engage the group in their experiences of feeling the freedom that comes from Sabbath rest.*

Freedom *Image from 'The Shawshank Redemption' (Columbia Pictures, 1994)*



In the film 'The Shawshank Redemption', Andy is wrongly imprisoned and serves nearly 20 years before managing to escape. This image capture the moment of he breaks out and his first taste of freedom at the beginning of a new life.

What does this feel like?

Do you ever feel like this?

How does this connect to Sabbath rest?

Facilitator Use the ideas of approaches to Sabbath in everyday life and the discussion about freedom to focus on practical ways to a pattern of habits and routines in everyday life that values Sabbath for ourselves and others.

Question **What habits and routines could we develop that would help us to grow a healthy work/rest pattern in our daily work and lives?**

Facilitator Share ideas in the group and summarise the discussion.
Idea might include:

- Can we live more simply with less
- De-cluttering our lives
- Regular walks /exercise
- Managing phone, email, telly, internet, social networking etc

Facilitator **During the week you might like to reflect on:**



**Where might you find Sabbath moments
this week?**

Facilitator Encourage people to spend few minutes pondering on what they feel they have learned from the session.

Ponder **What did you learn from this session?**

Facilitator Ask group members to share quickly 1 or 2 points and reflect back any common themes or issues that need to be explored elsewhere. Agree with the group what they would like to do next and who is going to lead the next session.

Prayer

Option 1 The Jewish 'Kiddush'

At the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, 2 candles are lit. One is for 'observance' (a commitment to observe Shabbat), and the other is for 'remembrance' (of all that God has done for us).



As you light the first candle, pray that you will observe the Sabbath (in moments, attitudes, days and seasons) and commit to do so this week.

As you light the second candle, remember all that God has done over the past week.

Time of reflection

'God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.' (Genesis 1:31)

Look back over the past week. What has been 'good' for you? Look ahead, what has the hope of being 'good'? Say together:

It is good to praise the LORD
and make music to your name, O Most High,
proclaiming your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night,
to the music of the ten-stringed lyre
and the melody of the harp.
For you make me glad by your deeds, LORD;
I sing for joy at what your hands have done. (Psalm 92)

Option 2 (said or sung)

Be still

Be still for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One is here;
Come bow before Him now
With reverence and fear.
In Him no sin is found,
We stand on holy ground;
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
The Holy One is here.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place;
He comes to cleanse and heal,
To minister His grace.
No work too hard for Him,
In faith receive from Him;
Be still, for the power of the Lord
Is moving in this place.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around;
He burns with holy fire,
With splendour He is crowned.
How awesome is the sight,
Our radiant King of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
Is shining all around.

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