

“God Invites His People to His Rest” (Exodus 20:8-11)

We are in the series of "The Call to Undivided Intimacy" studying the Ten Commandments." Today we will study the 4th commandment, and this is the part 3. The title of the message is “God Invites His People to His Rest”.

We work in order to make a living. We take a rest from work, in order to do the next job. We take a few days off. We enjoy leisure, recreation, entertainment. But they are different from the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is to rest in God. We can live moving from Sabbath to Sabbath. There is no one who cannot have rest in God.

God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. And He says, or actually commands us to keep it holy. “To keep it holy” simply means to reserve it for God alone, setting it apart from other things. No mixing up. It’s just for God. Basically practicing the Sabbath is the very heart of responding to the call to undivided intimacy.

Today, we’ll look at the fact that God rested, and that he is inviting his redeemed people to join him. The Sabbath was made for people. And I’ll talk about our practice.

1. God Invites His People to His Rest

Exodus 20:8-11

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

God created everything out of nothing. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good, on the sixth day. God had finished the work of creation, so on the seventh day he rested in perfect peace He created. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy (Genesis 1:31- 2:3).

God rested. It was not simply because He was tired. God never get tired. God had finished all his work of creation and rested. It doesn’t mean God stopped

working. He is still ruling this universe with order and laws. In that sense God is very active, but he is in *shalom*, an eternal state of rest and peace and harmony.¹

And he is inviting us to join in his *shalom*. He wants to share his rest and peace and harmony with us. As he finished his work and is in control, we can just depend on him. That is the heart of the Sabbath rest.

Why is it difficult for us to take the Sabbath? A major reason is that we value productivity. The more you're productive, the better you're. If we rest, of course our productivity will be reduced. So we don't like to stop working. But as Christians, we want to obey His Word. So our next question is, "What kind of benefit will the Sabbath bring to me?" "What will I gain if I observe the Sabbath?" We're still thinking that the more productive we are, the better we are. God says "No, no, no. I know you have that kind of tendency. That's why I gave you the commandment of Sabbath."

So what is the point? By giving the Sabbath, actually by commanding us to keep it, God is shifting our minds from being Human-centered to God-centered. The fourth commandment is a special gift for the people of God, pointing them to their coming Messiah and salvation by grace rather than working.²

One day, we'll be in eternal rest with him. Practicing the Sabbath reminds us where we came from. We were sinners, the enemies of God, justly deserving the eternal punishment. But because of Jesus, by God's grace, we were saved. And practicing the Sabbath reminds us where we will be. "It is not concerned with making life easier for us, but with teaching us about the age to come that God has prepared."³ And because of the Sabbath, we remember that it's not only for the future, nor for the past, but now, I'm with him, I'm in his presence right now. He is my God, and I'm his.

2. Come to Me and Find Rest for Your Soul

Jesus said, "Come to me and find rest for your soul" (Matt 11:28), and through the 4th Commandment, God is saying "I will recover rest in your life. The rest you seek is not there. Come to Me."

Everyone wants to be accepted. Everybody wants others to acknowledge their worth as they are. So, we try our best to work hard to be accepted, and present our best before people. I wore the kind of clothes my friends wore. I listened to the kind of music my friends listened to. I went to the

¹ Michael S. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom: Relating to God and Others through the Ten Commandments*, 1993, [Kindle 2004]. Location 1714

² Horton, 1880

³ Horton, 1738

places where my friends went to. I wanted to have a life which my friends would say “it’s cool,” because I wanted to be accepted. I wanted to have relationship with them.

We want to remain who we are, but our human relations in the world depend upon condition after condition. If the conditions change, then the relationship ends. It is not that I myself am accepted in this relationship, but only as long as the other accepts the conditions I set, the relationship stands.

It’s the same when we accept others. Often instead of accepting a person as they are, we tend to accept the conditions the person has. As relationships are based on accepting these conditions, we can’t have deeper friendships with them. It’s just a superficial relationship. When it is fun, we can have fun together. But somehow, we still feel lonely, not connected.

In the human relations like this, we are tired. And we tend to relate to God in the same way, so we also end up being tired in our relationship with God. When we forget His Word and begin to live our own way, we start to have troubles instead of peace. We want to make everything good, even perfect. We become so busy with to do list for God. And the list is getting longer and longer, and never ends. What shall I do for God? What shall I talk about as a Christian? What shall I wear as a Christian? What shall I eat and drink as a Christian? I want to make everything good because I’m a Christian. Then, what would happen to us? We become very tired and stressed out.

But God speaks to us, saying “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” “Turn to Me and have a life in me, with me. Come to Me.” In Christ, we were reconciled with God. In Christ, our relationship with God is restored, like one between a loving Father and a child. It’s not because of what you can do nor what you have done. It is just because we are in Christ. To practice the fourth commandment is nothing but experiencing Christ.

A Christians says, “Rest and spiritual care were the refreshment my tired body and thirsty spirit needed. Filled up with the Holy Spirit, I could see the quiet ways He was moving in my life. This is a Sabbath.”⁴

Even if others ignore you, or no matter what kind of opinion others may have of you, there is one in this world who looks at you, and knows everything about you and accepts you as you are. He is God, who says to you, “You are precious in my eyes, I love you. I called your name and I redeemed you.” There is no one else in this world who can decide your worth other than God who created you and gave you a life. And His evaluation is “You are wonderful.” You cannot have peace until you recover your relationship with this God and recover your true worth.

⁴ Christina Hergenrader, *Love Rules: A Study of the Ten Commandments*, 2016, Kindle, page 51

3. To Love Yourself in God with People

Now let's look at how we can spend our Sabbath practically. The point is not what we do or what we don't do. But the point is to love yourself in God with people.

Sabbath is a way of being in time where we remember who we are, and taste eternity. Remember that everything you have received is a blessing from God. Remember to stop worrying and offer thanks for the wonder of life.⁵ The point is to "love yourself in God with people." Today, we'll particularly focus on "loving yourself with people." I'll talk about three practical things.

(1) Remember

Among the Ten Commandments, Sabbath is the only commandment that begins with the word "remember." Remember! It refers to something we already know, but have forgotten.

God cares for you. He knows the hardship you are facing right now. He gives you strength, and constantly provides what you need. Remember this and come to this God and just spend time with Him. It's not to get some solution or wisdom, or to discuss matters with Him. Just remember who you are and who your God is.

"Sabbath can only begin if we choose."⁶ We must set aside time to spend just for Sabbath. Otherwise it never comes. When the time comes, you stop, leave everything with God, choose to let go of everything, and just spend time with Him, feel that you know Him and you are known by Him.

At dinner time on the Sabbath day, Yumi and I have a habit of putting candles on our table. We remember that the Lord who is light is there with us. The light spreads throughout the whole room. We remember that the Lord, the Light of Truth, is present in every aspect of our lives.

Remember the Sabbath is not just for the people of Israel. The Sabbath is also for "your son or daughter, your male or female servant," and also for "your animals" (Ex 20:10). How shall we apply this in our modern time? Choose at least one heavily used device—the telephone, television, computer, tablet, washing machine or iron — and let them rest for a Sabbath period.

(2) Giving Thanks and Delight

⁵ Wayne, 6

⁶ Wayne, 44; 27

“Sabbath is an especially sweet time for giving thanks.”⁷ The Sabbath is a day of delight, a day to be at peace with all we have.⁸

During Sabbath time we are focusing on our gratefulness for what has already been given. We set aside time to delight in being alive, to enjoy the gifts of creation, and to give thanks for the blessings.⁹ In other words, the Sabbath is a day off from worrying and regretting, a break from planning and accomplishing.

And on the Sabbath day I usually take time to look back at the previous week, remembering what I am thankful for, and write these things down. Sometimes I can't think of anything to be thankful for. Then I just start writing, “I'm thankful about last week” and continue to write something about last week, then, often something I can be thankful for comes up in my mind. And, at the Sabbath dinner, I make it a habit to share with Yumi about what each of us felt thankful for in the past week.

(3) Enjoy What You've Given

“Play nourishes our delight. When we engage in “purposeless” enjoyment of one another, we harvest some of the sweetest fruits of life.”¹⁰

To walk without purpose. To read a book, not for gaining knowledge nor studying nor training, but just for enjoyment, for refreshing your soul. To meet with friends. To visit a place where you can relax. But I don't recommend you to play on a computer or phone because they are the devices you often use on usual days. Do something different. Whatever you do, the key is to remember who you are and who your God is, and enjoy!

For example, I go to mountain climbing for a half day. After I came back, I showed the photos I took and shared what I saw with Yumi.

Well, it can be anything. Enjoy what God has given you. Enjoy the time you can spend with your loved ones. For some people, gardening on weekends is their delight. But for others it is a duty. If it's something you have to do because you ran out of time during the week, then don't do it on the Sabbath.

For parents who are raising children, especially under the age of ten, it's not easy to take Sabbath rest. But by changing our state of mind we can even enjoy what we used to consider a demand as God's blessing.

This is what Wayne Muller says: “During Sabbath we take the time to bless our children, place our hands upon their heads, our fingers in their hair, and pray for their strength, and courage, and happiness. We rest with them, eat with

⁷ Wayne, 229

⁸ Wayne, 132

⁹ Wayne, 128; 26

¹⁰ Wayne, 102

them, play with them, walk with them, listen to their stories and their worries and their laughter, and remember to whom they belong.”¹¹

Someone says: if you try to control your children according to your schedules and your plan, it will be a tireless battle. But if parents let their children lead, it will be a lot smoother. The key is not to tell them what to do “Do this or do that. Don’t do this or you cannot do that”, but to ask them questions “What is that over there? What shall we do after meal? Who needs help to change their clothes?” Let the children decide and act on their own initiative, and join them and play together, enjoy what you’ve given.

Of course I understand you can’t do that every day. But I think it may be possible for you to do that a few hours a week. What about enjoying your time with your children a few hours a week? It must be good.

“If we surrender fully into Sabbath time, we can slowly move from a life so filled with noisy worries that we are deaf to the gifts and blessings of our life, to a life in which we can listen to God.”¹²

It’s the call to undivided intimacy.

For Self-Reflection and Small Groups

1. Have you ever felt tired of being a Christian? Why did you feel so? Describe your Christian life in those days. Why did you do so?
2. Where do you find your value usually? How does that kind of thinking shape your life style? How dose practicing the Sabbath help you to remember who you are?
3. Some ideas about how you can practice the Sabbath are introduced. When and how will you have the Sabbath this week? What preparation is necessary in order to do it?

¹¹ Wayne, 160

¹² Wayne, 84