INTRODUCTION
Many of us approach time in a way that results in extremely busy lives. And busyness is a spiritual illness that has become so prevalent in our culture, in the church, in the university. The spiritual disease of busyness has become so common that we’ve been lulled into accepting it as “normal.” But it’s not. Our culture of “ceaseless pandemonium” is masking a “fundamental distrust in the goodness of God, a basic impatience with the ways of God and creation.” And the fact is, “our anxious, often wayward, striving...[is] an affront to the multiple levels of grace that sustain and nurture us daily.”

One pastor who had taken drastic steps to “ruthlessly eliminate hurry from his life,” said, “As I have slowed my life down through silence and solitude, I have discovered both the wickedness hidden by a hurried life as well as the wonder and delight my Father has in me. Oddly, through intentional times of practicing spiritual disciplines my walk with Jesus has become more spontaneous. He is present in more of my day. I have loved others better, and seen progress made in overcoming anger and the desire to have things my way. In a nutshell, Jesus has great access to and control over my life. I’m more in tune to the still small voice of the Spirit.”

This is the type of thing I was getting at yesterday. If we are going experience the deep, heart and character level change that comes with genuine discipleship, then we must fundamentally change our attitude toward time. Instead of thinking in terms of managing our time and mastering our time (and ultimately murdering time) we need to recognize time as a gift from God, not a resource for us to use. We shouldn’t wrestle with time, we should receive it and embrace it.

And doing this, receiving the gift of time means we accept that time is structured by God and not by us. One way he’s structured time is with the rhythm of “evening and morning.” This rhythm is right there in Genesis 1. But there’s another rhythm to time in the creation account of Genesis. I didn’t point it out yesterday. But I want us to look at it today. Turn in your Bibles to Genesis 1:31.

SIX DAYS OF WORK, ONE DAY OF REST
[Read Genesis 1:31]. Now the problem is that we stop reading there. But really, the story does stop there. And not only does the story not stop there, the scene doesn’t even stop there.

Genesis 2:1–3. And we hear something similar in the 10 commandments. Turn to Exodus 20:8–11. So here’s another rhythm that God has stamped onto time. Yesterday we saw the rhythm of “evening and morning.” Today we see the rhythm of six days of work and one day of rest.

Evening and morning...six days and one day.
Evening and morning...six days and one day.
Sleeping and waking...working and resting.

That’s the rhythm.

If we are going to be changed into true humans who are truly ourselves dance to that rhythm.
THE SABBATH IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
Now I know that we don’t live in the Old Testament. We live on this side of the cross and some things have changed. And the sabbath is one of them. In the Old Testament, “the sabbath command is solid, fierce, mandatory. It is rooted in the two greatest narratives which shaped ancient Israel: Creation and Exodus...[it’s] appropriate because God rested on the seventh day after completing his creative work. [And it’s]...commanded because God brought Israel out of Egypt. Bad things happen when...[people] ignore...the sabbath.”

And then when you get to the New Testament, things do change. But it’s important to realize that Jesus didn’t just “obliterate Sabbath teaching.” What he does in the gospels, and we see this worked out in the epistles, is that Jesus “reframes” the sabbath “so that we can see once again, with renewed emphasis, what creation’s ultimate meaning is.”

Now, I’m not going to address the issue of whether the Sabbath should be observed on Saturday or Sunday. “The important that it is observed faithfully so that God can imbue us with his rhythm of six days of work and one day of ceasing work.”

TWO DISCLAIMERS
Now yesterday I gave a couple of practical tools for joining God in the rhythm of a day. Today I am going to give some practical tools for joining God in the rhythm of a week.

But first, two disclaimers.

1. Sabbath keeping is not a legalistic duty. There has been a shift from the Old Testament. Something has changed. And yet, we are still told in the New Testament that the sabbath is a gift to us. This is what Jesus said in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” So I would argue that “keeping the Sabbath holy” (like the 10 commandments say) means to recognize that the rhythm of six days of work and one day of ceasing work is carved into the grain of the universe and into the very DNA of our bodies. “Living the biblical concept of time and work” is one of “God’s great gifts to us.” So as we seek to become, by God’s grace, truly ourselves and truly human, the whole issue of Sabbath is really important. That’s my first disclaimer. Sabbath–living is not a legalistic duty, but it is a gift. (I strongly suggest you read the 3rd chapter of Ortberg’s book. It’s entitled, “Training vs. Trying: The Truth about Spiritual Disciplines.” I think it will help clarify what I’m getting here.)

2. My second disclaimer is that “the Sabbath is accessible to everyone and involves many different pathways.” Do what you gladly choose to do. Don’t be frustrated if you are unable to integrate everything I mention.

Transition: Okay, with that being said. Here are 3 practical ways to receive the gift of the Sabbath.
RECEIVING THE SABBATH

1. Rest
2. Feast
3. Cease

Rest

*Genesis 2:1–3.*

Think what Adam and Eve. They were created toward the end of the 6th day, and they were told to go to work. That was back in *1:28.* So that was at the end of the 6th day. So they go to bed, and they wake up on the 7th day, ready to go to work, but no. It’s not a work day. Their first full day is the 7th day. So they wake up on the 7th day, and instead of going to work, they go to rest. “The gardening tasks had to wait until the next day.”

You see, the climax of creation, the culmination of God’s creative work is the day of God’s rest.

There’s an important point here: “We work out of rest rather than” working “in order to deserve” rest.” Or to put it another way, “rather than working our heads off to gain some days” off, “we rest first and then, out of the Joy of that rest, work for the next six days.” You see, “grace...claims us first, and out of its freedom we respond with our work.”

“The world is no friend to grace.” And shaped as we are by the world, we have a backward sense of time.

We saw some of our backwardness and God’s rhythm yesterday. Today we see some more it.

At it’s core, the very word “sabbath” means to rest. Think in terms of a holistic resting:

- Spiritual rest – This means to be held in the loving embrace of God. You need to make room for this. “The greatest result of Sabbath resting is the opportunity to know the presence of God, no matter what our present circumstances might be.” For me this frequently happens in worship on Sunday, as I confess my sins, and then I’m assured of forgiveness, and sing praises, and hear God’s word, and then feast at God’s table.

- Physical rest – Your body needs to rest after working for six days. And the rest you need is the rest of silence. Think in terms of taking gentle walks together; turning off the TV and radio, and taking a nap.

- Emotional rest – Too often we are so emotionally drained, we can’t cope with our lives. This comes through a balance of time with friends and time alone. Each person needs to discern their own level of balance. Extroverts and introverts are different. And different seasons of life require different levels of community time and alone time. (We’ve gotten off balance here.)
• Intellectual rest – Rest your brain. Stop your intellectual labors. I encourage you to be very strict about trying not to think about whatever your brain is having to work on during the week.

Feast
A friend of mine likes to say, “Jesus ate his way through the gospels and eventually he died because of who he ate with.” Jesus was no gloomy bystander at parties.

Listen to what John Ortberg says, “One day a week eat foods you love to eat, listen to music that moves your soul, play a sport that stretches and challenges you, read books that refresh your spirit, wear clothes that make you happy, surround yourself with beauty. [Make a list of your favorite things and indulge in them.] And as you do these things, give thanks to God for his wonderful goodness. Reflect on what a gracious God he is to have thought of these gifts. Take the time to experience and savor joy, then direct your heart toward God so that you come to know he is the giver of ‘every good and perfect gift.’”

Sunday is a feast day. I’m a part of a Christian tradition that practices Lent as a Spiritual Discipline. 40 days leading up to Easter we fast. But the 40 days don’t count Sundays. Because Sundays are always a little Easter. So whatever we are fasting from during the weekdays of Lent we receive back from God as sheer joie de vive. My habit: chocolate pleasures.

Cease
Remember Genesis 2:1–3 and Exodus 20:8–11. We must “draw boundaries around how much we work.” When you see yourself as the ultimate master of your time, you measure your worth by what you accomplish. Maybe you know Christians (perhaps saw one in the mirror this morning?) so caught up in doing God's work that they feel guilty for joining God in divine rest.

At the heart of Sabbath-keeping is that for a whole day you do not produce or accomplish. For 1 day out 7 you cease productivity.

I like the way one author put it: “Stop working, if for no other reason, because God told us we could!”

“When we stop from our work, what we are really doing is exhibiting a fundamental trust and faith in the goodness and praiseworthiness of God.” Sabbath ceasing is Sabbath trusting. It’s “a call to visibly demonstrate in our daily living that we know ourselves to be upheld and maintained by the grace of God rather than the strength and craftiness of our own hands. To enjoy a Sabbath day, we must give up our desire for total control. We must learn to live by the generosity of the manna falling all around us...[You see] Deep down, we all have difficulty with the idea that we live through the mercy of divine gift. We prefer to think that we live through the might and control of our own exertion.”
Turn to Psalm 127:2. We need a weekly sabbath to remind us: *“It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives sleep to his beloved.”*

What happens, is that by not doing our usual work on our day of rest we remember the truth of v1. *“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain.”*

“For six days a week” you should be “involved in the act of making, shaping, and transforming the world. So, we take one solid period of time, twenty–four hours, to change our relationship to the world—to refrain from acting upon it...and, instead, to stand back and to” rest in it.20

Maybe you are thinking, “How can I skip working one day every week and still get everything done?” I’ll tell you what I’ve learned. I can never get all the work done...unless I stop for a day.21

**Sabbath keeping is our resistance to our culture’s emphasis on accomplishment and our steadfast commitment to live by grace through faith.**

**Transition:** 3 actions at the heart of Sabbath–Keeping: cease, feast, and rest. Will you decide that you want to keep the Sabbath? I commend to you one day each week of Sabbath where you “cease work and worry,...[you] rest deeply in the grace of God, ...[and you] feast.”22

**CONCLUSION**

Now, in order to sweeten the pot, I’m going to wrap this up with three benefits of receiving the weekly rhythm of time that God has carved into the universe. For the first I’m going to use a quote from an interesting anarchist–Christian–mystic, Simon Weil. For the second, I’m going to use a quote from Herman Melville in coordination with a passage of Scripture. And for the third comment, I’ll cut out all the middle man and woman and direct our attention to a final passage of Scripture.

Okay, first. Simone Weil. Like I said, she was a French anarchist–socialist, a pacifist–resistance fighter, philosopher, and Christian mystic. All rolled up into one. A very interesting lady. She has this essay about education. She puts her finger on a very important fact. She writes, We don’t “obtain the most precious gifts by going in search of them.” We wait for them. In the words of Simone Weil, “Man cannot discover them by his own powers, and if he sets out to seek for them he will find in their place counterfeits of which he will be unable to discern the falsity.”23 This is why it’s so important to develop the good habit of Sabbath–keeping, because if we do it well, we learn to quiet ourselves, and we therefore become available to receive the gifts of God as genuine gifts rather than as possessions. And when this happens, we are transformed into people of humility, awe, and delight.

Second, there’s a scene in Moby Dick where Melville, the author, is describing a turbulent scene on the whaling boat. The ship is roaring across a frothing ocean in pursuit of the great, white
whale, Moby Dick. The sailors are laboring fiercely, every muscle taut, all attention and energy concentrated on the task. The sea is chaotic. The boat is chaotic. Everything is in turmoil except one man. There is one man who does nothing. He doesn’t hold an oar; he doesn’t perspire; he doesn’t shout. He is languid in the crash and the cursing. The man is the harpooner, quiet and poised, waiting. And then this sentence: “To insure the greatest efficiency in the dart, the harpoorers of this world must start to their feet from out of idleness, and not from out of toil.”

Hanging up in my office is a beautiful piece of art by Makoto Fujimoro and this Scripture verse: Isaiah 30:15.

Third, listen to Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted int he earth!” Do you know how you know this about God? Do you know how you know deep in your bones, with a deep sense of calm, that God will prevail. His justice, his truth, his beauty, his compassion, his mercy, and his grace will be the last word. Do you know how that knowledge gets into your heart? Only through stillness. There is a part of God we can only know through stillness.

Let’s pray.
5. Dallas Willard, “The Key to the Keys of the Kingdom.”
24. Herman Mellville, *Moby Dick*. 