

How to Celebrate God with a Day of Rest

I. The motivation for a Day of Rest is God's preeminence.

- Isaiah 58:13-15; Colossians 1:18
- Most of the Jews absolutely botched the whole Sabbath purpose because they made it about following man-made rules. They did what pleased them.
- If we enter this discussion trying to see what we can get out of it, if we're trying to earn brownie points with God, if we're just trying to make ourselves feel comfortable or be able to check off some religious bullet-points, God is not going to be pleased.
- Anything we do and don't do on our Day of Rest must be to the honor and glory of God as an act of worship to Him.

II. What to avoid on a Day of Rest.

- **We need to cease everything that will disrupt our physical rest.**
 - We need the physical rest that allows our bodies and brains to rejuvenate. This involves healthy amounts of daily sleep as well as a one in seven rhythm of body stewardship. We are fools if we believe that God is glorified by the never-ending, body-and-brain-wracking busyness of our modern existence. It's artificial. It's unsustainable without chemical enhancements. It's unhealthy, and it's biblically unwise.
- **We need to cease everything that disrupts intentionally worshipping God.**
 - I Corinthians 7:32-35
 - Ceasing brain work and body work in order to rejuvenate our bodies is one thing, but spiritual rest does not arise from taking a break from spiritual things.
 - In fact, as we search the Scriptures we see that spiritual rest comes when we are actively trusting and actively loving.
 - If we view a Day of Rest as an opportunity to engage in our own pleasures, to shelve the things of God, and do what pleases us, God is not pleased.
 - Resting physically is to cease from that physical work. Resting spiritually is to engage with spiritual work.
 - Of course we're to love God and others every day of the week, but the Day of Rest was specifically designed to remove most of the dividing distractions — the concerns about the things of the world — that could keep us from unencumbered love for God and others.
 - The Sabbath was the day that the Jews engaged in intentional corporate and personal worship in which they couldn't engage if they were encumbered by weekly work.
- **We need to cease everything that disrupts intentionally loving the people in our lives.**
 - In the same way we should specifically and purposefully set aside a day to devote ourselves to the greatest commandment, we cannot fully love God if we're not loving others.
 - This means that all selfish ambition, all personal pleasure, and all prideful self-worship needs to be set aside so that we can work toward God's best interest in the lives around us.
- **We need to cease everything that distracts from our anticipation of future rest.**
 - Focused enjoyment of God and service of others is a very snapshot of our eternal future.
 - And though there will be necessary work in glory, there will be none of the the self-fulfilling, self-protecting, self-initiated, self-required, self-providing, laborious work.
 - We need to set aside the laborious, self-providing work that so often tempts us to take our eyes off of God.

III. The Motivation for a Day of Rest is obedience.

- To truly give God the preeminence in our lives, we must obey Him. It's wicked to profess God but live as practical atheists. It's never good enough to pay lip service while we offer our lives on the altar to self. True belief in God will always work itself out in our behavior. Living faith always produces Christ-honoring works.
- And when we love Him and work according to His purposes, we know that He will work all things out for His greatest glory and our greatest good. But the key is the intentionality — the motivation. If we're intentionally trying to obey God for the purpose of simply enjoying our day off, we're doing exactly what the Jews did.
- Giving God the preeminence demands obedience to His commands and His example. That's it. That's the motivation.
- Therefore, don't cease from laborious work just to cease from work. Cease from the work that grows from trust in self because that's what God commands. Let's obey Him in our resting.

IV. What to embrace on a Day of Rest.

- **We need to embrace rest for our bodies.**
 - Brain stress and body stress — have a negative impact on our lives. We're not stewarding our bodies well when we don't have appropriate rhythms built into our weeks.
 - The idea of taking a break from one thing in order to engage in another does not inherently mean that the activity has to be — in and of itself — restful.
 - Healthy rest is a rest from our usual. We need a break from the norm. Consider your most productive work of the week — for many it will be their jobs, for others their school, and for others their homes. Your Day of Rest will be most physically healthy when you take one day in seven to cease from that work and find rest in something else.
- **We need to rest our spirits.**
 - Here is the integral reality of utter-importance that we must believe. When we talk about physical rest, we refer to a ceasing of work. But when we talk about spiritual rest, we're not talking about taking a break from spiritual things.
 - Remember, we rest from work, but we rest in (or to) God. This means that all of the commands in Scripture about loving others still stand.
 - We need to continue evangelizing and discipling. Parenting falls under these categories just like every human relationship. We don't get to stop loving our spouses on a Day of Rest. It's not about avoiding those who need help. That would be selfish.
 - A Day of Rest isn't "me time." It's not about "self-care." Will it result in renewed physical and spiritual vitality? Definitely! But that's not the goal; it's just the benefits. The goal is to love others.
 - Spiritual rest involves setting aside those things that would distract us from serving others, but — most importantly — we need to rest our spirits by removing the distractions that would keep me from worshipping God. Time in prayer, time spent in the word, time spent praising God, and time spent in corporate worship follows the pattern the Scriptures lay out for us.
 - And not only does God deserve this, and not only does this provide all the benefits of resting from work and in God, but it also helps us look forward to our future rest in Christ.
 - The return of Christ is to motivate all we do. II Peter 3:10-14
 - A Day of Rest is designed to have us stop and dwell on the joyous realities of our future with God!

V. The motivation for a Day of Rest is conformity to Christ.

- In order to give God the preeminence, we must fully obey Him — not merely in word and deed, but most importantly in our heart.
- And as we obey Him by doing the right thing in the right way for the right reason and in the right power, we are being conformed to the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another. It's the beauty of progressive sanctification — striving to be practically conformed to the image of Christ as we are positionally conformed to the image of Christ.
- Again, having the right motivation informs our Day of Rest. As we become like Christ, we're reminded of the future day that we will be glorified as He is glorified. We will be sinless — like Jesus, and what a glorious day that will be!
- Obedience is a necessary part of our becoming holy. Holiness is setting something apart for a specific purpose.
- In the same way that God commanded that the Day of Rest be set apart for all the things about which we've been talking for the past three weeks, participating in a weekly Day of Rest (specifically) and all true obedience (generally) is further setting us apart to God.

VI. When to have a Day of Rest.

- Many Christians believe that the idea of Sabbath rest is no longer necessary for followers of Christ. I believe it was John Calvin (along with others) who argued that there was nothing unique to the Sabbath that Christians shouldn't be doing or enjoying every day. If I remember correctly, He had a similar view about holidays. Why set aside a day to celebrate God's goodness when we should be celebrating it every day? And though we should be growing in our sanctification every day, the Day of Rest was designed to afford us undistracted time to emphasize that worship and growth.
- **There are those who argue for Saturday.**
 - There is value in continuing the seventh day format God established in Creation.
 - But since we don't live in a theocracy, not everyone can rest on Saturday.
- **There are those who argue for Sunday.**
 - Since many people believe that Sunday has replaced Saturday as the best day to corporately worship the Lord, there is value in observing a Day of Rest on Sunday.
 - But since we don't live in a theocracy, not everyone can rest on Sunday.
- **There are those who argue for Anyday.** Day of Rest where we exercise our trust in God by removing the worldly distractions in order to love Him, love others, and engage in healthy rhythms of rest is the expectation.
- One-in-seven is the expectation from God. In fact, if we're getting really specific, there were many weeks on the Jewish calendar where they had more than one Sabbath. There was always a weekly Sabbath, but there were a number of High Days on the holiday calendar that were extra Sabbaths. That means that the idea of rest didn't only ever have to fall on Saturday. There was flexibility for a number of them.
- That flexibility is just as free to us today.
- As we make God's expectations, character, and deeds our only motivation, we're going to want to set aside one day in seven so that we can cease from our worldly distractions — namely the work we do that's required to keep our world spinning — in order to embrace the work it takes to undistractedly love God, love others, give our physical selves the necessary rest we need, and look forward to the day we get to Sabbath with God for all eternity.

VII. The motivation for a Day of Rest is evangelism.

- Point one set the foundation that God is to have the preeminence in all things. Point three developed that concept by reminding us that God will never be preeminent in our lives if we're not obeying Him. Then point five unpacked the idea of sanctification — as we give God the preeminence in our lives by obeying Him, we will be conformed to the image of Christ.
- And so our final piece comes from Matthew 5:16, "*Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*"
- The only reason God leaves believers on this earth is that He wants to use us to draw others to Him. Our devotion to God that produces obedience needs to cause the world to think differently about our God. And as we are matured into the image of Christ, our light becomes brighter, our salt saltier, and our obedience more glorifying.
- Our Day of Rest plays into this in a beautiful way. When God's people intentionally participate in a God-motivated, counter-cultural, and counter-intuitive Day of Rest, it should cause the world to stop and think.
- A Day of Rest dedicated to resting from laborious work and resting in God will look weird to the world..
- The motivation for a Day of Rest is the same as everything else we do. God deserves the preeminence in our lives, therefore we must obey Him, be conformed to His image, and point the world to Him.

VIII. The Conclusion

- God's core expectations for a one-in-seven Day of Rest are just as relevant and alive as they were on the seventh day of Creation.
- He wants us to steward our bodies in a healthy way. He wants us to steward our spirits in a healthy way by giving special weekly attention to loving Him and loving others. And He wants those experiences to focus our minds on the glorious future He has planned for all His people — which in turn stokes the fire we have for continuing to give God the preeminence in all things.
- In order to accomplish this, we simply need to cease from the work that is necessary for life. That includes the jobs which provide the money or materials necessary to live as well as the daily tasks that keep our little worlds spinning.
- As we set these aside, we not only have more time to focus on truly resting in God, but we exercise our trust in Him.
- And then we get to engage in all of the work necessary to rest in Him.