

# The Lost Blessing of Sabbath Rest

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*Genesis*

By Ty Blackburn

**Bible Text:** Genesis 2:1-3

**Preached on:** Sunday, August 14, 2022

## **Providence Church**

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Jon and Maggie. Now Maggie has made a couple of visits over the last year, it's been actually nine Sundays in a row that I was out of the pulpit, 10 Sundays since I was wearing a tie. It feels odd now. But just want to say how blessed we were by the sabbatical, and how much we appreciate you as a body to encourage us to take that time and so graciously, joyfully give us that and pray for us as you have and so it made it such a joy for us. And then I think just thinking about being gone that long and remembering through the years of ministry the challenges and thinking, wow, I could leave for nine Sundays and know that the church was in good hands, that they would be fed well. And you saw that. You saw that by eight different men who preached over these nine Sundays: Todd Friel, and James Rouse, and Scott Rouse, and then Todd Guthrie, and then Charles Walker, and then I think it was Denver Clark, then it was Dalton, Ted then Dalton. All the way out. And that's just tremendous. And I've listened to a number of the message, that's five I've completed and hope to get the others because we were worshiping at other churches, just to kind of help you know what we were doing. We did a little bit of traveling and went out to some of our family roots in Oklahoma where my mother is from and Arkansas. We worshiped at the Bible Church of Owasso our first Sunday out. The second Sunday we were at Grace Community in Huntsville, and we've worshiped at a number of churches in the Atlanta area since we've been back, and it has been a great joy to worship other places and sit under the word and to see how like-minded churches are lifting up the name of Jesus each week, but it made us love our church even more and we're so glad that we are here with you, and it made us look forward to getting back even though we were blessed every place we went and encouraged.

We had a lot of family time, a lot of family projects that we've been working on trying to make our house....well, we've been there 19 years almost and it's amazing how much you accumulate and anyway, we cleaned things out and did a lot of great stuff. We've had a lot of a great time together as a family. I think that's been one of the things that has hit me with the most source of joy, but also probably the greatest sense of conviction in that, realizing that how distracted I tend to be from my family, and I think I tend to be distracted at times in ministry with other things that are pressing. And that's been a real... I'm going to talk to you more about that actually when we get to the message. This is a long introduction, so just be aware of that. But it's been really helpful too for us to

reconnect, and I know for Patti and me and for Jon and Maggie, we have really been blessed to be able to spend that time together and just working together, enjoying life together and reconnecting and refocusing what God wants us to do. Been a lot of time of reading and study, reading books on pastoral ministry and philosophy of ministry and have conversations with a couple of pastors, extensive conversations with men I wanted to spend some time talking with, and so spent several hours doing that. Patti and I went to dinner with one couple and then another extended phone call. And then a lot of time writing on my project, my doctoral project is hopefully coming to start to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and had some time to really pour into that. It's something that I needed focus and so thank you for giving me the time to do that and for your prayers. I really appreciate the prayers. I know the prayer guide went out, kind of gave you a weekly prayer thing and we felt your prayers and really feel like God worked in some neat ways in our lives to help us in our own love for him and our walk with him.

But in relation to the project, let me say a word about that while I'm there. You know, I'm doing a doctorate in biblical counseling and D.Min not a PhD, it's d-admin actually, technically, which is a D.Min plus some other classes. But the focus is you try to do the ministry project in your church to impact your church for the kingdom in some way, a focused effort to bless the body and the thing the Lord put on my heart was helping the body of Christ be more welcoming to persons with disabilities. It's been something that was on my heart in a number of different ways and then in 2017 had the opportunity to go to the Biblical Counseling Coalition that year in Rome, GA, where Biblical counselors from all over the country gather and these are kind of the key leaders. We got an invitation to come just as guests and so we went. Jess and I went in 2017 and at that particular meeting, Joni Eareckson Tada was there talking about the need for biblical counseling to become more strategic and focused on persons with disabilities and their families, how can we minister better to them. And she gave a testimony and I don't know if you've heard her, if you haven't put on your agenda to listen to some of her testimonies, she's done it in many different places. Wonderful woman of God. Joni Eareckson Tada, a quadriplegic since she was, I think, 17 now probably almost 70, I would think, and she has been a testimony to the sustaining grace of God and the power of God made perfect in weakness. And she had given her testimony this evening, and I was talking to one of the men in her ministry afterwards, and he made a statement, he said, "Can you imagine what we would have lost if Joni Eareckson had not been given to us, if she had not been led by the Lord to walk through the path of quadriplegia? What would the church, the evangelical church have lost?" And then he said this, "What do you think local churches are losing because they say persons with disabilities are not really involved in the body life of the church?" And so that struck a chord in my heart and so as I was working through the process, I felt like that's something that I would like to really think about and study and work on. So that's what the project is aimed at, helping us be more welcoming, to have our hearts that are more intentionally welcoming to persons with disabilities.

And so the plan was to finish the chapters I needed to finish, submit them and get the go-ahead to launch the project, but my professor, he had the gall to be on sabbatical this summer and just coming back on August 15th. Can you believe that? And anyway, so I've been delayed a few weeks in getting approval and so pray that he's able when he gets

back tomorrow, he's going to hit the ground running and look at my submission because I'd really had hoped to come back and pretty quickly get into the project. Essentially what we're going to do is spend two Sundays preaching on it, and there's a Saturday seminar, a six hours seminar on Saturday that I've been working on a curriculum over the last year and a half that we would use and everyone's invited to take the survey, and you take a survey on the front and this is the way it works. So I'm going to lay this out. You take a survey on the front end just kind of test your knowledge, comfort level, skills related to persons with disabilities. Then I preach two sermons, do the seminar and then we take a survey on the back end. And so we have to compare and see how the intervention has helped the church. It's kind of a technical thing to the research side of it I'm not that crazy about, but this is what I've got to do and I think it'll be helpful.

So anyway, I say that to say that if I get the approval, when I get the approval we'll be sending the survey out. So be watching for that. When the survey comes out, if you could turn it around, it should take you about 10 minutes at most, 20 questions. Send it back and that would help me immensely because I need to get 30 folks that have gone through the training, all of the training and been surveyed on the front end and the back end to help me complete the research elements. Anyway, if you have any more questions about that, feel free to ask me and it should be coming out, it could be this week, it might be the next week, it might be the week after just depending on how quickly the wheels turn at Southern Seminary. But anyway, so that's my project.

Back to the sabbatical and the blessing that it was. Some other things that I was able to do for the first time in years, I mean, I don't know that I've ever done this actually, I took two days to get completely away. A brother, dear brother in Christ suggested that to me and two days and went away by myself. I did take Jon with me, but he's a really great companion for this. He and I respected each other's time completely, and so we just spent time eating meals together and we played Scrabble at night. Other than that, we were diving into our own stuff. I was reading and praying and writing. I left my computer at home. My cell phone I took with me, but I left it over to the side and I only called my wife at night, and I didn't look at it at all. I unplugged. Man, it was such a blessing. I want to tell you that is really something to think about. We all need to get more unplugged from our technology. I remember seeing a meme online somewhere recently that said, "You remember the days when the phone was on the wall, it was attached to the wall and we were free." A lot of profundity in that. Those of you don't know those days, ask your folks or your grandparents about it. You could go somewhere and nobody could find you until you got to where you were going. They had to know where you were going to call there. Isn't that amazing how far away that seems.

And so, anyway, it's nice to be able to get in touch with people in emergencies and stuff like that, there's blessings about it, but it also can be a tremendous distraction. And it really got to me in the sense of thinking about and just talking with my family different times, one of the things that the Lord was showing me was how I could be distracted with good things. I'm thinking about my sermon and I'm working through a point and so Patti or Maggie or Jon ask me something and I'm just kind of giving them partial attention because I'm still thinking this through. And the Lord just really has begun to break my

heart over that, that that's just not godly. It seems to be. It has an appearance of godliness, but it's not. The godly thing to do in the moment is to be completely present with the person right in front of you, to be serving the Lord to bless them. Now the sermon matters, of course. There's got to be plenty of time set aside for that and I've got to be a better steward of my time and wiser in the use of it, but that was something that really had been hitting me and it's something about unplugging and separating from the burdensome joy of preaching and teaching. What a joy it is but it is a burden, and the weight of caring for the needs of the congregation gave me clarity that I'm so grateful for and my family was. And so I think actually, one of that we've had, it's been a bittersweet thing, we wanted to come back because we missed you guys so much, but on the other hand, I think they've been and I've been kind of sad that we're going to be going back. It feels like we could go back to the way it was. And so I'm praying for a new normal. I want what the Lord has shown me I want to walk in.

So pray for me in that way and that actually leads to what my message is going to be this morning because I wanted to share, I'm going to be sharing in weeks to come as the elders and I work through a lot of the directional things that I've been thinking about, and I'm very excited about what I think the God has put on my heart, and I can't wait to sit down with them because the challenge is that them leading you like they have these last nine weeks, they've been, and I know the Lord's been working on them, helping them think through things, and we're all going to get together and talk about where are we going as a church, and we're going to this Wednesday night we're going to start that process. And so we look forward to coming back and then sharing that with you and I think it's going to be a really neat thing. I think God has done something really special in my heart, my family, my wife, my kids and I think he's doing that with the elders. Even some of the challenges that we all have in our lives are always a part of what God is doing.

So I can't wait to tell you about that, but that's not what we're going to talk about this morning. This morning I want to talk about, I want to look at a passage of Scripture that's at the very beginning of the Bible and unpack it a little bit as we look at the insight that really came to me through this sabbatical. I want you to turn with me to Genesis 2 and I want you to, the title the message is, "The Lost Blessing of Sabbath Rest." The lost blessing of Sabbath rest. Sabbatical. So basically, the idea is that sabbatical is an extended Sabbath, as it were, that's why it's called a sabbatical, you see the same word. The Hebrew word Shabbat, which means to rest. And so that was the purpose of the sabbatical, to unplug from the regular duties of pastoral ministry, to rest from those and to focus on some other areas still related to the pastoral ministry, but to step back to gain some perspective and study time to really get a new look at these things.

And so that's what the sabbatical was and that's what the Lord used to really help me so much and as I've been thinking about that, as I shared, I don't want to go back to the way it was. I don't want to be preoccupied. I want to be present with my family. I want to be present with you in a deeper way than I have been because the Lord has shown me that I had more distractions, I didn't realize I was distracted. I thought I was doing fine. I didn't think I needed, I mean, I think I thought I needed a sabbatical in the sense that I was worn

out and I knew that the church was, we're at a place where it feels like we're kind of at a new stage where we've been at, we're kind of at this like growing from a teenager into an adult or something and there's these challenges we need to work through, and we needed some directions. I felt the pressure of that, but I didn't really feel like, I didn't understand how much I needed to take stock of my own heart, and the Lord graciously gave me more than I was asking for in that.

And so in thinking about how do you not go back to that, the thing that hit me and how can I share with the body the blessing of that, is to understand the blessing of Sabbath rest. The Lord has given us in the very first pages of Scripture a prescription for how we are to live. When he created man, he created the world in six days. Genesis 1 gives us the six days of creation. Genesis 2:1-3 gives us the seventh day and that's what I want to read right now. Genesis 2:1-3.

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. 2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Let's pray.

*Our Father, we come to You, the God who has created us, You created all things, You own, all things, we, the earth is Yours and the fullness thereof, every single person in this room truly belongs to You, everything that is created belongs to You whether we acknowledge that or not, and in our unbelief, we don't acknowledge it. We act like we belong for ourselves and our own purposes but You created us for Yourself. And Father, thank You that You have shown us even in the very early pages of Scripture, the way that You want us to live, the way that You want us to come to know You. So open the eyes of our hearts this morning, speak to us from this passage, and show us the blessedness of the rest that we have in Christ. We pray this in His name. Amen.*

So the missing or lost blessing of Sabbath rest. I want to talk about three points to help us look at what this passage is saying, the big picture. I'm not going to argue the particulars. Let me just say right up front, we don't have time to talk through whether we're on the Sabbath position you have, like are you a strict Sabbatarian? In our circles, Reformed Baptist churches, we have different views about how exactly the Sabbath is to be practiced. Should you, you know, do any work at all? Should you go out to lunch? These are issues that genuine Christians wrestle with and need to pray through before the Lord, and there's a continuum of, I think, sound attempts to deal with the text of what the Bible is calling us to. I'm not going to get into the details like that. What I want to step back and do today is look at the big, broader principle that should be in everyone's life no matter exactly how you work out the details. It's the principle that matters and the idea is that the Lord has made us to find blessing in resting in him, intentionally resting in him.

Think about this. I mean, God created the world in six days. He could have done it in one but he did it in six. Why? Well, part of the reason is because he was going to do something on the seventh and the seventh, he spends a whole day resting. Why? Why does God rest? Read the Bible and we should ask questions like that. I mean, think about Scripture interprets Scripture. Did God need to rest? Was he tired? I mean, I guess it would take a lot of energy certainly to create something out of nothing, indescribable energy, right? But the Bible is clear in other places that God does not need to rest. I mean, this word from Isaiah 40:28, "Do you not know?" Isaiah 40:28, "Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth Does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary." He doesn't get weary.

Or Psalm 121:3-4 after it says in verse 1, "I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep."

Jesus in John 5 when he heals the man at the pool of Bethesda, the lame man, tells him to take up his palette and walk. It was on a Sabbath day that he healed and we get a window, if you read the gospels, you'll see this that Jesus seems to be intentionally healing on the Sabbath to pique interest and to really unsettle the Jewish hardened religious system. "How can he be doing this on this Sabbath?" And Jesus says in John 5:17 gives us the key to understanding. He says this. They're concerned that he healed this man on the Sabbath, he says, "My Father is working and I am working." What he's saying is God always works. God never rests. And his healing on the Sabbath was part of a testimony to his deity. "I'm always working. Even as the God-man in My humanity I may be sleeping, but in My deity I'm upholding all things by the word of My power." Never resting. So even those healings on the Sabbath were testaments to his deity.

So God doesn't need rest. Well, why did he rest on the seventh day? It's because we need to rest. He was setting a pattern for us and he was offering an invitation to us. This first point, the purpose of the Sabbath rest, the purpose of Sabbath rest is essentially to recalibrate our souls. You could sum it up with that, to recalibrate our souls. God doesn't need rest. Jesus says in another place when they're asking him about why he heals on the Sabbath, he says this, "Man was not created for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was created for man." God created the Sabbath for man, so the Lord rested for the benefit of man, and he rested for the benefit of man before the fall. That is, the creation order had Adam and Eve never sinned, this would have been the plan. They were working in the pre-fall world. Work is good. Don't listen to the lies in the culture. Work is good. God says it is therefore it is. So they were supposed to work. Adam loved to work, Eve loved to help him in the various work that they had, but the pattern would be, "Seventh day you're going to rest with Me."

Now how did the seventh day benefit man? Well, it was going to re calibrate the soul. When we look into the law after man falls into sin, there are a couple of different places that when God gives the commandment formally to remember the Sabbath in the old

covenant, in the Old Testament law, he says in Exodus 20:8-11. Exodus 20:8-11. You have the command for the keeping of the Sabbath. Exodus 20:8 says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you." Nobody is to work in your house on the seventh day including your animals. And this is what he says after that, verse 11, he gives a reason for that. "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy." God set down the week, the seven-day week and let me tell you something, that's going to be attacked soon in America. They will be attacking the seven-day week because the forces in our culture, they're trying to overturn everything. Male and female. They're going to come after the seven-day week. Just watch. It will not be long because everything that reminds them of what God's created order is they hate. But he created seven days. Six days he made the world, in the seventh day the Sabbath rest, and he did it so that, and he's telling them in Exodus, "Listen guys, you have to work a lot." And they had to work a lot more than we think we have to work a lot. We think it's hard for us to rest. We really have it easy relatively speaking. I mean, they had to work so hard just to live. I mean, they had to plant the crops, weed the garden. They had to care for the livestock. To eat, they didn't just have to, you know, go to Publix or Kroger or go online and have them deliver it or go to Publix and Kroger and have them come out to your car and put the groceries in. They had to actually kill the cow. After they had fattened him up, they had to skin the cow, they had to butcher the cow, they had to store the meat. These are not quick, easy processes. They had to go get the water with a bucket from the stream or the well. It was hard. And so they were always working and to take a day and not work took faith, but God says, "It's essential that you do this. In fact, if you do this, you're going to find out the six days are more profitable than whatever you include on the seventh. Whatever you gain, it'll be way less than the six. I will bless them because you need this, you need this reminder to stop working and recalibrate your soul, realign your life with ultimate purposes that I have for you."

The real realignment of the soul, the recalibration of the soul, begins with salvation and really the beautiful thing of the Sabbath is that the ultimate fulfillment of the Sabbath is entering into God's rest is entering into salvation. The ultimate fulfillment of the Sabbath rest is when we will enter into heaven, the new heavens and the new earth with God forever. It's a picture of that. Scripture makes this clear. If you read Hebrews 3 and 4, you see that the author of Hebrews is making just this point. He talks about entering God's rest and he actually quotes from Psalm 95 right after the verses that you read today, Ted. It goes into where the psalmist talks about when God got angry with the people, when they were about to go into Canaan, God said, "Go into Canaan," and they wouldn't go in. They didn't trust God to deal with the people, to give them the land that he had said he would give them. They looked at the challenges and the difficulties, they were too great. The walled cities or the walls are too high. The people are too big. The forces against us are too mighty for us. And God of course, knew that, but he said, "I'm going to give you the land," but they did not believe God and enter into the land and God says, "I swore to them in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest." To go into Canaan was to enter into

God's rest. The author of Hebrews, Hebrews, 11, as well as Hebrews, 3, and 4, you read these this week, you will see this. He's saying that Canaan is a type of heaven, that God was teaching us through the actual historical events of the nation of Israel what it is to go into heaven. To enter into Canaan, they had to enter into Canaan by faith trusting in God to do what they could not do. They had to take their eyes off of their resources, their limited resources, and the challenge that was before them that was too great for them and they had to believe in the promise of God. "I will give you the land." They failed to do that and they failed to enter his rest.

The word "rest" intentionally used to call back to mind the whole Sabbath principle, entering into rest, and you see this in the New Testament in other places. Let me show you just a few places. Look at Romans 4. This was God anticipating the way of salvation way back in Genesis 2:1-3. Paul has made clear in chapter 3 of Romans that the way God saves us is not by works that you do. It's not by works. No, the way God saves you is when you stop working and start trusting in God. You believe. It's not your righteousness or my righteousness, our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of God. No matter how much you reform yourself, you will never make yourself acceptable to God. You will still be rejected. You and I are hopeless and helpless. But God has done all that needed to be done by sending his Son to live a perfect, sinless life, to live a perfect life of complete righteousness and then to die as a lamb experiencing the wrath of God against our sins. He bore our sins in his body. They were transferred to him. He suffered in our place. Then as he died, he took our sins out of the way, and he gives us back his righteousness. The resurrection proves that. So he takes our sins and he gives us his righteousness and this is how you're saved. So the way to salvation is you stop working and you start trusting.

Look at Romans 3:28, before you look at chapter 4, look back at 3:28. Paul says, "For we maintain that a man is justified," that is, declared righteous, "by faith apart from works of the Law." Chapter 4, verse 4, "Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness." Salvation comes when you stop working and start trusting.

Now turn with me to Hebrews. We're not going to look at all the verses there, but a couple of key verses I want you to look at with me, Hebrews 3:18. Here the author of Hebrews is commenting on verses from Psalm 95 that he quoted earlier in the chapter speaking about the unbelief of the nation of Israel outside of Canaan when they would not go in. You can read the story of that in Numbers 14. So the psalmist, hundreds of years later, is commenting on that. Now, 1,000 years after the psalmist wrote these things, the author of Hebrews is applying this to the people of God. And he says in verse 18, "to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? So they were not able to enter because of unbelief." Chapter 4, verse 1, "Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,



'As I swore in My wrath, they shall not enter My rest.'" Skipping on down to verse 10, "For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His."

So he's saying that the Sabbath was a type of salvation. God rested from his work because we're supposed to rest from our work. And when you look at Exodus 20, remember verses 8 to 11 when it said the Sabbath command is given, remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Think about when you stop working, what you're supposed to do is think about what God has done. He created the world in six days. Glory in what he has done. It's interesting that in Deuteronomy, given about 40 years after Genesis, right before Moses dies, the second giving of the law. They're given the law again a second time. So you find the law repeated, Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 almost word for word, but there's a difference in Deuteronomy 5 when it says remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, instead of saying for in six days God created the world, it says this, "For the Lord by His mighty hand saved you from Egypt." So don't do any work, but on the seventh day, think about the great saving work of God in the Exodus.

So the common theme both places is stop working and put your trust in the finished work of God. That's the Sabbath. Stop working and start trusting in the finished work of God, and we need to recalibrate our souls to that. You need if you've never placed your faith in Jesus Christ, you need to stop working and trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ today. You cannot reform yourself. Stop trying. Instead start trusting Jesus and then with now having been saved, been given his Spirit, now you can start working along with him by the power of the Holy Spirit to change. But until you have his power, you have no hope. We have no hope.

So the purpose of the Sabbath is to recalibrate our souls. Now, the practice of Sabbath rest. The second point is the practice of Sabbath rest. Essentially three points that I want us to look at. Back to Genesis 2. Look at what God did because it helps us know what we're supposed to do. What does it mean to remember the Sabbath? Look what God did. Verse 2, "God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." Verse 3, "God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made." Twice we're told that God rested. I mention it doesn't make sense other than the fact that he's teaching us something. He didn't need to rest. So what was his rest about? Well, what we know is he ceased working. He stopped, and there's a great emphasis on what he stopped doing. He rested on the seventh day, verse 2, from all his work which he had done. It says almost exactly the same thing in verse 3, he rested from all his work which he had created and made in New American Standard, literally same verb, made as done in the two previous times it's used. Verse 2, he completed his work which he had done. He rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because in it he rested from all his work which God had created and done, literally same Hebrew word.

So look what all God has been doing. Look what all God has been working and now he stops working, he stops doing. And literally the idea of the word is to sit down and be

still. God has been creating the world and he sits down and he's still and why does he do that? What is he doing? He's not tired. He's not breathing hard. He's admiring what he's done. He's glorying in the beauty of what he's done. And then he creates the Sabbath and invites us into his rest. He's inviting us into that moment to sit down with him, to stop working and glory in what he has done. That's the purpose of it.

So the first thing we have to do to practice the Sabbath rest is we have to stop working. You've got to cease. You've got to desist. You have to make sure that you stop activity in a regular way than your week. I'm not saying that you have to do this, you know exactly what this looks like I don't know, but it means that you and I are called to be intentional about stopping the work and setting aside time where we're not doing the same thing that we've been doing all week. So stop working. Stop planning. Stop thinking about what you're going to try to do, what you have got to get done. In your mind it's so hard to turn it off, isn't it, once your mind gets going. But we're called to do this by God's grace, and we have to seek that so we stop.

The second thing practice of the Sabbath rest is first is stop, A) is stop, 2A) stop. 2B) reflect. So God's reflecting on the work he's done and so we should reflect on the work that God has done and also reflect on the work we've done that God has done through us. We should take time regularly to look back over the last week. Look back over the last week, what's happened this week? What have we accomplished? You have to stop and think about that. It's kind of hard actually. If I were to ask you right now, tell me, you come up here in front and tell everybody what you've done this week, what's happened in your life. "Well, I went to work. You know, I watched the ball game last night." You know, there's not that much that you come up with right away. You have to spend some time thinking about it intentionally in the presence of God. "Lord, help me think through what we've done."

And then God delights in it, and we're called to delight in what he's done. So it's three steps: stop, reflect and delight. Delight in the good things that God has done and pray about the things where we see we have been deficient. But delighting in the good things. We need to take time to do. This is something I think we really miss out on. You know, like if you're working on a project at home with your kids and you accomplish it, do you take time to sit down and look at it and celebrate it? Together, do you do that? If you don't, you're missing out on the way God does things. There's something enriching about, I mean, that doesn't mean we sit around and all the time we don't work. No, we're supposed to be working but we're supposed to take time to stop and not just stop because we're worn out and we just go to bed, stop and reflect. Look what we've accomplished. Look how different that, look at what it looked like, think about what it looked like before this morning when we started working on this project and think about what it looks like right now when we finished it. Isn't that good? Isn't God good to give us the strength and the ability and the resources we need to do that? We're being like God. We're bringing order into our lives. That's the creation instruction: fill the earth and subdue it.

So delight in it. Stop, reflect, delight. It's so hard and I want to mention that one other kind of a secondary issue here, when it's interesting that he makes it one seventh of the week. It seems like an over-allotment. If I was, you know, there advising God, I don't think we should spend that much time not working, especially given that we have to pluck the chicken after we wring its neck, we've got to do all of that, can't we just maybe one day in 10? Now, one day in seven, it needs to be that regular because we so easily get distracted, we so easily lose focus, we so easily forget what really matters, why we're even here, and we're supposed to step back and look at what God has done, we're to think about, "Hey, what am I here for anyway? What?" And mom and dad sitting down together looking back over the week thinking about each kid, each child. What's happening in this life? How much progress? What have we been trying to accomplish in this child's life? How much progress we made this week? See how powerful that is just to stop and assess. The Lord says we need that. You can't live a fruitful, faithful life without building this into your life. You'll have some measure of fruit and some measure of obedience, but you can expand it dramatically by building this into your life, some sense of regular evaluation, and it makes sense it needs to be weekly.

So how do you do that? What does it look like to totally unplug? I've been reading a couple of books that speak about how, you know, it is challenging in our day, I said in some ways we have it easy. Yeah, we can get our food pretty easily, just drive through, but we are amazingly inundated with information now. I mean, the statistics are astonishing, how much information is coming at us on a daily basis. Technology overwhelms us. One book that I read recently, it's a secular book but it's pretty helpful. Listen to the title of this book, "Stolen Focus: Why you can't pay attention and how to think deeply again." Why you can't pay attention. It's a common problem that everyone is recognizing. Another title of a book, "Deep Work: Rules for focused success in a distracted world." One of the things that regular assessment does is helps you realize how little we accomplished this week. It felt like we were doing all kinds of stuff, didn't it? Felt like we were running, we were going. We didn't have any time to ourselves, it felt like, but what did we really accomplish for the kingdom? The Sabbath principle says stop and look at that. What of the work that we've accomplished has God really accomplished in us? And we stop and take stock. It's a time to be humbled by our failures and our weakness and to cry out to God for help. But it's a time, it's a gracious gift of his grace to reset our focus.

I think one of the challenges that we have to deal with is social media and the cell phone, the curse of the smartphone. I mean, it's a blessing in a way, but I think it's a whole lot more of a challenge and difficulty. And how easy, you know, one of the things, think about this, I said I'm trying to be focused in conversations, more focused than I have been in the past. If you are talking to someone, you're having a conversation with somebody, another brother or sister in Christ, you're having a conversation and you're trying to build one another up. You're doing kingdom work. You are pouring into their life. You want to and yet you find yourself continually, "Oh, I just got a text message. Oh, I just got..." And you just look for a second and then look back, look for a second, look back. The studies show that your brain is like your level of engagements up here, when you look away it goes way down here, just that one second and it takes you so long to get back where you

were. God doesn't want us to live like that. The person in front of you is the person that you need to be focused on.

So we have to learn to think differently. We have to expect that people aren't going to respond to our text immediately, because if they do, that means they're ignoring somebody else. We have to assume that they're not going to answer every time we call because if they do, they're ignoring someone else. How do you like when you're talking to somebody in the middle of conversation, they take the phone call? Now I know there's a place for that. We have certain rules we have to apply. If it's your wife, that's one you need to work through, and you probably need to take that call, but so many other calls you don't. And then even then, as wives and husbands, we need to think about hey, what's going on? Do I really need to call now? God wants us to be people who are so connected to him, so walking with him that we are breathing life to one another and to try to help another brother through life that is hard work. I talked about, it's hard to prepare a sermon. It's hard to exegete a heart. What is it that I can really do to help this brother that's struggling right now? What's really his issue? What's his heart issue? "Lord, help me see that." Oh, I just got a text message. I totally lost where I was going. We've got to think about these things. I'm not trying to tell you, you know, if you see somebody with a cell phone, you know, throw a flag or whatever. No, we all have to, but you've got to really weigh the responsibilities and look at the calling that we have in Christ. But I think the Sabbath principle is the key. Weekly assessing.

So for us, one of the things we've talked about is we're going to weekly look together on Sunday night at the last week what's happened. We're going to praise God and we're going to plan for the next week. It's something we've done in the past, but not intentionally consistently every single week. That's what we all need to do. We need to find a way to build this principle into our lives because we need to continually recalibrate and refocus. And if we do that, what we find is we then are abiding in Christ. The goal of it is the goal of the Sabbath, which is we didn't accomplish what we intended. I mean, we're never going to be looking back at a week and saying, yeah, we got it all right this week. That's just not going to happen. It's not going to happen. So every week there's a measure in which we're going to say, "Lord, I, I dropped the ball here. I'm so glad that Jesus has covered this sin, this negligence in my life. Lord Jesus, be to me the ability to take advantage of that next opportunity." And we abide in him, and he makes us more and more like him. We cease from our work, we trust in his all-sufficient grace, and he makes us more and more fruitful and faithful.

And I think it's a good idea to try to take some kind of sabbatical approach. Unplug, go away for a couple of days as a couple. Pray and seek the Lord if you can do that. Anyway, I'm very grateful for what the Lord has done through the sabbatical, and I'm so grateful for Jesus Christ, that he is our rest.

Let's go to Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, how we rejoice in You, Lord. You are so good. Your ways are perfect. Your wisdom exactly what we need. We pray that You would help each person here to*

*evaluate, Lord, are we trusting in Christ or are we trusting in our own works? Lord, You know who needs to stop trusting in Jesus plus their works, and help them just repent of any trust in themselves and trust completely in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross and through his resurrection. And Lord, You know each one of us who belong to You who have truly come to know You. You see the distractedness, You see the lost focus, preoccupation with worldly things, that our emotions or stress is governed by values that aren't what they should be. We don't want to be like that. Help us, Lord, to build into our lives disciplines that will just help these disciplines will help us cling to grace. We know our disciplines can't change us, Lord, but You've told us to discipline ourselves with the purpose of godliness, to seek by Your power and Your grace to build these things into our lives. So Lord, grant us grace. Help us. Make us people who are strong in the Lord, who in our rest, in our quietness and confidence, we find Your strength and we'll be like the one in Isaiah 40 when You reminded us that You don't slumber, You don't sleep, You don't grow weary, but those who wait upon the Lord, they will renew their strength. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. Bring this to pass in our hearts and in our lives. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*