

Rhythms of Rest

Week 2: Rest for Your Family

Happy Mother's Day to all the moms out there! We are so grateful for you. Being a mom is hard work, but it is valuable, Kingdom work. I know there are a lot of things you do that go unnoticed and unappreciated. But, I want you to know today that your unseen sacrifices and struggles are seen and valued by the Lord.

I've got this cardinal that lives in the bushes outside of my office window. And about 10 times a day, it flies into the glass. I hear its beak *tink* up against it. It'll do that a few times and then finally give up. And then a little while later, it'll do it again a few times and give up.

Every now and then, after it flies into my window, I'm able to look up and see it standing on the window sill, looking at the window, moving its head, trying to figure out what's going on. Why it keeps bumping into something it can't see.

The problem is, birds don't perceive glass as a solid object. To them, it looks like they could just fly right through it. So, this cardinal outside of my office keeps bumping up against this barrier that's invisible to him, this limit, and doesn't understand why its head hurts all the time!

And after listening to this poor thing bump into his limit multiple times a day, I realized I do the exact same thing. Maybe you do, too. You see, all of us have limits. **We have limited time, limited energy, and limited resources, but (like that cardinal) we don't always perceive our limitations.** And so we keep bumping into them and wonder why our head hurts! Why we're tired all the time. Why we're grumpy. Why we're stressed out and anxious. If we bump up against our limits enough, eventually we're going to start feeling the pain from it.

I think that's part of the reason God gave us the Sabbath. **The Sabbath reminds us that we all have limits and protects us from the pain of bumping up against them.** Sabbath gives us little moments of rest in the middle of the **laundry** and homework and chores and sports and **laundry** and the fights and squabbles and meals and sleepovers and **laundry** and dishes and errands and grades and **laundry**!

We were not for the pace that many of us live at. We were not made to go, go, go. All of us have limits, and your limits might be more than mine, but you have them. All of us need time to slow down, refill, refresh, and reconnect with the people that matter most. Sabbath reminds us that we all have limits and it protects us from the pain of bumping up against them. It's why I believe the Sabbath day is a gift wrapped up as a command.

The command is found in Exodus 20, starting in verse 8. God is giving his people 10 laws for them to live by. 10 commands to follow that will separate them from everyone else as they live them out because they were so counter-cultural. And, even then, this command to rest was so out of the ordinary that God felt like he had to spend a little more time explaining it.

The command to Sabbath is the longest of the 10 Commandments. This is what it says, **Exodus 20:8...(READ vs. 8-11)**

Sabbath was a day to set aside to rest and remember. Celebrate God and enjoy all the good things in life that he has given us. It was a day to celebrate the goodness of God with good food, good drink, good friends.

And did you notice that Sabbath was a community event. Everyone stopped for one day. From sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, everyone ceased their work to reflect and rejoice. Sabbath was a community activity.

Families reconnected with each other. They would worship and celebrate together. They'd share a meal and invite their neighbors to join them. They would practice certain rituals and routines that would recenter them. For one day, all the distractions of the week would be set aside and they would reconnect and refresh together.

Isn't there something about that that sounds so nice?! If you're like me, you hear that and there's something inside of you that's like, "That's the way life is supposed to be." I think that's our soul craving margin between our pace and our limits. But even though we desire a day of rest like this, we have a hard time doing it. Plus, we don't live in a culture that stops at the same time, or ever! And so we just keep running and going and, many of us, drag our families along with us.

And like that bird outside my office, we keep bumping up against our limits, our kids limits. We bump up against our limits of time and energy and resources because we have a hard time accepting that we even have limits and perceiving where they are. In fact, we don't typically see them until we've already bumped into them and felt some kind of pain in our life.

A few years ago, when I was leading our Bedford Campus, I had gone over 4 weeks without taking a day off. It was just a full season of ministry between hospital visits and couple of funerals. There was a wedding in there somewhere. Plus, we were in the middle of the transition and the weekly demands of leadership and preparing a sermon just kept piling up. I had gotten into some unhealthy rhythms and found myself crashing into my limits.

I was extra irritable. I was getting short with Amber and the girls. I started avoiding people and isolating because I just didn't have the emotional energy to give to anyone. I didn't like the person I was becoming. I was red-lining, and my tank was running on fumes. I realized my body and soul could not keep running at the pace I was going and I just had to say, "Enough!"

My guess is that many of you have found yourself in that same place. Maybe you're there right now. And you hear my talking about healthy rhythms of rest and all you can think

about are the things on your to-do list, the emails you haven't responded to, the person who needed that report from you last week.

The demands of life and work and family just keep piling on and you feel caught in a race you didn't sign up for, stuck running at a pace you can't keep up, but you have no idea how to stop. So, how can we realistically practice these rhythms of rest that the Lord has invited us into, and help our family experience them, too? Well, I think we have to be intentional about it. I think it starts with you've got to **Decide you're going to do it.**

You've got to decide for yourself and your family that you are not going to keep going at the pace you're going. You've got to decide that you're going to take a day of Sabbath rest. And this might be the hardest part of taking a Sabbath day because, here's what I've found, no one is going to make that decision for you. Our culture is not going to tell you and your family to slow down and do less to find a better life. They're going to tell you that if you want a better life for you and your kids, then you've got to do more and do it faster.

If you try to create space between your pace and your limits, there will always be something waiting in the margins to fill it. And, it's usually something good. But, if you want to enjoy the rhythms of rest God has given us, you've got to decide for you and your family that you're going to make it a priority. That you're going to model for your kids that there's a better way to live. And after you decide you're going to prioritize a day of Sabbath rest, then you've got to **Decide what you're going to do AND (more importantly) NOT do.**

Maybe sit down and write out a list. If your family is at home, do it with them. As I've developed some healthier rhythms of rest in my own life, I try to spend my Sabbath day doing things that bring me joy and closer to the Lord. That help me see things differently. Someone shared this with me years ago and it's always stuck with me. **Change of pace + change of place = change of perspective.** And it doesn't have to be drastic differences, but it's amazing what a little change of scenery and pace will do for your soul.

On my Sabbath day, I try to listen to my body and what it needs. Sometimes that means it needs a long run or bike ride and sometimes it needs an extra cup of coffee while sitting on the patio.

I don't really have any hard and fast rules about what I do during my Sabbath, but I do have some guardrails for what I won't do, and it basically boils down to this: I don't do anything I feel like I HAVE to do. Or, at least that's my goal. I try really hard to make it a day when I only say, "I GET to do this..." instead of the typical, "I HAVE to do this..." There are plenty of things I HAVE to do throughout the week. I want my Sabbath day to be filled with things I GET to do.

And so, real practically...one of my favorite things to do on my Sabbath day is mow my yard. And, you might think, *well that sounds like work...* but if you've been around for a little bit,

you know how much I love to mow! I see mowing my yard as caring for the part of the earth that God has entrusted to me, and so, in a way, it becomes an act of worship.

But, there have been some Mondays, which is when I take my Sabbath day, when mowing felt like something I had to do. And on those days, I have to make the decision not to do it. I try not to do anything that feels like a burden and only do things that bring joy. To do that means you need to **prepare**.

If you know something is going to feel like a burden that day, prepare for it ahead of time. If you know it'll be easy to slip back into some unhealthy rhythms, prepare some guardrails against it. Maybe preparing for Sabbath means setting a reminder on your phone a couple of days before so you don't forget. Maybe you do all your meal prep the night before. You do a quick tidying up around the house so you're not trying to rest in a space that reminds you of what you have to do.

Preparing for Sabbath might mean setting an away message on your email or doing what you need to do so you can leave your device in another room. We give kids a hard time about being addicted to their devices, but listen, adults, if the idea of a day separated from your devices makes you start to shake a little...I'm just saying!

So, do what you and your family need to do to prepare for Sabbath and then **enjoy** it. You're creating margin for you and your family. You're actively rebelling against the pace of our culture. As one author put it, you are practicing Sabbath as resistance! You're choosing a way of life that says, "I'm not going to keep bumping up against my limits all the time and call it normal! And I'm not going to let my family do it, either."

If you want to step into the rhythms of rest God has given us, **(show list)** you have to decide to do it, decide what you're going to do, and (more importantly) NOT do. You have to prepare for it and then enjoy it. And as you look at that list, I wonder if there's one that stands out as your next step? If so, is there something you can do TODAY to take it?

And listen, I get that this is not easy. I know there is a lot of guilt around this issue. Going into this series, my prayer has been that we don't add to the guilt and shame that many of us already feel around this topic, especially when we think about our kids. It is SO easy to teach on Sabbath and rhythms of rest and turn them into a burden instead of the gift that God meant for them to be.

And so, today is not me wagging my finger at you, saying, "You should do this!" I'm not going to "should" on you on my way out the door for my sabbatical! That's how the Pharisees taught on the Sabbath and Jesus didn't have very kind things to say about them.

Instead, I just want to remind you that there's a better way to live. I just want to remind you that we all have limits because it's not a message you're going to hear in our world today. And God has given us the Sabbath to remind us of those limits and protect us from the pain

of bumping up against them all the time. And when we live within the rhythms of rest He has given us, we find that we have a lot more time and energy for the things and the people that matter most.

I'll close with this. Someone dropped a book off to me a couple of weeks ago called *Embracing the Rhythms of Work and Rest*. It came with a really sweet card, but no name, so if it was you, thank you. Notes with no name on them aren't typically sweet and encouraging, but yours was! I actually added the book to my Sabbatical reading list.

In the book, the author, Ruth Haley Barton writes, "Sabbath is more than a practice – it is a way of life ordered around God's invitation to regular rhythms of work, rest, and replenishment that will sustain us for the long haul of life."

And so, may you not be like the bird by my window. May you perceive your limits, your family's limits, and may you make the effort to step into God's rhythms of rest so you don't keep bumping up against them and can instead make time to enjoy all the goodness of God and the good things he has given us.