



November 22, 2020

“Finding Rest for Your Soul”

Matthew 11:1-19

Pastor Gary Hamrick

God has created a pause for our work week with what the Bible calls a Sabbath. The Sabbath is a time of rest and it’s intended to benefit us both physically and spiritually. We need to rest physically – to be off and recharge our batteries, so to speak. But even more than that, we need rest for our souls that can only be found in a relationship with Jesus. There are a lot of tired and weary people in our world: people who are tired of running from God, tired of an empty life, tired of the lies and the shame and the weight of sin. Jesus invites us to come to him and find rest for our souls. In today’s message, Pastor Gary teaches about rest for our souls and the three things that can hinder finding God’s rest.

Historical Background

1. Pastor Gary said, “[[Matthew 12:1-14](#) is] about perceived violations of the Sabbath Law that Jesus and his disciples committed. ... Unfortunately, over the years, what God intended as something beneficial to people, the Sabbath, has over time for some been reduced to a list of rules and regulations that have become burdensome, or for others, something that is just completely ignored altogether.”
2. Physical Benefits of the Sabbath
 - a. The Hebrew word for rest in [Genesis 2:2](#) is Shabath. ¹
 - b. Pastor Gary said, “The idea behind Shabath – ‘to rest’ – in its original form in [Genesis 2:2](#) is the idea that [God] paused to enjoy, to reflect upon, and to celebrate what he had done. And to that end Sabbath for us should include the same element. Sabbath for us should include a time when we pause, to reflect upon, and enjoy the goodness of God. That is, in part, why we come to church. When we come to church, we in effect are putting our busy lives

¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=H7673&t=NKJV>

on pause long enough that we can gather together, worship the Lord, study the Bible, and in doing so we are pausing to enjoy, reflect upon, to celebrate the goodness of God. And even though Sabbath Day is still technically speaking on Saturday, ever since Christ rose from the dead, what you begin to see in the early Church is that Christians started making Sunday a day of celebration and worship, and so we've carried on that tradition ever since the book of Acts when the early Church started to gather on Sundays to remember the resurrection of Christ, which occurred on a Sunday. So, for most Protestants, not all... our Sunday is our Sabbath... We have to learn to relax a little bit, and so this is why God has inserted the Sabbath into his Word. ... It's a gift to us, and because it's a gift, it's something beneficial for us. It makes sense that we can do beneficial and necessary things on the Sabbath without violating it. It's a good day, for our good, and we can do good. ... God prescribed a day for us, but not to the exclusion of doing good and necessary things."

- c. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, who practiced strict adherence to the Law charged that Jesus and the disciples violated the Sabbath for "working/threshing" on the Sabbath, and the reason was because they didn't understand the real purpose of the Sabbath.
- d. [Matthew 12:1-2](#) - *"At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!'"*
- e. When Jesus healed the man with the withered hand, the very same people accused Jesus of "working" on the Sabbath, which shows how much more they were interested in keeping their understanding of the Law than the wellbeing of the man who was healed!
- f. [Exodus 20:8-11](#) - *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."*
- g. The Mishnah ² is a commentary on the Law that was written by Jewish religious leaders and scholars over a period of about three hundred years (circa 200 B.C. to 135 A.D.).
- h. The Mishnah includes twenty-four chapters on what work is and what work is not in relation to the Sabbath!
- i. The Mishnah was imposed upon people as though it was God's Word.
- j. [Mark 2:27](#) - *"And [Jesus] said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and*

² <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/mishnah>

not man for the Sabbath.’ ”

- k. Jesus responded to their outrage about the disciples and him being Sabbath lawbreakers by telling them about a time when David and his men were in a similar situation, how priests are not violating the Sabbath when they serve, how it’s not wrong to rescue sheep from a ditch on the Sabbath, and how necessity always overrules legality.
- l. **Matthew 12:3-8, 11-12** - *“But He said to them, ‘Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?’³ Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’ ... Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’ ”*

3. Spiritual Benefits of the Sabbath

- a. Pastor Gary said, “[We need rest for our souls. We need] the kind of rest that only comes in a relationship with Jesus.”
- b. **Matthew 11:28-30** - *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest for your souls**. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”* (Emphasis added)
- c. Jesus used a farming illustration that would have been easily understood by his hearers.
- d. In Jesus’ illustration of two oxen yoked together, one would have been an older, stronger, and more seasoned ox [Jesus], and the other younger, weaker, and less seasoned, who received the benefit of a reduced workload [us].
- e. Pastor Gary said, “In other words, what Jesus is telling us is that there is a restlessness that runs deep in the human soul that can only be satisfied when [we] are harnessed with Jesus.”

What Hinders Entering God’s Rest?

4. Unrepentant Sin

- a. Sin separates us from God and it’s the root of all of the restless in our lives.
- b. To repent means that we turn from sin and to God, and repentance is the

³ **1 Samuel 21:1-6**

first step in entering into a relationship with God.

- c. **Acts 3:19** – *“Repent, therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord...”*
- d. Simply put, when we get right with God, it’s then that we will have peace with God.

5. Unforgiving Self

- a. **1 John 1:9** – *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*
- b. Pastor Gary said, “When we don’t forgive ourselves, even when God has forgiven us, we don’t really experience the kind of rest that he wants us to have. [We] should never see ourselves any more than the way God sees us, but neither should we see ourselves any less than the way God sees us. If we really want to experience that rest when we are in a relationship with [God], then we have to learn to see ourselves the way he sees us: loved, forgiven, [and] redeemed. Sometimes we have less mercy for ourselves than what God has given us, and we rob ourselves of entering that rest because we can’t seem to forgive ourselves. It’s important to understand that when he forgives us, we need to forgive ourselves as well. Stop listening to the lies of the enemy who whispers in your ear that you are not loved, you are not forgiven, and you are not redeemed. If you think that you aren’t worthy, fine! That’s a fact. None of us is worthy, but because of what Christ has done for us on the cross, he has made us worthy in him.”
 - i. **Revelation 3:4** – *“... they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.”* (Emphasis added)

6. Unbelieving Soul

- a. Pastor Gary said, “You will not find rest for your soul if you do not believe with your soul. When [I] say soul, [I’m] talking about heart and mind. We have to engage the heart and mind to understand and to believe that Jesus loves us, died on a cross for us, and wants relationship with us. You have to believe in order to receive. ... Unbelief robs us of [God’s] rest. ... There are a lot of tired and weary people in this world. ... tired of running, tired of feeling empty or guilty, tired of playing games with God, tired of the lies [and a] double life. Jesus invites [us] to come to him and find rest for [our] souls. Repent of your sins. Believe with your heart. Accept Jesus as Lord, and when he forgives you, forgive yourself and enter into his rest...”
- b. **John 1:12** – *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name...”*
- c. **Hebrews 4:3** – *“For we who have believed do enter that rest...”*

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Matthew 12:1-14](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they were challenged by someone about what they were or were not doing on Sundays.
3. How has the Holy Spirit helped you to change your understanding of what it means to experience the blessings and benefits of a day of rest?
4. Provide an overview of the Pharisees' understanding of Sabbath. (See #2a, #2c through #2l above)
5. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the physical benefits of having a day of rest. (See #2b above)
6. Allow the people in your group to share experiences about being a person who was unsettled and without rest before coming to faith in Christ.
7. Read and discuss [Matthew 11:28-30](#). (See #3a through #3e above)
8. Read and discuss [Acts 3:19](#) and the blessings that come when we repent of sin. (See #4c above)
9. Read and discuss [1 John 1:9](#) and allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've been unwilling or unable to forgive themselves. (See #5a above)
10. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's remarks about forgiveness. (See #5b above)
11. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about believing with our heart and mind. (See #6a above)
12. Read and discuss [John 1:12](#) and [Hebrews 4:3](#). (See #6b and #6c above)
13. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)