

Practices & Study Guide

Lent 2019

Week 2

The Way of

patient
kind
not jealous
not boastful
not proud
not rude
does not demand its own way
not irritable
not resentful
does not keep record of wrongs
does not rejoice in injustice
rejoices in truth
never gives up
never loses faith
hopeful
endures

LOVE

Week 2: Unplug (Sabbath)

Introduction: Sabbath

Sabbath is a Hebrew word that means “stop.” Like what happens when we unplug something from a power source. A Sabbath can be an intentional interruption of the work and school schedule;

- a time to reflect and worship without distraction.
- an opportunity to trust God with our time and our lives.

It can happen once a week as well as every day in small ways that become part of our lifestyle.

Try it Out! Practice 1: Weekly Sabbath

Look at the next week and schedule a day without work (or a half a day if a full day isn't possible.) Spend that day being present to God's in prayer or Bible Reading, enjoying favorite activities, a favorite meal, and/or simply resting.

Reflect on this practice of taking a break without work. What went well? What was easy? What was difficult about taking a significant time away from working? How did you feel in that time of Sabbath?

Try it Out! Practice 2: Daily Sabbath

Carve out 5-10 minutes in your day to engage in a mini-Sabbath. Directions on how to engage this time of daily rest are below:

Instructions for daily Sabbath:

1. Find somewhere you can be quiet and still. Turn off your phone and other electronics and begin to settle yourself down. Physically unplug something (your computer, TV or something else) as a symbolic act of “unplugging.” Close your eyes and take a deep breath.
2. Think of all the distractions in your life – the things that cause you anxiety, fear or stress. Imagine these things written on wet sand at the beach. Now imagine the ocean tide sweeping in and completely erasing the words, leaving smooth wet sand.
3. Sit in a moment of silence, unplugged from your distractions.

Here are some more ideas of things to do while you are unplugged:

- Go for a walk or run and thank God for the different things you see that you are genuinely grateful for.
- Choose a word or phrase to focus on each time you're reminded of the thing or experience you are unplugging from. For instance, when you think about it, you might silently say, “God, I want to notice you,” or “Jesus, be near.” This can be a helpful way to redirect your thoughts toward God.

Try it! Practice 3: Meditate on Scripture

We're going to engage scripture in a pattern that involves four steps: Read, meditate, pray, and contemplate. The first step is to read the passage: **Read Psalm 46** (below). As you read, take note of any words or phrases that stick out to you.

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
Come, behold the works of the LORD;
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.
"Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

Psalm 46

Meditate on the word or phrase you noticed most. Focus in on it for a few moments. Make a list or draw some images of other things that are similar to this word or phrase. Why do you think this grabbed your attention?

Pray to God. Invite God to speak to you about your own life in light of this passage. Ask God to create a deeper connection with you day by day.

Contemplate on the characteristics of God that are highlighted in Psalm 46. Make a list of all the things we learn about who God is and what God is like based on this passage. Thank God for these truths.

Plan another time this week to set aside as a similar Sabbath moment, maybe even every day. Try this pattern again: read, meditate, pray, and contemplate with another passage of the Bible. (Suggestions: Mark 12:28-34, Psalm 136)

Notice this week - Reflection

If you do choose to unplug from something, take notes (mental or written) of what the experience is like for you. Is it hard to let go of what you unplug from? Do you find yourself thinking about it instead of being focused on noticing God? If so, don't worry—that's a common experience.

Noticing God in Your Whole Family

Here are some ideas for you to engage the whole family this week (please don't feel like you have to do all of them; just pick one or two):

- In the spirit of the Sabbath (a regular interruption of our normal routine to notice God), could you surprise your family with a Sabbath moment? Perhaps dismiss a usual weekly chore to give kids a break. Take everyone on a field trip to a local museum or park to notice God's creation. Say "no" to an unnecessary commitment on behalf of your family (a birthday party or extra soccer practice) and treat them to a relaxing night home instead. Or instead of working on the computer when you're around the house this weekend, keep it turned off and see who notices. Then at the end of the weekend ask what it was like for other members of your family for you to spend the weekend away from your computer.
- Connect with a friend or two this week and ask for ideas their family has tried in order to create more Sabbath rhythms in their lives.

Small Group Questions

1. During the moments this week that you have intentionally “unplugged,” have you noticed any difference in your life or your time with God? Has God shown you something that you wouldn’t have noticed before?

2. If you haven’t really had a chance to “unplug,” how do you feel about that?

3. What is something you could temporarily “unplug” from - for an hour a week, ten minutes a day, one day a week, or even for the rest of the series - to create space to notice God? (This doesn’t need to be something that literally plugs in. This could be any of life’s distractions.)

4. **Read Genesis 2:2-3 and Deuteronomy 5:15.** What rationale do these two passages give for Sabbath rest?

5. **Read Mark 2:27-28 and Matt 11:28-30.** What insights do you gain by reading what Jesus had to say about Sabbath in these passages?

6. **Read Mark 1:35-39.** How does this story inform the call to rest?

7. **Read 1 Kings 19:10-12.** Reflect on this example of rest. What do you notice in this story?

8. Take time as a group to practice Sabbath together. Engage in Practice 3 above together as a group. Then reflect on how it went. (eg. What went well, what didn't go well, could you make this a regular practice - why or why not...)