

# You Need A Vacation!

On Sunday we continued our “New Beginnings” sermon series by considering whether the new beginning many of us need is simply to resolve to do less.

1. Warm-up question: Years ago, a stressed-out New York City bus driver named William Camillo abandoned his route and drove all the way to Hollywood, Florida, before running out of money and getting arrested. Do you ever fantasize about “leaving it all behind?” If so, where would you go?
2. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for hundreds of years. Then God miraculously freed them. But that doesn’t mean their lives were instantly better. They’d spent generations learning how to survive as slaves, now they had to learn to live as free people. What do you imagine the life of the typical Israelite was like when they were enslaved? If you had been one of them, what might have been the worst part of slavery for you?
3. After the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from slavery, while they were still trying to learn what it means to live free, Moses went up a mountain to ask God for guidance. One of the first things God said to Moses – one of the ten most important things God said – was: “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work. . . . For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day.” Exodus 20:8.
  - a. Basically, this verse is saying that we, in our own lives, should imitate what God did (and does). If God makes room for Sabbath renewal, so should we. Did God “need” to rest and renew? Why or why not? Why would an infinite being need Sabbath?
  - b. In ancient culture, slaves were valued only for their work. By contrast, children were considered worthy simply for being who they are. So what are the implications of saying we are children of God? And what does that mean for how we should approach our work/life balance?
  - c. Which is more holy and important – work or rest?
4. Deuteronomy 5:15 gives another important reason for the Sabbath principle. It says, “Remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” The idea here is that God specifically gave the Israelites the Sabbath principle to help them overcome the slave mentality and learn to live as free people.
  - a. Why was Sabbath observance especially important for former slaves?

- b. Though we don't answer to any Egyptian overlords, the Bible does tell us that "powerful spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12) are constantly trying to enslave us by telling us that we always need to be "on" and don't have time for rest and renewal. Why is that message so powerful and hard to resist?
  - c. What's something in your life that needs to get done, but isn't done, and it's stressing you out?
  - d. John Gardner once said, "We can keep ourselves so busy, fill our lives with so many diversions, stuff our heads with so much knowledge, involve ourselves with so many people, and cover so much ground that we never have time to probe the fearful and wonderful world within. . . . By midlife most of us are accomplished fugitives from ourselves." What does it mean to be "a fugitive from myself?"
5. Jeff suggested three reasons why Sabbath observance makes such a powerful, positive difference in our lives:
- It helps me learn to live like a beloved child of God, instead of a slave.
  - It constitutes one of life's GREATEST acts of faith. When I summon the courage to give up time that could have been devoted to "doing," I am boldly declaring that God is greater than even time itself – *Jehovah Jireh* ("The Lord will provide").
  - It creates space for renewal and creative insight that back feeds into my work time making it more productive, so I end up accomplishing more than if I had not observed the Sabbath.

Which of these reasons most speaks to you – and why?

6. Malachi 3:10 says, "Test me, says the Lord, and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out for you such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." In that spirit, Jeff challenged us to conduct a two-week experiment using the Sabbath principles listed on p. 3 – or your own adaptation of those principles. Take a moment to read the principles.
- a. Do these feel like good guidelines for modern Sabbath practice? What do you like about them? What do you dislike?
  - b. What's the benefit, if any, of designating a specific day for Sabbath observance and for having specific rules that guide you on that day?
  - c. What are the biggest impediments to Sabbath observance?
  - d. How would you assess your current Sabbath practice – highly observant, very unobservant, or somewhere in between? What, if anything, needs to change for your Sabbath observance to be more powerful?

## **Suggested Guidelines For Modern Sabbath Observance**

1. **Just Be . . .**

This will be a Day of being, not doing.

2. **Make Time for God . . .**

As an act of faith, I will go to worship, whether I feel like I have the time or not.

3. **Palms Up . . .**

At worship, and throughout the Day, I will be in the “Palms Up” mode, mindfully soaking in the presence and goodness of God all around me all Day long – because that’s what will renew me.

4. **No Stressful Stuff . . .**

On my Sabbath, I will only do things that I genuinely find relaxing and refreshing, except in an emergency.

5. **No Hurry . . .**

I will let the Day breathe. No hurry. I will act as though I have an infinite supply of time because, as an eternal child of the living God, I do. So on Sabbath Day, I’m going to act like it!

6. **Social Media?**

Consider whether social media contributes to, or detracts from, your Sabbath renewal. If it detracts, craft a personal rule to minimize its adverse impact on your Sabbath Day.

Remember, Jesus set us free from legalism. The Sabbath principle is not about rule keeping, but about maximizing our rest and renewal. What works for someone else may not work for you or vice versa. Design a Sabbath practice that works best for you, then be religious about keeping it!