



A weekly resource to spark biblically-centered conversations with your kids about the issues they face in today's youth culture.

SABBATH

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“Sabbath” is a biblical idea that conveys important spiritual significance for how young people navigate and flourish in the world. It’s also a term that is often either neglected, or burdened with legalistic restrictions. Helping your family and your teen(s) develop a robust understanding of sabbath will equip them to walk in greater joy, fulfillment and purpose for God’s glory!



What is Happening?

We’re living in what has appropriately been labeled an ‘attention economy’. Attention is treated as a scarce commodity and each of us have more things vying for our time and focus than we could ever hope to give our full attention to. In this environment, it’s challenging to develop healthy rhythms of rest and rejuvenation.

We live in a hurried and worried world. This is especially true for young people who, as digital natives, have been immersed in the attention economy and bombarded with information and schedule overload all of their lives. The rapid and chaotic pace of life is so common that for teens it often feels normal (or at least “expected”). Many have also come to anticipate the negative side effects associated with our full schedules. Things such as stress, mental health challenges and distanced relationships are commonplace today.

- *Mental health.* Mental health challenges among teens continue to trend upward. An increasing number of teens report feeling anxious, depressed, sad and hopeless.
- *Struggle to find time for rest.* Teens continue to feel overwhelmed with the pressures of school, work and extracurricular activities. The average teen sleeps two hours less per night than research indicates they need.
- *Constant distraction.* Teens spend the equivalent of a 40 hour work week in front of screens, not counting screentime for school and homework. They’re exposed to more information than they’re able to process. This creates a never-ending cycle of distraction and multitasking.
- *Feelings of isolation.* While screens provide quick connection, they often prevent the formation of deep and meaningful relationships.
- *Lack of robust and countercultural faith.* In their 2020 report, Global Youth Culture, the ministry OneHope recorded findings from their survey of nearly 8,400 teenagers (ages 13 to 19) from 20 nations. Of teens surveyed, 43% identified as Christian. Tragically, of those youth, only 7% displayed the beliefs and actions of a committed Christian. Teens struggling to step into the depth of purpose that Christ calls them to instead reflect the hurry and worry of the culture around them.





WORD

What Does God's Word Say?

In stark contrast to the hurried and worried pace of the world, God's Word calls us to walk in joy (Psalm 16:11, Galatians 5:22-23) and to boldly act as God's representatives here on earth (2 Corinthians 5:20). In order to do this, we need to create space where we pull back from our normal rhythms and schedules to rest and refocus. Helping your teen have a robust understanding of 'sabbath' is critical for their spiritual growth and their ability to build God's Kingdom. The Bible has much to say about sabbath, in both the Old and New Testaments. There are also strong cultural norms that exist, especially common in older generations, for how sabbath should be understood and practiced. Careful examination of God's Word on this issue is critical (Colossians 2:16). Here are five insights for how sabbath can be understood and applied in a teen's life:

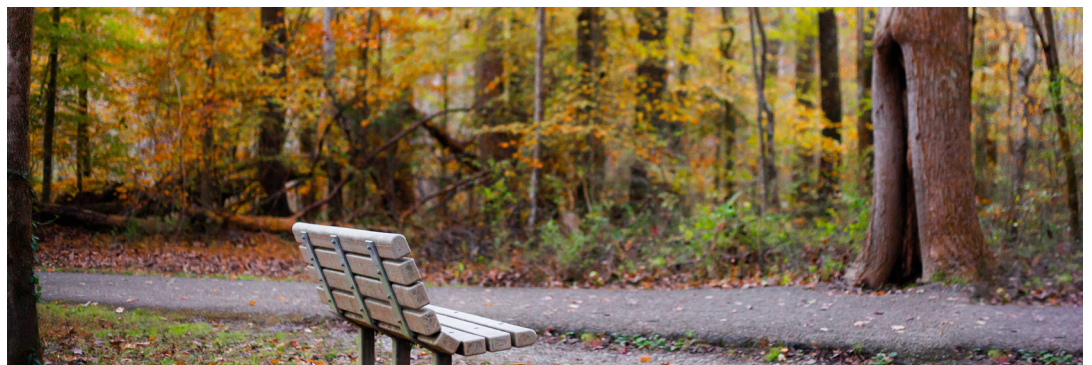
Rest. In the Old Testament, God commands His people to remember the Sabbath day and to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8). God gave us the pattern of rest (Genesis 2:2) - daily and weekly - because our bodies need this to function at full capacity.

Restrict. A powerful, yet countercultural, aspect of sabbath is to lay aside certain activities that are common in our daily lives. This is less about following legalistic rules to 'do no work', and more about giving space to evaluate the things we're focusing on and trusting in (Proverbs 3:5-6). It's also an opportunity to see where idols are forming in our lives. If something feels impossible to give up for a day, that's a good sign that we need to do exactly that!

Remember. In the busyness of daily life, it's so easy to get distracted. Sabbath is an opportunity to remember that this world is not our home (Hebrews 13:14-15); that God is making all things new (Revelation 21:3-5); that our lives have meaning through Christ, rather than the things we do (Matthew 11:28-30); and that we've each been tasked with spreading the good news of Jesus to everyone God puts in our lives (Matthew 28:19-20).

Reconnect. The pull of attention and activity in our lives makes it easy to become isolated and distanced from others. Sabbath is an opportunity to intentionally reconnect with other believers as we remember together what God has done, and is doing, in our lives (Hebrews 10:25).

Reflect. The concept of healthy rhythms of rest, restriction, remembrance and reconnection are increasingly uncommon in our busy world. The very practice of making time for these sends a powerful message to our neighbors, peers and world that we're living in a different way. This is an intentional way to spread the gospel - to reflect the love and joy of Jesus - through our lifestyle (2 Corinthians 5:11-21).





WALK

Conversation Starters and Questions:

Making space to intentionally rest, restrict, remember, reconnect and reflect are becoming increasingly countercultural. Sabbath is a powerful opportunity to refocus ourselves on God, and reignite a passion to spread God's love in our world. Take time to discuss the following questions with your teens as you talk together about practicing sabbath:

- Which of the five aspects of sabbath - rest, restrict, remember, reconnect, reflect - come most naturally to you?
- In what ways are you/our family already practicing sabbath? Which of these do you like? Which are challenging for you?
- Have you ever considered taking a social media sabbath? How about a phone sabbath?
- What are some benefits that will come from developing the practice of weekly sabbath?
- What challenges will you have in creating regular time to sabbath each week?
- How can you use sabbath as an opportunity to showcase the gospel to your friends and peers?
- What's one step that you can take this week to get started with practicing sabbath?

"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

(Matthew 11:28-29)



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