



# Worship

# Overview

For many Western Christians, Sunday has become what Eugene Peterson called a “bastard Sabbath”—the illegitimate offspring of the Sabbath and a secular day off.

Whether you practice Sabbath on Sundays, Saturdays, or another day of the week, it’s essential to remember God commands us to “remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy.” To keep it “holy” means to sanctify it, set it apart, and dedicate it to God for his special purposes. Sabbath isn’t just a day to sleep in, relax, and do whatever brings you joy (*it is*, but *it’s more*): it’s a day to worship. To reorient your entire life back to its center in God.

In our final week of Sabbath, we elevate the Sabbath from a restful, joyful day off to a holy day of worship and delight in God himself.



# Practice

## WEEK 04: WORSHIP

For our final week, we have two exercises for you.

### **01 Practice a light and life-giving version of what the ancients called “fixed-hour prayer.”**

All that means is you pause two to three times during your 24-hour Sabbath to pray. Not prayer as in intercede for God to move in the world. In fact, in Orthodox Judaism, intercessory prayer is forbidden on the Sabbath because it’s a form of work. Prayer in the wider sense is a reorientation of your heart to God in wonder and awe. One understanding of prayer is coming to rest in God’s goodness. Two to three times this Sabbath, rest in God’s goodness.

The most ancient and, for many people, the most helpful way to do this is by praying a psalm, such as Psalm 23, 37, 103, or 105.

You can also do this by listening to worship music or praying with a friend or going on a walk in nature—the options are endless.

The end goal is spend as much of the Sabbath as you possibly can in conscious communion with God, just receiving his love for you and giving back your love for him.

### **02 Identify two to three practices by which you enjoy God and do them.**

It’s key to discover what the spiritual writer Gary Thomas calls your “spiritual pathway;” the way you are uniquely wired to enjoy God.

For you this could be time alone in stillness, or it could be throwing a raucous party with your community. It could be walking in nature or reading a novel by the fire. It could be an emotional experience, or it could be the intellectual study of theology, philosophy, or quantum physics. It could be a sensory act such as walking, fishing, or bird-watching.

As you discern if an activity is a good fit or not for your Sabbath practice, it can be difficult to know if certain things are appropriate. One simple rubric is to filter every potential activity through the four movements of Sabbath:

1. **Stop** — Is this ceasing what I do on normal workdays? For example, if you work as a mechanic, but you really enjoy gardening, even though it can be a bit physical, that may be a beautiful Sabbath activity for you. But if you're a landscaper, it's likely not the best fit for your Sabbath practice.
2. **Rest** — Is this restful? Does it refill my soul with new energy emotionally, intellectually, physically, spirituality? Things like watching TV may give us a welcome break, but we seldom get done and feel new energy for life.
3. **Delight** — Does this activity bring me deep, visceral joy in God? Do I find myself naturally happy and grateful and connected to God as I do it?
4. **Worship** — Does this activity connect me more deeply to God and his goodness and beauty? Do I find myself coming alive to the wonder of his nature and spontaneously bursting into praise?

However you enjoy God and whatever the practices you love, do a few of them this coming Sabbath.

The point of both these exercises is to live in what Jesus called "abiding," not only all Sabbath long, but all week long.



# Reach Exercise

WEEK 04: WORSHIP

## Reading

Read Part 3 and the Conclusion of *Sabbath* by Dan Allender (pp. 149-194).

## Podcast

Listen to episode 4 of the Sabbath series from the Rule of Life podcast by Practicing the Way.

## Exercise: Silence and Solitude

Our final Reach Exercise is to spend a portion of your Sabbath in the quiet with God. There is a special kind of stillness that comes on the Sabbath when our relationship to time is unhurried, and we savor more than we stress. See if you can tap into that Sabbath time and give it back to God in loving worship.

To do this, we recommend you find a quiet, distraction-free time and place. For many, first thing in the morning is the ideal time, but do whatever works best for your life.

For couples with younger children, consider breaking the day into thirds — a third spent all together in delight, a third for one parent to go be alone to rest and pray while the other plays with the children, and a third where the parents swap places.

Spend your time in silence and solitude reading Scripture, journaling, walking in nature, or just napping and prayerfully resting in God; whatever your pathway is to God's peace and presence.

# Sabbath Reflection

## WEEK 04: WORSHIP

After your Sabbath, take 10 minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

01 Where did I feel resistance?

02 Where did I feel delight?

03 Where did I most experience God's nearness?

Continue to share what you are learning about God, Sabbath, and your spiritual journey with a close friend or community member.

**Note: Be as specific as possible as you write. Bullet points are fine, but if you write it out in narrative form your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.**