Sabbath: Your Weekly Yes to God's Gift of Rest

It started, as these things often do, over a lunchtime meal.

A friend and I met up at a little Thai bistro off Colorado Boulevard, savoring Panang curry while catching up on family news. Before long, our conversation took a turn—an important one.

In view of the relentless demands of life and leadership, we found ourselves circling around one big question: ***How do you keep your soul healthy?***

As we compared notes, our answers quickly-–and unmistakably—overlapped. Almost in unison, we began talking about the indispensability of **Sabbath**—that sacred, set-apart day each week where the "got-to's" give way to the "get-to's." That day when you stop long enough to remember you're not God, and long enough to receive the rest He designed for you to enjoy.

A Working Definition

Over the years, I've been refining how I describe Sabbath. Here's where I've landed:

Sabbath is a weekly 24-hour period devoted to God for the purpose of rest, renewal, reflection, relationship, and recentering—when the "got-to's" give way to the "get-to's."

My take on the relevant Scriptures is that Sabbath is a gift. An invitation. Not a rule or requirement.

Yet sadly this life-giving gift is often unopened.

In the circles I run in—primarily Christian leaders—Sabbath is the exception rather than the rule. In a recent leadership workshop, I took a show of hands. Fewer than half the leaders present had any intentional pattern of Sabbath in their lives.

That's telling.
And I don't believe it's what God had in mind.

What Is Sabbath, Really?

Here are a few voices who have shaped my thinking about Sabbath:

> *Sabbath provides for us now an additional rhythm for an entire reorientation of our lives around the living God.*
> —Pete Scazzero

> *Sabbath is not the reward you take at the end of finishing everything on your to-do list—because you and I both know that day never comes…it's the rest you take smack-dab in the middle of your tasks…without apology, without guilt.*
> —Mark Buchanan

In other words, Sabbath is a decidedly countercultural act of trust.

A deliberate pause.
An intentional time-out.
A weekly reminder that God is God—and you are not.

Why Sabbath Matters More Than We Realize

Ruth Haley Barton calls Sabbath the "linchpin" of a life aligned with the rhythms God built into the world. I wholeheartedly agree.

Reggie McNeal says it disrupts our default routines so we can remember and reflect.

Gordon MacDonald notes that Sabbath is the way we press "peace" into the rush and routine of our daily lives.

Sabbath is God's way of caring for the deepest parts of us.
Our minds.
Our bodies.
Our souls.

It's the renewable rhythm God designed for your life and leadership.

What Sabbath Actually Looks Like

For me, Sabbath has become a weekly invitation where I pursue the things that restore my soul:

- Enjoy personal worship
- Worship/serve at your church
- Take a long walk
- Enjoy some moments of reflection
- Read a good book
- Take the family to the park
- Share a meal with loved ones
- Enjoy coffee and a conversation with a family member or friend
- Watch a family-friendly movie
- Zoom with some out-of-town family or friends
- Call out for pizza and play a board game with your kids
- Watch NFL football or the Masters golf tournament

No stopwatch. No agenda. No pressure.

Sabbath carries a spirit—a quiet surrender where the relentless demands of life are shelved under a simple

sign: **Not today.**

Sabbath also provides time to review the game film of our lives. We play back our decisions, attitudes, relationships, challenges, accomplishments, failures—with a view to deepen our faith-walk.

A Shift of Heart, Not Just a Shift of Schedule

Sabbath is not a ritual; it's a life-giving rhythm. It's not a check-box, but rather a way of choosing to see your life from a different angle, with a different mind-set, in a different light.

You still have your job tomorrow.
Your responsibilities.
Your challenges.

But Sabbath lets you come at them with a replenished soul rather than a depleted one.

[BTW: Here's a Sabbath FAQ that speaks to many practical matters].

Your 40-Day Test Drive

Let me ask you a question:
Does Sabbath occupy a reserved spot on your calendar?

If not, I'd like to offer a simple invitation:
Give it a 40-day test drive.

Six weeks.
Six pauses.
Six intentional choices to say *yes* to God's gift.

My promise?
By the end, you'll begin to discover how God's gift of rest will dramatically impact your life and leadership.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Executive Director
Lead With Your Life