



How to use the Companion Guide:

- 01 **Learn:** Gather together as a community for an interactive experience of learning about the Way of Jesus through teaching, storytelling, and discussion. Bring your Guide to the Session and follow along.
- 02 **Practice:** On your own, before the next session, go and “put it into practice,” as Jesus himself said. We will provide weekly spiritual disciplines and spiritual exercises, as well as recommended resources to go deeper.
- 03 **Reflect:** Reflection is key to spiritual formation. After your practice and before the next session, set aside 10-15 minutes to reflect on your experience. Reflection questions are included in this Guide at the end of each session.
- 04 **Process together:** When you come back together, begin by sharing your reflections with your group. This moment is crucial, because we need each other to process our life before God and make sense of our stories. If you are meeting in a larger group, you will need to break into smaller sub-groups for this conversation so everything has a chance to share.

Tips

It's essential to remember that all of the Practices are a *means to an end*.

The end goal of Sabbath is not to say, "I practice Sabbath." It's to apprentice under Jesus to become a person who is marked by an inner spirit of restfulness and who is calm, at ease in their own body, unhurried, kind, and present. You will become aware of what God is doing around you, sincerely grateful, emotionally healthy, and delighted by the goodness of your life with God. A person who is like a rock in a sea of chaos, unmoved by the overwork, overconsumption, and overactivity of our host culture.

Because it's so easy to lose sight of the end goal of a Practice, here are a few tips to keep in mind as you sabbath.





01 Start small

Start where you are, not where you “should” be. If a full 24 hours is too much, start with a half day; if that’s too much, start with a few hours.

02 Think subtraction, not addition

Please do not “add” Sabbath into your already overbusy, overfull life. Think: what can I cut out? A weekend sports team? A house project? Weekend emails? Formation is about less, not more.

03 You get out what you put in

The more fully you give yourself to this Practice, the more life-changing it will be. The more you just dabble with it and the more shortcuts you take, the less transformation you will experience.

04 Remember the J-curve

Experts on learning tell us that whenever we set out to master a new skill, it tends to follow a J-shaped curve; we tend to get worse before we get better. If you currently enjoy your Sunday routine or day off, don’t be surprised if your first few Sabbaths are awkward and difficult. Just stay with the Practice; you will come around.

05 There is no formation without repetition

Spiritual formation is slow, deep, cumulative work that takes years, not weeks. The goal of this four-session experience is just to get you started on a journey of a lifetime. Upon completion of this Practice, you will have a map for the journey ahead and hopefully some possible companions for the Way. But what you do next is up to you.



Stop

Overview

In Session 01 we explore the first movement of Sabbath and the most literal meaning of the Hebrew verb *shabbat* — “to stop.” To sabbath is, at it’s most basic, to *stop*, to cease, to be done.

Peruse any popular magazine and pay close attention to the advertisements — a couple lounging in bed and reading the paper, a woman and her dog napping on the couch, a group of friends on the beach for a picnic — they are all images of stopping. Marketing departments the world over know that you crave a life with Sabbath, or what Marva Dawn called a “Sabbath spirituality” — a life with moments of peace, ease, calm. And they are offering to sell you Sabbath. The irony is you don’t need to buy anything to sabbath, you just need to stop.

In the Genesis story, the Creator God himself rested on the seventh day, and in doing so he built a rhythm into the fabric

of creation. For six days we work and labor and wrestle with the earth, but on the seventh day, we stop. We breathe. We come to rest.

When we live in alignment with this ancient, primal rhythm, as Jesus did, we find what Jesus called “rest for our souls.” But when we fight or chafe against or attempt to outsmart this innate, bodily cadence, we fracture our soul’s wholeness into a million pieces. Exhaustion, confusion, alienation from God and others, harm to the earth and the poor, and even spiritual death are all the toxic waste of a life without Sabbath.

In Session 01, we experiment with Sabbath as a day to stop.

Opening Questions

When instructed, pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 What's your current understanding of the Sabbath?
- 02 Is the Sabbath a part of your life currently or not?
- 03 What thoughts and feelings do you have going into this Sabbath practice?

Notes

As you watch the teaching as a group, feel free to use this page for notes.
What are some main ideas? Or what really resonates with you?

Discussion Questions

Now it's time to pause the video to reflect on the teaching. Circle up in triads (groups of three) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 What stuck out to you from that teaching? Was there a Scripture or thought that especially resonated with you?
- 02 Is Sabbath a part of your current life rhythm or not?
- 03 What are the obstacles that get in the way of your practicing Sabbath? Either practically or emotionally?

Practice

SESSION 01: STOP

Information alone does not produce transformation. To grow, let's put this teaching into practice. Consider what steps the Spirit might be inviting you to take before the next session in response to what you've learned.

01 Pick a time to sabbath, and give it a try

There are three basic options.

- 01 The Christian Sabbath on Sunday, which is best for most of us since it's also our day of worship.
- 02 The traditional Sabbath from sundown on Friday night to the same time on Saturday.
- 03 The midweek Sabbath for those with non-traditional work schedules.

If an entire day is too much for you, that's fine. Start where you are. We recommend you set aside a three-to-four hour time period, either after church on Sunday or on a weekend night, turn off your phone, and just *stop*.

If at all possible, get into a rhythm with Sabbath on the same day each week. Your body will "memorize" the day, begin to anticipate it in the days before, and live off its energy and joy in the days after.

In biblical theology, the day begins at sundown, not sunrise as in the modern mindset. By the end of the week, many of us are too exhausted to really enjoy our Sabbath. For that reason, we recommend you begin at night, if at all possible. Start with a Sabbath meal with your community (more on that in Session 03), or simply light a candle and say a short prayer before you fall asleep.

Circle or write what you feel led to try.

02 Pick a beginning and ending ritual

In a traditional Sabbath ceremony, called the *Kiddush*, you begin by lighting candles, praying, and eating a Sabbath meal with your family and community. And you end by praying and sharing the highlight of your Sabbath.

You can do exactly that, or you can let Sunday worship with your church mark the start, or you can get creative—start with a picnic, bonfire, or hot bath. Let your creativity guide you.

Feel free to use the companion volume *Sabbath Meditations* from *Practicing the Way*.

What ritual would you like to try?

03 Pick one to three Sabbath activities to enter into the spirit of Sabbath

If you read the wider Sabbath literature, some of which is as old as the New Testament itself, you discover there are 12 common activities that fill up a traditional Sabbath.

- 01 Lighting the candles
- 02 Blessing the children
- 03 Eating a Sabbath meal
- 04 Expressing gratitude
- 05 Singing
- 06 Worshiping with your church
- 07 Walking
- 08 Napping
- 09 Making love to your spouse
- 10 Reading, especially Scripture
- 11 Spending time alone with God
- 12 Spending time with family and friends in conversation and celebration

This is not a “to-do list,” but more like 12 best practices that you are invited to grow into over time as your heart desires.

For Session 01, pick one to three that your heart is drawn to and sound appealing to your personality and stage of life. And just see what happens.

Circle or write what you'd like to do.
