

(10-06-24) The Essentials (1)

Community of Sabbath
Genesis 2:1-4 & Exodus 20:8-11

Today is the first Sunday of the new sermon series, *The Essentials*. When we say essentials, it first means they are about our identity as God's community. Secondly, these are things we must not compromise on but must persistently hold onto, no matter what challenges we may face. Lastly, we must have a proper and accurate understanding of those essentials. We will explore **Eight Essentials** for the next two months: **Sabbath, Worship, Fellowship, Reformation, Communion, Servanthood, Non-Members, and Thanksgiving**.

As we navigate each topic from the Scriptures, I hope and pray that we can have time to check in on our understanding of those essentials as well as our spiritual states and practices.

The first essential is the Sabbath.

The name **Sabbath** originally comes from the Hebrew verb *Shabbat*, which means primarily "to cease or desist." In the **NRSV**, *Shabbat* is translated as "rest," while the **Good News Translation** has "stop," and in the **Living Bible**, "cease."

"So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested (*shabbat*) from all the work that he had done in creation." (Genesis 2:3 NRSV).
"He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation and **stopped working**." (Genesis 2:3 GNT)
"and God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he **ceased** this work of creation." (Genesis 2:3 Living Bible)

The second meaning of *Shabbat* is "to rest."

"According to Juan-Cardos Lerman, a biology researcher at the University of Arizona, failing to rest after six days of steady work will lead to insomnia or sleepiness, hormonal imbalances, fatigue, irritability, organ stress, and other increasingly serious physical and mental symptoms. He suggests, "This need for rest every seventh day is rooted in the fact that the human biological clock operates on a 25-hour cycle. Because organized society prevents us from getting up one hour later each day to follow our natural internal clock, our body demands the time to "sleep in" or rest every so often to recover from the forced 24-hour time cycle that is too short. We must 'cease labor' once every seven days and rest our bodies for longer periods than on other days in order to catch up on our cycle of time. The biblical Sabbath commandment includes the ideas of both cessation of labor and refreshment." (Marva Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (1989), 69)

Then why do we need to stop? We need to stop to remember. That is why the Sabbath day is called the Day of Remembrance.

First of all, we need to remember our God.

As we intentionally stop our working and weekly routines, we are to remember who God is, what God has done to us, and God's promises to all of us.

Our lives are so busy. We are too indulged in the work we have to do. Sometimes, people seem to misunderstand their busyness as their importance, effectiveness, and even success in their lives. That is why God, after creating the world, intentionally stopped His work and put the Sabbath into the rhythm of our lives.

“So God blessed the seventh day and made it **holy**, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:3 ESV)

The Hebrew verb for “to be holy or to be set apart” is *kawdash* (커대쉬). We find the very first *kawdash* in Genesis 2:3. God did not set apart or make holy a particular place or object, but rather *kawdash* a special time, the Sabbath day.

God is the essence of love and holiness. God's love is an expression of God's holiness. So, when we are exposed to God's presence, we can participate in God's holiness and love. The Sabbath is the day we remember and participate in God's holiness and love. So, we must set apart the Sabbath day for this purpose.

God emphasizes the same teaching in Exodus 20 as He shared the summary of His commands through the Ten Commandments.

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it **holy** ... For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the Lord **blessed** the Sabbath day and **set it apart as holy**.” (Exodus 20:8 & 11 NLT)

On Sabbath, we need to remember who is really in charge of our lives, who is the real owner of our lives, and where our lives are heading.

“The spiritual rest which God especially intends in this commandment [to keep the Sabbath holy] is that we not only cease from our labor and trade but much more - that we let God alone work in us and that in all our powers we do nothing of our own.” Martin Luther, *Treatise on Good Works* (Luther's Work vol. 44, 1966), 72.) Luther's proclamation, “When our works cease, God alone works in us” sheds light upon the meaning of real rest. When we experience God's presence in our lives as we stop our work, we can finally enjoy rest.

Secondly, we need to remember who we are on the Sabbath day.

“But now, this is what the Lord says—he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you ... For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior ... Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you ...” (Isaiah 43:1, 2a, 3a, 4a NIV)

We set aside a day to remember that we are precious and honored in God's sight and loved, profoundly loved, not because of what we produce but because of God's holiness and love. Celebrating God's love on our Sabbath transforms us so that we can value others more deeply and in the same way as God's love.

Lastly, we need to remember those who have lost their Sabbath.

The Sabbath day is not only for ourselves. It is for all creation and all people. We should especially remember those who have lost their Sabbath: the people in war zones, under natural disasters and pandemics, those who have been persecuted because of their faith in Jesus Christ, and those who need the saving grace of God.

“Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; he sets the prisoners free and gives them joy.” (Psalm 68:5-6a NLT)

“When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” (Isaiah 41:17 NRSV)

The Sabbath day is a day to reorient our hearts toward God's heart. We are not called to do new things at all, but we are called to participate in what God is doing in the world and become part of His program. That is why the Sabbath day is a day of embracement.

Closing

As I close my sermon today, please remember that we are to live our lives centered upon the Sabbath. From Thursday to Saturday, we anticipate the coming Sabbath day. From Monday to Wednesday, we reflect on the past Sabbath day. How? We apply the spirit of the Sabbath to our weekday life. We remember who our God is, who we are, and those who have lost their Sabbath. We are to live up to that kind of remembrance. The Sabbath day is not just the first day of the week. It has to be at the center of the whole week and our lives.