



# THE WAY Sermon Study Guide

## Week 9: The Way of Rest and Reflection

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There is something about the beginning of a new year that feels different. Time seems lighter, a little less rigid. The calendar has not yet filled up, routines are not quite locked in, and many people find themselves unsure what day of the week it even is. It is a season marked by rest, reflection and reset—a space to breathe before life speeds up again.

In the Christian tradition, this moment can be understood as more than just a holiday lull. It can be a *kairos* moment—a God-appointed time that sits outside ordinary clock time. A moment when God invites his people to slow down, pay attention, reflect honestly and respond intentionally. This is the gift of Sabbath.

Read Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 20:8-11

The Greek word *kairos* describes a decisive or opportune moment when God breaks into the ordinary flow of life. It may come through Scripture, a conversation, an interruption, a sense of conviction, or simply the gift of slowing down enough to listen.

The start of a new year naturally creates space for this kind of attentiveness. The danger, however, is that conviction alone does not lead to transformation. Reflection without response changes very little. God's invitation is not just to notice these moments, but to respond to them. And in his grace, God provides a practice that creates space for exactly this kind of reflection and response—a gift given right at the beginning of the biblical story: Sabbath.

In Genesis 2, the creation story pauses. After six days of work, God rests, not because he is tired but as an expression of delight. He steps back from his work,



declares it “very good”, and blesses the day. Sabbath is not an afterthought, it is a rhythm woven into creation itself.

So important is this rhythm that God later enshrines it in the Ten Commandments. In Exodus, the command to remember the Sabbath takes up more space than almost any other commandment. It is not presented as optional, but as essential. A gift given for our good.

1. Where do you notice natural *kairos* moments in your life?
2. How does it change your perspective to see Sabbath as part of creation, not just a command?
3. What messages about work, productivity or worth have shaped your life? Do you tend to see rest as something you earn or something you receive?

### Read Luke 6:1-11 and Mark 2:27-28

In Luke 6, Jesus challenges legalistic understandings of Sabbath by prioritising compassion and restoration over rigid rule-keeping. The Lord of the Sabbath reminds us: “the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

Sabbath is not primarily a legal burden but a created provision that orders life around rest and relationship with God. Its purpose is our flourishing and its invitation is to live in step with divine priorities instead of cultural ones. Recognising Sabbath as a gift changes the posture from duty to gratitude, and reshapes our time so that work serves worship rather than the other way around.

1. What do Jesus’ actions on the Sabbath reveal about God’s character?
2. In what ways can religious practice lose its heart and become burdensome?
3. Where might you be tempted towards either legalism *or* neglect when it comes to spiritual disciplines like the Sabbath?

### Read Leviticus 23:1-3

Ironically, in trying so hard not to become like the Pharisees, many modern Christians have swung to the opposite extreme of neglecting Sabbath altogether. For many followers of Jesus today, Sabbath remains one of the least understood and least practised spiritual disciplines. But Scripture gives us a helpful framework.

Before outlining Israel’s sacred festivals in Leviticus 23, God begins with the Sabbath as the foundation upon which all other holy days rest. From this passage, five essential elements of Sabbath emerge.



## **Stop**

The Hebrew word *Shabbat* simply means to stop, to cease, to be done. At its core, Sabbath is about stopping ordinary work in order to rest before God.

This is often the hardest part. Even when paid work pauses, it can be all too easy to remain busy. Emails are checked. The week ahead is planned. Chores are squeezed in. And screens fill every quiet moment.

Sabbath is rarely broken by doing bad things. It is crowded out by doing very reasonable ones. But we are called to stop as an act of trust—trusting that the world will keep turning, that productivity is not ultimate, and that God is still at work even when his people rest.

1. What fears surface when you think about truly stopping?

## **Worship**

Leviticus describes Sabbath as a “day of sacred assembly” reminding us that worship sits at the centre of Sabbath. Jesus himself consistently gathered with God’s people, even when relationships were strained with the religious teachers.

Today, gathering with the Church remains a core expression of Sabbath—a reminder that life is lived in community with God and others.

1. How might God be inviting you to engage more deeply with the “sacred assembly”, and what practical step could you take this week to foster this?

## **Rest**

Sabbath rest is deeper than sleep or collapse after exhaustion. While physical rest matters, Sabbath points to something more holistic. Jesus’ invitation in Matthew 11:28-30 captures this beautifully: real rest is found in walking with him and learning his rhythms.

Sabbath rest addresses body, mind, soul and spirit. It is rest from striving, from worry, from constant hurry. It is resistance against a culture that measures worth by output and possessions. Each week, Sabbath draws a line in the sand and declares: *Work matters, but it is not everything.*

1. How does Sabbath rest challenge cultural definitions of success?

## **Delight**

Beyond stopping and resting, Sabbath also means delight. When God rested on the seventh day, he delighted in what he had made. To delight is to notice what is good, beautiful and true, and to enjoy it with gratitude.



Delight might look like sharing meals, laughing with friends, walking in nature, enjoying music or art, telling stories, playing, celebrating and giving thanks. Sabbath is not meant to be grim or restrictive. It is meant to be life-giving.

1. How might delight be a spiritual practice, not just a personal preference?

### **Intentionality**

The final element is intentionality. Many people already stop, rest, worship or delight in some form on weekends. But Sabbath is not accidental. Without intention, it easily becomes another blurred day filled with leftover work and distraction.

Intentional Sabbath requires planning, conversation and commitment. It asks: *What will help us truly stop? What practices will lead us to worship, rest and delight?* Without intentionality, even good activities can cause the heart of Sabbath to be missed.

1. What might need to change in order for Sabbath to become intentional rather than accidental?
2. Which of the five elements feels most life-giving for you right now? Why?
3. Which feels most difficult? Why?

### **An Invitation for the Year Ahead**

As the new year begins, the question is not simply *What will I achieve?* but *How will I live?*

Sabbath is not just about one day; it shapes how we live the other six. God's gracious invitation is to resist hurry, embrace trust, and rediscover the promise of Isaiah 58:13-14—*those who call the Sabbath a delight will find joy in the Lord.*

- What might it look like for you or your household to practice Sabbath more intentionally this year?
- Share it with the group or write it down as an act of commitment

### **Suggested Closing Prayer**

Read **Isaiah 58:13–14** aloud together.

Close by praying that the group would learn to call the Sabbath a delight, find joy in the Lord, and walk more deeply in the way of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath.