



Keeping Sabbath

About this Faith Practice

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Let's Begin...

Now that you've downloaded the files for your faith practice and age group or setting, you can get started planning one or multiple sessions:

1 Open the .pdf file for your age group or setting. Choose an Exploration, the approach you think will help your group to best experience the faith practice. Choose any one of the following Explorations to use for one session:



Discovery



Scripture



Discipleship



Christian Tradition



Context and Mission



Future and Vision

Note: If you're planning multiple sessions, you can follow the order suggested above or feel free to use any order that fits the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to start with Scripture and then see where that leads them. Others may be more ready to act in their community and might want to start with Context and Mission.

2 Locate the Exploration you've chosen

3 Look through all 9 activities and select the ones you would like to do with your group.

- If you're planning a 30–45 minute session, choose 3 activities.
- It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving.
- For 45 minutes to 1 hour, choose 4 or 5 activities.
- For a 1½ to 2-hour session, you can use all 9 activities.

Tip: Look for this symbol  to find activities designed for Easy Preparation (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

4 Make copies of any handouts () related to your activities. Order posters () if using art (see "Ordering Posters," below).

Use of Art, Music, and Scripture in Faith Practices

Faith Practices activities include many opportunities to grow in faith through the use of scripture, music, and art.

Ordering Posters

If you choose activities that use an art image, you or your church will need to purchase posters of the art by clicking on the link provided in the activity. If you wish to use art, you will need to plan ahead, since it takes 1 to 2 weeks for the posters to arrive after you place your order.

Art

Six posters are used with the faith practice Giving and Receiving Hospitality and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Public Fountain" by Manuel Alvarez Bravo (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"Guatemala: Procession" by Betty LaDuke (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"The Dance of Youth" by Pablo Picasso (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>)

"Going to Church" by William H. Johnson (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>)

"Midday Rest" (after Millet), c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>)

Music

Three music selections are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality. We have selected music which is easily found in many hymnals. A web link is provided to give more information about each music selection.

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling, Tune: Unser Herrscher (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>)

I Woke Up This Morning, Tune: Woke Up This Morning (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>)

I've Got Peace Like a River, Tune: Peace Like A River (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>)

Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality, two with each Exploration.

Discovery	Genesis 2:2–4	Luke 12:22–31
Scripture	Mark 2:23–3:6	Exodus 20:1–17
Discipleship	Luke 6:1–11	Deuteronomy 6:1–9
Christian Tradition	Mark 6:30–34, 53–56	Isaiah 58:9b–14
Context and Mission	Jeremiah 17:19–27	1 Corinthians 11:17–26
Future and Vision	Psalms 119:105–112, 129–136	Matthew 27:51–66 (Matthew 26:14–27:66)

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

A common factor among young adults is change. This group is traditionally discovering their world. The training provided in their upbringing is like a bag of goodies they toss over their shoulder, from which they may or may not draw as they move about their adventures of continuing education, beginning new jobs, starting their families, and exploring new technology. Their lives are so full that Sabbath, or rest of any sort, is often not high on their agenda. This Exploration may help point them toward the value of Sabbath rest and God as a center of rest.

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BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 2:2-4
Luke 12:22-31

Leader Preparation

Find a space free of distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend time with the biblical text or texts that you are using, keeping in mind that the focus is on the idea of keeping Sabbath. What stories or events from your life reflect the concepts of rest, recreation, justice, and community? Think about the young adults who will be journeying with you. What stories might they have?

Position yourself in a way that best allows you to enter into a spirit of prayer. It may be standing with your arms out, kneeling with your eyes closed, or even focusing on the flame of a candle—find whatever works best for you!

Prayer: Most gracious God, with a word you began creation. You spoke and each part came into being—even the rest that you call us to enter. In that rest you began the story of humanity that leads to this very moment. Help me to understand that I and my fellow travelers on this journey are part of that story. As I prepare to lead this group, give me the creativity, energy, and insight to share the story with others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 What I Need (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read Luke 12:22-31. Consider the question, “What do I need in my life?”

Supplies:

- Bibles
- handout: “Cap Your Need,” Attachment: Activity 1
- paper and pens or pencils

Christian faith says that the world is basically a good place and life is good. In Genesis, as God created each part of the universe, God saw that it was good. “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.” (Genesis 1:31 NRSV). And on the last day, God rested. In Luke 12 Jesus speaks of the goodness of creation and the God who creates. Sabbath is a time to slow down, sit back, and enjoy the goodness of creation. Our culture often sends a different message. Life is not good until you have acquired everything you want.

Read Luke 12: 22-23. How might this work in your life? Suppose your boss needs you to work 60-80 hours a week in order to keep your job. Does this feel calming and helpful? Or, does it feel like a senseless escape from reality?

Distribute the handout “Cap Your Need” and have the participants respond to Crosby’s statement. Invite the participants to quickly figure their monthly needs and to write that figure on a piece of paper. During the next week challenge them to refine their needs list as they reflect on the quote from Gordon Crosby.

2 How Crazy-Busy Is Your Life?

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- camera (optional)

Pose this or a similar question: How crazy-busy is your life? Invite the participants to create a body statue that demonstrates their answer. For example, someone who is totally stressed might have his/her hair all messed up and a freaked-out facial expression, while someone who is not busy or stressed at all would be in a prone position on the floor. Participate in this activity as the leader. Modeling helps the group see that you have challenges in your life too. When everyone is posed as a statue, take a picture of each statue. Display these on a bulletin board. What title might be appropriate for this display? Invite the participants to title their own picture and to share what their statue portrays.

Offer the following statements. For each one, ask if they believe it to be true. Those who say it’s true, stand up; those who say it’s false, sit down.

- The busier we are, the more important we seem to be.
- If we are too busy to spend time with friends and family, it is because we are being successful in other areas.

Discuss the responses. In what ways is this statement true for them? For the people they respect?

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 God and the Seventh Day

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the participants to read Genesis 2:2–4 together. Then offer this information: “The ancient rabbis teach that on the seventh day, God created *menuha*—a word that means peace, tranquility, serenity. They teach that until the seventh day, the Sabbath, creation was not finished. Only after God created *menuha*—tranquility and rest—was creation completed.”

Divide into groups of three or four and pose these questions: Why do you think God rested? On God’s day of rest, what would have been on God’s Blackberry or “to do” list? What do you think God was trying to do? What would God put on a social networking page (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)? Imagine what God might have done on the seventh day, and create a skit or dialogue to show it. Don’t assume that “rest” means doing absolutely nothing. Maybe God found some wild mint and made a glass of tea. Maybe God talked to a parrot or played with a monkey. Use your imaginations! What might God have done for R and R? Invite the groups to share their creations, and affirm them for their creative thoughts.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 An Aha! Moment (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Reflect on your life, and prepare to share one of your “Aha!” moments with the group.

Supplies:

- paper and pencils or pens

Allow time for the participants to reflect on their life to recall a significant event or activity that made them aware of the spirit of God, an “Aha!” moment when they realized they were not alone. It may have been a very brief, fleeting sense of security or reassurance perhaps related to a big decision. Or, perhaps they have had a significant encounter with another person that revealed God to them in a new way. Maybe it was when they decided to be baptized or married or join a church, or the first time they held a newborn infant, or when they received comfort at the time of a significant loss. Sometimes it’s a matter of actually naming God’s presence at times we might not think about God in our lives. If someone feels that there has not been such an experience for them, maybe there is another significant event they feel has shaped who they are presently. Ask them to jot down on paper any notes about the event to help them remember it.

Describe your “Aha!” moment, and then invite others to do the same. Some may be hesitant to share, but may find it easier after others have spoken. Allow people to pass in this activity.

5 Long-held Sabbath Keeping Traditions

Leader preparation: Invite an older member of the congregation to come and share with the group his or her experience of Sunday/Sabbath. See the activity description for some questions for the guest to ponder before addressing the group.

Supplies: None

Introduce your guest, and have the group members introduce themselves to the guest. Don't assume that everyone knows one another. Have the guest talk about his or her experience of Sunday or Sabbath as a young adult. What were the expectations of him or her on Sunday? From where did these expectations come? What activities, if any, filled the day? What special clothes, foods, or other items do they associate with Sunday or Sabbath? In what ways have his or her traditions of keeping Sabbath changed over the years? What influenced the change? What is a crucial part of Sabbath keeping in his or her life now?

Invite the participants to talk with the guest, to ask questions, and to describe some of their experiences of Sabbath also. This is an opportunity for intergenerational dialogue. Discuss: What changes in the observance of Sunday/Sabbath are positive? Which are more negative? How can older patterns of Sabbath keeping inform our habits?

Thank your guest for sharing with your group.

6 Rest

Leader preparation: Observe how and when you rest.

Supplies:

- poster "Midday Rest" (after Millet), c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>
- Bibles

Display the poster where everyone can see it. Invite the participants to spend three minutes with studying the poster, just looking. Gaze at the haystack, outfits, the colors, the movements, etc. What do you notice? What happened right before and right after this moment in time? Allow time for people to share their reflections.

Think about when you can find time each day to rest. Ask: How does our culture say you should reduce stress: happy-hour specials? spa or massage? new exercise class? new and powerful fruit juice? seeing a movie? How do we relax? How do we get rid of stress? How do we rest?

Read Genesis 2:2-4. In light of Sabbath keeping, why is it important to rest, relax, and reduce stress?

Ask the group in the next week to record when they rested and what they did, and to note how they felt after resting. Ask them to be ready to share their reflections with the group in the next session.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Same Time (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Think of examples of possible Sabbath activities. Review “About This Exploration” at the beginning of this session.

Supplies:

- handout, “Centering Life: Keeping Sabbath,” Attachment: Activity 7

Keeping Sabbath does not have to mean doing nothing. Review the handout “Centering Life: Keeping Sabbath.” As a group, create a list of outwardly Sabbath activities in which all the participants can be involved at the same time, on the same day, by each participant in the weeks that the group is meeting. Then as a group decide which activity or activities they like and agree to do. These activities will be done in their individual home or environments to honor the Sabbath. Examples are a prayer, a song, or a verse of scripture. As the weeks go by, share whether this common activity has a special meaning.

8 Focus and Draw

Leader preparation: Check out the outdoor surroundings and determine the best place to send the participants for this activity.

Supplies:

- sketch pad (or paper and a book or other hard surface)
- pencils
- nature items (optional)

One aspect of Sabbath is slowing down to observe the world around us. Invite the participants to go outdoors, choose a particular plant, tree, or flower, and study it for five minutes. If going outside is not an option, bring in some nature items such as flowers, pinecone, tree bark, ant farm, etc. After the allotted time, bring the group back together. Distribute sketch pads and pencils, and ask them to draw the item as they see it in their minds, without looking at the item. It is important for participants to know they don’t have to be artists to do this. The sketch they make is whatever flows out of them as they recall what they observed. Give them five to ten minutes to complete their drawings.

Then come together and share. Ask: What surprised them? What was unique and special about the part of God’s creation that they observed? How observant are we of our world?

9 Seek Ye First

Leader preparation: Listen to the song “Seek Ye First,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/23yxro3>. This song is based on Luke 12:31.

Supplies:

- song, “Seek Ye First” <http://www.tinyurl.com/23yxro3>

Listen to Karen Lafferty’s praise song “Seek Ye First.” The lyrics are printed on the YouTube video. Sing along. Print out the YouTube address so that participants can use this music at home as part of their Sabbath keeping. Another selection

is “Lilies of the Field” by John Michael Talbot: <http://www.tinyurl.com/32c3q4a>.

Young adults may value the Web site Journey to the Cross, <http://www.journeytothecross.org>, or the United Church of Christ daily devotional, <http://www.ucc.org/daily-devotional>, each a free subscription service that sends a daily devotion to your e-mail address.

If you have ever driven somewhere and not been able to see street signs because they are rusted or covered by a tree branch, you know how a place can communicate, “If you don’t know your way around already, you probably should go back where you came from.” Conduct an assessment of what a visitor might experience visually when they enter your community’s space (this could be the building you meet in or an entire city). What might make a person/group not feel welcome? What is clearly missing? What could be improved by providing more information or by demonstrating more empathy? Develop a strategy to implement your suggestions.

Reflect

As you think back on this session, what moments stick out for you most? What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, and about the young adults in your group? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

Attachment: Activity 1

Cap Your Need

“After determining your family’s financial need, put a cap on that need. Adjustments will be necessary as the children grow. . . . There will be unexpected expenses and expenses you will plan for, like college, but within reason put a cap on your needs. If you do not, you will never be free. Faster than your income rises, what you think you need will rise. The need for more will always be two steps ahead of what you earn. You will never feel free enough to share financial resources with the poor, and you will not know the joy of giving.” (Gordon Cosby, founder of the Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C)

Conversation with K. Killian Noe, cited by Noe, in *Money and Faith: The Search for Enough*, edited by Michael Schut (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2008), p. 167.

Centering Life: Keeping Sabbath

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of his Sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to his followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God’s resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Some in this group are quite familiar with the Bible. For others, it is a strange and forbidding book. And those who know it may have mixed feelings about it. Some associate the Bible with prohibitions: “Thou shalt not’s.” Some see it as an impractical book of ideals, out of touch with the world we live in. For some it is like the horse and buggy, a thing of the past. Perhaps our time together will lead to a more positive and life-affirming understanding of the Bible and its contents.

About this Exploration

Scripture defines Sabbath in several ways. Our journey will help explore how Sabbath was given as commandment and blessing, and how Jesus expanded Sabbath to be more inclusive. Jesus reinforced the concept that the Sabbath was about God but for people (Mark 2:23–3:6). Sabbath is a time of blessing, a time to rest from daily work and restore energy and “Godness.” Sabbath is not a time to worry about rules, but to work for God’s reign, letting God take care of the rest. What helps us focus on Sabbath? Consider how we can recharge, refresh, and renew our spirits, minds, and bodies.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Mark 2:23–3:6
Exodus 20:1–17

Leader Preparation

Find a space free of distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend time with the biblical text or texts that you are using, keeping in mind that we are focusing on the idea of Sabbath keeping. What stories or events from your life reflect the concepts of rest, recreation, justice, and community? Think about the young adults who will be journeying with you. What stories might they have?

Position yourself in a way that best allows you to enter into a spirit of prayer. It may be standing with your arms out, kneeling with your eyes closed, or even focusing on the flame of a candle. Find whatever works best for you!

Prayer: Most gracious God, with a word you began creation. You spoke and each part came into being—even the rest that you call us to enter. In that rest you began the story of humanity that leads to this very moment. Help me to understand that I and my co-travelers on this journey are part of that story. As I prepare to lead this group, give me the creativity, energy, and insight to share the story with others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Keeping the Sabbath (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review Mark 2:23–3:6.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Ask the group to read Mark 2:23–3:6. Divide into two groups and prepare for a debate on the statement “Jesus was wrong to challenge Sabbath customs.” Give each group ten minutes to prepare their points and choose a speaker or speakers. In their responses, encourage them to include contemporary examples, such as Blue Laws. Give each side a chance to speak. Then give each side a chance for rebuttal. Finally, ask each side for a summary.

2 Visiting a Synagogue

Leader preparation: Locate a Jewish synagogue in your area. Visitors’ courtesies vary among congregations, so find out when the synagogue conducts its Shabbat (Sabbath) service and inquire what they expect from you and your group if you visit. A decorum card on Shabbat etiquette may be available. Expectations might include wearing head coverings and conservative clothing. Prohibitions might include smoking, electronic devices on the property, and applause. Check the Web site mentioned below.

Supplies: None

Keeping the Sabbath holy is one of the Ten Commandments. Learn how observant Jews practice keeping the Sabbath (Shabbat) at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2762rm>. As a group discuss what you know about the Jewish Sabbath. How do your Jewish friends or coworkers observe the Sabbath?

Prepare to visit a synagogue if there is one near.

Resources: <http://www.tinyurl.com/29jftxz>

3 Discerning Sabbath through Touch

Leader preparation: Study Mark 2:23–3:6. You will need something old, wrinkled or damaged, such as a shriveled prune or a dried pig’s ear—something to simulate the feel of a “withered hand.” The purpose of this activity is to introduce the element of surprise into Sabbath practice (as Christ so often did) and to incorporate touch to make the Scriptures come alive.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- prune or dried pig’s ear

Read Mark 2:23–3:6. Ask the group: When have you been surprised by God? When has God answered a need in a way you did not expect? Pass around the prune or dried pig’s ear and invite members to focus on the feel. Ask them to imagine what it would be like to have a hand that felt like that and probably was useless. Think about how hard it is to unbutton clothes, hang a bird feeder, use a tool, or hold a wiggly toddler with the use of only one hand. (You’ll probably

Session Development

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have other examples too, and if a participant is handicapped, they would be able to share their frustrations, if they are willing. Ask in advance.)

Point out the statement in the scripture: “The Pharisees had their eyes on Jesus to see if he would heal him, hoping to catch him in a Sabbath infraction” (Mark 3:2, The Message). Discuss the idea that a trap was set for Jesus; no one seemed to care about the man’s need. Ask: When have we been so focused on doing or being “right” that we missed an opportunity to help someone? Or ignored our own need?

Close with this or a similar prayer: *God of healing, nurture, and truth, forgive us when we neglect to respond to our own needs or the needs of others. Help us shift our focus from “being good” to doing your work and spreading your healing touch and words of truth. Help us to be more mindful of blessing and opportunity in each day. Amen.*

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Ten Commandments (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Consider how you would rewrite the commandments God gave to Moses.

Supplies:

- large sheet of paper
- markers
- handout: “Positive Version of the Ten Commandments,” Attachment: Activity 4

Read Exodus 20:1–17. Eight of the ten commandments are written as a negative statement. Rewrite them, with the same intent, as affirmative statements. Example: “You shall not kill” could become “Honor and protect all life.” This activity could be done individually or as a large group. How do you feel about positive commands? How do you feel about negative commands? The handout offers one example of a positive version of the Ten Commandments.▫

5 Still, Very Still

Leader preparation: Gather supplies.

Supplies:

- one large candle
- lighter
- soft contemplative music

Invite the group to spread out in the room so they are not near one another. If necessary, move to a large space for this activity. Give these instructions: We are going to spend a few minutes in silence, with just the music in the background. During that time, I invite you to concentrate on your breathing and on centering yourself. Try not to think about anything. Try just to be still with your body and your mind. When the music is over, we will continue in complete silence for several more minutes.

Turn out the lights, light the candle, and turn on the music. Depending on your group, allow 3–5 minutes on each part of this experience.

After the time is up, leave the lights off and talk quietly with the group. Reflect with them on how this felt. When have they had other times this past week when they were that still, other than when they were asleep? On a scale from 1–10, with 1 being really uncomfortable and 10 being quite comfortable, how would you rate your comfort level with this activity? If this was comfortable, how can you make time for more of this kind of time?

⑥ **It's One of the Ten**

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or white board and markers

Ask the group to name the Ten Commandments that they can remember, and write these on the newsprint or whiteboard. It's okay if the list gets longer than ten, because some of what's named may not be in the Ten Commandments. Invite them to open their Bibles to Exodus 20:1–17 and compare the two lists. Ask: What were the easiest commandments to remember? The hardest? As you look at society around you, which ones seem to get followed the least? Do you think these are all equally important? Why do you think, when God gave ten rules to live by, keeping the Sabbath was right up there with not murdering someone? (The Sabbath is an economic statement, that humans are worthwhile not for their work and income, but because God loves them.)

Sending & Serving Activities

⑦ **"No Other Gods"**

Leader preparation: Reflect on Exodus 20:3. Consider what "other gods" (meaning anything central to life that we worship) we worship in our society. How can you stay centered on God?

Supplies:

- Bibles
- magazines
- scissors
- glue
- poster board or newsprint

Read Exodus 20:1–17, focusing on verse 3. Ask: What other gods does our culture worship? What in our lives do we hold sacred? Divide a large poster board or newsprint in half. Ask the participants to fill one half with symbols, pictures, or words representing other "gods" that take our focus away from God. These may be found in the magazines you provided. Fill the other half of the poster with symbols, pictures, or words representing the God that we worship. How can we stay focused on one God, with the glamour of other gods that our culture pulls us toward?

Ask the participants to share with one another about the challenges of being, as Paul wrote, "in the world, but not of it."

8 Jesus Prayer

Leader preparation: Study <http://www.jesusprayer.org/>. The Jesus Prayer is one of the oldest of Christian prayers. The original form was from the words that the two blind men cried out to Jesus in Matthew 20:31. The prayer was formalized by the Orthodox churches in the fifth century.

Supplies:

- copies of the Jesus Prayer: “Jesus Christ, Child of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” (shortened forms may also be used: “Christ, have mercy on me” or “Christ, have mercy”)
- music to be played during the prayer

Offer information about the Jesus Prayer to the group. Discuss the participants’ understanding of “mercy” and “sinner.”

Used as a breath prayer, the Jesus Prayer can be an effective way to move through fears and feelings of unworthiness to grace and peace in Christ. With soft instrumental music in the background, invite persons to inhale when praying the words “O Christ Jesus,” and exhale when praying the words “have mercy on me” (or other forms of the prayer, as chosen).

After a few minutes, ask the group to sit in silence and reflection. Then ask them to share with the group, as time allows.

9 Amish Sabbath

Leader preparation: Familiarize yourself with Sabbath practices of the Amish. For example visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/37jdzn> or a similar site.

Supplies: None

Share with the group what you learned about the Amish, who take the definition of Sabbath more literally. Try not to make this an exercise of us against them, but rather of observing differences. If there are Amish people living near you, share your experiences and impressions of them. What in our life would be healthier if we were more like the Amish? What about the way we observe Sabbath seems healthier? Is there a happy medium? How do different ways of observing Sabbath affect community? How do they define community?

Reflect

As you think back on this session, what moments stick out for you most? What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, and about the young adults in your group? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

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Attachment: Activity 4

Positive Version of the Ten Commandments

1. There is only one God.
2. Remember I am your God. Worship only me.
3. When you say God's name, speak it with love and respect.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother
6. Respect all living things.
7. Be faithful and loyal to your life partner.
8. Respect the things that belong to other people.
9. Always tell the truth about others.
10. Be content and happy with the things that you already have.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

What does it mean to be a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ? Not many adults are asking that question out loud, but young adults all want their lives to be worthwhile, to mean something, to make a difference in the world. The activities in this Exploration may help young adults to find in the way of Christ clues to answering those yearnings.

About this Exploration

Practicing Sabbath leads us to a fuller understanding of who we are as children of God. God calls the people of Israel to keep God's words on their hearts, to teach them to their children, to fix them as an emblem on their foreheads. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the law is given to free people from oppression, not further to oppress an already downtrodden people. As we explore what it means to keep Sabbath, we will experience that Sabbath becomes a way of being, as well as a way of doing.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Luke 6:1-11
Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Leader Preparation

Find a space free of distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend some time with the biblical text or texts that you are using, keeping in mind that we are focusing on the idea of Sabbath. What stories or events from your own life reflect the concepts of rest, recreation, justice, and community? Think about the young adults who will be journeying with you. What stories might they have?

Position yourself in a way that best allows you to enter into a spirit of prayer. It may be standing with your arms out, kneeling with your eyes closed, or even focusing on the flame of a candle. Find whatever works best for you!

Prayer: Most gracious God, with a word you began creation. You spoke and each part came into being — even the rest that you call us to enter. In that rest you began the story of humanity that leads to this very moment. Help me to understand that I and my fellow travelers on this journey are part of that story. As I prepare to lead this group, give me the creativity, energy, and insight to share the story with others. Amen

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Disengage to Engage (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Be prepared to tell the story of Karen.

Supplies: None

Tell the story of Karen. Karen's spiritual director suggested a technology Sabbath. One day a week she does not use the computer, read e-mails, watch television, listen to the radio, answer the cell phone, use the iPod, etc. She has one day with no electronic technology filling her senses. At first, a technology Sabbath was very difficult. Six months later, she was looking forward to the Sabbath and used the time to disengage, so she could engage fully during the week. Eighteen months later, the practice was second nature and had positively impacted her ability to be "present" even when engaged with technology and many people.

Ask: What does the phrase "disengage to engage" mean to you? Some sacrifices are made for religious beliefs. Some are with regards to clothing, fasting, time, and many other matters. As we are all different, the answers to these questions will also be different. From what might you disengage as a practice of keeping Sabbath? What discipline would that take? What are the first three steps you would need to identify for this disengagement? Often when one begins intentionally to develop a new habit, such as diet, exercise, stop smoking, etc., having an accountability partner or support partner is helpful. Who might you choose as such a partner to support you in your disengagement practice?

2 The Holy in the Ordinary

Leader preparation: The title "The Holy in the Ordinary" comes from a book by Macrina Wiederkehr, *Tree Full of Angels: Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary* (HarperOne, 1990). The idea is to observe common items with the eyes of God. Prepare for this session by collecting ordinary, common items for observation.

Supplies:

- various objects (rock, feather, photograph, piece of clothing, Bible, cross, candy, glass of water, knife and spoon, candle, toys, etc.)
- paper and pens

The Sabbath is a time to stop and look for God in the ordinary. Place on a table in the center of the circle of the group the items you brought. Describe how by looking through the eyes of faith, God can be seen and experienced in all ways, in the ordinary times and through ordinary objects of life. Invite the participants to spend a few silent moments looking at the objects on the table. Then have them close their eyes and breathe deeply. Pray the following: Spirit, live and move in our eyes, ears, and hearts as we look for you in everyday, common things, and in one another.

Ask persons to share any insights that came to them from this activity.

and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 The Shema

Leader preparation: Read Deuteronomy 6:1–9. Verses 4–9, called the Shema (she-MAH), are an ancient Jewish meditation recited by faithful Jews each day, usually in the morning and in the evening. In preparation for leading a group discussion watch “Shema Yisroel — Aryeh Kaplan’s Meditation” at <http://www.tinyurl.com/37r4vyj>.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- “Learn to recite the Shema” at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2g8ndhd>

Read Deuteronomy 6:1–9. The Shema is the heart of Jewish faith. Summarize what you learned from “Shema Yisroel — Aryeh Kaplan’s Meditation.” Have the group read the Shema three times: first, silently; then, whispered to oneself, then aloud as a group. What does this ancient meditation mean to you? View the YouTube video about learning to recite the Shema, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2g8ndhd>.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Open on Sundays (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the story of J. C. Penney on the handout.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- handout about J.C. Penney, Attachment: Activity 4

Read Luke 6:1–11. Then tell the story of J. C. Penney. Ask: In what ways are these stories alike? Where in your life do you sense the same struggle with tradition? How do these stories help you deal with the issue, or help you decide what to do?



5 An Invitation to the Dance

Leader preparation: Reflect on the art.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Dance of Youth,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7> by Pablo Picasso
- Bible

Ask members of the group to consider the art. How does it show discipleship? Does discipleship feel this alive, this exuberant? Does Christ generate any excitement in us? Read Deuteronomy 6:1–9. Ask: To whom is it addressed? (Not to individuals but to the community, a reminder that faith is a community affair, not an individual matter.) In what ways, if any, does the Picasso painting relate to the scripture?

Ask persons to share moments when their faith journey felt like the mood in the Picasso. What was special about that moment? How might we open ourselves to more moments like that?

6 “Johnny the Bagger”

Leader preparation: View the story of “Johnny the Bagger” on <http://www.tinyurl.com/37z3gev>. List ideas about how to incorporate your day-to-day activities into mini-Sabbaths, quietly bringing peace, joy, and God’s love to those you meet.

Supplies:

- newsprint or white board and markers
- computer access to view “Johnny the Bagger” <http://www.tinyurl.com/37z3gev>

If you have computer capability, project and view “Johnny the Bagger.” If not, just tell the story. Then ask: How might each of us “do Sabbath” in quiet, unobtrusive ways throughout our daily life? How might we be God’s love to each person we meet? How might our attitudes and actions reflect Sabbath peace? How can we experience moments of Sabbath blessing and joy in these daily events? Have you met any “Johnny” types in your daily life? Discuss how Christ’s life modeled union with God and congruence of God’s law and God’s grace in new (and often startling) ways. How can we bring God’s love and healing into daily life in nonjudgmental, nonintrusive ways? List on the board personal mini goals to try during the following week.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Faith Time Line (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Refer to your faith journey from your earliest recollection to the present as a preparation to lead others into exploring their faith journey.

Supplies:

- paper and pens

Distribute paper and pens. With the paper in the landscape orientation, draw a line across the sheet and divide it into three-year or five-year increments. This is your life timeline. Invite the participants to fill in their remembrances of what their faith experiences included from their earliest remembrance to the present. Place highlights above the line, and place painful or difficult experiences below the line

After time for writing and reflection, lead a group discussion of their faith experiences. Ask: What was the most significant time frame so far for growth on your faith journey? How did you most experience God—in solitude, in community, in worship, in nature? When were there times when your faith, belief, and experience of God were absent? How have you felt most centered in God? Can you see Sabbath practices on your faith journey?

Close with a prayer of gratitude for the faith journey that has led to this very moment.

8 “What a Wonderful World”

Leader preparation: Check the sites below for a recording; print copies of the lyrics to “What a Wonderful World” as sung by Louis Armstrong.

Supplies:

- copies of the lyrics of “What a Wonderful World” as sung by Louis Armstrong, from <http://www.tinyurl.com/kxewn>
- pens or pencils
- online resources: <http://www.tinyurl.com/28zahbq>

Part of practicing our faith in the world is expressing gratitude. Hand out copies of the lyrics to “What a Wonderful World.” Sing the song, or read the lyrics. Invite the participants to circle all the words in the song for which they are grateful. The song lends itself to rich imagery and the glory of God’s world. Then ask each participant to share one aspect of gratitude with the group. Affirm that offering thanks is a Sabbath practice.

Closing prayer: *God, we are grateful for all of the blessings you continue to bring us throughout our life. Help us always to remember you and your world with thanks. Amen.*

9 Commitment to Call

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Read Luke 6:1–11. Note that Jesus clearly places helping someone in need over religious tradition. Today’s activity is about meeting a specific need, both for healing and for social contact. Many people in Jesus’ time believed that those who were sick or had some physical limitation were sinners being punished by God and therefore avoided them. Ask: How does it feel to be alone or not in touch with others? Discuss whether they would be willing to make a habit of calling on others, either a telephone call or a visit.

Ask each person to compile a list of at least three people they know who would welcome more contact with other people, and whom they will make a commitment to call. They also will ask the person they call if they know of someone that would like to or needs to receive a call. This will be an activity to be carried out on the Sabbath. Other family and friends may join in and do the same with persons they know.

Reflect

As you think back on this session, what moments stick out for you most? What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, and about the young adults in your group? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

Attachment: Activity 4

J. C. Penney

James Cash Penney started the J. C. Penney Company, a national chain of stores founded on the Golden Rule. Penney deeply valued honesty and respect for the customer among those he hired. When he opened his first retail store in 1902, miners in town worked six days a week and only on Sundays had time to do their shopping. With great angst, and with trepidation over breaking with church teachings and family tradition, Penney decided to keep the store open on Sundays to meet the needs of his customers. When he helped those who could come in only on Sundays, he experienced deep satisfaction, and knew there was something of the Divine in his work. He was rewarded that year with sales that enabled him to pay off his entire loan.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

Often the word “tradition” is perceived by young adults as negative. They feel something will be required without consideration of their current positions and opinions. Their world is ever changing, and they feel practices of faith should do the same. They need to discover the benefits of tradition, the dangers when it is lacking, and how tradition is always being reshaped to meet the needs of the day.

About this Exploration

Throughout the history of the church, the practice of Sabbath has run from narrow to broad. Certain faith traditions establish restrictions concerning a Sabbath day, limiting everything from household tasks to social activities. Other traditions focus on the intent of the practice: worship, study, and rest. All these traditions highlight rest and recreation. Current understandings have broadened Sabbath to embrace the practices of justice and devotion in and around the moments of our daily life. These various interpretations provide the foundation for our practices of Sabbath today.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Mark 6:30–34, 53–56
Isaiah 58:9b–14

Leader Preparation

Find a space free of distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend some time with the biblical text or texts that you are using, keeping in mind that we are focusing on the idea of Sabbath. What stories or events from your own life reflect the concepts of rest, recreation, justice, and community? Think about the young adults who will be journeying with you. What stories might they have?

Position yourself in a way that best allows you to enter into a spirit of prayer. It may be standing with your arms out, kneeling with your eyes closed, or even focusing on the flame of a candle. Find whatever works best for you!

Prayer: Most gracious God, with a word you began creation. You spoke and each part came into being—even the rest that you call us to enter. In that rest you began the story of humanity that leads to this very moment. Help me to understand that I and my fellow travelers on this journey are part of that story. As I prepare to lead this group, give me the creativity, energy, and insight to share the story with others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Sick and Tired (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make copies of the skit.

Supplies:

- Bible
- copies of skit, Attachment: Activity 1
- Bibles
- white board or newsprint and markers
- paper and pen or pencil

Ask volunteers to enact the skit. Then read Mark 6:30–34, 53–56. Divide the group into two teams: the R and R team, and the Full-Time Ministry team. Ask the R and R team to come up with a top ten list of reasons why Jesus and the disciples should take a break. Ask the Full-Time Ministry team to come up with a top ten list of reasons why they should keep healing and helping everybody that comes to them. Ask the teams to write their lists on newsprint or a whiteboard or, if you wish, let them text their lists to each other.

Compare and debate the lists. Is there a right or wrong answer here? What do they see happening in the lives of ministers and other full-time Christian workers that they know? How can they serve others, as well as take care of themselves?

2 Tradition!

Leader preparation: Locate a video of Fiddler on the Roof. Invite long-time member of the congregation someone to come and talk about share about the long-held traditions in your congregation.

Supplies:

- video of the song “Tradition” from *Fiddler on the Roof*, <http://www.tinyurl.com/2tsgob>, and a way to show it

Show the video “Tradition” from *Fiddler on the Roof*. Ask: In what ways are traditions good? In what ways are they bad? Invite the participants to name some traditions of your congregation that they like, and some that have no meaning for them.

Invite your guest to share about the long-held traditions, perhaps how they got started, what happened in the past when traditions were changed, what traditions are no longer recognized. Invite the group to dialogue with the guest about those that are or are not meaningful to them. Narrow the discussion to Sunday morning traditions. What aspects of the building itself, the décor (such as special paintings or memorial windows), the worship, the leadership, the music, where people sit, etc. are steeped in tradition? Which traditions do people appreciate?

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 Improvisational Drama

Leader preparation: Read Isaiah 58:9b–14. Have several Bibles on hand for this activity, preferably either the NRSV or The Message translation.

Supplies:

- background music
- Bibles
- newsprint or white board and markers

Play upbeat music in the background, perhaps praise choruses you have on hand. As soon as all are seated, read aloud Isaiah 58:9b–14 and Mark 6:30–34, 53–56, and invite discussion from the group about them. Focus especially on the attitudes and actions.

Divide the group into groups of three or four. Assign each small group the task of creating an improvisational mini-drama to illustrate a section of the Isaiah passage. For example, those being assigned Isaiah 58:9b might stage a demonstration of unfair labor or family practices and victim blaming. The group enacting verse 10 might demonstrate preparing a meal at a soup kitchen or handing out supplies to a shelter, or being the ones needing to be fed. The group taking verse 11 might become a “bubbling spring” or a fruitful garden. Encourage the participants to give full rein to their imaginations!

Have each group present their minidrama to the whole group. After every small group has had a chance, invite the larger group to discuss how it felt to become actors and creators, and how it felt to watch as well as to participate in improvisational drama. Did they experience anything new or unexpected? What insights did they gain about “being Sabbath” in the world? If any ideas for future projects emerge, write these on newsprint or a white board. Allow plenty of time for discussion.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Making Decisions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Review the story “The Decision” and think through possible endings.

Supplies:

- copy of the story “The Decision”, Attachment: Activity 4

Talk with the group about a time when they made plans to go on an exciting vacation either with friends or family. How did the anticipation build as the plans were implemented? Read the story to the group or ask a volunteer to read the story. Invite the group to enter into the excitement of getting ready for a long-awaited vacation. How would they end the story? Create several possible endings, both positive and negative. What are the tradeoffs of each decision? If we understand taking Sabbath as being healthy for us, what does it mean to allow others to take Sabbath time? This story has some of the same tension between serving and rest that Jesus and the disciples felt in Mark 4.

5 Rest? Me?

Leader preparation: Study Mark 6:30–34, 53–56. Jesus has been healing people at Gennesaret and then retreated for rest. He and the disciples are met by crowds, and we read about the miraculous feeding of 5000. After that miracle, Jesus retreats. Think of times in your life when you have risen to the occasion and then needed rest.

Supplies: None

Read Mark 6:30–34, 53–56. Ask: What is the sequence of events for these Gospel passages? How does this passage speak to you? When have you risen to an occasion and then needed rest?

Share experiences of the value of rest. Caring for an aging parent, a person with a disability, or a young child, for example, requires a big commitment and creativity in getting the rest necessary to continue each day.

6 Worshiping God – Only for Me?

Leader preparation: View the song on the video and prepare your response to the questions.

Supplies:

- video of “Worshipping God,”
<http://tinyurl.com/2gxpwh>

Read Isaiah 58:9b–14, then view the video. Ask: In what ways does the Isaiah passage help us to understand Sabbath? What are God’s priorities for us? In what ways do we create a Spirit-filled legacy? How does our culture tell us to create a legacy? What relationship is there between keeping Sabbath and participating in mission?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Favorite Bible Passages (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- newsprint or white board and markers
- Bible concordance

The Bible is an important part of our Christian tradition. This activity is an opportunity for each person to think about his or her favorite passages of Scripture. Some may not have any, so do not expect everyone to speak. Some may know a paraphrase of a verse, but may not know the reference or the whole verse. A Bible concordance can help locate those verses. Some may know popular verses, but may not consider those as their favorites. For those in your group who are married, ask what scripture was used at their wedding. Other significant occasions often include the reading of scripture, such as baptism, confirmation, funeral, etc. Ask people to name their favorite passages. List these on the whiteboard or newsprint. Then ask them to say what special meaning the passage has. Which of these are associated with a special person or a special event in their life?

8 Centering Prayer with Sabbath Time

Leader preparation: Sabbath time is a space and time to stop and reflect on God's presence. Centering prayer is an ancient prayer tradition rediscovered in our time. Trappist monk Thomas Keating has led this movement with his book *Open Mind, Open Heart* (London: Continuum, 1994). Review the simple steps of the prayer before the session.

Supplies: None

Note the steps of centering prayer:

- a. Choose a prayer word as a symbol of your intention to open and surrender to the movement of the Spirit and the awareness of God. The word becomes a sacred word (examples: love, peace, God, rest, open, Spirit).
- b. Sit comfortably and with eyes closed; relax in a prayerful consciousness.
- c. Silently introduce the word as the symbol to listen to God.
- d. When you become aware of thoughts, sensations, feelings, memories, reflections, etc., gently return to the sacred word.
- e. At the end of the prayer time, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes. Offer thanks.

Invite the participants to share their insights and experience of the prayer time.

9 "Chariots of Fire"

Leader preparation: Watch the DVD *Chariots of Fire*,

<http://www.tinyurl.com/2vpk536>

or read about Eric Liddell in *Eric Liddell: Pure Gold* by David McCasland (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 2004).

Supplies: None, unless as a group you decide to watch *Chariots of Fire*

Eric Liddell was on the British running team for the 1924 Olympic games. While he was slated to run the 100-meter dash, he refused to compete when he learned that he had to run a preliminary heat on a Sunday. Instead, he was switched to the 400-meter dash, and won an Olympic gold medal anyway. He believed it was better to honor God and keep the Sabbath free of work than to compete on a Sunday for an Olympic gold medal. His choice distressed his teammates and nation, but he stayed his course. At the height of his running career, he made another choice for God instead of for his running career: he went to China as a missionary. His life represents one type of conviction concerning the Sabbath.

In this day of Sunday shopping, how can we even understand a story like this? What choices have we made about what constitutes work and rest on the Sabbath? In what ways do we honor God, rather than people or the community, in all we do on Sundays? How does this affect our local community?

Reflect

As you think back on this session, what moments stick out for you most? What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, and about the young adults in your group? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

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Attachment: Activity 1

Sick and Tired

Characters: Jesus, Peter, James, John, person being healed

Peter: Jesus, can we have a minute? We need to talk.

Jesus: Of course, um, just a minute. I need to talk with one more person here.

Peter, James and John look at each other and sigh loudly.

Jesus (*talks to a person being healed, touches the person's shoulder*): Go in peace.

Jesus (*turns to Peter*): Now, you have my attention. You wanted to talk?

Peter: Yes. It's about last night. It . . . didn't turn out the way we'd hoped.

Jesus: What do you mean?

James: He means that the intentions were good. We were all exhausted and starving. We'd been so busy helping people we hadn't even had time to eat. So you said we should get in the boat and go someplace away from the crowds for some R and R.

John: It was a great idea, Jesus. But you know what happened. The people got wind of where we were going, and when we landed, there they were. Crowds of needy people again.

Jesus: Yes, I know.

Peter: And you know what happened. You felt sorry for them.

Jesus: Yes, I did. They seemed so lost . . . like a bunch of sheep with nobody to tell them what to do or where to go.

John: So, you taught them. And that's great, Jesus, really it is. But when do we . . . when do you . . . get a break? We can't keep going like this 24/7.

Jesus: But they are so sick . . .

James: And we are so tired.

Jesus (*pauses for awhile, thinking*): You're right, James. It's time for us to get away. Tell the guys to stock the boat with supplies for a couple of days. I know a quiet place where nobody will find us. We'll leave as soon as possible.

Attachment: Activity 4

The Decision

I couldn't wait. After months of working way too many hours and spending very little time with my family, I couldn't wait for us to start our vacation together. We had planned a trip to Mackinaw Island, where we would rest, relax, ride our bikes, and just "be" together. We spent our time before the trip preparing our bikes, making sure we had everything we needed and planning what we would take with us. Fresh air, a swimming pool, and no motorized vehicles—this seemed like the perfect getaway for us.

The morning of our departure arrived. We were busy packing the car and getting our bikes lined up for the bike rack. Everyone was excited. The children were picking out their books and movies to keep them busy during the car ride, and the snack bag was all ready to go. Just as we were leaving the house, the phone rang. It was a coworker. Her mother was in the hospital, and she needed to go be with her father. Could I please take her shift so she could go? We had always covered for each other in the past, but I really wanted and needed this time away with my family.

How could I say no to her? How could I disappoint my family again?
What should I do?

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

The sky is the limit with this age group. They have tremendous resources available to them. The energy demonstrated will result in success or failure for the individual. This time together may lead them to see opportunities to use their lives for the work of God.

About this Exploration

The prophet Jeremiah goes to the busiest places in the city to call the people to observe Sabbath as a day intentionally set apart by God. In the same way, we are called to take the gift that is Sabbath to our communities and then to the wider world. As communities of faith, we are encouraged to model Sabbath living that is joyful, inclusive, and not burdensome. The Corinthian church was challenged to rethink the way they lived out the Sabbath together in community. Maybe we will have to do the same! What do you mean — change?

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 17:19–27
1 Corinthians 11:17–26

Leader Preparation

Find a space free of distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend time with the biblical text or texts that you are using, keeping in mind that we are focusing on the idea of Sabbath. What stories or events from your own life reflect the concepts of rest, recreation, justice, and community? Think about the young adults who will be journeying with you. What stories might they have?

Position yourself in a way that best allows you to enter into a spirit of prayer. It may be standing with your arms out, kneeling with your eyes closed, or even focusing on the flame of a candle. Find whatever works best for you!

Prayer: Most gracious God, with a word you began creation. You spoke and each part came into being—even the rest that you call us to enter. In that rest you began the story of humanity that leads to this very moment. Help me to understand that I and my fellow travelers on this journey are part of that story. As I prepare to lead this group, give me the creativity, energy, and insight to share the story with others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Tools of the Trade (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: For this activity, ask every member in advance to bring one “tool of their trade.” This might include a laptop or pen for accountants, writers, office managers, or insurance brokers; money for bankers or mortgage lenders; visual guides or chalk for teachers; learning toys or books for full-time parents; tool belts for trade workers such as plumbers, carpenters, roofers, electricians; textbooks for students, etc. Be prepared to show and tell a bit about your work, too.

If you do not have time to request people to bring their tools, provide index cards or paper and have each person write the name (or draw a picture) of a tool of their trade.

Supplies:

- “Tools of the trade” of group members
- index cards (optional)
- Bibles

Assemble the tools of the trade on a table in front of the group. Invite the participants one by one to demonstrate or describe using their tool and tell a bit about their workdays. What do they most enjoy or value in their workday? What would they like to change? What is hardest for them?

We often think of ministers or mission partners having a call from God for their work. Pose these or similar questions: What sense of God’s calling do you have about your work? How might we think differently about our work that would help us find God in our labor?

2 Looking Outward

Leader preparation: The magnifying glass and binoculars symbolically represent looking deeply inward and to the places near and far where Sabbath can be practiced. Reflect on the people and situations that can be considered by magnifying what is close to us and looking beyond what we can now see and know.

Supplies

- magnifying glass
- binoculars

Pass around the magnifying glass. Ask the participants to think of Sabbath practice as something that leads us to look more deeply into ourselves and what is familiar to us. Name some Sabbath practices that look inward. Pass around the binoculars. Ask the participants to think of Sabbath practice as something that leads us to look beyond ourselves to consider the needs we do not now see. Name some Sabbath practices that look outward.

Invite the participants to reflect on this question: How can we practice Sabbath by looking both inward and outward?

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 Everything Is Spiritual

Leader preparation: Rob Bell is the founder of an ecumenical faith community in Michigan. The video “Rob Bell: Everything Is Spiritual” reminds us of our spirituality. View the video: <http://www.tinyurl.com/5m6ey5>.

Supplies:

- “Rob Bell: Everything Is Spiritual,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/5m6ey5>

View the video as a group. Ask: What issues are raised? What spoke to you? How might your perception change if you think of yourself as spiritual? How does that affect your relationships with others when you acknowledge that they, too, are spiritual? What about someone you don’t know, or someone who has hurt you? What impact on mission does this concept of spirituality have for us?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Journaling with Scripture (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read and reflect upon 1 Corinthians 11:17–26.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper and pens

Discuss how journaling can be a way to dialog with scripture and seek God’s leading. Ask volunteers to take turns reading a verse of the scripture. Invite the participants to read the passage again, reflecting on the ways that this scripture invites them to honor a Sabbath practice.

Allow a few minutes of silence to reflect on the scripture. Then invite the participants to write their reflections and insights. Ask: Where do you see yourself in the passage? Where do you see your church in the passage? What message does this passage have for you or for your church? Record any other thoughts that come to you.

Ask persons to share anything they wish from this experience.

5 Busy Person’s Sabbath

Leader preparation: Read Jeremiah 17:19–27.

Download (<http://www.tinurl.com/2f2lvxl>) and read “The Busy Person’s Sabbath” by Linda Hanick, vice president, communications and marketing, at Trinity Church, a historic Episcopal parish near Wall Street in New York City, reprinted with permission at UCC.org.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- printed copy of “The Busy Person’s Sabbath”

Read Jeremiah 17:19–27 together. Sit in silence with it for a few moments. Then introduce “The Busy Person’s Sabbath” to the group. Again allow a moment for silent reflection. Then lead a discussion about the possibilities offered by the idea of practicing “The Busy Person’s Sabbath.” If you wish, covenant with the group members who are able to do this to report back in the next session.

6 Poem for One I Love

Leader preparation: None

Supplies:

- paper and pencils or pens

Consider this: The Sabbath is God’s gift of love to us, a statement that we are more than the work we do. Sabbath is a sign that life, your life and mine, has value that cannot be measured in money. Reflect on and discuss this statement: “Time equals money. There may be no more insidious or destructive tenet in modern life. . . . When we equate the very gift of life to money, we end up commodifying all of life, and see the world through the mind-bending prism of the dollar sign” (Michael Schut, in *Money and Faith* [New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2008], 270-71).

We all have someone very near and dear to our hearts. Write a poem to that chosen person, and prepare to present it to them. It will bless their spirit and give you another opportunity to share yourself in love. Suggest either the haiku (see <http://www.tinyurl.com/29lr6e>) or cinquain (see <http://www.tinyurl.com/2wau7xb>) poetry forms.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 We End Up Where We Focus

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- paper and crayons, markers, or pencils

Tell the following story: Carol was fifty-three when she decided to take a motorcycle riding class. If all went well, this intense weekend of both classroom and on-the-bike learning would end up in a certificate that would allow her to get a motorcycle license. In general, things did go well. She learned what clothing to wear, how to start the bike, shift gears, stop quickly, and how to lean into curves. The hardest task to perform was riding a figure eight in a rectangular box drawn with chalk on the pavement. Her instructor gave this advice: “Don’t look down at where your wheel is — look ahead to where you want to go. You will always end up where you are focused.” Carol passed the class and got her license, but if you’d ask her today the most important thing she learned from that weekend, she would say: “You will always end up where you are focused.”

Ask for responses to the story. Sometime beginning drivers are told that where their eyes go, the car goes to. Ask: What experiences of focusing have you had?

One method of setting direction in our lives is visualization. Many people, including athletes, use visualization to achieve their goals. They see themselves, in their minds, accomplishing the goal. A high jumper sees herself going over the bar. A violinist sees himself playing in a world-renowned orchestra. These methods can be a part of our faith practices as well. Invite the participants to take 5 minutes to think about something they would like to do for humanity. Visualize doing it. Where are you? What are the sounds, sights, smells? Who is around you? How are you making a difference in somebody’s life? Provide paper and markers, crayons, or pencils for people to use to capture their visions. After the 5

minutes is over, invite persons to share these goals with each other. Allow them to pass if they wish.

Then give this challenge: Make this a focus for your life. Write it on your wall, your Bible, your mind. Keep it as a focus. And see where you end up.

8 Stand Up

Leader preparation: Reflect on 1 Corinthians 11:17–26.

Supplies:

- markers
- paper
- Bibles

Ask the group members to read 1 Corinthians 11:17–26. Imagine you are one of the people who are feasting, not sharing or waiting for others. What might you say about this behavior in the community of Christ? Who might object to what you might say, or accuse you of forgetting that you are a master, not a servant?

Ask: When have you ever had to stand up for Christ? Share stories about standing up, or not standing up, for Christ. Was it in word or in other ways? Was it easy? What could have made it easier? How did you feel afterwards? Where do you feel a need right now to stand up, but are afraid or hesitate to do so?

9 Church in the Street

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies: None

Some churches practice celebrating one Sunday service “In the Street.” The goal is to draw the attention of persons passing by who might not be part of a Christian community. They may have a personal need or spiritual issues to be addressed. Sharing in this way allows freedom from the traditional clothing worn, music shared, and the order and extent of the worship service. The church makes itself available to the community in which it worships. Discuss the possibility for your church to consider such an activity or create another one that might serve the same purpose. What do you think of “Church in the Street”?

Reflect

As you think back on this session, what moments stick out for you most? What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, and about the young adults in your group? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Often the world we live in is a discouraging place. God gives us hope that a better world and a better life are possible, that God gives us the strength and courage to be part of God's work of rebuilding and transforming the world. These times together may give the members of this group new hope for their own part in God's work.

About this Exploration

Sabbath implies renewal based in reflection. Rooted in the past, Sabbath beckons us toward the future. It calls us to encounter God in the present moment. Sabbath is a way for us to remember that we are God's beloved children. Awareness of God's presence can guide us through all of life's experiences. As God's people, we often find ourselves facing challenging times, not unlike those faced by the psalmist and by Jesus' followers after his crucifixion. At such times, a sense of God's presence can guide our choices toward a future filled with the possibilities of Sabbath transformation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

***Psalm 119:105–112,
129–136***

***Matthew 27:51–66
(Matthew 26:14–27:66)***

Leader Preparation

Find a space free of distraction where you can be alone with God. Spend time with the biblical text or texts that you are using, keeping in mind that we are focusing on the idea of Sabbath. What stories or events from your own life reflect the concepts of rest, recreation, justice, and community? Think about the young adults who will be journeying with you. What stories might they have?

Position yourself in a way that best allows you to enter into a spirit of prayer. It may be standing with your arms out, kneeling with your eyes closed, or even focusing on the flame of a candle. Find whatever works best for you!

Prayer: Most gracious God, with a word you began creation. You spoke and each part came into being—even the rest that you call us to enter. In that rest you began the story of humanity that leads to this very moment. Help me to understand that I and my fellow travelers on this journey are part of that story. As I prepare to lead this group, give me the creativity, energy, and insight to share the story with others. Amen.

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Serenity, Now! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read about Reinhold Niebuhr and origins of his now-ubiquitous Serenity Prayer. See <http://www.tinyurl.com/6cjxmb>. Print copies of the prayer. Read Psalm 119:105–112, 129–136.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- copies of the Serenity Prayer, Attachment: Activity 1

Read Psalm 119:105–112 together. Reflect on the circumstances that moved the psalmist to call out to God in these words. Introduce the Serenity Prayer to participants, asking if any of them have heard or used it before. Tell them a little about Reinhold Niebuhr and the writing of the prayer. Then enter a time of silence during which you invite the participants to reflect silently on things in their own lives that may be calling out for God’s serenity. Invite those who wish to speak them aloud to do so.

End by praying the Serenity Prayer together.

2 “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow”

Leader preparation: Locate a CD with the song “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow.” You can listen to a Leann Rimes recording on <http://www.tinyurl.com/3a48ukh>, and read the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e4d76e>.

Supplies:

- CD and CD player
- one Halloween mask for each person

Invite the participants to choose a mask and put it on. Go around the group, and, while wearing the mask, have each person say what scares them about the future. Then play the song, and invite them to remove their mask whenever they feel it is the right time, based on what the song says. When all masks are off, listen to the song again. Reflect together: Even though we don’t know the future, and there are things coming up that could be scary, we know that God is in control, and that Jesus Christ walks with us.

3 A Very Important Tattoo

Leader preparation: Come to this session with a tattoo on your hand or your forehead that you’ve created with a washable marker. The tattoo should be a symbol of what’s most important to you in your life.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- washable markers

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9. Many Jewish people wear this prayer tucked into a small leather pouch tied on their arm. The Shema is foundational to their faith; it is most important in their faith life.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Some of the group members may have one or more tattoos. You might invite them to talk about why they have those and what they mean. Invite the participants to get into groups of two or three to give one another a tattoo with the washable markers. Everyone needs to decide what tattoo they are willing to wear. It should be a symbol of what is most important to them. Let the other persons apply it. Place the tattoo either on the hand or forehead. When everyone has been given their tattoo, go around the group. See if they can guess one another’s symbols, and invite them to share the reason for the symbol as well. Share yours as well.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Vision (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Prepare your own vision.

Supplies:

- paper and pens
- Bibles

Read Matthew 27:51–66. Ask: How do you think the disciples felt at this point? When have you felt so discouraged? How do you feel about your future? What do you anticipate your life will be like in five years. Provide paper for the participants to write or draw a vision of their future in five years.

Discuss what needs to take place for their vision to become reality. What are some immediate and long-term steps? Give each person a chance to describe his or her vision with the group. Others may be inspired by the sharing of one another’s vision. Discuss difficulties in accomplishing these goals. Who encourages your visions? Who stands in the way? How can members of this group help one another? What part does keeping Sabbath play in this vision and in the steps to fulfilling the vision? Pray for wisdom to seek God’s will and to do it.



5 Out of Work

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- poster: “Out of Work,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Käthe Kollwitz

Study the print “Out of Work” by Kollwitz. Discuss what each person sees in the picture. What is each person in the picture feeling? How is each person coping? What might each person be thinking? Perhaps this is how the disciples felt after the death of Jesus.

One Sabbath practice is helping those in need. Is anyone in the group out of work? Do you know people who are out of work? In what ways can the group or a member be helpful: working on a resume, passing on a job tip, networking, providing a meal or an evening’s entertainment, providing child care?

6 Nowhere Else

Leader preparation: Reflect on the Kushner quote.

Supplies: None

In his book *Who Needs God?* (New York: Summit Books, 1989) Rabbi Harold Kushner states, “My teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel once wrote, ‘Six days a week, we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth. On the Sabbath, we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul. Six days a week, we seek to dominate the world. On the seventh day, we try to dominate the self. The world may have our hands, but our soul belongs to Someone Else.’ It is under the auspices of religion, and almost nowhere else in our lives, that we can meet people as brothers and sisters, not as buyers and sellers” (pages 103–104). Sabbath allows us to center ourselves in God’s way so that we learn how to be extravagantly welcoming to everyone, seeing the Divine in every action and every person.

Read the Kushner quote to the group. Ask: How does the quote touch you? What might lead you to think or act differently?

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Stand By

Leader preparation: None.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Read Matthew 26:56 and 27:55–66 with the group. Ask: Who is standing by Jesus? Where are the disciples?

Jesus calls us to stand by people in need physically or emotionally, people who are alone. Ask: Whom do you know that you already stand by? Whom do you know that you could stand by more often? Who stands by you? Invite persons to contemplate these questions, and when they are ready, simply to say the name of someone they stand by, or who stands by them.

8 Now Go and Heal

Leader preparation: Gather the supplies.

Supplies:

- Band-Aids
- anointing oil
- candle
- background music

Invite the group to listen quietly as you read Mark 3:1–5. Jesus was all about healing. He healed people physically, emotionally, and spiritually — and sometimes he did it on the Sabbath, because helping people was more important to him than keeping the Sabbath rules. When we follow Jesus, we are called to bring healing to others. Maybe we don’t think we can do that, but we can ... all of us. We all can bring healing to others with our words and actions, and that healing is more important than the rules of peer pressure or popularity or thinking we don’t have time.

Tell the participants that you would like to anoint them with oil. You want to anoint them as a vessel that can bring healing to others. And, you will give them a Band-Aid to wear to remind them to offer healing to others. (Optional: Some might wear the Band-Aid in the middle of the forehead, where everyone could see it and inquire about it, giving reason to explain its symbolism.)

Light the candle and play the background music. Offer the anointing and Band-Aid. Anointing can be on the forehead or on the hand. It takes very little oil to do this, and be careful not to get it on clothing. Words to say with the anointing could be: “(Name,) I anoint you to bring healing to others. May God’s spirit anoint you with power from above.”



9 Passing the Peace

Leader preparation: Reflect on the ways that the poster “The Dance of Youth” represents passing the peace in the circle.

Supplies:

- poster: “The Dance of Youth,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>, by Pablo Picasso

Invite the participants to study the poster and to describe how it depicts the emotions and exuberance of gathering in community. Ask: What emotions can you see in this picture?

Invite the participants to stand in a circle and clasp hands with their left palm up and right palm down. Explain that the left hand is the hand that receives, and the right is the hand that gives. As hands are held in the circle, offer a meditation: “Focus your attention on your right hand. What can you give to the person next to you? Offer the energy of that giving: love, peace, wisdom, rest, whatever you feel you can give to the person next to you. Now focus your attention on your left palm. What would you like to receive? Feel the flow of giving and receiving around the circle. Pass this peace, love, healing to someone or something outside this circle that needs it.” Allow time for silent reflection.

Reflect

What did you learn about Sabbath, about yourself, and about the young adults in your group? How can you grow in your own understanding of Sabbath? What one thing can you do this week to help you find Sabbath in your life?

Say, “Peace be with you.” Invite the participants to share the peace with the others through a handshake or hug of peace.

Attachment: Activity 1

The Serenity Prayer

God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,
Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

Amen.

—Reinhold Niebuhr