

Scripture Passages:

‘And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made’

Genesis

2:2-3

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day”.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

Title- *Sabbath, a Beautiful Gift from God*

REST. How many times have we been told that we need to get some rest? Do we need to take better care of ourselves? Do we need to take a mental health day? During Covid, we all realized how important our mental health is and how important it is for us to take care of ourselves. Living in New York City, the greatest City in the world, we are always on GO. Always rushing to get somewhere even if we don't have anywhere to go. In the midst of all of the noise down the streets of places like Times Square, Midtown, the Bronx, Washington Heights, and Brooklyn there is a need for REST. The daily grind of getting up, going to work or school, taking care of children and spouses and a myriad of other responsibilities causes us to always be on the go; sometimes too busy even to think. Pushing ourselves to the point of exhaustion or physical illness and all of that for what?

In the midst of all of our responsibilities, deadlines, and appointments, God wants us to REST in Him. All throughout Scripture we are reminded of the importance of REST which renews us both physically and mentally. “Truly my soul finds rest in God....” (Psalm 62:1-2); “He grants sleep to those He loves....” (Psalm 127:1-2); “When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet...” (Proverbs 3:21-24) and there are many more examples throughout Scripture urging us

to find rest in the Lord. This recurrence of this theme throughout the Bible, is not a coincidence; it is intentional; a call to the people of God to find rest in Him.

From the beginning of the creation of the world, we are taught the importance of rest. After the creation of the world in the book of Genesis, God Himself needed to rest. How awesome is that?! He modeled for us what we should be doing! Genesis 2:2-3 states, “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made”.

Now, we get how important it is to REST but I think it’s really important that we understand the context and background of REST. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the SABBATH was a day of REST; a beautiful gift from God to his people. When the Hebrews were enslaved in Egypt they did not have Sabbath so they were not allowed to rest. Their task was to build the cities of Pharaoh and as a result, they were pushed both mentally and physically to the limit. When Moses arrives and confronts Pharaoh, he wants nothing more than for Pharaoh to let his people go; as a result, Pharaoh took his anger out on the Hebrews and they were forced to work longer and harder with much fewer resources than they originally had. Those in charge of the enslaved Hebrews were merciless and worked many to death.

Once the Hebrews were freed, the Sabbath Commandment for them was a beautiful (and much-needed) gift from God. In Deuteronomy 5:12-15, He commands:

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it*, you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day”.

Here, the Hebrews are reminded, “that you were a slave in the land of Egypt”. There they were forced to work tirelessly day in and day out and, “the LORD your God brought you out from there”; he brought them *out* of there because the life they were living was contrary to what he intended when he created the world; he had so much more for them and he wanted them to receive this beautiful gift; the gift of rest.

So the question is, how are *you* going to keep the Sabbath? How are *you* going to REST? How are *you* going to do what God has commanded you to do? If you really, really think about it, it’s really probably one of the easiest Commandments to follow yet it is sooooo hard for us to do because of our busy lives. Think of how good you feel when you are resting; think of the simple joy you have when you’re just lounging around at home, maybe reading a book or taking a nap. It may seem so small but setting aside a day or an hour or a few hours to just rest in God and focus can bring a great sense of renewal. Now, the Sabbath looks different for everyone; not

everyone can take one whole day to rest; it's just not realistic. So you need to really think of what that may look like for you; in your life. Reflect on how you want to honor God's Commandment and find rest in Him. God himself loved us so much that he commanded us to REST. His intention for his people was not a life of work, work, work. He wants us to find rest in Him. When you need to be reminded of this, meditate on the Scriptures; revisit passages that urge you to find rest in him. That recurring theme of REST is there as a reminder to the people of God, the people of a God that loves us so much to command us to REST. Find REST in him and you will be renewed and restored!