

introduction

Genesis 2 opens with a striking image: God rests. After six days of creative work, filling the earth with life and order, “God had finished the work he had been doing and rested on the seventh day” (verse 2). Even before there were commandments, toil, or sin, there was rest. Rest is woven into the fabric of creation itself. In today’s discussion, we’ll explore how rest is not a luxury or an afterthought, but an essential part of living in rhythm with our Maker. Because we are made in his image and called to reflect him, rest is central to our humanity. God’s example invites us into patterns of work, delight, and reflection that sustain life in all its fullness.



When’s the last thing you did that truly felt restorative? And how so?

read

Genesis 2:1-3 (NIV)

¹ Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

² By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.

rest as freedom

God’s rest in Genesis 2 is unlike the rest we often imagine. What we see from the beginning is that rest has never meant mere idleness. God does not grow weary, so his “rest” is not a pause from fatigue. His rest was the satisfied and celebrated pause of a Creator whose work was complete. Creation is now fully formed, functioning, and good, and God takes delight in it. As

Kidner observes, it is a “rest of achievement, not inactivity” — a pause to nurture, enjoy, and affirm what has been brought into being.¹

But in a world that measures value by productivity, achievement, or recognition, it’s easy to see our lives as a constant checklist of performance. The idea of Sabbath rest challenges this mindset, inviting us to pause and consider that our worth is not defined solely by what we do or accomplish. We are reminded that we are not slaves to production, reputation, or efficiency. As Tim Keller points out, practicing Sabbath rest frees us from slavery to work, materialism, or societal pressures, giving us permission to step back and trust that God’s grace sustains us.² This freedom is both external — ceasing from labor — and internal, resting in the assurance that our efforts, failures, and limitations do not determine our significance.

discuss

- 1. What might it look like to rest from constantly trying to prove your value or meet others’ expectations? How does this contrast with the culture around you?**
- 2. How could approaching rest as a kind of freedom — not merely a break from work — change the way you organize your week or set goals?**
- 3. What areas of life do you find hardest to let go (to God) or step back from?**
- 4. In what ways could regular practice of rest influence how you care for yourself, your relationships, or the world around you?**

rest as delight

The biblical pattern of Sabbath rest invites us into a rhythm of delight. Unlike the other days, structured around labor and productivity, the seventh day emphasizes enjoyment, reflection, and acknowledgment of God’s goodness. God’s own rest demonstrates this principle: he didn’t

¹ Kidner, Derek. *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, 2008.

² Keller, Tim. “Study 2: *Creation, work and rest*” What were we put in the world to do? Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2006.

rest from fatigue, but delight in a work that was complete. Eugene Peterson in *The Message* paraphrases Matthew 11:28-30, that true rest comes from walking with Jesus and “learning the unforced rhythms of grace.” God’s rest invites us to delight in what is complete, to savor the fruits of labor, and to take pleasure in the ongoing flourishing of creation. This delight is not mere pleasure, but a deep recognition and engagement of God’s provision and care.

Sabbath rest is also a practice of devotion, care, and attention to life itself. In the Old Testament, Sabbath rest included leaving the land to recover (cf. [Exodus 23:10-11](#)), entering the promised land as a place of renewal (cf. [Deuteronomy 12:9-11](#)), and even celebrating the Jubilee year in which justice, restoration, and freedom were proclaimed (cf. [Leviticus 25:8-17](#)). Through Sabbath, we are reminded that we are stewards of creation, not owners. Just as God ceased from his work, we are called to step into his rhythm of delight, enjoying and caring for what he has made without needing to control, manipulate, or exploit it. By practicing rest, we remember that life is more than what we produce – it is being fully human, enjoying God’s gifts, nurturing relationships, and joining in his ongoing care of the world. True rest, then, is not a limitation but a liberation, inviting us to walk in the freedom, delight, and rhythm of God’s design.

discuss

5. **What does it look like in your life to intentionally stop to savor the fruits of your work, relationships, or personal projects? Can you share a moment when you genuinely felt that joy and satisfaction?**
6. **What keeps you from fully embracing rest and delight in your life – whether habits, expectations, or pressures – and what might help you overcome those challenges?**

group application

Exploring Six Ways to Practice Sabbath Rest (Tim Keller)

Completely Unplanned	Complete cessation from activity occasionally (breaks with no agenda or scheduled activities)
Avocational Time	Something that is pleasurable for you, but that takes some skill or expertise
Contemplative Time	Not just gathered worship, but inward resting through prayer, solitude, journaling, reading, and reflection
Aesthetic Time	Enjoying God's creation, music, arts, landscapes, and allowing these experiences to refresh and energize you in unique ways that other forms of resting do not
Nurture Relationships	Time set aside to pay full attention to the most important people in your life
Inject Sabbath into your work	Deliberate limitation of productivity as a way to trust God, be a good steward of yourself, and declare freedom from slavery to our work (e.g., deliberately set fewer goals in a given day and week)

Discuss

1. Which of the six types of Sabbath rest do you naturally gravitate toward, and which feel most unfamiliar or challenging? Why?
2. How might deliberately “injecting Sabbath into work” change the way you approach your job, school, or daily responsibilities?

Apply

1. Which one of these types of rest could you try this week? What would it look like in practice, and how could the group support you in that?

announcements

- **Talking About Jesus Today**
Friday, October 17 (7-9 pm) & Saturday, October 18 (9 am-12:30 pm)
Learn how to winsomely talk about Jesus and the hope that is found only in him with your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors. Dr. Daniel Strange (Crosslands Forum) and Jennifer Chan (City to City NY) have been invited as special guest speakers.
<http://redeemerws.com/fallconference>
- Sunday, October 19 | **Membership Class, 1:15-2:30 pm**
This is a pre-requisite class for becoming a church member. This class is strongly encouraged of anyone who considers RWS as their “home church.”
redeemerws.com/membership
- Saturday, October 25 | **Manuscript Bible Study Training, 9 am-2:30 pm**
Learn from InterVarsity instructors on how to engage with God’s word personally, and in a small group context, so that times of study go beyond “just reading” the Bible.
redeemerws.com/biblestudy
- Sunday, October 26 | **Diaconate Open House, 1:15-2:00 pm**
As Elected Leader Nominations begin next month, learn about the mercy approach of our Diaconate and hear some deacons and deaconesses share on their roles and experience. A light lunch will be served.
redeemerws.com/openhouse