

## **Group Opening Discussion (Sabbath & Solitude)**

What happens to you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually when you go long periods of time without rest? Without a day off?

What happens to you physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually when you don't pull away for times of solitude with God?

How hard is it for you to sit still and silent before the Lord listening to whatever He might want to say to you?

What were Sundays like in your family as a kid? What are they like now? What is one thing you'd like to change about the way you spend your Sabbath?

Describe the pace of your life. Do you have times when you unplug and relax?

When I relax, I feel guilty. On a scale of 1-10, how true is this of you?

What rejuvenates you? If you had some time to do something you enjoy, what would that be?

## **Group Break Out (Sabbath)**

Read Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 20:8-11 – Why do you think God rested on the seventh day of the creation? Was he tired? What does the Exodus passage tell us about why we should observe a Sabbath? What is the purpose of Sabbath?

Read Matthew 12:1-14 and Luke 6:1-11 – How did the religious leaders misunderstand and misapply the Sabbath? What does Jesus say Sabbath is about?

Read Luke 13:10-17 and Mark 2:23-27 – Based upon Jesus' actions and teachings, what do you learn about the real purpose of Sabbath? How can practicing Sabbath bring healing and freedom to your life?

Read Psalm 62:1-2 and Matthew 11:28-30 – How do these verses remind you that keeping Sabbath is about trusting God? Are you trusting God to give you rest? What does that look like when you take a day off?

Read Hebrews 4:1-11 – In what way is the Sabbath rest of God still in effect for believers today? How will you enter God's rest by observing a Sabbath? Is there a future aspect of Sabbath alluded to here?

Read Isaiah 58:13-14 – What promise does God give those who observe Sabbath? Is this a verse only for Israel or does it apply to you? How can you disconnect from your normal pursuits to enjoy the rest and restoration that comes from honoring "God's holy day."  
(Remember Mark 2:27)

## **Group Break Out (Solitude)**

Read Mark 6:6-13, 30, 31 – Why did Jesus encourage the disciples to pull away from the busyness and pressures of life and ministry to a quiet place? How does that resemble the practice of solitude? Do you have the same need? Why or why not?

Read Luke 4:42; 5:15, 16; 6:12; 9:18, 28; 22:39-42 – What pattern or rhythm do you see in Jesus' life that encourages you to practice times of solitude? Why were they so important for him? How important should it be to you?

Read Psalm 4:4,5,8; Psalm 46:10; Psalm 62:1-2 – What instruction do these verses give you for times of solitude with the Lord? How can you incorporate them into your alone time with God? How can you practice "stillness" before the Lord?

Read Lamentations 3:21-29 – How do these verses encourage us to sit quietly, be silent and wait before the Lord? What do you learn about God and spending time alone with Him?

## **Sabbath**

Matthew 11:28 (Msg) - Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.

Matthew 11:28 (NKJV) – Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

### **A. Definition:**

A day to focus on God and one another instead of our to-do lists

NOT Legalism  
NOT Empty Ritual  
NOT A Perfect Day

It is the opportunity to focus on the two most important commandments:

LOVE God  
LOVE Others

It is a time to put aside cares and work to just love God and others.

1. A Spiritual Practice, a Journey, a Process  
We practice it because by practicing it, we encounter God in life-changing ways.
2. A Command (10 Commandments) – Exodus 20:8-11 & Deuteronomy 5:12-15
3. Not a luxury, but a necessity for mental, physical and spiritual health.

The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath. Mark 2:23-28 – Sabbath is a gift for us. Choose to receive it.

Compassion is never against God's rules – Luke 13:15 and Matthew 12:11

- B. **Six Aspects of Sabbath that allow us to unplug regularly and give us energy and enthusiasm so we are renewed by rest** (from Rest: Living in Sabbath Simplicity, by Keri Wyatt Kent)

### **1. Resting**

Do you say – If I just finish this project, or get through school year or the summer or whatever, then, things will settle down and I can focus on what matters – I'll be content and I'll live a simple and serene life?

We are usually in our default response to continual crisis in our lives = we get busier

Running without stopping deplete life of meaning.

“When we feel restless, we often think, I've got to do something. We rarely think, I've got to do nothing.” (Keri)

“To practice Sabbath is to practice a stillness that brings clarity to our lives.” (Keri)

Psalm 46:10 (NKJ) – Be still and Know that I am God.

In the message it says, “Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything.”

What is restful to you?

It can be alone or with family and/or friends.

### **2. Reconnecting**

Despite our technology to connect (emails, voice mail, text, instant message, skype, etc), yet increased loneliness, isolation and feel disconnected.

Need connection with God and each other.

Psalm 34: 8 – Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good...

We should be seeking not more relationships, but deeper ones --- Intimacy with God and with each other.

How can you reconnect?

### **3. Revising**

So how do we revise our Sabbaths? We have to plan. We have to make choices.

Focus on connections, not entertainment.

Unplug electronics and plug into others – to know others and to engage with them.

Possible choices (not legalistic):

- a) Don't make kids stay home, but don't take them shopping either.
- b) Be available to listen but not wait on them hand and foot.
- c) Don't shop, housework or laundry or run errands.
- d) Don't hurry.
- e) Read Bible or other books with kids.
- f) Take a bike ride together
- g) Prepare meals in advance
- h) Invite other families over for Sunday Supper
- i) Clear your schedule
- j) Play outside with the kids
- k) Have conversations
- l) Play Board Games
- m) Take a walk
- n) Listen
- o) Nap
- p) Eat leftovers
- q) Cup of tea
- r) Watch the snow fall
- s) Turn off the computer
- t) Sit and drink cocoa by fire (TV fire DVD)
- u) Pray
- v) Play music that is restful
- w) Light candles
- x) Restful hobbies
- y) Be a Mary, not Martha on your Sabbath day
- z) Make things simple

### **4. Pausing**

Pausing should be part of your daily routine (it prepares you for Sabbath) –

- a) 30 seconds to sit still and breathe
- b) Few simple stretches before moving to next task
- c) Short walk to clear mind

- d) Focus on something else for a few moments
- e) Building margin into your day
- f) Be interruptible
- g) Pause to chat with someone
- h) Look out the window
- i) Moment to Pray/praise
- j) Think of something for which to be thankful

## 5. Playing

Play – breaks down barriers  
Encourages cooperation  
Strengthens relationships

“Playfulness is a path to humility.” – (Keri)

Purpose of play = simple joy (like a child)

Relax, giggle and laugh with others

Play just for fun – not competition or addiction

True playfulness brings joy and teaches trust (God is able to keep the universe going without our help) – Play is an act of trust. Trust is a key part of childlikeness.

Have you ever enjoyed something so much that you lost track of time? That you forgot about yourself and your “to-do” list?

Examples:     Deep conversation with dear friend  
                  Reading absorbing book  
                  Engaging deeply in some creative endeavor  
                  Knitting  
                  Scrapbooking  
                  Gardening  
                  Visiting a museum

Recreation can re-create us.

Enjoy what you have rather than focusing on what don't have – move toward contentment ---  
Cultivates Gratitude.

What do you like to do? What is play for you? What's fun? What rejuvenates you?

## 6. Praying

Generation Me – born 70's, 80's & 90's – Self-centered, disrespectful of authority, depressed, self-important – They were taught self-esteem by the baby boomers (who focused on introspection and self-absorption) – GM confidence based not on accomplishments but on existence – make yourself happy (facebook you tube, etc ) – self-focused culture – it's all about me – want ribbons for just showing up for work.

Where boomers felt self-absorption and self-importance based on what they accomplished, Generation Me feels self-importance and self-focused based on their existence.

What is the antidote for self-absorption and self-importance --- Prayer

Rather than pray selfishly, focus on God, then others – This is the Sabbath mindset of Prayer.

Remember on the Sabbath what God has done and that we are not Him.

Prayer is enjoying the attention of God and giving our attention to God. Delight in being with Him. Makes God smile. This is relationship.

Psalms 120-134 – Songs of Ascent – Sung as worshipers walked up to the temple in Jerusalem – Prayers and focus on God - (Read 133 and 134)

Matthew 6:33 (MSG) – Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.

Remind yourself:     God is as close as the air I breathe  
                              Listen to His voice of love  
                              A restful interlude to give attention to God

Do you have a sanctuary in your home? A chair or corner where you pray regularly?

## Solitude

Solitude is a Place.

1. A Place in Time Set apart for God alone – unplug and withdraw from noise and busyness of being with others
2. A Physical Place set apart for times alone with God – not cluttered with work, noise, technology, people
3. A Place inside me where God's Spirit and my Spirit dwell together in union – private and reserved for intimacy with God – a Safe place.

Silence deepens our experience of Solitude. We are away from our addiction to noise, words and activity. We create a place for listening.

We enter solitude based on our desire for God.

Technology makes it difficult. We get exhausted by being too accessible. Cell phones, pagers, emails are all interruptions to Solitude. Technology can disconnect us from God, and often from others.

Jesus's example – Mark 6:45

How to practice Solitude:

1. Choose a Place.
2. Get comfortable
3. Breathe deeply
4. Become aware of God's Presence
5. Be Still
6. Listen and Speak with God in Prayer
7. Select a Bible passage 6-8 verses long –
  - a. Prepare in Silence – Pray – Speak Lord, I am listening.
  - b. Read the Passage
  - c. Reflect on It – Who, What, Where, Why, When?
  - d. Respond – What should be my response?

- e. Rest – Read the passage again and rest in it.
- f. Resolve – to live out the Word in a specific way

“We are so afraid of silence that we chase ourselves from one event to the next in order not to have to spend a moment alone with ourselves, in order not to have to look at ourselves in the mirror.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Think about: Community is not loneliness grabbing onto loneliness. I’m so lonely and You’re so lonely. It’s solitude grabbing onto solitude: I am the beloved, You are the beloved; together we can build a home. (Henri Nouwen).

**Ideas & Tips for Incorporating the Practice of Sabbath into your life**  
**(Choose those that are relaxing for you – No Stress)**

Remember: Sabbath defies the workaholic culture we live in.

1. Make a list of the things you enjoy most and plan to do one or more of them on your next day off.
2. Make a list not only of things to be included but things to be avoided on your Sabbath day.
3. Completely disconnect from your job. Refuse using your day-off to “catch up” or “get ahead” of work-related material.
4. Don’t answer any work-related voicemails, texts or emails on your Sabbath.
5. Let go of things that stress you out for those twenty-four hours.
6. Engage in restful activities: Take a walk and/or a nap. Go on a picnic or a bike ride.
7. Do what you love. Avoid doing what you hate on your day off.
8. Refuse to make a “to-do” list on your day off.
9. Set aside some intimate time with God and others you love.
10. Plan an activity or time with friends where you will laugh a lot.
11. Sleep late on your Sabbath or take an afternoon nap.(without guilt)
12. Plan to do something fun with your family.
13. Spend some time being still and quiet, listening and watching for God to speak to you or show you something beautiful and significant about Him or you or others or life.
14. Don’t over-plan your day off. Have no schedule. Go with the flow. No structure.
15. Exercise but don’t overdo it.
16. Play your favorite game.
17. Go to a movie in the middle of the day.
18. Take your child/family for ice cream or some place you both enjoy.
19. Connect with a friend.
20. Cook your favorite meal and celebrate it with friends of family.
21. Read a book, magazine, article, Bible.
22. Practice carefree celebration.
23. Relax.
24. Go to a library.
25. Starbucks with friend or family.
26. Wii bowling with family.
27. Gardening if that is relaxing for you.
28. Cook together (make it fun)
29. Be grateful.
30. Create something, if that is fun for you.
31. Scrapbook, if that is relaxing for you.
32. Take a bubble bath.
33. Crochet, knit etc (only if it is relaxing and not a chore)
34. Listen to restful music or other music that lifts your spirit.

35. Light candles or arrange aromas in your home.
36. Drink a cup of tea.
37. Gaze at the stars.
38. Do a random act of kindness for someone.
39. Spend time outside in nature.
40. Build a snow man.
41. Jigsaw Puzzles
42. Blow bubbles
43. Play with your pets.
44. Go barefoot
45. Watch the sunset
46. Leisurely stroll
47. Be silly
48. Dance around the house
49. Write poetry
50. Journal your thoughts
51. Read to someone
52. Be spontaneous
53. Write handwritten notes
54. Picnic in the living room
55. Play board games

## **Ideas & Tips for Incorporating the Practice of Solitude into your life**

1. Identify “little solitudes” you can find in your schedule or day where you can be alone with God (for example: driving to and from work or the grocery store, etc.)
2. Schedule a longer time of solitude once a month and schedule a full day of solitude once a year.
3. Pick a regular spot that will have the least amount of distractions where you can get alone with God. Choose a place that is uncluttered from work, away from the noise of interpersonal relationships.
4. When practicing solitude, unplug from all forms of technology and sit quietly before the Lord.
5. Let go of expectations of what God might do or say or not do or say during your solitude time.
6. Begin your time with short phrases like, “I’m here, Lord”, “I need help Lord” or “I’m listening Lord.”
7. In solitude, speak less and listen more. Practice being comfortable with silence during solitude.
8. Ask God to show up and speak to you but be silent long enough to allow Him to whisper His truth.
9. During a period of solitude, silently listen for your own loneliness and longing. Wait silently to hear if God reveals anything about them.
10. Meditate on one verse the whole time and let God speak to you.
11. Memorize Psalm 46:10 and apply it during solitude.
12. Keep a solitude journal and record the results of your time with God. (Detail what the experience was like and what you learned about God, yourself and your relationship. Did God speak to you?)
13. Let your children see you having a regular quiet time.
14. Create a time where all the family sits in silence. Let each of them pick their own place. Ask them to unplug from all technology. Ask them to just be alone in silence or send them with a verse to meditate on. Come back together and share what happened, whether it be to talk about their thoughts during the silence or how God spoke to them through the verse.

## **Personal**

What changes do I need to make to re-establish a Sabbath and Solitude into my life? Are there attitude corrections that I need to make? Are there lifestyle changes that will help me make Sabbath a consistent practice?

What do I have to do today vs What do I think I have to do today?

What are the things you do that replenish you and restore you most? How can you incorporate those things into your Sabbath?

Can you find times to pause throughout your week? How?