

Sabbath Restores Us to Sanity:

A Helpful How-To for Resting to Rise

Did you know that Sabbath and shalom (peace) are always present together in Scripture? They go hand in hand. **Without Sabbath, there is no peace. And without peace, there is no justice.** I had always wondered why violating Sabbath made the list of the Ten Commandments, and it's also the closing thought of my favorite passage of Scripture, Isaiah 58, which didn't make sense to me either.

Through studying this coupling, I began to fully understand that we are human beings, not human doings, and when we don't take a Sabbath, we begin to act like machines rather than people. What follows very quickly is that we begin to think of others as machines as well, and people who become machines to us are easy to exploit. Without a Sabbath, we live in a little microcosm we've created, and it's easy to think that the world won't work without us, that we are in control of everything, when the opposite is actually true. The world is expansive and large, rich and beautiful, and we couldn't possibly hold it all together—only God has the capacity to do that. The world works just fine without us, and our part, though extraordinary and significant, is small, to say the least.

Without a Sabbath, we begin to falsely believe that our thing is superior or inferior to another's, and it becomes easier to feel like we have some sort of ownership over people rather than a responsibility to them. We begin to shrink people down to what they can do for us, how they can build our thing, rather than allowing them to just be people, made in the image of God. Funny thing is, we can do this with our children, spouse, employees, and communities of faith, because it's a mindset, and the amount of people we are influencing is irrelevant.

Without addressing the attitudes that drive us to resist rest, we cannot make the necessary changes we need to in order to enter a lifestyle of Sabbath. That's the first step. While there's no easy, overnight method that will suddenly change your life, I put together a helpful how-to that will either encourage or depress you. Maybe both.

1. **Admit there's a problem.** Acknowledge the taskmaster living inside your head, if you have one, and serve them a notice. They are not God. You will no longer be under their thumb, doing their bidding.
2. **Start with small changes.** Leave the office on time. Keep commitments to yourself. Schedule time to rest, and don't cancel. Spend time with some folks you love, and who love you, doing what you want to do, not what you have to do.
3. **Put your phone down.** That thing is an anxiety-inducing heart attack waiting to happen. You are not a twenty-four-hour pharmacy. No one should have access to you every hour of every day.
4. **Remove work email from your phone on your days off.** I don't even know how to tell you how this changed my life. *Nope, I am not even going to look, because I am off. Sorry if you aren't, but you are grown, and we used to have to communicate through pagers and phones hanging on the wall, so I am sure you'll all be fine without me on the days you are not paying me to work.*

5. **Take a break from social media.** At least once a week, just don't even look. If you missed anything juicy, your friends will likely send you a text, meme, screenshot or GIF. Also, you won't be so angry at all the people on vacation while you are busy not having the budget to take one. (Maybe that's just me . . .)
6. **Stop shoulding all over yourself.** *I should respond. I should have taken care of that. I should do more than is required of me on every project, and treat absolutely everything as a top priority. I should be a better at this, that, and the other thing.* No, you shouldn't, and even if you should, guilt and shame are not permanent solutions to change; they're an invitation to the crazy train, which you are currently trying to deboard.
7. **Just don't respond.** I am not talking about irresponsible, lazy correspondence. I am talking about eliminating the taskmaster who tells you that everything is urgent. No, it's not. Skip the notifications. Delete the email. Ignore the question. Read the text and don't text back, if it's not necessary. Don't forget, less than twenty-five years ago, we couldn't even text!
8. **Choose a Sabbath and keep it.** For a full twenty-four hours each week, don't do anything that you have to do but only things that you choose to do. Share a meal with people you love. Take some time for yourself. Do the thing that makes you feel alive, even if it's just a bubble bath, a walk, or reading in your sweats. Yes, the first few weeks, you will feel like the world is falling apart at the seams, like it just can't hold up without you. Listen: yes, it will. You are not the glue of the universe.
9. **If you have little children (or teens, I imagine, but can't know for sure), there's no hope for you.** Kidding—not kidding. No, you cannot sleep in on your Sabbath. No, you cannot just go to a movie, because it will cost you \$150 for babysitting, tickets, and one pack of M&Ms. No, you cannot let them fend for themselves because you need a break. Just do your best. At nap time, don't do laundry. Go lay down, or make a meal you can eat in peace, or watch *Law & Order SVU*. If you have a partner, take turns giving each other a break to do what you want, or ask a friend for a few hours of help. And put those jokers to bed at 7:00 p.m. on your days off so you can live your best life.
10. **Give yourself time to catch a rhythm.** It might take you a full year to find what works for you and your family. You may have to plot your exit from a job that's killing you. You might have to ask for a work from home day, so you can pick the kids up once a week. You might realize that solitude is your sweet spot, or that you need more time with friends. Don't give up and keep trying.

