

INTRODUCE

Well, good morning church! If I haven't met you yet, my name is Chris Martin, and I'm the Lead Pastor here.

If you've got your Bibles, and I hope you do, please open them up to Leviticus chapter 23. Leviticus 23. That's where we're going to be.

We want every person to have a hand on their Bible. You can open your phone or tablet to Leviticus 23. That's on page **101** in those Bibles under the chairs.

INTRODUCTION

Did everyone freak out when they saw the church email this Thursday?

- Should I say April Fools?

Or really,

- I just know that you won't watch the video
- without a little click-bait!

So, back in the Fall of 2020 we preached a sermon series called The Disciplines, and in that series I took one week and talked about sabbath.

Now, more than 40% of you are new to Fathom since that time,

- and so, I'm going to take this opportunity
- to talk about the discipline of taking a sabbath once again.

Cause ain't nobody nailing this except Hobby Lobby and Chick-Fil-A!

But I'm also going to take it from a different angle.

- Because this summer,
- my family and I will be taking our first Sabbatical from ministry.

And so, the question becomes:

- what is a sabbatical?

TRANSITION

So, let's dig into the Bible first. Great place to start!

What does the Bible say about sabbatical?

- Well, the foundation of a *sabbatical*
 - is rooted first in the *sabbath*,
- so, we need to theologically need to understand sabbath
 - if we are to get our minds around sabbatical.

EXPLAIN: GENESIS 2

Now when many of us think of the sabbath,

- we think of creation,
- in Genesis 2,
- after God created everything,
- he stopped and rested on the seventh day.

The English word is *sabbath*, but it comes from the Hebrew word *shabbat*.

And the word literally means to *cease* or *stop*.

So, the sabbath is a day to stop:

- to stop working,
- to stop wanting,
- to stop worrying,
- to just stop.

Now, one thing to note here:

God does not stop on the seventh day because he is tired.

- He didn't stop because he was tired.
- He stopped because he was finished!

God could've kept creating...just like we can keep working.

- So too, we don't only stop when we are wiped out...
 - burned out...
 - exhausted...
- No! In the very rhythm of creation,
- God modeled to us a day...
 - one in seven...
 - to stop.

EXPLAIN: THE 10

The other place people often think of sabbath is the 10 commandments.

Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5...the BIG 10!

Well, you know what number 4 is:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

So, the sabbath is a commandment!

And it's the only command with the word *remember* attached to it. Why?

- Do you think God might have been aware that we would be prone to forget this one?

- God doesn't say:
 - *REMEMBER, don't kill people!*
- God doesn't say:
 - *REMEMBER, don't sleep with your neighbor's wife!*

God says, **remember the Sabbath**. Why?

Because we're prone to forget the sabbath.

TRANSITION

But today, I want us to dig into everyone's favorite book of the Bible. Leviticus! Because it's here that we find God's law concerning sabbath and a more expanded version of what I'll call the three levels of sabbath.

LEVITICUS 23:1-3

[1] The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [2] "Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.

[3] "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.

EXPLAIN: TO THE LORD

Now there it is, level 1 sabbath.

- We've seen it in creation.
- We've seen it in the big 10.
- And now here it is explicitly in God's law.

And the thing that makes it a sabbath is that it's UNTO THE LORD.

- That's where a sabbath is different from simply a day off.
- A sabbath is UNTO THE LORD.

ILLUSTRATION: ME

So, my weekend is Friday, Saturday.

- Alright...I'm not Chick-fil-a! I'm not closed on Sundays!
 - I'm open for business.
 - Yo, I'm at work right now.

So, my family has chosen to sabbath on Saturday.

But Friday is my DAY OFF. I do all the work that I don't get paid to do.

You feeling me?

- Yardwork.
- Laundry.
- Cleaning.
- Running Errands.
- Groceries.

But a DAY OFF isn't a sabbath.

- Because a sabbath is UNTO THE LORD.
 - And we'll get into the details in a bit.

But Leviticus 23 begins with the sabbath.

- Work 6. Stop 1.
 - Work six days.
 - Stop on the seventh.

Bet then look at verse 4:

LEVITICUS 23:4

[4] “These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them.

EXPLAIN: FEASTS

So, the level 2 of sabbath are these feasts. I think it might be helpful to call them “extended sabbaths”.

God built in longer stretches of time for his people to sabbath. And the rest of this chapter lays these feasts out.

- Verses 5-8 cover the Passover.
- Verses 9-14 the Feast of Firstfruits.
- Verses 15-22 the Feast of Weeks.
- Verses 23-25 the Feast of Trumpets.
- Verses 26-32 the Day of Atonement aka Yom Kippur.
- And verses 33-43 the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles.

So, these are longer, extended times, that exist with the same purpose as a weekly sabbath.

And if we were to read this whole chapter you would see on repeat the words:

- TO THE LORD.
 - These are not vacations.
- They are UNTO THE LORD.

ILLUSTRATION: ME

Now, my family does practice something similar to this as well. I get four “weeks-off” from working at Fathom each year.

So, what we do is rhythmically,

- we take two weeks right after Christmas,
 - cause for me, the workload in the Fall up through Advent is a lot!
- And then two weeks during the summer.

And we try to treat those two weeks as extended sabbaths.

- Normally we’ll use the first week
 - to do house projects,
 - or take trips or vacations,
- that kind of stuff.

Cause I feel like it takes me about a week to get out of work mode.

But then the second week, man we try to do more of a longer sabbath.

- A lot more rest.
- A lot more refreshment.
- A lot more intentional time with the Lord.

This really helps me come back from my time off,

- not just bone dead exhausted.
- You ever get back from just hustling hard on a vacation,
- only to get back in to work and think...
 - *“I’m not rested at all!?!”*
 - *I need a vacation...*
 - *FROM MY VACATION!”*

Yeah, that's what we try to avoid.

And then, in Leviticus chapter 25, here's what God says:

LEVITICUS 25:1–7

[1] The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, [2] “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. [3] For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, [4] but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. [5] You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. [6] The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired worker and the sojourner who lives with you, [7] and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.

EXPLAIN: YEAR

So, now here is level 3 sabbath for Israel.

Every seventh year is to be a sabbatical.

- They live in an agrarian culture,
- but every seventh year they were to give the land
- an entire year of rest...
- a sabbath TO THE LORD.

Can you imagine this?

- God said he would provide for this agricultural society...
- for an entire year as they rested the land.

And we don't have time to go into it, but in the next verses in Leviticus 25,

- that every seventh Sabbatical,
 - that is, every 49th year,
- Israel was to take a double sabbatical.
- 2 years of sabbatical,
- and that was called the Year of Jubilee.

Now, here is where the modern idea of a sabbatical finds its Biblical roots.

- That every seventh year there is a much longer sabbath,
 - or sabbatical.

TRANSITION

And that's where we're at this year, Fathom,

- because we celebrated our seventh birthday in February,
- and Maryse and I are taking our first sabbatical this summer.

Now, before I give you all the details about my time this summer...

Let's do a refresher on the practical's of sabbathing...

- which then can be applied
 - to longer sabbaths...
 - or even sabbaticals.

How do we practically sabbath unto the Lord?

EXPLAIN: STOP

Well, in a sabbath I always break it down to four categories.

On my sabbaths I STOP, REST, DELIGHT, & WORSHIP.

And these four categories are the grid that we run everything through to see if it fits into our sabbath unto the Lord. First we **SLIDE STOP**

And I know I already covered this one a bit, but I really think this is the key to sabbath. We STOP.

ILLUSTRATION: NOISE

There's this guy, Bernie Kraus. He's a guy who records nature sounds for film and television.

- And he said that in 1968,
- if he wanted to get 1 hour of undisturbed natural sound
 - (no airplanes, cars, etc),
- it would take 15 hours of recording time.

But today, in order to get that same 1 hour of undisturbed sound, it takes approximately 2,000 hours of recording.

We live in a world that is never "turned off."

We are constantly going and doing.

- We have phones,
- and texts,
- and music,
- and e-mails,
- and TVs,
- and a lot more.

And that's all noise! But what about visual noise?

- Billboards,
- and pop-ups,
- man, there's advertising everywhere.
 - Car wraps...like, what the heck are those?

It's like we have become allergic to quiet.

- How often do you check you phone in a day?
 - In an hour?
 - On a date?
 - When you're with your kids?

Have you ever found yourself snapping at your kids when they interrupt you from doing something that, in the end, is probably stupid?

- "What do you want?!?"
- "I'm posting on social media!"

That kind of thing.

- "Can you give me a second?!?"
- "I'm tweeting a picture of us playing at the park together!"

Do you have a day that you unplug and stop doing and simply are?

On Sabbath we STOP.

- No email.
- No work texts.
- No homework.
- We try to limit chores.
- We try not to go shopping.
- We STOP.

EXPLAIN: REST

Second, we **SLIDE REST**

Now, I think we have a skewed view of what this word means,

- because when you and I think of rest,
- most often we think of a nap,
- or hitting the couch to watch some TV,
- or something like that.

We equate rest with leisure activities.

But Biblical rest isn't an idea...

- referring to the remedying of exhaustion...
- after a tiring week of work.

Rather, it describes refreshment that comes from STOPPING one's work.

Now,

- I think that a nap or watching a movie
- CAN be a part of resting on a sabbath.

BUT remember, it's a sabbath UNTO THE LORD.

- So, just drooling on yourself...
- while plowing through episodes of The Office...
- might not produce the rest...
- that will stir up affections for Christ.

And rest will look different for each person.

- It often works out that if you work all week with your hands...
 - you will likely rest with your head.
- But if you work all week with your head...
 - then you'll likely rest with your hands.

ILLUSTRATION: ME

That one is me.

- All week I'm thinking
- and writing
- and leading
- and emailing...

And I need my mind to take a rest...

- so, I like walking
- and biking
- and running
- and skiing
- and moving.

I rest actively.

EXPLAIN: DELIGHT

So, on sabbath we STOP, we REST...and third, we **SLIDE DELIGHT**

Back to Genesis 1: as God creates, he ends with the same cadence:

- And God saw that it was good.
- And God saw that it was good.
- And God saw that it was good.

He creates banana trees...

- plucks one of those things down and peels it...
- takes a bite...
- *"yeah, that's good!"*

He creates elephants, giraffes, wombats...

- and is like, *“Dang...I’m good.”*
 - Cats were likely a result of the fall...

He creates people, and what does he say?

- *“Now, that’s very good!”*

And sabbath has this idea of stopping and resting

- but ALSO of enjoying God
- and our lives in his world.

So, for a second, just think with me:

- What could you do for twenty-four hours
- that would fill your soul with a deep DELIGHT?

Do those things on sabbath.

ILLUSTRATION: CHRISTMAS

I’ve heard it described like this: think of sabbath like a weekly holiday.
Like Christmas...but every week.

But think about that:

- Christmas is a peak day every year.
 - It’s beautiful.
 - It’s special.
- You have traditions you practice.
 - You go to church...
 - There are special songs.

- You eat some of your best meals and treats.
- You normally spend it with family and friends.
- It's highly communal.
- And it should be highly restful.

Sabbath can be like Christmas, but 52 times a year!

It's doing as many things as we can that delight us...that bring about a holy pleasure.

- It's playing with my daughter.
- It's going for walks with my family.
- It's eating the very best meals.
- It's drinking the very best coffee
 - or other beverages I won't mention here.
- It's taking a nap.
- It's reading on the porch in the rocking chair.

It's all DELIGHT!

EXPLAIN: WORSHIP

We STOP, we REST, we DELIGHT, and finally, we **SLIDE** WORSHIP

Church, I think, if possible, you should sabbath on Sundays.

- If I didn't work for the church that's the day I would Sabbath.
 - And some of you do have to work on Sunday's, too,
 - and so, you should Sabbath a different day.

But I think...

- we should worship...
- on the Lord's Day...
- with God's people.

So, I think...

- coming to...
- and serving at church...
- should be a part of your sabbath routine.

To gather with God's people...

- to hear God's Word,
- to worship,
- to take communion,
- to pray,
- to serve the body...
- to love one another...

This is all a part of sabbath.

We STOP, REST, DELIGHT, and WORSHIP. **BLANK SLIDE**

EXPLAIN: COMMAND

Now, is this a command to be followed?

- Do I HAVE to sabbath?
- Are we as Christians COMMANDED to follow the sabbath?

Well, this is hotly debated.

Some will say,

- *“yes, it’s a binding command.*
- *Just like all the other 10 commandments...*
- *just because Jesus came,*
- *doesn’t mean those commands aren’t still binding.*
- *We wouldn’t say that of any other of the 10!”*

While others say,

- *“no, that’s legalistic to observe the sabbath.*
- *Jesus fulfilled the law...*
- *and now we’re free in Christ.*
- *So, Jesus is my sabbath rest.”*

And I would say there’s merit on both sides of the argument.

But I want to reframe the question:

- The sabbath isn’t a HAVE to...
- it’s an OUGHT to...
- and a GET to!

You OUGHT to sabbath because it’s so GOOD for you.

And you GET to sabbath because it’s a GIFT to you!

To observe a sabbath unto the Lord is a good gift from God that we would be fools not to partake in.

Again, think of Christmas. No one’s like,

- *“Oh you celebrate Christmas every year?”*
 - *How legalistic!*

- *Why does it have to be December 25th every year?*
 - *We're free in Christ!*
- *We should be able to do it whenever we want!"*

And no one's like,

- *"Well, this Christmas was a train wreck,*
 - *Uncle Larry wouldn't stop talking politics...*
 - *and the kids were little brats...*
 - *it was like a Chevy Chase movie!*
- *So, let's just cancel the whole thing!"*

No, you still do Christmas the next year.

And so it is with Sabbath.

- You OUGHT to do it...cause it's GOOD for you.
- And you GET to do it...cause it's a GIFT to you!
 - You serve the God who created weekends!
 - Praise his name!

EXPLAIN: HARD WORK

But it is actually hard work. It feels paradoxical, but...

- You have to work hard
- to rest well.

This means I have to protect my Saturdays.

- This means I have to work harder on my Fridays off,
 - so I'm not stuck with laundry
 - and lawn care
 - and extra work for my job on sabbath.

And I think each one of us should work towards the three levels of sabbath.

I think each Sunday, if possible,

- you should take a sabbath day.
- A 24-hour period
- where you stop, rest, delight, and worship.
- 1 in 7.

And then, I think you should plan your times in the calendar year

- where you have feasts of sorts.
 - Extended weekends
 - or even weeks
- where you sabbath for a bit longer.

And then finally,

- I think every seven years-or-so,
 - if you are able,
- you should consider a sabbatical of sorts.

Your employer may not provide it...

- although I've read a ton of research
- that the marketplace is finding this practice
- more and more appealing.
 - Giving extended time
 - every 7-10 years
 - to employees
 - is increasing productivity,
 - longevity,
 - and even enjoyment of work.

So, the business world is starting to catch up with the Bible here.

But even if your work doesn't do this...

- maybe you save up some of your PTO
- and you form your own sabbatical
- where you take some time...
- and you create a sabbatical unto the Lord.

EXPLAIN: MY SABBATICAL

So, this summer Maryse and I are leaving Fathom.

We'll be taking our sabbatical UNTO THE LORD.

- I got saved in 2001,
- I got my first church job in 2003,
- and I haven't stopped since then.

So, I'm coming into my 20th year of vocational ministry.

And the elders have generously extended this sabbatical to my family.

- So, my last Sunday will be May 15th,
- and I won't be back until the second week of August.

And we've crafted our sabbatical around those four things as well.

- We will be taking some vacations...
 - but it will mostly be STOPPING from church work...
 - RESTING in all the God has done for us...
 - DELIGHTING in the good gifts he gives...
 - and WORSHIPING with other friends and churches.

And Fathom will be in really good hands.

- Between the elders, staff,
- and some outside help...
- we will continue preaching
- through the Gospel of Matthew.

We have 3 other elders, and 3 elder candidates.

And there are now 6 staff members besides me.

So, you'll be in good hands over the summer.

- I won't be on email or social media.
- We're asking that you don't
 - reach out to us
 - with church stuff.
- There are godly and qualified men and women...
- here at Fathom who can help y'all out.

And everything I've dug into teaches...

- that giving a point leader of a church a sabbatical
- is actually one of the healthiest things for a church to do.
 - Other people get the opportunity to step up.
 - We'll see that I'm not indispensable.
 - We'll recognize where I might be over-functioning...
 - and where others are under-functioning.

While this is an investment in my family's emotional and spiritual health...

this is also a great investment in the church health for the long haul.

BLANK SLIDE W/PADS

CONCLUSION

Now, here's where I want us to land today.

So much of what the sabbath is, is lost on us.

Why? And this is significant...

Because we are so prone to drift to DOING rather than BEING.

Let me explain that.

- The Sabbath was woven
- into the fabric of how God created the universe to be,
- because you and I, by our nature,
- are going to try to earn what can't be earned.

ILLUSTRATIONS

There is something that happens in me when I complete tasks.

- When I can check something off a list,
 - there's a euphoric kind of,
 - *"I just accomplished something spectacular"*
 - thing that occurs in my soul.

Say Maryse comes home on a Friday, and says, *"Oh, you made the bed."*

- *"Yes, I did.*
- *I also unloaded the dishwasher,*
- *Harper has been fed,*
- *and the laundry basket is empty."*
 - Cape [flapping].

This husband thing is a breeze! I'm dominating this thing right now!

- When I send the elders my sermon manuscript...
- or I get into my truck after a good Sunday morning...
- or I finish a project at work...
 - I can feel this kind of...
 - *“I’ve got this”* mentality.

But here’s what happens.

- It doesn’t take too long for me...
- to become enslaved to those things.
 - Now I HAVE TO turn those things in...
 - I HAVE TO get those things done...

Because my whole identity now is caught up in that.

- I HAVE TO preach a lights-out sermon every weekend!
- I HAVE TO be the best husband possible!
 - And now I’m carrying all that weight!

And I’ll get crushed by any and all failures!

APPLICATION

The sabbath is God so kindly reminding us,

- *“Once a week...*
 - *or at that feast...*
 - *or on that sabbatical...*
- *just stop...*
- *just be.*
- *Your identity isn’t in those things.*
 - *Your identity is in me.*

- *Your identity isn't in...*
 - *what you can accomplish*
 - *or what you can get done*
 - *or how you can clean yourself up*
 - *or whether or not you do this*
 - *or whether or not you do that.*
- *Your identity is found in my adopting work in Jesus Christ."*

We have a tendency to forget that. Almost all of us do.

- In fact, most of us have a default setting...
- of trying to perpetually clean ourselves up...
- so God might approve of us.

And the Sabbath is going to step right into that nonsense.

God screams from the heavens,

- *"Stop! Just stop!"*
 - *"Well, let me just clean up."*
- *"Stop it!"*
 - *"But I'm trying to get better at this."*
- *"Okay. Just stop.*
- *Today just stop and rest in being mine.*
- *You're already mine."*

He doesn't love the cleaned-up version of you more!

- **That's not who he's wild about.**
- **The future you is not who God loves.**
 - **He loves you right now.**
- **That's what makes grace so amazing.**

It is by his blood and righteousness alone that you're saved.

And in the sabbath he screams out,

- *“Stop!*
- *Just be.*
- *Be my son.*
- *Be my daughter.*
- *I love you now.”*

The sabbath was made for you.

The sabbath is a gift to you.

I always like to end with these words from Jesus, when I talk about sabbath., so we'll end here today.

This is Matthew 11:28-30 from Eugene Peterson's The Message paraphrase.

SLIDE MATTHEW 11:28-30 – THE MESSAGE

“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. Walk with me and work with me—watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Let's pray.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

RESOURCES USED:

- Bethke, Jefferson and John Mark Comer. *Sabbath*.
- Crouch, Andy. Playing God.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Sabbaticals Pt. 1: What They are and Why Every Leader Needs One*.
- Scazzero, Peter. *Sabbaticals Pt. 2: How to Plan for a Transformational Sabbatical*.