

## Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:8-11 – Consumer Detox wk3 ‘STOP’ (Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2014)

**Question:** how many of you have taken a period of 24 hours uninterrupted rest in the last week?

And how many have taken one including no housework or other jobs like mowing the lawn?

Challenge of Sabbath in our society: non-stop, consumer driven and where technology makes so many of us contactable all-day everyday. One of those areas where reading Scripture seems so far from our reality – we’d love to live it out, but no idea how to get there or what it would look like.

Task for today: overview of Sabbath, and then some thoughts on how to apply it in our lives.

First, **Sabbath is God’s idea** – reflects pattern of God’s own work. Gen 2 – account of creation, 6 days of work and then one of rest: READ v2-3. Don’t need to assume a literal 6-day creation for God, not what author had in mind. Important thing is pattern: 6 days’ work and 1 day rest.

This becomes clear when skip onto 10 commandments, God’s pattern for healthy human society and what it means to live the sort of life God wants us to. God’s pattern of work and rest becomes ours, this time lived out in the rhythm of literal days: READ Ex 20:v8-10a. Note reason: READ v11.

So this pattern of 6 days’ work and 1 days’ rest within a 7-day period is set up as the foundation of the rhythms of human society. Note: 7 biblical number for perfection or wholeness/completeness. Interesting to see how even non-Jewish/Christian cultures have instinctively adopted 7-day week, including ancient China, Japan and Hindu civilisations. Communist Russia abolished it in 1929, but failed so badly that was reinstated in 1940.

One obvious implication of Sabbath being God’s idea, God’s invention, is that the Sabbath is very important. Not a minor bit of OT law, it is one of the fundamentals. Not just the fact that in 10 Cs:

- Also mentioned in all 5 books of Pentateuch (not just Gen and Ex but also Lev, Nu and Deut).
- Severe punishments decreed showed its importance. Numbers 15, death penalty for Sabbath breaker – same category as murder and adultery! Why? ‘Belongs to Lord’ therefore sin against God directly.
- It should be observed even in key work time: Ex 34:21 (ploughing season and harvest). No get out in certain busy periods.
- Mentioned throughout rest of OT: Neh 13, Is 56,58, Jer 17, Eze 20, Amos 8 – ‘a crucial indicator of fidelity to the God of Israel’ (Greene) – READ Is 56:2. Only specific command among general ordinances.

Other implication of Sabbath being God’s idea is the link between ‘rest’ and ‘holy’ – it is not just about not working but time specifically offered to God: a day which ‘belongs to the Lord’. Hence main weekly worship on ‘day of rest’ – come back to challenge of this later, but one aside...

Why ending of Sunday as day of rest so damaging – society in contravention of God’s laws. Only 2 definitive principles from creation mandate: 7-day pattern and marriage as monogamous, lifelong heterosexual relationship – threw Sabbath out in 1994 with Sunday Trading Laws, and now marriage 20 years later. Last nail in coffin, perhaps? – society completely lost its biblical moorings.

So Sabbath is God's idea. **Also a good idea.** Extra dimension of repeat of 10 Commandments in Deut 5. Here rationale for observing Sabbath is this: READ Deut 5:15 - Israel reminded what it was like to be slaves (forced to work) – how bad it was. Hence need to observe it for own wellbeing.

This reflects Jesus own teaching (our other passage) – famous verse: 'Sabbath made for man not other way round.' Designed for our benefit! Which again draws us back to the disastrous decision to make Sunday another shopping day. More work for everyone, no shared sense of a quiet day in the week. People have to find ways to rest with constantly changing shift patterns, and also people often spend their days of rest doing extra jobs which open shops allow them to do.

One final biblical principle: **Sabbath requires faith** – predates 10 Cs, Israel in desert Ex 16 and story of manna – not provided on Sabbath, so need to trust. Then reflected in biblical laws – Sabbath year! Same idea with Sabbath observance in key work times (above).

*'Humanity needs to recognise God as the provider, to put him before greed, to set aside anxiety and put limits on gainful labour.'* (Greene)

### **So how put into practice today?**

**Question:** which of these things is work? (SLIDE: DISCUSS)

Biblical definition of work: all meaningful activity (not just paid employment)

**First key principle: be clear about what is work and what isn't (SLIDE)**

- Work includes chores
- Harder question: grey areas like gardening. Rule of thumb: if it feels like work, it is work. So if it feeds and restores you, go for it in time off! If not, don't.

One of problems is that our time off often includes lots of 'work' – we need to make sure we have times of genuine rest. Hard if you have a family, no perfect solution.

**Second principle: Plan your rest time (SLIDE).** Not bound to Sabbath in quite the same way – NT loosens rules, in 2 ways: (1) new theological argument: In Christ we enter 'rest' of God (Jesus I will give you rest); (2) life of Spirit – not bound by strict adherence to law anymore.

Key question: *what is spirit of Sabbath law? Adequate balance of work and rest.* Need a 'day', even if spread over several chunks. My example – I am a 'shift worker': 'daddy why do you work on a Sunday?' So I have to plan my Sabbath differently. I also have to be ruthless about it. If it means I hide in kitchen when Alise answers door then I will!

**Finally: recognise that work can be addiction like any other.** Generally our society is addicted to work. Forced by employers and technology. Means that lots of people can't enjoy rest. Takes its toll over time. Remember that rest is not the same as sitting still. It doesn't mean we have to be sedentary, but if we are going to be active, is it activity which feeds and restores us, our relationships (especially with God, also with family and friends) – or is it more work? What controls your time? Is it just your boss, or your family, or is it other stuff that drives you?

Hard subject – almost as hard as money, perhaps more so! But this one's for our benefit. It's a no-brainer: no one dies wishing they'd spent more time at the office. As Lou says in her intro: the Sabbath is blessed, just and safe. It feeds our relationship with God, others and also ourselves. We remember who we are again. Above all, it reconnects us with Jesus, the Jesus who says: Come unto me, all who are heavy laden, and I will give you REST.'