

Breaking Bad Week 4
July 22, 2018, Honor the Sabbath
Just Another Manic Sunday
Martha Stringer
Matthew 12:1-14

My husband Paul and I had 3 children in 5 years. When kids are close in age like that there tends to be a lot of sibling rivalry. They were always jockeying for position to be first or get the biggest piece of whatever or arguing over whose turn it was to do the chores of the day, like set the table or take out the trash. It was exhausting for me to keep track of it all. So I came up with what I considered a miraculous method of maintaining order. Each kid was given a day of the week that was theirs. If it was “your” day then it was your day to go first, get the biggest piece...etc, etc. However not only was it your day to go first...it was also your responsibility to do the chores of the day. So when the fighting began all I had to ask was “Whose day is it?” I divided up the week like this Monday was day 1, Tuesday day 2 etc. One kid’s day was Monday the next kid Tuesday and the third kid Wednesday and then the rotation started over: kid one on Thursday, kid two on Friday and kid three on Saturday. Then came Sunday and you know whose day of the week that was? Mine. The Supreme Being of the Stringer household. On that day I got to go first and my husband did the chores. And on Sunday, and every day actually, I expected my kids to honor what was considered the most important commandment of all in the Stringer household: Thou Shalt Not Whine

It seems everyone creates their own version of commandments. I searched around and found the Ten Commandments for Cooks: Respect the knife. The moment you don't, you will be reminded of the reason why you should.

For Comics: Honor your mother and father for they will be interviewed.

For Car Washes: Thou shalt use 2 sponges.

Even George Costanza, Jerry Seinfeld’s goofy sidekick had a version called The Ten Commandments of (looking like you’re) “Working Hard.” Here are just a few:

Never walk without a document in your hands: People with documents in their hands look like hardworking employees heading for important meetings

Use computers to look busy: Any time you use a computer, it looks like “work” to the casual observer.

Keep a messy desk: A clean desk looks like we’re not working hard enough.

Look Impatient and Annoyed: to give your bosses the impression that you are always busy.

Sigh Creatively for Effect: Sighing loudly when there are many people around, gives the impression that you are under extreme pressure.

MOST IMPORTANT: DON’T email this list to your boss by mistake!!!

<http://www.beliefnet.com/columnists/idolchatter/2006/01/george-costanzas-ten-commandme.html#9VP5tMHpJ1f1iRDB.99>

They are funny but they have a ring of truth don't they? Because there is a pervasive perception that we are better human beings when we are doing. Doing fills us with purpose. Being racks us with guilt. Downtime is indulgent. Lives void of productivity lack meaning and busy-ness adds value. When you ask someone "how are you?" the usual response is...busy!

Once, long ago, being richer meant working less. An article entitled: Ugh, I'm So Busy: A Status Symbol for our Time summarizes it like this: It used to be that the richer one got, the less one worked and the more likely one was to show off *ample leisure time*.

Today we make judgements about how rich somebody is based on the long hours they put in at work. The wealthiest American men, on average, work more than the poor.

We've come to value being well-off and time-poor because a busy person is perceived as being more valuable. It's not so much about bragging about stuff, rather we brag about being busy to show how much we are valued for our skills.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2017/03/busyness-status-symbol/518178/>

We are in week 4 of our Breaking Bad series on the 10 Commandments and we are on the 4th Commandment about Keeping the Sabbath Holy. The Israelites lived as God's chosen people but all around them people were busy worshiping other gods and idols. There were gods for crops, gods for weather, gods for war. These small gods required offerings so the people were always busily running around trying to keep them satisfied. God addressed this with the First Commandment. Now, with the fourth commandment God tells them not only to worship Him above all others but to specifically set aside a day for it.

Moses tells us in Exodus: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy." Exodus 20:8-10

Because God has a specific plan about the rhythm of work and rest. He actually modeled it for us in the creation story in Genesis because after six busy days of creating we read... God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." 2:2-3

God took a rest – and he wants rest for us too. Children often whine when they are tired. The adult version of whining is complaining. If you're complaining you're too busy take a rest!

"True rest seems to be elusive for most Americans. Only 14% of adults set aside a day a week for rest. Only 12 percent of American adults say that they intentionally set aside a time of day when they don't use electronic devices."

Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family* (Baker Books, 2017), page 104

<http://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2017/july/8071717.html>

I am referring to the kind of busyness we have control over. There are many whose economic reality simply does not allow for downtime. They have to work two to three jobs to keep the family afloat. For the rest of us we are talking about the gift of rest God specifically spelled out for us.

The word Sabbath originally meant to be separate or set apart. In Jesus time it was Saturday. As Christianity evolved over time the Sabbath day of rest of Saturday transitioned to Sunday or what we refer to as the Lord's Day. We don't see Sunday commanded in Scripture as the new Sabbath, but the New Testament does set a pattern for Sunday being a special day specifically because Jesus rose from the dead on a Sunday. (Mark 16:9) So I believe Sunday is our day to commemorate the greatest event of our faith – the resurrection of Jesus.

Our culture does not. We commemorate... sports! We did a survey of churches across the country to gain insights on children's ministries. We asked the question: Are sports eating into your attendance? 22 churches filled out the survey. 20 of those responded yes and one church just didn't even answer the question. I can't tell you what you should or should not do on a Sunday. Should you take a job that requires you to work on Sunday? I did. I also spent many Sundays on the soccer field. Your Sabbath is going to be unique to you and your family. Just make time for it.

Jesus and his disciples observed the Sabbath and on this particular Sabbath day we find him in the synagogue as was his custom. Yet Jesus ends up clashing with the Jewish religious leaders over the significance of what it meant to observe the Sabbath.

In Matthew Chapter 12 we read:

“At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.”

He answered, “Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that the priests on Sabbath duty in the temple desecrate the Sabbath and yet are innocent? I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

Matthew 12:1-8

The Gospel of Luke records 6 accounts of Jesus healing on the Sabbath – also a considered a violation.

In all cases Jesus replies to the Pharisees accusations about violating the Sabbath by reminding them what the true intent of that rule was. The Pharisees have taken the definition of observing the Sabbath to the extreme and essentially nit-picked it down to such detail no one could possibly follow all of it. It was forbidden to tie a knot, light a fire, to prepare a meal or go on a journey among many other things.

So what started as a boundary God gives us permission to put in place – a day off from work not only for ourselves but for those who work for us or alongside us – even our animals became a day of endless prohibitions.

Jesus cuts through the traditions that have accumulated over thousands of years and emphasizes the God-given purpose of the Sabbath. A day, a gift, for our spiritual, mental and physical restoration. As I said before your Sabbath is going to be unique to you. But there are some basic practices:

First and foremost cease from work and let God **Refresh** you. In Exodus we read: “Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest, and so that the slave born in your household and the foreigner living among you may be refreshed.”
Exodus 23:12

Remember the reason given in the old testament of keeping the Sabbath is that the Israelites were slaves in Egypt and went four hundred years without a vacation. We are invited to keep Sunday separate as a day to remember we have been freed from slavery by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Even if you can't not work is there some non-essential earthly activity you can step away from? I do not read email on Sundays...it's a small boundary I've put in place to help keep me from the busy-ness we are pressured to maintain. Give yourself permission not to conform but be transformed. Which is exactly what we will dig into this fall when we begin our series called Different. How to think different, be different and make a difference.

The founder of Chick Fil A Truett Cathy, made the decision think differently and close the restaurant on Sundays in 1946 when he opened his first restaurant in Hapeville, Georgia. Here is what it says on their website:

Truett Cathy has often shared that his decision was as much practical as spiritual. He believed that all franchised Chick-fil-A Operators and their Restaurant employees should have an opportunity to rest, spend time with family and friends, and worship if they choose to do so. That's why all Chick-fil-A Restaurants are closed on Sundays. It's part of our recipe for success.

Truett Cathy set a boundary for his business and his employees and stuck to it even though it was considered different and illogical by business and Wall Street standards. Yet today Chick Fil A not only survives, it thrives.

After He created the world, God looked around and saw that “it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). God did not just cease from his labor; he stopped and enjoyed what he had made. What does this mean for us? We need to stop to enjoy God by doing something you enjoy. Take the opportunity to breathe deeply, focus on God and pay attention to the beauty around you. Deep slow breathing also makes you more available to listen to God.

And listening to God is our way to **Re-connect**. God knows everything about us. But he longs for us to be in a continual relationship with him. In order to connect with God we need to nurture

our relationship with him. The two best ways I know to do that is through reading his word and worship. Are you connecting with His word? Many of us have taken Pastor Doug's challenge to read through the Psalms this summer. Start now if you haven't already. I am always amazed at what I hear God saying to me through Scripture when I really spend time to breathe it in.

What is your attitude about worship – do you have to be here? Or you *get* to be here? Jesus didn't get hung up on all the legalistic rules of his day. He used the Sabbath for worshiping God, for resting from work and for doing good, and he encouraged his disciples to do the same. God gave us 168 hours in given in a week...we certainly can set at least aside 1 hour out of 168 for worship. Make worship a time to stop and reconnect.

Finally, when we rest in God's presence He **Refuels** us. Cars without gas don't go. When our tanks are dry we can't do much for ourselves or others. Even Jesus took time out to care for his own needs. After he spent hours healing and caring for the sick he needed some downtime!

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Mark 1:35-36

Airlines always advise to put on our own oxygen mask before helping others with theirs. In his book Sensing Jesus, Zack Eswine shares about a time of intense busyness and over-commitment. Until he says he received a letter - the old-fashioned kind of letter with a stamp on the envelope. The words were written by hand with a pen. I opened it and heard my mom's voice as I read. The words she had written: Son, a tree has to have roots to provide shade.” Eswine says he learned the following lesson: "Shade is hard to give when roots remain shallow."

He was a 4 time best actor nominee and won once for the movie Good Will Hunting. He won Grammys, Emmys, Screen Actor's Guild's and Kid's Choice Awards. In total he was nominated for 74 awards for his work. His estimated net worth was \$50 million dollars. He would have turned 67 yesterday had he not taken his own life 4 years ago. Robin Williams was a hard worker but he struggled with depression throughout his life and his coping strategy was to work more. According to the biography The Final Days of Robert Williams.

“When he faced struggles he tried to find solace and significance in working more. But what proved more powerful than the pleas from his colleagues and from family members to slow things down was his own desire to keep working through the pain, the one cure-all that had helped him cope with past troubles. He operated on working. That was the true love of his life. Above his children, above everything. If he wasn't working, he was a shell of himself. “

Don't worship your work, work at your play, and let your Sabbath day be just another manic day of the week. It can't sustain you. Let Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath be the true love of your life. He alone can refresh you, re-connect you and refuel you if you set aside time to let him do it.

Amen

<https://www.preachingtoday.com/illustrations/2018/june/robin-williams-discovered-that-work-is-no-solace.html>

<http://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/exodus/remember-the-sabbath/>

The Ten Commandments, William Barclay