

Keeping the Sabbath:

A simple guide for
exploring the practice of
Sabbath

*"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God."
Hebrews 4:9*

How to Begin

1. Choose Your Time

Decide when your Sabbath will begin and end. Christians have traditionally observed the Sabbath from Saturday evening through to Sunday evening, following the Jewish pattern of sundown to sundown. But you can choose any 24-hour period that fits your life and household. The key is to be intentional: set aside time that truly feels different, protected, and restorative.

2. Prepare Ahead

Sabbath goes best when it doesn't start in a rush. Think ahead:

- Arrange to pause on work tasks and projects for the duration of the Sabbath.
- Shop and prepare food in advance.
- Do essential chores the day before.
- Let others in your home or family know your plans.
- Plan ahead for activities that will bring joy and rest.

3. Set a Different Tone

It can be helpful to mark your Sabbath time with intentional acts and gestures, e.g.:

- Light a candle.
- Say a Sabbath prayer (e.g., see an example below).
- Read a Psalm or passage of Scripture slowly
- Take a few deep, slow breaths, acknowledging God's presence and slowing down to be present.

These small, deliberate acts help you slow down and shift your inner pace—from producing and consuming to savouring, delighting, and worshipping.

Cease

On Sabbath, people typically seek to cease from certain types of activities in order to rest. There is no one-size-fits-all list, but here are things to consider ceasing:

- Working (paid or unpaid tasks)
- Striving (to tick off to-do lists or solve problems)
- Producing (emails, errands, jobs around the house)
- Shopping (resist the need to consume)
- Digital distractions (consider limiting or stepping back from screens, social media, endless entertainment and constant notifications)

This isn't about rules—it's about freedom. Pause whatever pulls you out of being present and unhurried so you can rest, reconnect with God, and be renewed in relationship with others and creation.

Embrace

Use this time to engage in life-giving, joyful, and unhurried things:

- Take time to enjoy and savour your food, family and friends.
- Share meals with friends or family
- Go for a walk and appreciate wider creation
- Read, nap, laugh.
- Worship—alone or in community.
- Be present with your family or housemates.
- Soak in beauty, silence, and wonder.
- Rest in God's presence without an agenda.
- Read Scripture unhurriedly.

Sabbath is not about passivity. It's about being reconnected to what matters most—God, people, and the goodness of life.

*"The Sabbath was made for people, not people for the Sabbath."
Mark 2:27*

A modern Sabbath prayer

Lord of Creation

*Create in us a new rhythm of life,
Composed of hours that sustain rather than stress;
Of moments that bring new life, new hope and new perspective;
Of time that revives, refreshes and restores.*

Lord of Liberation

*Ingrain in us the patterns of your truth.
Set us free from our bondage to hurry.
Set us free from the pressure of never having done enough.
Set us free from the lie that we need to run faster, harder, and
longer.*

Lord of Resurrection

*Raise us into the beauty of your new life.
Dead to despair, alive to new hope.
Dead to complaining, alive to encouragement.
Dead to the limitations and expectations placed on us, alive to the
great expanse of your love.*

*By your ever-restful grace, allow us to enter your Sabbath rest today,
as your Sabbath rest enters us.*

*In the name of our Creator, Liberator, Resurrection and Life we pray.
Amen.*

A traditional Sabbath opening prayer

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe,
Who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments,
And commanded us to kindle the Sabbath lights.*

*May the Sabbath-light which illuminates our dwelling
Cause peace and happiness to shine in our home.*

*Bless us, O God, on this holy Sabbath,
and cause Thy divine glory to shine upon us.
Enlighten our darkness and guide us and all mankind, Thy children,
towards truth and eternal light.
Amen.*