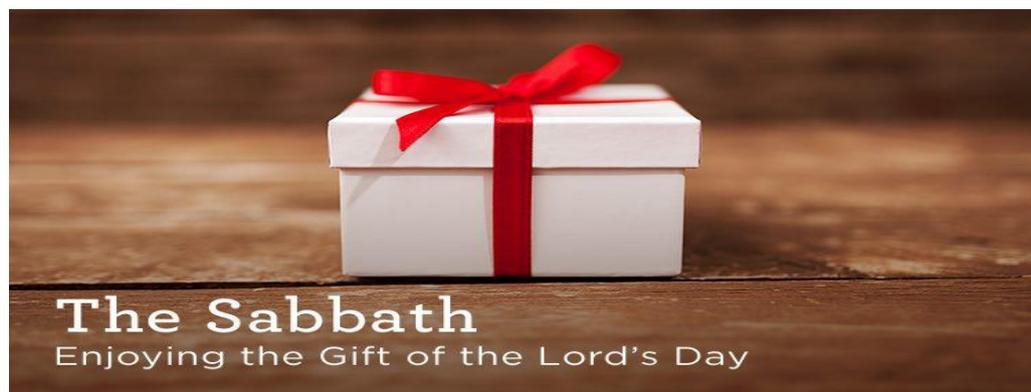


## Sabbath Study for groups



If as a group you missed Jacqui Dowdell's talk on the Sabbath on September 6, I recommend you begin your session together by listening to it. Both the spiritual and practical applications in Jacqui's talk were excellent and so pertinent to our lives today.

Sabbath means "rest from work" and God gifted the Jews a day of complete rest, from a Friday evening to Saturday evening. Many Christians retain the practice of the Sabbath but the day itself was changed to a Sunday in the fourth century AD. Because of working practises, many Christians find that they have to work out another day or way to practice Sabbath for themselves.

### **Open with prayer and praise:**

You could read Psalm 111 and echo the psalmist's praise with your own.

### **Opening:**

Begin by discussing the group's experience of Sabbath. Depending on age, they may remember a time when Sunday activities were restrictive; alternatively they may have no experience at all of Sabbath. Were their experiences positive or negative? How do they feel about the idea of keeping a Sabbath day?

**Word:** Read the following scriptures together

Genesis 2:1-3

Exodus 20:8-11

Ezekiel 20:12

Exodus 23:10-12

Mark 2:23-3:6

Jeremiah 17:19-27

### **Discussion:**

Why do you think God "rested on the seventh day" Genesis 2:3? (Elsewhere in Scripture we learn that God does not need sleep so presumably it is not because He was tired!)

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” The fourth commandment and further instructions in Exodus 23 and Jeremiah 17 emphasise the need for complete rest from work as a way to keep the Sabbath holy. What connection can you make between rest and holiness? How can your own rest from work “be holy”?

“I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy” Ezekiel 20:12. To be holy is to be set apart. How might keeping the Sabbath set us apart as Christians? Can you think of ways that this may put you into conflict with others or even be an example to others?

The Jews were often not good at keeping the Sabbath and God repeatedly, in the Old Testament, calls them back to it. In the New Testament we see the Jewish leaders chastising Jesus for not keeping the Sabbath. What do you make of Jesus’ response in Mark 2:27? What do you think he means by this and how might this affect the way you “do Sabbath”.

### **Application:**

Jacqui, in her talk, described how she and her husband have chosen to practise their Sabbath day but added that others may want to do it differently. How might you have a Sabbath rest in your week? Talk together about the practicalities and how you might support one another in this endeavour. There may be some in the group who already keep a Sabbath day and can share their experience.

Finally, pray together and for one another.

The Sabbath is a gift from God to rest and enjoy Him. It was never supposed to be a burden or a legalistic undertaking. Let us embrace god’s gift and find freedom in resting in Him.

“Stand at the crossroads and look and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls” Jeremiah 6:16