

Background - Rhythm of Life

<Provide some context to your group on why we're talking about Sabbath and even summarize the discussion from Session 1.>

The Rhythm of Life is a tool that we've provided to the Vox community to provide a framework for what spiritual growth and development looks like. In our attempts to support our community in their spiritual formation, we will provide our midweek groups an opportunity to dialogue and practice through each of the rhythms over a few seasons.

In the past, our midweek groups have spent seasons exploring Scripture and prayer and engaging each of those through different practices and expressions. This past spring, we spent a season on what it means to be Invitational and to discover healthy expressions of evangelism for our community. The hope is as we package guides for each rhythm, groups can go through them at their own pace or as new groups start up.

Sabbath: Session 2 Objectives

These objectives might be helpful in shaping and guiding the discussion to a healthy landing spot by the end of the night.

- a. articulate to the group that as members of a community, we have a role in other people's expressions of and ability to practice Sabbath, and we are likewise influenced by others.
- b. start to realize how we influence others
- c. brainstorm ways to practice allowing space for those in the community to rest

Personal Experience of Sabbath

These questions should help your group process the external nature and focus of Sabbath, especially in the context of community.

1. Given that the invitation to Sabbath was given to the community, what is our place, as a part of the community, in helping others to practice Sabbath?

<This may not open up a lot of discussion right away, but will hopefully introduce the concept that we are not alone in resting. We affect those around us. And others in community with us impact our own rest.>

2. Have you ever met someone who felt like a "place of Sabbath" for you? A person who made you feel at peace and restful? What about that person made you feel that way?

<Give people an opportunity to share about those in their lives who have been physical representations of Sabbath in their lives.>

3. As members of community, we rely on each other, at Vox, at work, even at home, to help fill in when we take time off that we need to rest and refresh. Do we need to ask those around us for that time to rest? Should we? It takes a tremendous amount of trust to be able to leave, even for a few days, those tasks and responsibilities that we feel are "ours." We have to be able to relinquish them and separate ourselves from them in order to enter into Sabbath.

<Allow space to reflect on this concept. Likely people will think of times at work they have helped cover for others when someone has gone on vacation. If others are having a hard time finding examples, Weylin's recent sabbatical is a great example of the community stepping in to take care of those things that Weylin does on a daily/weekly basis. Without the community, either he could not have taken that time off, or the church would have gotten along poorly in his absence.>

4. Read Leviticus 25 together. It is a radical idea, but the year of Jubilee has never been realized in history. Could you imagine that practice happening today: all land gained as payment for debt being returned to the debtor; slaves being set free; any outstanding debts being completely wiped out? Is there a small debt we owe others we would like forgiven? Student loans maybe? Mortgages? Past injustices we feel others owe us something for? In your own life, is there something you could do to help usher in Jubilee in some way?

Scripture on Sabbath

Split the readings among the group and give time for people to reflect on their passage and share reflections and thoughts. If you are short on time, you can even summarize the message and focus of the passages below and the need for everyone to participate, not just us as individuals.

Scripture Readings:

- **Exodus 16:28-29, Exodus 20:8-11, Leviticus 25: 1-7**

5. What are your reflections and observations about what each passage says about the community and Sabbath.

Exodus 16:28-29:

This command to Sabbath was given even before the 10 commandments (Exodus 20). We have always needed rest, and God has always invited us into it and has even provided us with what we need to rest (enough manna and quail on the 6th day that we needn't gather on the 7th). Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between God and the Israelites; a sign of His promise to deliver them to a better land and of their promise to honor and worship him. Sabbath is an act of worship.

Exodus 20:8-11 and Leviticus 25: 1-7

Sabbath is for everyone, the animals, and the land. All people need Sabbath, even the foreigners and hired hands, the animals, and even the land that is worked.

Scripture Passages:

Exodus 16:28-29 — Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

Exodus 20:8-11 — “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.

Leviticus 25:1-7 — *The Sabbath Year*

25 The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you —for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

Expression of Sabbath

Go back and look again at our role in Sabbath for the community. Do people have new thoughts or reflections about it?

As you think through practical expressions, here's a two-part question to help people brainstorm.

6a. Look back at your week and try to pinpoint some places you could have helped provide rest to others. Was there an opportunity you missed because you were too busy or rushed?

6b. Now is there something you can do in the coming week that will help usher in “Jubilee”, by creating equality or allowing others to rest?

<Spend some time brainstorming what your place is in your community. Just as we are all “different members of the same body,” so we all can help provide space for others to rest in various ways. You don't need to come up with something concrete right away, but let that thought sit with you for a time and just think about it.>

Prayer

Close your time in prayer for any reflections that came from this time of dialogue and also allow space for any personal areas that require care.

Appendix - Other Resources

Scripture Passages

- **Exodus 3:7-9** — The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey...9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.
- **Exodus 16:28-29** — Then the Lord said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where they are on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” So the people rested on the seventh day.
- **Exodus 20:8-11** — “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 23:12** — 12 “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 31:12-17** — Then the Lord said to Moses, 13 “Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy. 14 “Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death; those who do any work on that day must be cut off from their people. 15 For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. 16 The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. 17 It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.’”
- **Deuteronomy 12:10** — 10 But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.

- **Leviticus 25** - Year of Jubilee
- **Leviticus 26:35** — 35 All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

Current Environment and Culture

- Big Brothers, Big Sisters is an amazing example of the power of setting aside the time to be a place of rest of those who need it. The children in that program all come from broken homes. Their Bigs set aside time a few times a month to just be with them. To do an activity together and show that the child is cared for. Isn't that what you most craved from your parents and siblings when you were young? From friends as you grew older? From your spouse or significant other now?
- We overwork the land more now than we ever have. Livestock as well. We push it to produce as much as it can. We push animals to get as fat as possible. We use pesticides and herbicides and antibiotics to try to fight off disease. We never gives things a chance to rest, and we have all heard the warnings and possibilities of what we may face decades from now. There's no clear answer about what we would need to do to avoid it, and if we did just stop our agricultural practices entirely for one out of seven years, the starvation that would occur would be tremendous. We have put ourselves in a situation with no clear way out. We need Sabbath people, with creativity and love, to find solutions.

Wayne Muller from “Sabbath”:

“In our passionate rush to be helpful, we miss things that are sacred, subtle, and important.” Rest gives us a chance to slow down and carefully consider our own lives and actions. It can give us the opportunity to view and discover the joy or pain, light or suffering that another person may be experiencing. It is easy to let our busy lives shield us from the needs of others. We can easily become closed off.

Additional Resources

- “Sabbath” by Wayne Muller
- “Sabbath as Resistance” by Walter Brueggemann
- “The Sabbath” by Abraham Heschel
- “24/6” by Matthew Sleeth