



### Lent Day 22, March 14, 2012 Sabbath Day

*"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,  
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,  
And call the Sabbath a delight,  
The holy day of the Lord honorable,  
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,  
Nor finding your own pleasure,  
Nor speaking your own words,  
14 Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord;  
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,  
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.  
The mouth of the Lord has spoken."  
Isaiah 58:13-14*

When I was a little girl growing up in Michigan, I lived in the small town of Niles, and I can remember I always looked forward to Sundays. The day started out slower than every other day, so the morning was different from every other morning. My dad would always get up first and make bacon and eggs for whomever wanted it. My mom might play the piano for a while, or we would listen to some of my parent's favorite folk musicians on the stereo. It was a quiet, peaceful morning.

At about 11:10 a.m., we walked to church--it was only a few blocks from our house--and then after church my mom had a luscious, big dinner for us. The afternoons were spent playing at home or maybe visiting my grandparents. We never went shopping because nothing was open. The few stores we had in the town were all closed--because it was Sunday, the day of rest. Imagine that!

Most of us today live in towns where the stores are open seven days a week, and some of them even 24 hours a day. Our kids' sports teams play Sunday games. We use Sunday to play catch up on laundry, cleaning, and work we bring home from work. There isn't much resting or "Sabbathing" that goes on on Sunday. We've lost that old-time Sabbath feeling that Sunday is a special day.

As I've read and studied this week what a Sabbath Day should look like, I am convicted by how far my current Sunday is from that ideal, from how far it is from my childhood Sundays. The above verses show us that God wants the Sabbath Day to be a day that rests our bodies, replenishes our spirits, and rests our souls. As Ruth Haley Barton says in Sacred Rhythms, "The point of the Sabbath is to honor our need for a sane rhythm of work and rest. It is to honor the body's need for rest, the spirit's need for replenishment and the soul's need to delight itself in God for God's own sake (p 137)."

To keep the Sabbath will involve some changes in our lives. It will involve leaving out those things that are work to us, and adding in those things and activities that bring us rest and refreshment and draw us closer to God. It involves adding margin and space back into our lives.

We will need to be intentional about this the rest of the week, so that we are able to have a day without work. It will mean getting the laundry and housecleaning done on a day other than Sunday. Can you imagine having this day set aside for church, spending time with family and friends, napping, taking a walk or bike ride, spending time in intimacy with your spouse, reading for a few hours, talking with your children?

**Application:** I know this is not going to be an easy thing to implement. I would suggest that you spend some time praying over what God wants your Sabbath to look like and maybe reading a few articles or a book on this topic. Answer these questions:

- 1) What activities are work to me that I need to exclude from Sunday? What other day will I do them?
- 2) What things rest me that I would love to do on Sunday?
- 3) When will I attend church?
- 4) Would you like to include other times of prayer or music in your day?
- 5) How will your family practice the Sabbath as a family?
- 6) From the Bible verses in Isaiah, what benefits do we receive from keeping the Sabbath?

If you are panicking over setting aside a whole day for the Sabbath, can you start with a few hours set aside to practice the Sabbath? I think we also need to not let this be a legalistic thing, but as much as we can, try to honor the Sabbath. If it just doesn't work out, try again another Sunday. I will be figuring all this out with you, as this is all new to me too.

**Prayer:** Lord,

We are truly bucking the trends of our society here. I pray for wisdom to keep the Sabbath as you want me to. Show me what needs to go on Sundays and what I should add in that will honor You and bring my soul rest and peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.