

‘REST, THE INWARD LIFE’

There is no denying that rest is both necessary and good for us humans; in fact, it is so good commercial enterprise has tried to capture the market. There are now numerous ways in which, by paying a fee, you can be taught practises which claim to deliver rest, mental, physical, spiritual, or any combination of each, which now has been generalised as ‘wellbeing’. But God was there first, and his free and truly authoritative manual, the Bible, remains unrivalled.

Read Genesis 2:1-3

In the account of the seven days of creation, ‘on the seventh day God rested from all his work ...He blessed the seventh day and made it holy.’ In most corners of western society today Sunday is no longer kept holy by the majority.

Do you keep Sunday special in any way? How do you do this?

What do you feel was God’s objective for resting on the seventh day and making it the holy day of the week? Was God tired and in need of a rest?

Practicing sabbath rest begins not with adding more, but by receiving what God has already given: time set apart from normal activity into a rhythm of worship, finding joy and peace in stillness, and renewal of relationship with God. Sabbath is not a prize for interrupting our work; it is a gift that reminds us we are beloved before we are busy. God intended Sabbath to be a gift, but a gift is not a gift until it is accepted. It requires an action on our part.

Following your group discussion about keeping the Sabbath holy, share amongst the group what actions, if any, you feel able to take.

The seventh day of the week is Saturday; the day Jews continue to keep as their Sabbath. Do you know why Christians celebrate Sabbath on the first day of the week?

Read Mark 2:23 to 3:6

From this passage Jesus confirms that the Sabbath is a gift from God ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.’ Secondly Jesus, as He does often in the Gospels, points out the foolishness of following the letter of the law above the intention with which the law was given. The rhythm of worship/work/rest is a God given rhythm intended for our wellbeing; God knowing we need this to flourish. Our inner-being, our spirit, develops and is sustained as God intended following this life rhythm.

Should we restrict following this rhythm to Sundays only? How and where else could this be used?

When God rested on the seventh day it was surely to delight in all he had created. What should this tell us about our relationship to creation?

Prayer: *To be there before you, Lord, that’s all, to shut the eyes of my body, to shut the eyes of my soul, and be still and silent. To expose myself to you who are there, exposed to me. To be there before you, the Eternal Presence. Amen* (Michel Quist)