

Introduction

Summer series; it's been hot

- Basketball Frustrations: just have to practice

Practice takes what is difficult and makes it second nature

- **Luke 11:28** *"...blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice."*
- **Philippians 4:8-9** *Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.*

The Problem

Sometimes the way my kids feel about basketball is how we feel about faith... ever felt frustrated or exhausted by trying to become a better Christian?

- This summer: spiritual practices
- We often think of our spiritual formation like exercise: I grow by increasing resistance and difficulty
- Spiritual formation is different than physical formation: I grow by increasing surrender and trust
- It still requires practice, because it's unfamiliar to most of us
 - The New Testament compares our faith to a physical activity only once, but it compares our faith to plants dozens of times
- We can't change ourselves, but we can create the proper environment for growth

The Solution

Our goal: help you understand the best environment for GOD to change your heart.

- God isn't asking you to take on an additional burden, He is inviting you to trust Him deeply enough that you can give your burdens to Him

Matthew 11:28-30

- Yoke: a device to ensure two animals move at the same pace, same direction, shared load

What will guide your life?

- We are all guided and formed by something: demands of work, family dynamics, kid activities, political parties, personal aspirations
- Spiritual practices are the way we change the environment for our roots, and come under the yoke of Jesus

Scriptural Basis

- **Matthew 12:1-8**

What exactly is Sabbath?

- Sabbath is the regular practice of resting from our work and delighting in God's blessings
- Modeled by God in Genesis 1
- The word "sabbath" first introduced in Exodus 16, food for the Israelites as they traveled through the wilderness
- One of the Ten Commandments
- Extended into the New Testament and applied to us today in **Hebrews 4:9-10** *...there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God. For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world.*

The Pharisees thought they understood sabbath, but they had missed God's heart

- Not the only time they argue about Sabbath... ironically, it often seemed like their idea of keeping the Sabbath was more work than it was rest!
- Quote: "I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices" (Hos 6:6)
- Intention is explained in Mark's account of this story

Mark 2:27 *Then Jesus said to them, "The Sabbath was made to*

meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath."

- Even the Old Testament speaks of God's heart in Sabbath:
Exodus 31:13 *"Tell the people of Israel: 'Be careful to keep my Sabbath day, for the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant between me and you from generation to generation. It is given so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.'"*

Explanation

God's heart is not to restrict you, but to set you free!

- The Israelites had been enslaved to Egypt, who worked them relentlessly every day
- The Jews were under the religious demands of the Pharisees and the political rule of the Romans, both of whom gave very little leeway and punished severely
- You and I are in constant danger of being enslaved too
- Busyness makes us feel important and productive, but it doesn't make us feel peaceful

My story of performance

- Sabbath has played a major role in learning how to:
 - Find my identity and value in who I belong to, rather than in what I can do and how well I do it
 - Surrender my life to God and trust Him as a sovereign King who is in control of my life
 - Let go of the idols of productivity and accomplishment
 - Practice being content with who I am and what I have

Could be tempting to see sabbath as lazy or soft, but it's much deeper than just taking a day off for ambiguous religious reasons:

Ruth Haley Barton, *Embracing Rhythms of Work and Rest*: "When we think of sabbath only in terms of rest and replenishment, we are selling it short. In Jewish tradition, sabbath contains a strong element of resistance to the prevailing culture, and to the gods within that culture, as allegiance is proclaimed to the God who is our God. The practice of

sabbath-keeping was and is an act of resistance against a culture that brainwashes us into thinking that good things only come through unceasing determination, tireless human effort, and always being plugged in... Sabbath is first and foremost about the freedom to live our lives on God's terms for us rather than living in bondage to anyone, anything, or any culture... one of the main functions of sabbath-keeping is to give us a regular, built-in opportunity for remembering who we are and to whom we belong. No matter how enslaved we've been during the week, on the sabbath we remember our true identity as free people."

Application

How do we do this?

- **Sabbath produces contentment**

- **Philippians 4:11** ...I have learned how to be content with whatever I have.
- We must trust that God gave us the right amount of time
- Start small, but be consistent
- Give it time

- **Sabbath produces connection**

- This isn't an escape from life, it's learning to engage with life
- Turn off your phone and TV, and be present in every moment and every person
- Enjoy your relationships: prioritize the things that connect you to God and other people
- Help each other (spouses, kids, etc.)

- **Sabbath produces restoration**

- Do things that refresh your soul
- Sabbath is not an act we master, but a practice that forms us.

Romans 12:2