

Slowing Down to Receive

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Roots: A Study of Genesis 1-11

Genesis 2:1-3

This morning I want to talk about a subject that I don't recall teaching on in all the years that I have been pastoring. That is the Sabbath – practicing the Sabbath. Now, the Sabbath is a subject that figures very prominently in the Bible and also in the history of God's people – both the Jews and 2000 years of church history.

Perhaps my neglect of teaching on this subject says something about me and something about the culture we live in – even the church culture. Our culture is all about productivity. See, we talk about managing time. There are literally dozens of books out on managing time better. And there are seminars on time management. I mean, think about the phrase “time management.” Whoever invented that – time management? It screams of using time more efficiently, more productively, how to cram more activity into fewer and fewer moments.

There was a study some years ago by Juliet Schor called “The Overworked American.” And Schor claims that Americans are working an average of 163 more hours per year than they did 30 years ago. In other words, according to Schor's book, “The Overworked American,” the average American is working one month more per year than they did 3-4 decades ago. Schor's contention is that much of the increase of our wealth is the result of a radical increase in our work. This book contends that after a century and a half where Americans saw progressively reduced hours in working, we have reversed the trend and contrary to the rest of the world, Americans are working more hours, more overtime, more weekends.

We work an average of 7 hours a week longer than the French. We work 8 hours longer than the Germans, and 10 hours longer than the Norwegians. We also have many fewer vacation days. And when we take vacations, we Americans are dragging along our cell phones, pagers, and laptops. There was a recent study done which said that over 80% of Americans call into work at least a couple of times while they are on vacation.

More, more, more...faster, faster, faster...Americans work later. We take work home. Every other car has someone making a call. For a number of years, I was flying at least once a month. I can't tell you how many business persons are sitting on the planes banging away on their laptops or sitting in the airports making calls, typing with their other hand. I have seen people with their laptops on the beach.

And this lifestyle of rush is not just for business people. Some of the most pressed people in the world are mothers with small children. I remember my wife couldn't go to the bathroom by herself without having a little one follow her in. If you are a mom with a small child, you have someone pulling on your pant's leg all day long. Moving from there to throwing up on your shoulder. The typical mom's reaction is “Ah...it just matches the other

shoulder. Who cares?” Pulling out your pots and pans, drawing on the walls. It is not like you get to sleep through the night anyway. And the pace of single parents is sometimes doubled that of everyone else, especially if you are working a full time job outside the home.

It just seems like everyone is cramming more and more into less time. Studies say that kids have fewer hours to play. They have more homework. And the activities they participate in require much more time. The seasons for sports are longer. The demands for practice are greater. Every coach and every band leader aspires to be state champions. I mean at some of the high schools, if you participate in the band, you have taken on a full-time job. The kids are showing up with their instruments at 6:00 a.m. to practice so that their high school band can be state champions again.

My son, Daniel, played baseball in high school. When he went down to Miami University for his freshman year, he thought about trying to walk-on to the team. I called him up one time and said, “Dan, what’s happening with baseball? Have you checked it out?” He said, “Dad, in the off season, the baseball team requires about 20 hours a week of your time.” That’s just getting ready for the season – about 20 hours a week in the off-season. And who knows how many hours when the baseball season starts? He said, “I want a life.”

Now, on top of the drivenness of the American workplace, and the pressure that is one for parents and single parents and young moms and teens and kids, evangelical church culture encourages us to cram more into less time. I was reading a Bible commentary this past week about one author’s perspective of heaven. Here is what this author said, “Busy people often work especially hard the week before vacation tying up loose ends so they can relax. Students usually have their final exams right before semester breaks. When we know a rest is coming, we put extra effort into finishing our work. Healthy Christians love the work God has given them, doing it with passion and gusto, putting all their strength and care into it. But Christians love God’s promise of heaven’s rest even more and look forward to God’s rest with great joy. Today [Listen to these lines] renew your effort to work hard for God. Rest is coming. Now is the time to work with all your might. Relish the thought.”

No time to ease up now. Now is the time to push. To expend energy to work. To strive. To shove more activity into fewer and fewer hours. Today I want to talk about the Sabbath, the great gift of God, which reminds us to slow down.

You know, if there is anything that would be a lightening bolt across this whole culture marking Christians out as living distinctive lives, it would be the revival of the Christian practice of Sabbath. In a high production, high intensity world, I don’t know if there is anything that you and I could do that would cut more across the grain than us learning to slow down and to practice the Sabbath.

You know, the practice of Sabbath has pretty much disappeared, even in Jewish families, as the result of assimilation and pressure from the larger culture. There are very few Jewish families in the US that practice a genuine Sabbath. Historically, it was the Sabbath that marked Jews out from every other group of people on earth. The Jewish home revolved around the Sabbath. The house would be cleaned and scoured down on Friday. Even the poorest Jewish home would be transformed. And historically the mother would take out the family’s best table cloth and put it on the table. She would take out their best dishes; there

would be a special cup for the wine. Work was set aside. And on Friday night, the Sabbath would be ushered in by mother lighting the candles. Special loaves of bread were baked for Sabbath. They were braided breads – you still see them in Jewish sections of New York in the bakeries. They were braided egg breads called “Challoh.” There would be a special Sabbath meal on Friday evening.

The father in the home would take the opportunity at the table to bless his children - to pray a special prayer of blessing on the kids. Then they would go off to the synagogue where the rabbi at a certain point in the service would bless the young people. And then they would come home and father would pray another prayer of blessing over his children. Saturday morning was spent (at least for the adults) in synagogue. Saturday afternoon was a time for family, a time for playing games, a time for recreation. Historically, in Judaism, all of life revolved around the rhythm of the weekly Sabbath.

Now, those of you who know me well are probably chuckling as you hear me talk about slowing down because I am completely a Type A personality. They have my photo next to Type A in the dictionary. I have always been a very high production guy. Whatever job I have worked, I have worked lots of hours. And I am told I have worked really efficiently. I push out a lot of work in meetings, teachings and writing. I have always been a high production guy who admires other high production people and who lives in a society of highly driven, high production types.

The reason I say this to you is to communicate that I live in the world that you live in. As I talk about the Sabbath, understand that I am talking not as a person who takes three hours every afternoon in quiet meditation by a stream contemplating the way the water runs around the rocks. I don't spend my days feeding the ducks at one of the local parks. My life is spent the way your lives are spent, with the RPMs revved from the early morning when I get up until the point where I crash at night. Expending energy, pressing, creating, writing – and it hits a peak on my weekends as I get ready for preaching to several thousand people. There is this rush of adrenalin. Those of you who have to get ready for something big – you have a big project to complete, a big paper that is due, a big presentation to make – you understand what I mean by the adrenalin rush.

So as I composed this message on the Sabbath, I sat before the Lord and said, “What does Sabbath mean for someone like me and people like the people I am talking to? People whose engines are revved so that the RPMs are in the red line a lot of their lives. People who have the adrenalin flowing from morning to night; people who are trying to manage their time – what does Sabbath mean for us?”

And one word that I felt God gave me was, “For you, Rich, for the people in your church, Sabbath means being able to slow down enough to be able to receive. To not always be in the position of giving, spending, expending, striving—the Sabbath means slowing down to receive.” That is the title of my talk today – “Slowing Down to Receive.” Let's pray.

Genesis 2:1-3

Thus the heaven and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

Now, some of you may not realize that the chapter breaks were not part of the original writing of the Bible. When Moses wrote this text, he didn't say, "OK, let me insert in before the words, 'Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array...' a big number 2 to mark the chapter breaks. The chapter breaks were not added to the Old Testament or New Testament until the year 1205. It is almost certainly the case that if we were going to make a break, the break ought to occur after verse 3. The climax of the author's thought is not the creation of man, but rather God's resting on the seventh day - the whole structure of his thought preceding from day one through day 7.

Now there is something very interesting that we find in v. 3 about what God does with the seventh day. It says in v. 3, "And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy." God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Here is where understanding the backdrop to Genesis 1 proves very helpful. Genesis 1 was not written to answer modern questions about the age of the earth or evolution. Moses was not writing in response to Darwin. I think we can glean something from Genesis 1 in response to Darwin, but the backdrop of Genesis 1 is not a lot of the questions we bring to the text.

The cultural backdrop of Genesis 1 is the ancient near-Eastern world, and specifically Mesopotamian myths about creation. For example, in ancient Mesopotamia, the people used to worship the sun and the moon as gods. In Genesis 1, we read that the sun and the moon are not gods, but rather they were created by God. V. 16 says, "God made two great lights - the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night." These are not gods in creation. In fact, they aren't even worth naming. They are called the greater and lesser lights. The reason for many of the statements in Genesis 1 is it is an apologetic. It is the Old Testament response to the Mesopotamian myths.

What does this have to do with the seventh day and God blessing it and all of that? Well, in ancient Mesopotamia, the seventh day of the week was considered to be an unlucky day. It was the day that was called "the evil day," in which the king was not allowed to eat certain foods or travel by chariot. He had to offer sacrifices to appease the gods. The seventh day was a day of bad luck.

Now, over against the Mesopotamian view, what we have in Genesis 2 is that the seventh day is a day of blessing. It is not a day of bad luck. It is not a day where you need to worry about what the gods are doing. What God is doing is he is blessing.

Why do I say that it was really bad to put the chapter division where it is? Because the climax of the chapter is not the sixth day, but the seventh day - the day of God's rest. Why does creation climax not with a final grand outburst of activity, but with silence, with stillness, with rest?

Think with me, friend. We typically have as the climax and culmination of a great outburst of activity like the grand finale of the fireworks at Red, White, and Boom downtown. It is not just some sort of petering out, a couple of fireworks going off and then nothing. The grand finale of Red, White, and Boom is this five minute fireworks display where the sky is lit up and they are playing, in the background, the 1812 Overture.

So when the medieval chapter divider got to the sixth day and he saw this grand finale fireworks display, the creation of all the animals on the land, the livestock, the wild animals, and then the creation of men and women, he said, “Here it is. Here is the culmination.” But the trajectory of the chapter doesn’t terminate at its peak on Day 6. It terminates at the peak on Day 7. A great intermission of activity, a cessation, a pause, a rest, a stillness, a silence.

Why the pause? Why the intermission? Because without it, we would pay attention only to the activity – to the striving, to the rush, to the explosions, to the creation, to the work – and not to the creator. Because in the midst of everything else, we would forget God.

What is the purpose of Sabbath, which literally means “ceasing”? Sabbath is cessation day. It is pause day. It is stillness day, rest day. What is the purpose of Sabbath? It is to break from all of the activity so that we remember God the Creator. Isn’t it the case that in the rush of life it is easy to forget the Lord? We have the tyranny of the urgent pressing us. It seems that it is so much nearer to us than God. There is an email that you need to write. There is laundry that you need to do. There is the assignment you need to complete. There is the kid you need to drive. The meal you need to cook. The call you need to make. All of these urgent things are so much more insistent and pressing upon our attention than the Lord.

The Lord’s voice is rarely urgent. Oh, we need God, but he is not in our spaces. We can push off relationship with him until later. Isn’t it the case that God can disappear from your radar screen, not just because of trials and difficulties and problems, but because of the good things in your life – the blessing of your friends, your family, your food, your work? It can all crowd out the One who gave all this stuff to you. The Sabbath is there for us to remember God.

Let me put it a different way. By having an intermission in life on a weekly basis, by having a pause, a stillness, creating some space, Sabbath enables you and me to remember the point of our lives. The truth is that we always miss the point of life. We think the point is for us to grab as much as we can, to make our mark on the world. You may feel like the point of life is to raise the best possible kids – that is, happy, totally perfect children, who stand on the highest platform and get gold medals. For some of us the point of life is to make another deal, to make another sale, to be promoted to partner. For some of you the point of life is just to survive another day, to just get through this 24 hour period, to just make it until you crash at night and then drag yourself out of bed to do it all over again.

What’s the point of life? What’s the theme around which your whole life revolves? Your work? Your school? Making money? Survival? Sabbath tells us that the point of life, the theme of life, is to know God better. That the climax of your week would be to love your Creator more and to receive His love. And then next, to love people as much as you love yourself.

Is that in the forefront of your mind every day, with all of the tyranny of the urgent, that the point of your life is to love God with all of your heart, and soul, and mind and strength, and receive His love? And second to love people as much as you love yourself? Are those truths as near to your face as the tyranny of the urgent is?

If you are anything like me, you need regular mid-course correction. You don't need to be reminded of the point of life once a year on New Year's Day when you sit down and say, "OK, here it is the new year. I want to start off fresh. What are some of the big things I have been missing? What should my resolutions be?" I don't need to be reminded of the truth once a year. I need to be reminded of the point of life once a week. I need a Sabbath where other stuff gets pushed off the radar screen and the theme of life comes on – to know and love God. And you need the same thing too. You need a weekly tug back to the point of life, to remember your Creator.

Through Sabbath, rest, pause, stillness, we get to remember God. And through Sabbath we give space in our life to remember God's control. Because of the way we live, cramming as much into as few moments as possible, managing our time, it is incredibly easy for us 21st century Americans to believe that our needs are supplied by the work of our hands. That if we don't do it, it won't get done. As one overworked parent told me recently, "If I let up for even one moment, my world and my family will collapse."

What does Sabbath say? Taking a break on a weekly basis, hitting the pause button, stillness, silence says that you are not indispensable in holding this world or even holding your world together. Sabbath is a total rejection, it is a loud wakeup call, a slap in the face, if you will, for those of us who are holding on so tightly, believing that if we let go, everything is just going to fall apart in our work, in our homes, in our studies. That if we let up just for a minute, it is all going to come crashing down.

Sabbath says the only one who is indispensable is God. And that if you rest, or I rest, or if you or I let go, God will keep things going. Sabbath says what keeps the world going is not your activity. It is not luck that things hang together. "Well, we were lucky." It is not all of our activity put together. Sabbath says what keeps the world going is God.

Sabbath is like the parable of the growing seed in Mark 4 where Jesus says, "This is what the kingdom of God is like: a man scattered seed on the ground. Night or day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he doesn't know how." Whether he wakes or sleeps the kingdom of God continues. Whether we wake or sleep the world continues. Your world, this world. Sabbath is all about reminding ourselves that God is the one who holds it all together.

It is like what the great Reformer, Martin Luther, once said in reference to God's control. He said, "While I sit here sipping my little Wittenberg beer, the kingdom of God is marching on." With me, without me...The Sabbath says all that I see was here before I was born and all that I see will continue to be here long after I return to the dust and am simply a forgotten memory, a name on a tombstone in some old cemetery. I am not indispensable.

And neither are you. The Sabbath gives us perspective. We shrink down to our proper size and God gets to grow. We say, "Oh, you mean I am not in control of the universe? That the world will keep spinning on its axis and the sun will rise and set and the days will come and go? My family will continue and work will be there tomorrow and I am not the Lord of the universe or in control of all things? Remind me of that, again, O God."

Through Sabbath we remember God. Through Sabbath we remember God's control. Through Sabbath we remember God's salvation. Sabbath is a parable of our salvation. It is our physical picture of the way salvation works for the believer. I want you to see how Sabbath reminds us of our salvation. I want you to see this by turning to Deuteronomy 5:12. Moses is giving the Ten Commandments to the children of Israel for the second time. We see the Ten Commandments contained in Exodus 20. And then Moses is reminding the children of Israel in the book of Deuteronomy of the Ten Commandments that God gave them. And looking at the fourth commandment, we read about the Sabbath in v. 12. It says, "Obey the Sabbath by keeping it holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, or your manservant or maidservant, or ox, your donkey, or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest as you do."

Let's stop there for a moment. Moses is reminding the people that the Sabbath Day is not just a cessation day, a rest day, an off day for the boss, the employer, the master. It was a day for the servants, the employees, the animals to rest. Sabbath meant that the Jews were to shut down their entire operation. Everyone gets a day off. Nothing productive happens. There is no economic activity. And all of this is not just to be a statement of mercy to employees, servants or animals. Once a week, God is teaching his people a lesson in trust. See, it takes trust to stop productive activity once a week, to shut down the business, to close the store, to close the firm, to close the office. It takes trust to believe that if you shut things down, God will still provide.

Sabbath is a lesson in trust and, therefore, Sabbath becomes a parable for us about salvation. Look at how Deuteronomy 5 continues. V. 15: "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath Day."

Why the Sabbath? So that the Jews would remember how it is that they were saved out of Egypt. And so that we Christians would remember how we were saved from God's judgment of our sins. How is it that the Jews were saved in Egypt? By their activity? By their productivity? By their work or their striving? By time management? Becoming more efficient, pressing more into each day? How were the Jews saved from Egypt? They were saved by trusting in God. Not by their work. By looking to God. By trusting in God. By believing in God. By putting their faith in God. By resting in God's provision, the Jews were saved from Egypt.

And how is it that a person today will be saved on the Day of Judgment? What keeps people from being saved on the Day of Judgment is not their sin. Sin can be forgiven at the cross of Jesus Christ. What keeps people from being saved on the Day of Judgment? It is people's reliance on their own activity, their own productivity. The great sin in the sight of God is self-reliance, this American spirit of pushing and shoving as much into life as we possibly can and refusing to rest in the Lord and His provision.

The American spirit says, "I need to do something to make this salvation happen." Faith says, "I simply need to rest upon what Christ has done."

The American spirit says, “Do...do...do.” Christianity says, “Done...done...done – Christ has done it, so rest on it.”

This is what Sabbath is all about. It is about resting from your frenzied activity and learning how to rely on God to make things happen when you aren’t working. That’s why Sabbath is a parable of salvation. It teaches us week after week, trust in Christ. Rest on Christ. Believe on Christ. Stop trying to earn your way in, to produce more, to shove more into your life.

Sabbath helps us to remember God. Sabbath helps us to remember God’s control. Sabbath helps us to remember God’s salvation. God helps us to remember God’s kingdom. It is interesting that the Sabbath forms two great bookends for biblical revelation. You have the great Sabbath at the beginning of the world – the seventh day that we read about in Genesis 2 that culminates the work of creation. We have this great Sabbath at the beginning of the world, culminating in creation. And we have a great Sabbath at the end of time when this world is cleansed of sin and death and we get to live on the new earth with the new heavens. There are two great Sabbaths in the Bible – the Sabbath of creation and the Sabbath of eternity, the Sabbath of the kingdom, the first and the last Sabbaths.

And the author of the book of Hebrews uses the first Sabbath, the Sabbath of Genesis 2, to point to the last Sabbath, the Sabbath of God’s eternal rest. And if you are taking notes, you might want to jot down Hebrews 4. As I pause from my week to celebrate Sabbath, I am reminded that my life and this world is not all that will ever be. The apostle John says, “This world and its lusts are fading away.” As we pause we remind ourselves that one day a kingdom is going to come. We will live on a new earth and with a new heaven. And one day we will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

How often is it that you pause to meditate upon the truth that God is going to hold you and me accountable for what we do with life in this world? Sabbath is supposed to point us to the great kingdom that is coming, our eternal rest and the judgment that we are going to face one day. As things get back into perspective through Sabbath, through weekly midcourse corrections, where there is space enough in your life for God’s spirit to speak to you and say, “You know, you are doing a lot of things and you sure have pressed a lot into a very few moments, and you are working very efficiently. But you know only what is done out of love for God or for people, only what is done in God’s strength will remain forever. That what I have always wanted from your life is for you to love Me, to receive My love and to love other people. That’s what I am going to hold you accountable for.” That’s what is going to remain. That’s what you are going to hear about on the Day of Judgment. Friend, we need a Sabbath to gain some eternal perspective on our lives.

So how do you practice Sabbath? You don’t see very much about Sabbath in the New Testament. Paul tells us in Colossians 2:16, “Don’t let anybody pass judgment on you regarding the way you observe the Sabbath.” I think you could make a very strong case from the New Testament that it doesn’t matter if it is Saturday or Sunday or Monday or four hours, or 24 hours. In fact, in the New Testament the day for worshipping God almost certainly was moved from Saturday to Sunday. We see a movement from Sabbath, a seventh day, to Sunday, the Lord’s Day. If you are taking notes, you might want to jot down Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10 for this movement from Sabbath to the Lord’s Day.

And it is an amazing movement. On the one side we have this unbroken practice of Sabbath for 1400 years of Judaism. We have a 1400 year old tradition and a society that revered tradition. We have the fourth commandment repeated twice, “to keep the Sabbath.” We have the example of God in creation. We have the parable of salvation. On top of that we have the words of the prophets who told the Jews that one of the reasons God judged them is for their failure to keep the Sabbath. We have all of the testimonies of the rabbis laying out in minute detail what Jews were permitted and not permitted to do on Sabbath. And then suddenly, following the life of Jesus, we have Jews breaking the Sabbath and celebrating the Lord’s Day. What possibly could have weighed in on the other side of the scale to cause Jews, in light of their 1400 year tradition, to change their day of worship?

The only thing big enough, weighty enough, to cause them to change their tradition was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His defeat of death, his bursting forth from the tomb, his being clothed with an immortal body. One of the great indirect proofs of the resurrection of Christ is that immediately following the life of Jesus, we have historical evidence of Jews changing their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Something extraordinary would have had to happen to break a 1400 year old tradition. It was the Lord’s resurrection.

And so practically, friends, how do you and I celebrate Sabbath today? What does it mean for me, as a Type A person, or for you, perhaps, as a Type A individual, what does it mean?

Let me give you a couple of helps here. A Sabbath, some cessation, some break, some intermission is absolutely required in your life and my life, if we are to have any hope of living distinctively Christian lives. If you want to have any hope of growing as a Christian, you have to create in your life some room for God and room for other people.

Here’s the deal, friends, you wonder why you don’t grow more as a Christian. You wonder why God’s Word doesn’t have a greater effect on your life. Why are you not changing? Why does God’s Word not produce more fruit in our lives?

Jesus says that the reason why God’s Word doesn’t have more effect in our lives is because our hearts are crowded with anxieties and worries and activities. There is no space for God. There is no space for God’s Word. You yearn to hear the voice of God. You need to hear it. You wonder, what is God’s will for you? How can you gain wisdom in raising your children? Or God’s wisdom regarding a relationship? Or God’s wisdom for your work and a career decision or a ministry decision or a home buying decision. How do I hear the voice of God? I need to have some space in my life.

Let me translate Sabbath for you into a more modern word, a more 21st century word. Sabbath for you and Sabbath for me would probably mean the practice of solitude. Getting away from people for some time during the week and getting away from the radio and the cell phone and the instant messaging, the beeper, the television and books. See, here’s the deal. We have to create some space to hear the voice of God. We are so revved up, the RPMs are running so high, there is so much outer chaos in our lives and people talking and yelling and noise. And there is the inner chaos of anger, upset, depressions, bitterness, and anxieties. We need some space.

Do you know that some scientists discovered that it takes 20 times the dosage of amphetamines to kill a mouse when it is alone compared to the dosage that will kill a mouse when it is put in with other mice? If you put a whole bunch of mice together on a very low dosage of amphetamines, they just go off like popcorn. The activity level of a bunch of mice together is so high that they will all drop dead of heart attacks on a very low dosage of amphetamines. But you need 20 times the amount if you put a mouse alone.

Put people together in a room and they go off like popcorn. There is no space for God. No room to hear His still, small voice. Let me make a suggestion to you. In your crowded busy world, and in my crowded busy world, we can fit in two hours a week of solitude. No music. No people. No books. No TV. No noise – just solitude. You and God.

And you now what happens in solitude? Do you know why we hate it so much? Because once we shut down all of the outer noise, we hear all the inner noise, and we don't like all that inner noise – all of our guilts, our problems, our worries. It may be that you have to carve out this block of time before everyone gets up in your house once a week. It may be that if you are a young mom that you have to hire a sitter for two hours a week or have grandma or a friend or a sister or neighbor watch the kids, or even your husband. But every person, young mom included, needs some solitude where you get to hear God.

One way to practice solitude would be to get a spiral notebook and a pen and just do a little journaling. Slow the RPMs down. Get on your knees and write out a prayer to God. Get on your knees and write out your anxieties before the Lord – your fears, your upsets, your irritations. Get on your knees and quiet your heart after getting all of this stuff out and ask the Lord to speak to you about your life, about eternity, about His control, about His person. Write down what you are hearing.

We need time to relate to God. And another practical way to celebrate Sabbath is once a week you need time just to relate to your family, if you have family. Or to build friendships, if you are a single person. When everyone in the house is not going off like popcorn and running a thousand different directions. Listen to me now, I am speaking straight from my own heart and my own experience. We are a maximum busy family. Our family is just like your family. And when my kids were growing up and had lots of friends, and they also both played sports and I am very active and Marlene is very active – we insisted that Sunday afternoon was spent together as a family. We spent literally hundreds of Sunday afternoons together. I am not saying we never watched any football or just vegged out in front of the tube. But we had a family goal that we often hit – that Sunday was family day. And so we packed up after church on Sunday and we would head out to pick apples in the fall; go out to the country; go to a park; throw a football.

Once a week we created space in our life to relate to God. Once a week we created space in our lives to relate to those we loved. And as we slow down, we have an opportunity to receive life. Let's pray.