

APPOINTED TIMES SERIES

a messianic guide to the
SABBATH



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W E L C O M E

01

Whether you've never Sabbath a day in your life or you've been at this a few years and want to glean some new ideas, our desire is that this guide will take you deeper into what it means to Sabbath and give you some practical tips on how to sanctify this day in a way that gives life to your soul and help experience God's presence in a new way.

It's by no means a definitive rule book. You may not like an idea or you may disagree with some wording. That's ok! Take the parts that resonate and set other parts to the side. It's more important that you're on this journey with us.

As we begin, how about a blessing?

*May our Father bless you and your family
and may you be filled with shalom.*

03 Let's talk about the Sabbath

Why should you Sabbath?

Our western culture is often at odds with family and community centered around God. We go through our weeks only to end up feeling tired and worn out when the weekend arrives.

"I Sabbath on Sunday." is what many of us say, but after an hour at church, we're back to the same patterns, with the same frustrations looming over us as another week is about to begin.

Does this sound familiar?

- How do you break free from this?
- How do you create new rhythms?
- How do you cultivate a lifestyle that enriches your soul and deepens your love for God as the creator and sustainer of all things?

For us it started with the Sabbath.

How we stumbled into Sabbath

“I Sabbath on Sunday.” It's what always came to mind when I would hear someone mention the Sabbath. I mean we go to church on Sunday, Sunday is Sabbath.

Right?

Having grown up in a Protestant church, there's not a time I can remember when church was not a part of my life. Sometimes these routines and rituals have a way preventing you from ever asking any questions. To go beyond the surface of what you've always done to really dig in and uncover the roots of why we do what we do.

After all, it's just what we've always done.

A few years ago, I started reading a book, *Garden City*, by John Mark Comer. The book talks about how we can work with God to create a world that looks more like his kingdom. A garden city, if you will.

About halfway through the book is a chapter on The Sabbath. I was mesmerized. Reading his description of Sabbath (that he kept on Saturday) sounded so incredibly life-giving. I wanted that to be a part of my life.

So I took some notes, tucked them away and ventured off to read another book.

This time it was *Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard. What are the odds this would be yet another book on God's Kingdom, and, you guessed it—a chapter about the Sabbath.

I sent texts and snapshots of pages to my wife. Something was stirring inside both of us. "We need to try this," one of us wrote.

So we had a discussion and made some plans.

What do you do to usher in the Sabbath? How do you sanctify it and set it apart from the other days of the week? I started researching and found that the Kiddush (which means sanctification) is a prayer that Jewish people will pray while lighting two candles at sundown on Friday nights.

Originally written in Hebrew, it's primarily sung rather than read. Since we obviously couldn't read Hebrew, we opted for an English, messianic version that interjects portions recognizing Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah.

For some, the idea of reciting a static prayer may seem foreign, but sometimes, rituals can bring consistency and a depth of meaning. For me, I look forward to saying that final line:

“Blessed are you LORD, who sanctifies the Sabbath.”

There's this sense of demarcation that happens in my soul, where everything before that line is what happened during the week: the worries, the stress, the nonstop busyness. Then I say those words and Sabbath begins. It's like a marker for my brain that sets the Sabbath apart and gives me permission to just be.

What does the Bible say about the Sabbath?

The very first book of the Bible tells the story of God creating the world. After six days of creating, God takes a step back and declares that his work was very good.

Then, on the seventh day after God has perfectly completed his work of creating, the story shows us that the creator of the universe rested. The Hebrew word for rested is shâbath (תָּבַשׁ), which means “to cease” or “to stop.”

“God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy; because on that day God rested from all his work which he had created, so that it itself could produce.”

—Genesis 2:3

God then blesses the seventh day and he sets it apart as different from all of the other days so that the work he had created could continue to produce and thrive. Out of all the days in the creation narrative, the seventh day is the only day that God sanctifies and declares is holy. Not because of anything we’ve done or deserved, but because God alone divinely ordained it as holy time.

God, who doesn’t need to rest or take a break, sets up a rhythm for life for humans and all of creation. Before he made a covenant with Abraham and before any laws were given to the ancient Israelite people, God set a pattern for us to follow as a gift of his never ending goodness. A gift that would allow us to experience His presence in a day. A day where we don’t have to work or worry, because we know that the King of the Universe has provided everything we need.

Does this sound foreign?

Does it stir your heart?

How should you respond to this?

What do you do on the Sabbath?

Everyone has different things they enjoy that fill their souls with delight—there's no one size fits all.

Abraham Joshua Heschel, a Jewish rabbi and theologian, describes the Sabbath as “Eternity in a day.” In his book aptly titled “The Sabbath”, he puts forth the idea that since God is a god of time and space, unable to be relegated to an object (Hence the command to not create images or idols representing God), that instead, we are given a day—the seventh day—to be fully immersed in this divine presence that permeates all things.

By responding to the Sabbath, you are making yourself more aware of God's presence in the world.

I love that.

What would you do in response to this? What would you do every day, over and over if you could live forever?

You'd likely do something you enjoy—something that isn't stressful or draining.

You wouldn't be in a hurry or be frustrated.

Eugene Peterson, pastor and writer of the Message said that he spent his time on Sabbath to “Pray and Play.”

What are some things you can do that make you more aware of God's presence, but also bring you joy? Jot a few things down that come to mind and start there. There isn't a magic formula, but you'll know at the end of the day if your cup is filled or empty. Take note of what those activities are and do more of the ones that fill your cup.

It shouldn't feel difficult. Perhaps a bit uncomfortable as you form new rhythms—as you learn to live freely and

lightly. But don't forget, the whole purpose of the sabbath is for you to rest. Rest in just being you. Rest in God's presence in a day. Rest in the community and friendships that you have. No obligations, no low-grade anxiety, just a sense of completeness and shalom.

Learning new rhythms

Adopting this new practice came with ups and downs for our family. You would think that slowing down to rest would come naturally to us with our world of frantic busyness, but it doesn't. It wars against our existing patterns, against our culture of always needing to produce something. Sometimes, even against our entrenched expectations of church.

For a season we tried to sabbath on Sunday. Everyone was always out and about on Saturday which made it difficult to be the only ones attempting to sabbath. But after a while, we found that with getting the kids ready for church on time, volunteering throughout the day, and all of the other Sunday expectations, we found ourselves drained and not filled with peace. We came to the realization that Sabbath on Saturday just fit, and we decided to commit to it, regardless of the sacrifice.

Over time, as we settled into these new rhythms, the sense of God's presence began to grow. We began to rest again, foregoing shopping trips and anything that would hinder our ability to take a break from the normal flow of life. We had lazy mornings, baked chocolate croissants from Trader Joes, played with the kids, read books in the hammock, and just enjoyed life.

It was good for our souls.

As we've practiced this rhythm for several years now, we've kept many things, tried new things, and let go of others. There's no "perfect" way to sabbath, but we've found that committing to this rhythm has totally changed our outlook of the week and deepened our love for God. Our kids expectantly look forward to Friday night when we can say "shabbat shalom!"

So, whether you've been practicing the sabbath for years or you're just getting curious about how to start keeping the sabbath—welcome! You're in good company and I pray that this is the beginning of a whole new way of experiencing God's presence and shalom in your life.

“

*The Sabbath is a
time to reflect on
what God is
saying and what
He's doing.*

”

Eugene Peterson

10 Where to start

What do you do to usher in the Sabbath, recognizing it as a holy day in time and space? How do you sanctify it and set it apart from the other days of the week?

For our family, we spend the last half of Fridays cleaning up the house, putting away clothes and toys, loading the dishwasher, and getting everything prepared and in order so that the clutter and chores don't distract us. We try to use paper plates throughout the day so there's less to clean up, and we generally have our meals planned out so there's nothing to worry about on Sabbath.

The intentionality behind preparing for the day is a large part of what sets it apart. Rather than just coasting into the weekend, the preparation involved helps set the day up for success and gets your mind ready for a day of rest.

One of my favorite parts is that we have a family meal together every Friday night. My wife will make something delicious or I'll grill out. We bake fresh challah bread when time allows or we'll pick up some from the store. We open a bottle of wine. We involve the kids and ask about their week. We often have ice cream or another tasty dessert, and will play a family game together as we enjoy the evening as the start of sabbath.

Before we eat our meal, we have found that Kiddush, a traditional Jewish prayer, is a great way to intentionally demarcate the Sabbath as a set apart day. We read through the portion in Genesis where God rested on the seventh day, and we have our kids shout out portions they remember. We light candles to signify God's presence in our home. We pray a blessing over the day and our family and invite his shalom to cover us.

While we've found this rhythm to be meaningful over time, we encourage you to not get hung up in the specifics. As we've mentioned, what matters is that you're intentional.



“

*“For the Sabbath is joy,
holiness, and rest.
Joy is part of this
world, holiness and
rest or something of
the world to come.”*

”

Abraham Joshua Heschel

Messianic Kiddush

What is Kiddush?

Kiddush is a Hebrew word literally translated as “sanctification.” It’s a collection of Jewish prayers, traditionally repeated at the beginning of Shabbat on Friday evening just before sundown. It involves a small ceremony of lighting two candles, reading scripture and saying blessings over the wine or grape juice, the bread, and your children. While the traditional blessings are sung in Hebrew, we read them in English and occasionally attempt the Hebrew for smaller portions.

While there’s too much to cover in this guide, there’s tremendous significance in kiddush that has hit us over the years as we began to celebrate biblical feasts. For example, did you know that during the Passover Seder meal, there are four cups of wine that are traditionally had?

The first one is the cup of sanctification, or the kiddush cup. Every Sabbath when we pray a blessing over sabbath that “is the foremost day of the holy festivals marking the Exodus from Egypt.” reminding us of how God always delivers His people. We’re reminded of how Jesus partook in this same rhythm every shabbat as well as during His last supper at passover. We’re reminded of his body that was broken for us as we say a blessing over the bread. We’re reminded of how just like God provided manna for the Israelites in the wilderness for forty years, that similarly God has provided for our needs, and has ultimately given us living bread from heaven through His son Yeshua. And finally, we look forward to a future day when Jesus will come back to restore all things and inaugurate his Kingdom across the entire world.

Sabbath is a gift to help us continually live in our true identity—as sons and daughters of the Most High God. To remember his goodness toward us and how we constantly delivers us. To rest in His provision, knowing that our needs are met. To birth within us a longing for that future when all days will be like the Sabbath, and to celebrate the King who rules over all things with shalom.

May this journey bring delight to your soul and may the king of the universe give you ears to hear, eyes to see, and a heart to understand what His Spirit might speak to you.

What you'll need for Kiddush:

1. Two candlesticks with candles. (These shabbat candles are great to have on hand)
2. A special cup designated as your kiddush cup. (Have fun and get the fancy one!)
3. Some bread (challah is amazing if you can find or make it)
4. Some wine or grape juice
5. A willing heart

Messianic Kiddush

THE BLESSINGS

The following prayers are an adapted
Messianic version of traditional Jewish
blessings, prayed during Kiddush that honor
Yeshua as the Messiah. Feel free to
incorporate these in a way that gives life
to your Sabbath rhythms

Lighting of the Candles

(Read by the Lady of the House)

Light candles and say the following blessing:

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who sanctified us with his commandments, and commanded us to be a light to the nations and who gave us Yeshua our Messiah the Light of the world.”

Baruch attah ADONAI elo-hei-nu me-lech ha’olam, asher kidde-sha-nu bemitzvotav, lehadlik ner shel shabbat.

Remembering the Sabbath

(All of the following blessings are read by the Father of the House)

While holding a glass of wine or grape juice, read Genesis 1:31-2:3, to remember how God created the world and rested.

God saw all that he had made, and behold, it was very good. It was evening and it was morning, the sixth day.

Heaven and earth, and all their components, were thus completed. With the seventh day, God finished all the work that he had done. He thus ceased on the seventh day from all the work that he had been doing. God blessed the seventh day, and he declared it to be holy, for it was on this day that God ceased from all the work that he had been creating so that it would continue to function.

—Genesis 1:31-2:3

Blessing over the wine

While holding a glass of wine or grape juice, thank God for the Sabbath, remembering the cup of salvation and how He rescued the Israelites out of Egypt.

“Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who creates the true fruit of the vine - Yeshua.”

*Baruch attah ADONAI elo-hei-nu me-lech ha’olam,
borei pri ha-ga-fen, Yeshua*

(Everyone Respond: Amen)

Blessing for the Bread

“Blessed are You, LORD our God, King of the universe, Who gives us the Living Bread from heaven.” [Amen]

*Baruch attah ADONAI elo-hei-nu me-lech ha’olam,
ha-mo-tzi le-chem min ha-a-retz.*

(Everyone Respond: Amen)

Blessing to Sanctify the Sabbath

While holding a glass of wine or grape juice, say:

“Blessed are You LORD our God, King of the Universe, who made us holy with his commandments and favored us, and gave us His holy Sabbath, in love and favor, to be our heritage, as a reminder of the Creation. It is the foremost day of the holy festivals marking the Exodus from Egypt. For out of all the nations You chose us and made us holy, and You gave us Your holy Sabbath, in love and favor, as our heritage.

Blessed are you Lord, Who sanctifies the Sabbath.”

Baruch attah ADONAI, mekadesh hashabbat.

(Everyone Respond: Amen, and drink from the Kiddush cup.)

Blessing for Sons

May God make you as Ephraim and Manasseh

May our Father in heaven put in your heart his love and reverence.

May the LORD bless you and protect you and give you shalom.

Blessing for Daughters

May God make you as Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah, and Ruth

May the LORD bless you and protect you and give you shalom.

Shabbat Shalom

Sabbath has officially begun—Shabbat Shalom!

Additional Readings

Include a reading of these scriptures on the Sabbath as the Spirit may lead.

*Therefore, a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God. For one who has entered his rest has ceased from his work, just as God did with his. Thus, let us be careful to enter that rest.
—Hebrews 4:9–11*

*If you hold back your feet on account of the Sabbath from doing whatever you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and call the holy one of the LORD honored, if you honor it by not making your own way, seeking whatever you please, or speaking inappropriately, then you will delight in the LORD, and I will let you ride upon the heights of the earth, and I will feed you with the inheritance of your father Jacob, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.
—Isaiah 58:13–14*

Turn to me, all who labor and are burdened, and I will cause you to rest. Accept upon yourself my yoke and lean from me, For I am humble and lowly in spirit, And you will find a resting place for your souls. For my yoke is pleasant and my burden is light.

—Matthew 11:28–30

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

—Colossians 2:16-17

“UNLESS ONE LEARNS
HOW TO RELISH THE
TASTE OF SABBATH
WHILE STILL IN THIS
WORLD, UNLESS ONE IS
INITIATED IN THE APPRE-
CIATION OF ETERNAL
LIFE, WE WILL BE UN-
ABLE TO ENJOY THE
TASTE OF ETERNITY IN
THE WORLD TO COME.”

Abraham Joshua Heschel

22 Where do you go from here?

When we started this journey over 7 years ago, we had no clue what we were doing. But the Lord honored the intention of our hearts as we stumbled through it. We've tried some things, kept some, added some new ideas, and left others behind, but the biggest impact came as we were consistently practicing Sabbath each week.

So that's our encouragement to you: just start. Then try it again the following week. Involve your children if you have them and spark a discussion about what they have found different about the Sabbath day. Slow down and let yourself adjust to the unfamiliarity of rest.

Once you're comfortable, invite some friends over for a Sabbath dinner and share how this new rhythm has begun to shape your life!

Next Steps

Leviticus 23 starts with the Sabbath as the first of seven appointed times (or biblical feasts) provided by God to the ancient Israelite people to remember God and enjoy all that he has provided. If you've found the practice of Sabbath to be helpful, we invite you to join us and learn more about the other 6 biblical feasts that provide an amazing foundation for this ancient way of life.

Books we recommend:

The Sabbath by Abraham Joshua Heschel

Garden City by John Mark Comer

The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry by John Mark Comer

Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard

The Sabbath as Resistance by Walter Brueggeman

Music for Shabbat

Shalom by Joshua Aaron

Shema by Joshua Aaron

Shalom by Lauren Hackett Park

Shabbat Shalom by Laeli

Psalm 23 by Miqedem (Along with all of their albums!)

It's been a pleasure having you!

THANK YOU.

We're so glad you made it this far in our guide to the Sabbath. We hope it's been helpful to learn from our journey as we gave some practical steps to take on how to embrace the Sabbath. We pray this helps spark a newfound love of God's appointed times, expands your view of God, and sparks a hunger to experience His presence throughout your entire life.

Shalom!

The Ancient Way



Continue your journey through biblical feasts

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY FOR MORE.

If you've found the Sabbath to be meaningful to your life, we invite you to follow along as we explore other biblical feasts and take a journey toward an ancient way of life that embraces the Jewishness of Jesus our Messiah.

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