



YOUTH STUDY

from *www.TheThoughtfulChristian.com*

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 1

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath is a response to anxiety

Introduction

In this session, we will reflect on God's commandment to practice Sabbath in a world filled with anxiety.

Scripture

Exodus 20:1–20; 5:1–23

Case Study

Josh's alarm goes off at 5:30 a.m., and he immediately realizes he is sick. He feels chills but also is sweating. His eyes are heavy and watery. Still, he swings his legs out of bed because he knows he cannot miss school today.

In the kitchen, Josh's mom is already bustling around. She was at work until very late the night before, trying to help her team meet a deadline. Her boss has already declared that no one is to take time off until this latest project is finished. She drinks strong coffee as she tosses an energy bar and sports drink into Josh's backpack.

As Josh gets ready for school, he thinks about his day: he has two tests, band auditions, and track practice that will keep him at school until dinnertime. After that, his U.S. history study group is getting together to

work on a project they have to present at the end of the week.

"Are you OK?" his mom asks him as he walks into the kitchen. Clearly, he does not feel well.

"I'm fine," he says. He knows that if he misses his tests, he will only have to make them up. If he misses band auditions, he might not have the chance to play in the concert ensemble next year. If he misses track practice, his coach might not consider him for varsity. And if he misses his study group, he will let down his friends. Just as his mom pushes through and works late hours at the sacrifice of her own health and time with family, Josh knows he must do the same.

Closing Prayer

God of Sabbath,
in a world that is always asking more of us,
help us remember that you call us to practice
Sabbath.

When the demands become stronger,
may we remember that all you ask of us
is to love and serve you,
just as you have loved and served us
through Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.
Amen.

Questions for Reflection

1. Who are the “pharaohs” of today’s world?
2. What messages are these pharaohs sending to teens?
3. As a young person, what does it look like to follow commandments 1–4 in today’s world?
4. What is one thing you can do in the week ahead to practice Sabbath as resistance to anxiety?



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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 2

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath helps us see our neighbors as friends, not competitors

Scripture

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Exodus 20:8–11

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory

was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’”

Matthew 6:25–31

This Week

In this session, we will explore how the Sabbath commandment encourages us to see our fellow human beings as neighbors, not competitors.

Prayer

God of Sabbath,
in a world that wants us to see one another as the competition,
help us to remember that in Jesus Christ, we are one another’s brothers and sisters.
May we find opportunities to practice Sabbath rest
and remember that our greatest call is to love one another as you love us.
In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Case Study: Neighborly Leadership

Kimberly is a senior in her church youth group and has been tasked with organizing a day of service in her local community. In order to motivate the group, she has turned the day into a challenge. Each class in the youth group (freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior) receives points based on how many people participate. Classes can also earn extra points based on how many projects they complete throughout the day. When the day of service arrives, she hands out different colored T-shirts to each class in order to identify which “team” they are a part of. The groups take off and begin racing through their service projects. First, they rush around picking up trash in a local park. They then hurry to slap a fresh coat of paint on the playground equipment. Once they have finished at the park, they jump into their cars and race across town where they frantically sort through expired food at the food bank. At the end of the day, Kimberly declares the sophomores the winners. The sophomores then head off to celebrate while the other classes return to the playground, where they have been asked to apply a second coat of paint to the playground because the first coat was done in such a rush that the equipment looks worse than when they started.

David is also a senior in his church youth group, tasked with organizing a day of service in his local community. In order to motivate his group, David gathers all the members of the youth group and shares with them some photos and testimonies of former youth who participated in similar events in the past and how it shaped their faith. He shares a bit about each project the group has been asked to help with (picking up trash, painting a playground, and sorting food at the food bank) and asks the group to determine whether they would like to work on all these together or go out in groups based on their interests and gifts. The group decides to go out in small groups and invite other friends from outside the youth group to join them. At the end of the day they come back together to share their experiences and offer prayer for each of the ministries they have been a part of that day. Because the group painting the playground didn’t finish all their work that day, they all agree they will return together the next day to complete the job.

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you see pharaoh-like leadership demonstrated in this case study?
2. How do you see neighborly leadership demonstrated in this case study?
3. What are some situations you have been in before where you have witnessed pharaoh-like leadership?
4. What are some situations you have been in before where you have witnessed neighborly leadership?
5. Think about familiar stories from the Gospels in which Jesus is leading his disciples. Can you think of some specific examples of times he encourages neighborliness in his leadership?



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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 3

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath helps us remember where we are from and where we are going

This Week

In this session, we will explore how Sabbath calls us to remember where we have come from in order to help us discern where we are being called to go.

Scripture

Exodus 20:8–10

Deuteronomy 5:12–15

Arriving Activity: Where We Come From

Respond to one of the following prompts:

- Write down notes on any family stories you know about where earlier generations came from and how they got to where they ended up.

- Think of any group you are a part of (church, athletic team, club, music, friend/peer group) and write down some notes on any stories you know about the history of this group.

Closing Prayer

God of the past, present, and all that is to come,
in a world that so often wants us to forget where
we have come from,
thank you for the stories of Scripture
that remind us of those who have gone before us.
May we share in their faith and courage
in our lives today
and as we face the unknown.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

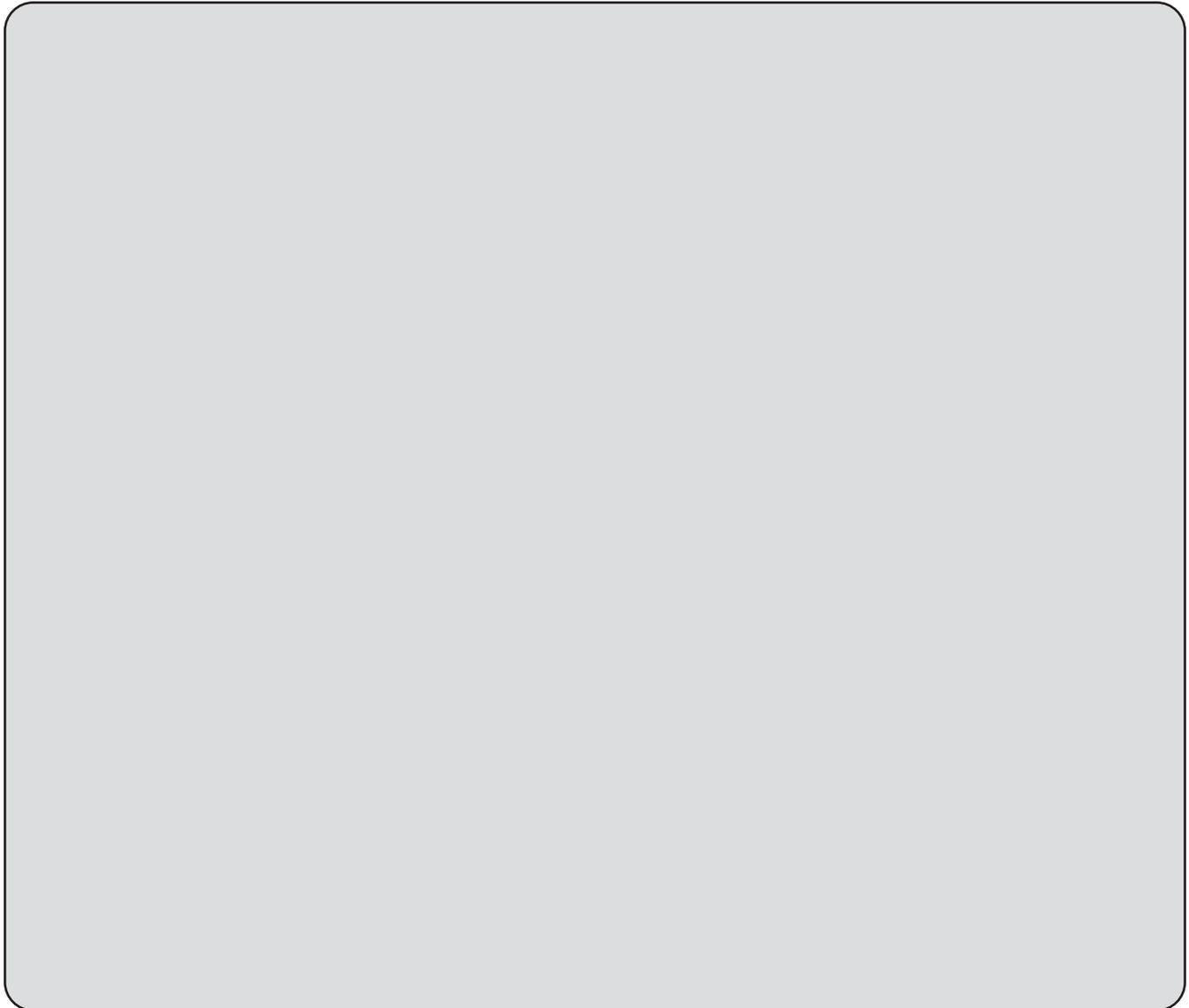
Case Study: Leaving Home

Aaron is the first in his family to even consider applying to college. Early on in his high school career his teachers and guidance counselor recognized his intellect and outstanding work ethic, so they took the time to help him apply to schools as well as secure a full scholarship. This fall, Aaron will travel to a small private college several states away from his family.

In order to help him afford the travel to school, as well as items needed to outfit his dorm room (sheets, towels, etc.), both of his parents have been working extra shifts. Aaron has been taking on odd jobs in the neighborhood. Although he has already secured a job working in food services at his new college, Aaron knows that most of the students who will be his classmates are coming from very affluent families. The majority of his college peers will drive nice cars and be able to hire tutors for difficult courses, and most will not have to work in order to be able to afford basic necessities like toiletries, transportation, or a winter coat when the weather gets cold. Aaron is incredibly grateful for this opportunity but also very apprehensive about the transition and being away from his family.

A Letter to Aaron

In partners or small groups, write Aaron a letter of advice and encouragement as he transitions to his new college environment. Your letter should include elements of remembering and practicing Sabbath as demonstrated by Moses in Deuteronomy 5.





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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 4

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath reminds us to include others

This Week

In this session, we will explore how Sabbath keeping calls us to a more inclusive way of life.

Scripture

Isaiah 56:3a, 6, 8

Membership in the Body of Christ

Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say,
“The LORD will surely separate me from his
people”;

.....
And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it.

.....
Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.
Isaiah 56:3a, 6, 8

Focusing on verse 8, respond to the following:

- How has the church become more inclusive throughout history (racially, ecumenically, regarding gender and sexual orientation)?
- In what ways does the church still practice exclusivism in both official and unofficial ways?
- What is the difference between feeling excluded and being discriminated against? How can we help in each situation?
- How can the church make all children of God feel more welcome?
- How does Sabbath play a part in this effort?

Prayer

God who loves us all,
in a world that wants us to ignore the cries of the
oppressed
and focus on our own achievements,
we pray you will help us to keep Sabbath.
May we pause, rest, and listen for your call,
which tells us to love and welcome others
in the same way you love and welcome us.
In Christ’s name we pray.
Amen.

Case Study: Résumé of a Sabbath Keeper

Study the following résumé of a recent high school graduate:

Education

- Northeast High School, Class of 2019

Academic Achievements

- Graduated with honors, 4.9 GPA
- AP Scholar
- National Merit Scholar
- International Baccalaureate
- Presidential Scholar Award

Leadership Roles

- Grade 12: Student Body President
- Grade 12: President, French Club
- Grade 11: Student Body Treasurer
- Grade 11: Vice-President, French Club
- Grade 10: Class President
- Grade 9: Class Treasurer

Extracurricular Activities

- Grades 11–12: Varsity Tennis Team
- Grades 11–12: National Honor Society
- Grades 11–12: Model United Nations
- Grades 10–12: Varsity Cross-Country Team
- Grades 10–12: Yearbook Staff
- Grades 9–10: JV Tennis Team
- Grade 9: JV Cross-Country Team
- Grades 9–12: French Club
- Grades 9–12: Student Council Leadership

Work Experience

- Grades 9–12: Private Tutoring Business
- Grades 9–12: Private Nannying

Reflection Questions

1. How do you think this person keeps (or does not keep) Sabbath?
2. How do the groups this person is involved in influence who she interacts with on a daily basis?
3. Based on this résumé, do you think she has relationships with a diverse group of people or not?
4. How could this person create more time for Sabbath keeping and justice seeking in her life?



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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 5

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath keeping resists multitasking

This Week

In this session, we will explore the idea that multitasking keeps us from observing true Sabbath.

Scripture

Isaiah 1:12–17; 58:1–7

Matthew 6:24–33

Addressing Multitasking and Practicing Sabbath

- What is one aspect of multitasking in your life that you would like to work on avoiding in the week ahead?

- How will you accomplish this goal?
- Who will you ask for help?

Prayer

God who loves us all,
in a world that constantly pulls us in every
direction,
help us to put down our phones,
to stop adding to the to-do list,
to focus our hearts and minds on you,
and to not rush by our neighbors who are in need.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Case Study: Princeton Good Samaritan Study

Why do people help in some situations and not in others? There was a famous study done in the 1970s of a group of students studying to be ministers at Princeton Seminary. The study was conducted by social psychologists John Darley and Daniel Batson, who wanted to determine what factors might play into a person's decision to help someone.

The students were told to prepare a sermon on the parable of the Good Samaritan, the biblical story about helping strangers even when it is not convenient. The group of students were randomly assigned to one of two groups. When they gathered, one group, the *hurried condition* group, was told they were late getting to the place where they needed to deliver their sermon. The other group, the *unhurried condition group*, was told they had plenty of time to get to where they needed to preach.

Each student then walked alone to the place they were to preach. On the way, an actor portrayed a man in trouble who needed help. His eyes were closed, and he was coughing and moaning.

Which group do you think took time to help the man? Both? Neither?

The research found that only 10 percent of seminary students in the *hurried condition* stopped to help the man. In comparison, 63 percent of the participants in the *unhurried condition* stopped to help. So even a seminary student with the Good Samaritan on their mind might ignore a person in distress if they are in a hurry.¹

1. This particular summary of the Princeton Good Samaritan Study is taken from the following source: <https://sparq.stanford.edu/solutions/take-time-be-good-samaritan>.



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PARTICIPANT HANDOUT Session 6

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath reminds us what is truly important

This Week

In this session, we will explore the idea that Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination to help us see that the things we covet ultimately do not satisfy.

Scripture

1 Kings 21:1–29
Luke 12:13–34

Reflecting on How We Covet

- Identify a source of jealousy or greed in your own life.
- Think about how you can be less anxious about

this going forward. How does Sabbath play into seeking to covet less in our daily lives?

Prayer

God of Sabbath,
in a world where there are so many things to covet,
help us to remember that you call us to a better
way of life.

May we find, in the practice of Sabbath,
time and space to listen for your call.
As we go out into the world,
may we seek ways to share your love
with every neighbor we encounter.
Amen.

Case Study: The Rich Fool

A wealthy businesswoman learned one day that her investments had almost quadrupled in their worth. She thought to herself, "How wonderful! Now what will I do with all this money?" She went to the bank and met with an adviser. He showed her many options for stock portfolios and investment accounts, all of which would help her money to grow even more. She quickly realized that if she followed his advice, she would never have to work another day in her life. She invested the money, quit her job, and immediately booked a vacation at a luxury resort so that she could relax. She felt no guilt about not paying her housekeeper, personal trainer, or chef while she was on vacation. She also never considered any of the requests from local charities that sat unread in her mailbox or the financial adviser's suggestion to set up a charitable foundation with her money. After all, she'd worked hard for what she had! What the woman did not realize was that within only a few weeks, her life would end and her fortune would remain tied up in a legal battle for years and years to come.

1. What are the barns we build, and what are the things we store in them?
2. How easy is it to find ourselves in the same position as the rich fool?
3. Jesus says, "Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15). How do we live out this advice in our own lives?