



YOUTH STUDY

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LEADER'S GUIDE Session 1

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath is a response to anxiety

Introduction to This Lenten Study

Do the following scenarios sound like any youth you know?

Two classmates sit in the school cafeteria, their lunches untouched. One is engrossed in her phone, texting furiously with another friend who sits across the room. As her fingertips fly across the screen, alerts repeatedly pop up. A notification tells her she has been tagged in another friend's picture. Her heart skips a beat until she opens another app, inspects the picture, and then breathes a sigh of relief when she sees it fits in with the image she is working to cultivate. She returns to her texting and ignores the reminders that continue to appear as she tries to finish her conversation before the bell rings.

Next to her, a friend jumps from his chemistry textbook to his phone. He has a test next period, and his stomach is in knots. He didn't get home until almost ten the night before because he went straight from track practice back to the school yearbook office and was then pressured to go out for coffee with the rest of the yearbook staff. He fueled himself with caffeine in order to study all night for this test but ended up falling asleep around 2 a.m. without having accomplished much school work.

In February 2019, the Pew Research Center reported rising rates of anxiety and depression in U.S. teens:

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- The Ten Commandments

GATHERING

- The Sabbath Commandment

OPENING

- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- Skit: pharaoh's world
- Case study: pharaoh in today's world

RESPONDING

- Reflection questions

CLOSING

- Share responses
- Closing prayer

"Whether they personally suffer from these conditions or not, seven-in-ten teens today see them as major

problems among their peers. Concern about mental health cuts across gender, racial and socio-economic lines, with roughly equal shares of teens across demographic groups saying it is a significant issue in their community.”¹ Among the top concerns of those surveyed were getting good grades, looking good, fitting in socially, being involved in extracurricular activities, and being good at sports. Our country’s young people seem to be working themselves into a panic in a futile attempt to have it all: perfect résumé, social and physical conformity with their peers, and exceptional athletic ability.

The dilemma, like all social crises, begs the question: What will the church’s response be? The answer is already embedded in our tradition—the commandment to keep Sabbath. This six-week study, intended to be used during the season of Lent, is based on Walter Brueggemann’s book *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*, first published in 2014 and then again in 2017 with a study guide for group discussion. As a Lenten series, this study offers a younger generation the opportunity to reflect on the frenetic consumer culture that demands their time, energy, and loyalties and consider how Sabbath can be a tool to resist the “culture of now.”

The sessions in this study will help participants see how, in our contemporary context of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath can be an act of resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it insists that our lives are not defined by production and consumption. It is an alternative to the demanding presence of advertising and the culture of social media. Sessions will explore how topics such as anxiety, exclusivism, and multitasking are consuming our lives and pulling us away from relationship with our God and neighbors.

This study is addressed to young people who find themselves “weary and . . . carrying heavy burdens” (Matt. 11:28) by the uncontrolled requirements of our society—particularly its social conformity that urges doing more and having more, assumes there is a technological solution for every human problem, and promotes greed and control. Through Sabbath, may they rediscover the God who has created and redeemed them and who longs to sustain them by offering them a place to lay down their burdens and find rest.

Introduction to This Session

In the season of Lent, many Christians take time to examine our lives, identifying personal practices and

attitudes that keep us from being in true relationship with God and neighbor. We can use this period of liturgical time to cultivate practices that renew both of these relationships. One way to understand how we are to live in relationship to God and others is to look to the wisdom offered in the Ten Commandments.

A close look at the Ten Commandments shows us that the first three commandments have to do with our relationship with God and the final six commandments have to do with our relationships with our fellow humans. The fourth commandment on Sabbath is the “crucial bridge” that connects the Ten Commandments together.² The fourth commandment looks back to the first three commandments and the God who rests (Exod. 20:3–8). At the same time, the Sabbath commandment looks forward to the last six commandments, which concern the neighbor (vv. 12–17). God, self, and all members of the household share in common rest on the seventh day. When one rests, all rest, and they do so alongside the God who creates and sustains them.

Gods of “More”

In Exodus 5, the “gods of Egypt” demand endless produce and authorize endless systems of production. Pharaoh is the enforcer, demanding that slaves produce more and more bricks to be used to build more storage for the pharaoh’s endless supply of material wealth (grain). Because the system was designed to produce more and more surplus (Gen. 47:13–26), there was always more need for storage units that in turn generated more need for bricks with which to construct them.

In this system, there can be no Sabbath rest. There is no rest for the pharaoh as he supervises and monitors. There can be no rest for the pharaoh’s taskmasters. And of course, there can be no rest for the slaves who must satisfy the taskmasters in order to meet the pharaoh’s demanding quotas. In this context, all levels of social power—gods, the pharaoh, supervisors, taskmasters, slaves—are caught up in and committed to the grind of endless production.

Restlessness

The reality of restlessness in our contemporary society is obvious. In our society, we experience an endless pursuit of greater security and greater happiness, a pursuit that is always unsatisfied, because we have never gotten or done enough. The gods (“other gods”)

of this system summon us to endless desires and needs that are never met but that always require yet greater effort.

It is impossible to overestimate the level of anxiety that now characterizes social relationships. Into this arena of restlessness comes the God of rest who offers relief from that anxiety-producing system. This God has no hunger for commodities. This God is attentive to the cries of those “left behind” and comes to open a new future by providing us an exit from systems of restlessness into the restfulness of neighborliness.

Sabbath is a practical no to restlessness so that neighborly engagement, rather than production and consumption, defines our lives. Our motors are set to run at brick-making speed. Therefore it is both urgent and difficult to find restfulness. However, our lives as individuals and within God’s community of believers depend on our willingness to pause and honor the Sabbath commandment.

Goal for the Session

Participants will explore how the commandment to keep Sabbath can be a faithful response to a culture of anxiety.

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members. As much as possible, pray for each person by name. Ask for the Spirit to move among the group and foster a lively, creative discussion.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout

Teaching Tip

One of the activities in this session is creating and performing a skit. Even if your group seems hesitant to perform their skits in front of one another, encourage them

to have fun with it. This activity is a great way for participants to become more comfortable with one another and may help foster more open conversation going forward.

Arriving (5 minutes)

1. The Ten Commandments

Place a blank piece of newsprint on the wall in your gathering space. As participants arrive, encourage them to work together to name all ten commandments (in order). They are *not* to consult their Bibles or any other outside sources during this time.

Gathering (10 minutes)

2. The Sabbath Commandment

Once most of your group has arrived, ask for a volunteer to read aloud Exodus 20:1–21 and have the rest of the group assess the list of commandments created in the Arriving activity for accuracy. Make any necessary edits so that the group’s list reflects the commandments as they appear in Scripture. Then point out the following to your group:

- Some scholars have noted that the first three commandments show us how to think about our relationship with God.
- The last six commandments show us how to think about our relationships with other people.
- Some think that the fourth commandment, on Sabbath, is a bridge between these two things.

Ask the group to brainstorm some ideas of what this could mean. How might Sabbath act as a bridge between our relationship with God and our relationships with others?

Opening (5 minutes)

3. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

- In the season of Lent, Christians are called to examine our lives and identify personal practices and attitudes that keep us from being in true relationship with God and neighbor.
- We can use this period of liturgical time to cultivate practices that renew both of these relationships.

- One way to understand how we are to live in relationship to God and others is to look to the wisdom offered in the Ten Commandments.

Explain that in today's session, the group will look specifically at how keeping Sabbath can be a faithful response to a culture of anxiety.

4. Opening Prayer

Lead your group in prayer, either with your own words or with the following:

God of Peace,
 we live in a busy world that is constantly calling
 us in different directions.
 We find ourselves anxious, overwhelmed, and
 struggling to follow you.
 Send your Spirit to be with us now. Let us hear
 what you have to say to us, and may we grow
 to new understandings of your Word through
 this time together.
 In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

5. Skit: Pharaoh's World

Have participants read together Exodus 5:1–23. Discuss as a group:

- What is happening in this story?
- How would you describe the tone of Pharaoh? Of the workers? Of Moses?

In smaller groups, ask participants to place the story found in Exodus 5:1–23 in a modern-day setting and create a skit. Some possible settings for their story are school, work, or an extracurricular event such as a sport or club. Once they have had some time to prepare their skits, have each group perform for the others. Then debrief with the following discussion questions:

- How do you deal with demands that cause anxiety in your life?
- Can you relate to any of the characters in this story? If so, who and why?
- Clearly in Exodus 5:1–23 there is a lack of Sabbath in all of the characters' lives. How would this story be different if the pharaoh himself practiced Sabbath?

6. Case Study: Pharaoh in Today's World

Distribute the Participant Handout if you have not already done so, and ask participants to read the section titled "Case Study" about a family operating under a pharaoh-like atmosphere of production. Then ask participants how they might respond to this family using Exodus 20:1–20 as a basis for their advice. Draw from the following possible questions to further discuss the relationship between anxiety and Sabbath in this family:

- What things in this family's lives are keeping them from being closer to God and one another?
- How might the practice of Sabbath look for them?
- How would practicing Sabbath change their understanding of God and their relationships with one another?
- How is this family like/unlike your own?
- Why is it so hard to change our ways?

Responding (10 minutes)

7. Reflection Questions

Ask participants to take a few moments to respond to the reflection questions found in their Participant Handouts.

Closing (5 minutes)

8. Share Responses

Once participants have had some time to respond to the reflection questions, ask if there are any volunteers who might like to share their responses.

9. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

Your group may be interested in the article on anxiety and depression referenced in the introduction to this study. If so, print copies of the article for participants to read and discuss: "Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem among Their Peers," by Juliana Menasce Horowitz and Nikki Graff at the Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/02/20/most-u-s-teens-see-anxiety-and-depression-as-a-major-problem-among-their-peers/>.

Key Scripture

Exodus 5:1–23; 20:1–21

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Notes

1. Juliana Menasce Horowitz and Nikki Graf, “Most U.S. Teens See Anxiety and Depression as a Major Problem among Their Peers,” Pew

Research Center, Feb. 20, 2019, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2019/02/20/most-u-s-teens-see-anxiety-and-depression-as-a-major-problem-among-their-peers/>.

2. Patrick D. Miller, *The Ten Commandments, Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 117.

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YOUTH STUDY

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LEADER'S GUIDE Session 2

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath helps us see our neighbors as friends, not competitors

Introduction to the Session

The season of Lent is often understood as being solely about our personal relationship with God. Often, churches will encourage their members to give up or take on a personal practice during this season with the goal of becoming more aware of our sin. However, Lent is ultimately about much more than the individual. In this session, participants will be invited to consider how Sabbath frees us to not just serve our God as individual believers but also to serve our neighbor and strengthen our identity as a community of faith, the body of Christ.

We begin at Mount Sinai in Exodus 20:8–11. The people of Israel have escaped the pharaoh's Egypt. They come to the mountain to enact a "regime change," turning away from pharaoh to embrace God's authority. Here, they are instructed on how to love their God and love their neighbor in respectful and life-giving ways.

Everyone gathered at Sinai that day could remember what it had been like in the world of the pharaoh:

- They could remember the pharaoh: an absolute authority with uncontrollable demands.
- They could remember that Egypt's socioeconomic power was organized like a pyramid, with a workforce producing wealth, all of which flowed upward to the elite and eventually to pharaoh.

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- Competitors and neighbors

GATHERING

- Discuss arriving activity

OPENING

- Summarize previous week's session
- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- Straw challenges
- Case study: neighborly leadership

RESPONDING

- Guided reflection on Matthew 6:25–31

CLOSING

- Share responses
- Closing prayer

- They could remember that the frantic policies of the pharaoh would lead to misery and the need to keep working and keep producing in order to meet impossible quotas.
- They could remember when the God of Sinai announced God’s self as the one “who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exod. 20:2).

At Sinai, God gave Israel new promises and possibilities. Israel was so eager to embrace this new way of life that they gladly signed on for the new regime.

The Sabbath Commandment

Of the Ten Commandments given to the people of Israel, the first three spoke to the exclusivity of God and the last six to the cultivation of a neighborly community. Nestled right between them was the fourth commandment:

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 . . . and consecrated it. (20:8–11)

The fourth commandment must have come as a shock to the listening Israelites. There had been no Sabbath in Egypt, no work stoppage, not even for the pharaoh, because frantic productivity drove the entire system. And now God commands them to instead redirect their energy to the cultivation of neighborliness.

Freedom to Be Neighborly

God invites those at Sinai to a new life of neighborly freedom in which Sabbath is the cornerstone. Such faithful practice of work stoppage declares that we will not participate in the anxiety system that turns us against one another as competitors. We will not be defined by pursuit of more, in either our economics or our personal relations or anywhere in our lives.

It is no wonder that Jesus invited his disciples out of the anxiety system:

“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?’” (Matt. 6:25–31)

The birds and the lilies are attestation that creation works! Trust it and live out righteousness, and your heavenly God—the Creator—will see to your well-being. The other gods are agents of anxiety. But we, by discipline, by resolve, by baptism, by Eucharist, and by passion, resist such seductions. In so doing, we stand alongside the Creator in whose image we are made. By the end of six days, God had done all that was necessary for creation . . . so have we!

Goal for the Session

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

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members.
- Arrange your space so that you will have enough room for participants to comfortably participate in the Exploring activity challenges.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers

- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout
- straws (enough for each participant)
- ping pong balls or another type of small, light object (enough for one per participant)
- masking tape

Teaching Tip

One of the activities in this session includes a set of challenges that will be more active for your group. Note that while the instructions say the activity should take place on the floor, the same activity could be done on a tabletop if that makes it easier for all individuals present to participate. This activity may also be substituted with the one in “Teaching Alternative.”

Arriving (5 minutes)

1. Competitors and Neighbors

Place two pieces of newsprint on the wall in your gathering space. At the top of one, write, “Who is my competitor?” At the top of the other, write, “Who is my neighbor?” Encourage participants to write as many responses to each prompt as they can think of as the group gathers.

Gathering (5 minutes)

2. Discuss Arriving Activity

Once most of your group has arrived, review the responses to the Arriving activity together and add any other responses that come to mind. Ask them to reflect on the following questions:

- Are there any individuals or groups that appear on both lists?
- In general, what feelings do we have toward our competitors?
- In general, what feelings do we have toward our neighbors?

Opening (10 minutes)

3. Summarize the Previous Week’s Session

For those who were not present the previous week, ask for a few volunteers to share what was discussed in session 1. Some key points to highlight include:

- In Exodus, pharaoh created a world filled with anxiety, concerned only with production.

- Our own world today and its demands don’t look that different than the pharaoh’s world in Exodus.
- The commandment to keep Sabbath is God’s way of helping us respond to a culture of anxiety.

4. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

- The season of Lent is not just about the individual.
- In Lent, God calls us to serve our neighbors and strengthen our identity as a community of faith, the body of Christ.
- In this session, we will look at how the pharaoh’s leadership divided the community and how God’s Sabbath commandment united it.

Explain that in today’s session, the group will look specifically at how the Sabbath commandment encourages us to see our fellow human beings as neighbors, not competitors.

5. Opening Prayer

Open your group in prayer, either with your own words or with the following:

God of Unity,
so often we see our fellow humans as our enemies.
We begin to believe that there is not enough love,
time, or opportunity for all of us.
Please use this time to remind us that, in your
eyes and through your ways,
there is always enough.
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. Straw Challenges

The group will participate in two different challenges meant to demonstrate the difference between relating to one another as competitors and relating to one another as neighbors. If you have a large group, it may be helpful to form two smaller groups to perform the challenges.

Challenge One

Give each participant a straw and a ping pong ball (or other small, light object). Tape a designated “start” and “finish” line on the floor and explain that participants are to move the ping pong ball from start to finish using *only* breath from the straw to move the ball. They must

keep their hands behind their backs at all times. Make it clear that they are all to attempt this challenge at the same time, and they are competing against one another. Once they have completed the challenge, be sure to designate a clear winner and declare the rest of the group losers.

Challenge Two

Perform the challenge again, but this time, remove the start and finish line from the floor and instead use the tape to outline a small square in the middle of the room (large enough to eventually hold all of the ping pong balls or small objects). Have participants toss their ping pong balls onto the floor but explain that it is not important that they keep track of their own ball. Again using only breath from their straws, their goal is to move all the ping pong balls into the box in the center of the space. However, this time they are working together as a team.

Once the second challenge is completed, put away the straws and ping pong balls and ask the group to reflect on the following:

- How would you describe the atmosphere in the first challenge?
- How did you relate to or feel about your fellow participants in the first challenge?
- How would you describe the atmosphere in the second challenge?
- How did you relate to or feel about your fellow participants in the second challenge?

Ask for a volunteer to read Exodus 20:8–11 aloud. Remember how, in the pharaoh’s world, life was all about production and people were often competing against one another to see who could work harder and create more. Ask the group to consider: How does the Sabbath commandment encourage neighborliness instead of competition?

7. Case Study: Neighborly Leadership

Distribute the Participant Handouts if you have not already done so, and ask participants to read the section titled “Case Study: Neighborly Leadership” about a crew working together on a service project. Then ask participants how they might shape their own leadership style using Exodus 20:8–11 as a guide. Draw from the following possible questions to further discuss the case study:

- What are some situations you have been in before where you have witnessed pharaoh-like leadership?
- What are some situations you have been in before where you have witnessed neighborly leadership?
- 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?

Responding (10 minutes)

8. Guided Reflection on Matthew 6:25–31

Ask participants to listen as you slowly read aloud Matthew 6:25–31. (They may close their eyes during this time or read along in their Participant Handout.) Then have the group take a few moments to respond to the reflection questions in their Participant Handouts.

Closing (5 minutes)

9. Share Responses

Once participants have had some time to respond to the reflection questions, ask if there are any volunteers who might like to share their responses.

10. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

Ask participants to think of leaders (teachers, church leaders, coaches, etc.) in their lives who have encouraged either competition or neighborliness. Have them reflect on the benefits and challenges to each of these approaches in context.

Key Scriptures

Exodus 20:8–11

Matthew 6:25–31

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

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LEADER'S GUIDE
Session 3

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

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

Introduction to the Session

Entering the Promised Land

In the early church, Lent was a season during which new converts prepared for their official entry into the Christian community (which would take place on Easter Sunday as they were baptized into membership). It was also a time when those formerly estranged from the church repented and sought to reconnect. Much of what happened in this time was remembering how God had been at work in the past in order to more clearly discern how God's Spirit was at work in the present. This pause, or Sabbath, led to renewed vision about where God would lead the community of believers in the future. The same was true in the days of the Exodus.

Eventually, the people of Israel made their way through the wilderness and came to the Jordan River, ready to enter—at long last—the promised land. But it had been a long time since Sinai. And so Moses stopped at the Jordan (in the book of Deuteronomy) and gave Israel instruction for the new land, instruction that lasts for thirty chapters! Moses spoke for so long because he wanted to be sure that Israel understood that the old, desert covenant still pertained to the agricultural territory they were about to enter. Moses regarded the land

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- Where we come from

GATHERING

- Share our stories

OPENING

- Summarize previous week's session
- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- "That they may rest like you"
- Case study: leaving home

RESPONDING

- Share case study responses

CLOSING

- Closing prayer

of Canaan, a very fertile place, as an enormous temptation to Israel.

The new land offered so many blessings that Israel would begin to think they could manage on their own. The new land would make them prosperous, and Moses knew that prosperity breeds amnesia. He warned Israel about amnesia: “Take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (6:12).

The Israelites might forget where they came from, the circumstance under which they had departed, and how they had gotten away. They might forget that they had lived in a system of unbearable coercion wherein they had to meet impossible production schedules of more bricks. Moses anticipated that if they were not alert, they would end up right back in another system of coercion. Because the land was fertile, it would make Israel safe and happy. And if Israel could increase what it produced, it would be safer and happier. Israel might come to think that the goal of its life was to acquire and acquire and acquire. And in order to acquire, Israel would need to compete with the neighbor. The system could turn one’s neighbor into a competitor. The land had the power to destroy the fabric of the covenantal neighborhood.

That They May Rest Just Like You

To this end, Moses articulates the commandments. They are the same as the Sinai recital in Exodus 20, with only slight variation. In Deuteronomy 5:12–14 there is one noteworthy change. As in Exodus 20, all are to rest: sons and daughters, slaves, oxen, donkeys, livestock, immigrants. But a phrase is added: “can rest *just like you*” (CEB). Sabbath is the great day of equality, when all are equally at rest. Not all are equal in production. Some have greater access to consumer goods. Such a system, of course, creates haves and have-nots, significant and insignificant, rich and poor, people with access and people denied access.

But Sabbath breaks that gradation caused by coercion. On the Sabbath:

- You do not have to do more.
- You do not have to sell more.
- You do not have to control more.
- You do not have to know more.
- You do not have to be involved in ten different extracurricular activities.

- You do not have to be younger or more beautiful.
- You do not have to score more.

Because this one day breaks the pattern of coercion, all are *just like you*, equal—of equal worth, equal value, equal access, and equal rest.

Moses in Deuteronomy says:

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day. (5:15)

Moses is very big on remembering, because he knows that forgetting is a huge temptation in an affluent environment. Sabbath is the break, regular and public, that permits us to remember. Sabbath is the opportunity to recall Egypt and the pharaoh and then to remember God and the exodus. Those who remember and keep Sabbath find that they are less driven, less coerced, less frantic to meet deadlines—free to be rather than to do.

The Pause That Transforms

Moses, in Deuteronomy, imagines that Sabbath is not only a festival day but also a new social reality that is carried back into days one through six. People who keep Sabbath live all seven days differently. Sabbath is not simply a pause. It is an occasion for reimagining all social life away from coercion and competition, replacing those things with compassionate solidarity. Such solidarity is possible only when the cycle of greed is broken. Sabbath is not simply the pause that refreshes; it is the pause that transforms. Whereas Israelites are always tempted to greed, Sabbath is an invitation to receptivity, an acknowledgment that what is needed is given and need not be seized.

Goal for the Session

Participants will explore how practicing Sabbath helps us remember where we have come from in order to discern where we are being called to go.

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout

Teaching Tip

The Arriving activity in this session asks participants to recall stories from their family history. You may have individuals in your group who, for various reasons, may have limited or no knowledge of this sort. Be sensitive to the fact that this could be an upsetting subject for some, and be sure to offer the alternative question (in the Participant Handout) as an option for this activity.

Arriving (5 minutes)

1. Where We Come From

As participants arrive, distribute copies of the Participant Handout and point them to the Arriving activity writing 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.

Gathering (5 minutes)

2. Share Our Stories

Once most of your group has arrived, ask for volunteers to share some of the responses they wrote during the Arriving activity. Ask the group to observe any similarities among these stories or any that are particularly unique.

Opening (10 minutes)

3. Summarize the Previous Week's Session

For those who were not present the previous week, ask for a few volunteers to share what was discussed in session 2. Some key points to highlight include:

- The season of Lent is not just about the individual.

- In Lent, God calls us to serve our neighbors and strengthen our identity as a community of faith, the body of Christ.
- Pharaoh's leadership divided the community, and God's Sabbath commandment united it.

4. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

- In the early church, Lent was a season during which new converts prepared for their official entry into the Christian community and those formerly estranged from the church repented and sought to reconnect.
- Much of what happened in this time was remembering how God had been at work in the past in order to more clearly discern how God's Spirit was at work in the present.
- When the ancient Israelites finally made their way through the wilderness and were about to enter the promised land, Moses stopped and gave them a long list of instructions. He reminded them of where they came from, because he was afraid that once they were in a land of prosperity, they would forget the struggles they went through to get there.
- Sabbath became an important practice in the life of the community when everyone stopped and remembered where they had come from and how they were called to honor all people in the community.

Explain that in today's session, the group will look specifically at how Sabbath calls us to remember where we have come from in order to help us discern where we are being called to go.

5. Opening Prayer

Open your group in prayer, either with your own words or with the following:

Eternal God,
you have been with us throughout all generations,
uplifting our ancestors in their struggles
and offering hope when all seemed hopeless.
Help us to remember all the ways you have been
at work in the past
so that we might better understand how you are
present among us now.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. “That They May Rest Like You”

Have participants form partners or smaller groups for this activity. Each small group or set of partners will need two Bibles. Have them compare the following two passages:

- Exodus 20:8–10
- Deuteronomy 5:12–15

Ask them to discuss the following:

- What difference do you see between these two passages?
- Why did Moses make a point to tell Israel to remember their past before heading into the promised land?
- Why did Moses add the phrase, “can rest just like you”?

Ask participants to recall if they have ever made a momentous transition in their lives (changing schools, moving to a new home, adjusting to a change in their family situation). How does remembering where we have come from strengthen us when we are faced with transition and challenge?

7. Case Study: Leaving Home

Distribute the Participant Handout if you have not already done so, and ask participants to read the section titled “Case Study: Leaving Home.” After they have had some time to read the case study, have them return to their partners or small groups, where they will write the character Aaron a letter of advice and encouragement as he transitions to his new college environment. Their letters should include elements of remembering and practicing Sabbath as demonstrated by Moses in Deuteronomy 5.

Responding (5 minutes)

8. Share Case Study Responses

Ask for volunteers to read their letters of encouragement to Aaron. Note how the themes from Deuteronomy appear in each of the letters shared.

Closing (5 minutes)

9. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

If there is a written history of your congregation available, consider copying a few pages of it and distributing the information to your group to read and discuss. How does remembering an individual congregation’s story help us remember who God is calling us to be now? How does it help us practice Sabbath in a religious culture that is often consumer driven?

Key Scriptures

Exodus 20:8–10
Deuteronomy 5:12–15

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

Kathy Wolf Reed is copastor of First Presbyterian Church of Auburn, Alabama, where she lives with her husband and three children.



YOUTH STUDY

from www.TheThoughtfulChristian.com

LEADER'S GUIDE
Session 4

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath reminds us to include others

Introduction to the Session

Israel's Membership

Social belonging, membership in groups, and the sharp pain of exclusivism will not be unfamiliar topics to youth. In this Lenten study, it is important to stress that we do not find our belonging in the body of Christ because we have achieved some standard of perfection. In fact, quite the opposite is true—one thing we all have in common is that the grace we know in Jesus is deep and wide enough to be inclusive of us and all our sins. Bearing this reality in mind, we now turn to the issue of exclusivism as Israel entered the promised land.

After the exodus, it did not take very long for Israel to try to give order to its life and establish boundaries of membership, to determine who was in and who was not. In general, the insiders are those who obey the commandments of Sinai. While the book of Leviticus provides guidelines for every phase of life to be sure that membership in Israel consists only of those who sustain intentional purity, the book of Deuteronomy takes the Sinai commandments in a somewhat different direction. It places emphasis on justice and is concerned with the vulnerable who need protection from the community: the poor, alongside widows, orphans, and immigrants. Israel consists of those who practice such protective justice:

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- Membership qualifications

GATHERING

- Reflect on membership

OPENING

- Summarize previous week's session
- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- Membership in the body of Christ
- Case study: résumé of a Sabbath keeper

RESPONDING

- Reflect on our own Sabbath keeping

CLOSING

- Closing prayer

You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you. (Deut. 16:19–20)

Membership in the Worshiping Community

In Isaiah 56:3–8, we see a move toward *inclusiveness* against ancient *exclusivism*. It advocates the option of including two groups of applicants for membership in Israel. First, welcome the *foreigners*!

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.
Isaiah 56:3a, 6

Second, admit eunuchs! (A eunuch was a man who had been castrated and was often tasked with guarding women and their living areas.)

And do not let the eunuch say,
“I am just a dry tree.”
For thus says the LORD:
To the eunuchs who keep by sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
I will give, in my house and within my walls,
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

Isaiah 56:3b, 4–5

The conditions of admission clearly do not concern race, ethnicity, or any sort of standard of perfect purity. There is a generic requirement of the new recruit simply to keep Torah. But there is only one specific requirement spelled out: keep Sabbath! This is the single, solitary mark of membership that lets the life of God’s Israel spill over among those who have been excluded but are now

welcomed. Sabbath represents a radical disengagement from the producer-consumer rat race of the empire. The community welcomes members of any race or nation, any gender or social condition, so long as that person is defined by justice, mercy, and compassion and not competition, achievement, production, or acquisition:

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

Membership Today

We now read this ancient text in a contemporary moment of deciding. Ours is a time of scattering in fear. We are so fearful that we want to fence the world in order to keep all the others out:

- Some of the church still wants to fence out women.
- We build fences to keep out immigrants.
- The church in many places fences out gays.
- The issue of race is still a powerful tool used for fencing.

Sabbath deconstructs the notion of being qualified for membership. Later on, John the Baptist dealt with the professional insiders. They were so proud that they bragged about their pedigree, their entitlements, their ancestors: “Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham” (Matt. 3:9).

What counts is not pedigree. What counts is fruit. What counts are the outcomes of your life. Paul said of this fruit: “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things” (Gal. 5:22–23).

The “good fruits” arise from the “peaceableness” of Sabbath. The “destructive fruits” are generated by rat-race living. The advocates in Isaiah 56 want no rat-race companions. They want, rather, the fruits that arise from work stoppage. Those who refuse Sabbath produce only sour grapes, the grapes of wrath and violence and envy and, finally, death. Sabbath is a refusal of the grapes of wrath, an embrace of good fruits of life and joy, of praise and *shalom*.

Goal for the Session

Participants will explore how Sabbath keeping calls us to a more inclusive way of life.

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members.
- On pieces of newsprint, write out the group descriptions for the Arriving activity and post them around your meeting space.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout

Teaching Tip

In the Exploring activity section called “Membership in the Body of Christ,” participants are asked to think about how the church has become a more inclusive institution throughout the years and how some may still feel excluded from the church. In this activity, it is important to distinguish between feeling excluded and being truly discriminated against. Be sure to lift up this distinction during this time of conversation and explore the differences with your group.

Arriving (5 minutes)

1. Membership Qualifications

Around your space, post pieces of newsprint with descriptions of various groups your youth may have the opportunity to try out for written at the top. (Some examples might include Varsity Basketball Team, National Honor Society, Honor Band, Competition Dance Team, Student Council Officer.) It may be helpful to tailor these groups to ones you know your youth participate in. As youth arrive, ask them to write under each group title things one must do or qualities one must have in order to be able to join this group.

Gathering (5 minutes)

2. Reflect on Membership

Once most of your group has arrived, review each group and its qualifications. Talk about which groups in their

schools are the most exclusive and hardest to gain membership to. Are there other groups that have not yet been mentioned? Then ask participants to consider:

- How is membership in these school-sponsored groups different from membership in a church?
- What does one have to do to become a member of a church?

Opening (10 minutes)

3. Summarize the Previous Week’s Session

For those who were not present the previous week, ask for a few volunteers to share what was discussed in session 3. Some key points to highlight include:

- When the Israelites finally make their way through the wilderness and are about to enter the promised land, Moses stops and gives them a long list of instructions. He reminds them of where they have come from, because he’s afraid that once they are in a land of prosperity, they will forget the struggles they went through to get there.
- Sabbath becomes an important practice in the life of the community to stop and remember where they have come from and how they are called to honor all people in the community.

4. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

After the exodus, it did not take very long for Israel to try to give order to its life and establish boundaries of membership, to determine who was in and who was not.

While the book of Leviticus provides guidelines for every phase of life to be sure that membership in Israel consists only of those who sustain intentional purity, the book of Deuteronomy places emphasis on justice and is concerned with the vulnerable who need protection from the community: the poor, widows, orphans, and immigrants.

In Isaiah, we see a move toward *inclusiveness* against ancient *exclusivism*.

The conditions of admission clearly do not concern race, ethnicity, or any sort of standard of perfect purity. There is only one specific requirement spelled out: keep Sabbath!

Explain that in today's session, the group will look specifically at how Sabbath keeping calls us to a more inclusive way of life.

5. Opening Prayer

Open your group in prayer, either with your own words or the following:

God of us all,
just as you called together Jews and Gentiles,
and men and women,
and slaves and free
to be one in Christ Jesus,
do the same for us now,
and help us to seek Sabbath
so that all may find their rest in you.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. Membership in the Body of Christ

Begin by reiterating the danger of creating insiders and outsiders in the church: if we believe we are truly "one in Christ Jesus," we have a duty to reflect this in our daily lives.

Ask for a volunteer to read Isaiah 56:3a, 6, 8. In partners or small groups, ask participants to focus on verse 8 and respond to the following questions (written in their Participant Handout):

- 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?

7. Case Study: Résumé of a Sabbath Keeper

Participants will study a sample résumé in their Participant Handout of an academically and athletically high-achieving student. They will be asked to reflect on the following questions (written in their Participant Handout):

- How do you think this person keeps (or does not keep) Sabbath?

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

Responding (5 minutes)

8. Reflect on Our Own Sabbath Keeping

Ask for volunteers to share some of their responses from the resume activity. Then ask the group to brainstorm aloud:

- What are some opportunities in our own lives to be more intentional about keeping the Sabbath?
- How might keeping Sabbath regularly help us be more inclusive and justice-seeking people?

Closing (5 minutes)

9. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

This session can also create an opportunity for discussing inclusive language for God. Download the brochure "Well Chosen Words!" from the PC(USA) website (other denominations may have a similar document to reference) at http://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/pw/pdfs/wellchosenwords.pdf and discuss as a group how the language we use as a community of faith can help create an environment that is either exclusive or inclusive of those seeking membership and a sense of belonging.

Key Scriptures

Isaiah 56:3a, 6, 8

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

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YOUTH STUDY

from www.TheThoughtfulChristian.com

LEADER'S GUIDE
Session 5

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath keeping resists multitasking

Introduction to the Session

Multitasking in Ancient Israel

Today's youth, as well as their parents and teachers, exist in a culture of multitasking. However, regardless of how productivity and the achievement of "more" may be applauded in our society, studies show that, in fact, "we humans aren't as good as we think we are at doing several things at once."¹ While we may equate doing multiple things at once with achieving and acquiring more, the restfulness of Sabbath suffers when we divide ourselves during what is supposed to be a faithful act of worship. The Lenten season offers us the opportunity to be honest about where our energy, attention, and focus are. We are called to repent of our own failure to fully place our hearts and minds in the act of worship and prayer and consider how we might renew our faith in our Sabbath practices going forward. There are two passages, from the prophet Isaiah that expose the multitasking taking place on the Sabbath.

Isaiah 1:12–17

In this prophetic oracle, we learn that YHWH is disappointed in and exhausted with Israel's worship. Worship practices (offerings, incense, assemblies, prayers, and Sabbath) are cut off from the well-being

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- Multitasking challenges

GATHERING

- Reflect on multitasking challenges

OPENING

- Summarize previous week's session
- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- Multitasking and Sabbath
- Case study: Princeton Good Samaritan study

RESPONDING

- Reflect on our own multitasking

CLOSING

- Closing prayer

of the neighborhood and the protection of the vulnerable. Worshipers in Israel may have gone through the motions of the Sabbath, but they did not stop the practices of anxiety, coercion, and exploitation that real work stoppage would entail. Their desire to produce and gain more had such momentum that it carried right into and through the Sabbath. The great festival of rest had become simply another venue for restlessness.

Isaiah 58:1–7

In this much later text, the prophet reflects on a dispute about correct worship. On the one hand, there is ritual fasting among those who “delight” to draw near to God (v. 2). But while going through the motions of worship, fast, and humbleness (v. 3), in fact the Israelite worshipers practice exploitative economics and oppress their workers. While Sabbath is not explicitly mentioned, it is clear that the worship under consideration did not allow for sabbatical work stoppage. There is no justice for or generosity toward workers in this practice. This worship contradicts neighborliness and provides a cover of legitimacy for exploitation.

On the other hand, the poem proposes an authentic “fast” that includes justice toward the oppressed, bread for the hungry, housing for the poor, clothing for the naked—that is, genuine, neighborly covenantal support. This worship is congruent with the Deuteronomic commands concerning the vulnerable in society. Worship that does not lead to neighborly compassion and justice cannot be faithful worship of YHWH.

Jesus and Multitasking

In our current society, in one author’s opinion, the most unwelcome form of multitasking is with the cell phone, which is sometimes used while at dinner with a guest or while driving. Then there is taking notes during a church service... not notes on the sermon, but a grocery list or an accounting of calls to return or deals to make. Multitasking is the drive to be more than we are, to control more than we do, to extend our power and our effectiveness. Such practice yields a divided self, with full attention given to nothing.

Jesus offers an ominous characterization of “multitasking”: “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matt. 6:24).

To serve God and wealth at the same time is impossible. It is like keeping Sabbath and at the same time planning for commerce. It is like praising Jesus while preying on the poor. Such multitasking with a divided heart means that there is no real work stoppage, no interruption in the frantic attempt to get ahead. Doing tasks of acquisitiveness while trying to communicate humanly is the true mark of the “turn to commodity.” We all become commodities to one another, to be bought and sold and traded and cheated. The Sabbath command is an urgent summons to break the pattern of the divided heart before it is too late. No wonder Jesus followed Matthew 6:24 with verse 25, which warns us not to be anxious!

Goal for the Session

Participants will explore the idea that multitasking keeps us from observing true Sabbath.

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout
- copies of “Resource Sheet: Instructions for Multitasking Activities”

Teaching Tip

Be sure to spread out the various instructions for the multitasking activities in the Arriving section throughout your space so that participants have plenty of room to complete some of the more active challenges. Consider whether anyone in your group has difficulty with mobility. If so, most of these activities can be adapted to be performed in a seated position.

Arriving (10 minutes)

1. Multitasking Challenges

As participants arrive, place the instructions for the various multitasking challenges (see the resource sheet

for this session) throughout your meeting space. Have them walk around the room and try to complete each of the activities described.

Gathering (5 minutes)

2. Reflect on Multitasking Challenges

Once most of your group has arrived and has had a chance to attempt each of the multitasking challenges, gather together as a large group and reflect on the following questions:

- Which one of the challenges did you find to be most difficult?
- What are some of the feelings you experience when you are trying to do more than one thing at a time?
- How would this activity have felt different if you were just trying to do one thing at a time?
- What are some other situations in your life where you feel as if you are often multitasking?

Opening (10 minutes)

3. Summarize the Previous Week's Session

For those who were not present the previous week, ask for a few volunteers to share what was discussed in session 4. Some key points to highlight include:

- After the exodus, it did not take very long for Israel to try to give order to its life and establish boundaries of membership, to determine who was in and who was not.
- While the book of Leviticus provides guidelines for every phase of life to be sure that membership in Israel consists only in those who sustain intentional purity, the book of Deuteronomy places emphasis on justice and is concerned with the vulnerable who need protection from the community: the poor, widows, orphans, and immigrants.
- In Isaiah, we see a move toward *inclusiveness* against ancient *exclusivism*.
- The conditions of admission clearly do not concern race, ethnicity, or any sort of standard of perfect purity. There is only one specific requirement spelled out: keep Sabbath!

4. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

- While we may equate doing multiple things at once with achieving and acquiring more, the restfulness of Sabbath suffers when we divide ourselves during what is supposed to be a faithful act of worship.
- Worshipers in ancient Israel may have gone through the motions of the Sabbath, but because they did not stop work practices that abused their vulnerable workers, God became angry.
- Jesus also warned his followers against “serving two masters” (God and wealth) at the same time. Multitasking with a divided heart meant no real work stoppage, no interruption in the frantic attempt to get ahead.

Explain that in today's session, the group will explore the idea that multitasking keeps us from observing true Sabbath.

5. Opening Prayer

Open your group in prayer, either with your own words or with the following:

God of Sabbath,
on the seventh day you rested
and gave the gift of rest to all you created.
Yet through our busy schedules, demands,
and desire to do more,
we have taken that rest away from those who
need it most.
Help us to turn our hearts wholly to you
and find true Sabbath for all.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. Multitasking and Sabbath

Ask participants to take out their phones. If they do not have a phone, simply give them a piece of paper and pen. Instruct everyone in the group to text a friend (if they have a phone) or write down a list of everything they know they have to do this week.

As they begin their texting/listing, ask them to continue as they listen to you read the following passage aloud:

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

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?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Matthew 6:24–33)

When you are finished reading, ask participants to stop texting/listing and repeat back to you what they heard in the Scripture passage.

Next, ask participants to put down their phone or pen, close their eyes, be still, and listen again to the same passage. After you have read Matthew 6:24–33 again, ask participants to repeat back to you what they heard in the Scripture passage this time. As a group, discuss the following:

- How well do you think you heard this passage while you were texting/listing?
- How well did you hear the passage when you had your phones/pens away and your eyes closed?
- Which of these felt more like an act of worship? Why?
- Think about the passage itself: How does it encourage us to stop multitasking in order to connect more deeply with God?

7. Case Study: Princeton Good Samaritan Study

In the Participant Handout is a summary of a study done at Princeton in the 1970s. In this study, seminary

students were asked to walk from one side of campus to another while preparing a speech on the parable of the Good Samaritan. Some were told that they were late, while others were told that they had plenty of time to get to their destination. On the way, an actor pretending to be in distress was placed in their path. Those in a hurry were less likely to stop. Those not in a hurry were more likely to stop. Ask participants to take a few moments to read the full summary of the study. Once they have finished reading, discuss the following questions:

- What is most striking to you about this study?
- How could you see this same situation playing out in your own life?
- Have a volunteer read Isaiah 1:12–17 and Isaiah 58:1–7 aloud to the group.
- Why does multitasking anger God in these passages?
- How does multitasking affect our ability to love our God and our neighbors?

Responding (5 minutes)

8. Reflect on Our Own Multitasking

On their Participant Handouts, ask youth to identify and write down one aspect of multitasking in their own lives they would like to work on avoiding in the week ahead. In the Participant Handout they will be asked to describe how they will accomplish this goal and who they will ask for help.

Closing (5 minutes)

9. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

To take the experience of deep listening to Scripture a step further, repeat the first Exploring activity (Multitasking and Sabbath) by reading Matthew 6:24–33 using the process of *lectio divina*. Simple steps to this practice can be:

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide the reading/hearing of the Scripture.
2. Read the passage slowly and clearly.
3. Offer a moment of silent meditation to listen for God, and then read the passage again.

4. Pray to God that you will be open to hear what God is calling you to do, and then read the passage again.
5. Contemplate what God wants you to put into practice based on this Scripture.

Key Scriptures

Isaiah 1:12–17; 58:1–7
Matthew 6:24–33

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

To read the complete summary of the Princeton Good Samaritan Study, go to <https://sparq.stanford.edu/solutions/take-time-be-good-samaritan>.

Note

1. Jon Hamilton, “Think You’re Multitasking? Think Again,” National Public Radio, Oct. 2, 2008, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=95256794>.

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Resource Sheet: Instructions for Multitasking Activities

Make a copy of this sheet, cut out each of these instructions, and post them each in a different area of your meeting space:

1. On a sheet of paper, write out the Pledge of Allegiance while you count aloud to 100 by 2s (2, 4, 6, 8, etc.).
2. Find a partner and, with your right hand, engage in a thumb war. With your left hand, simultaneously play "Rock, Paper, Scissors."
3. On a sheet of paper, write out a list of odd numbers from 1–100. As you are doing this, with your free hand make a circle motion in the air. At the same time, with your left foot (if you are right handed) or your right foot (if you are left handed), draw a triangle on the floor.



YOUTH STUDY

from www.TheThoughtfulChristian.com

LEADER'S GUIDE
Session 6

Sabbath Keeping for Busy Teens: A Youth Lenten Study

Sabbath reminds us what is truly important

Introduction to the Session

Coveting

In biblical tradition, coveting is understood as both an attitude of craving and the forceful action to secure what is craved. The tenth commandment warns against the greed that motivates individuals to crave that which belongs to their neighbors and the lengths to which some are willing to go to take what is not rightfully theirs.

The specifics of such community-destroying greed include “house and wife.” In a patriarchal society, one’s wife was understood to be property, as was the house. Beyond house and wife, the commandment also concerns the householder’s “means of production,” that is: slaves, ox, and donkey. After specifically naming these named objects—house, wife, means of production—the commandment ends with a conclusion so sweeping that nothing is exempt from the rule: “everything that belongs to your neighbor.”

The Neighborhood

It is striking that in this final, very brief commandment, the term *neighbor* occurs three times. It is all about respecting the neighbor and, in doing so, preserving, honoring, and enhancing the neighborhood. It is most

Session at a Glance

ARRIVING

- The tenth commandment

GATHERING

- Reflect on the tenth commandment

OPENING

- Summarize previous week’s session
- Share the goal of the session
- Opening prayer

EXPLORING

- Naboth’s vineyard
- Case study: the Rich Fool

RESPONDING

- Reflecting on how we covet

CLOSING

- Closing prayer

probable that the “neighborhood” of the day was a village of vulnerable peasants, each of whom lived a vulnerable economic existence with no margin for loss. For that reason, any disturbance of property arrangements had the potential of making life in the village unlivable. It follows that Sabbath rest in that context means to protect the space and property of the neighbor from practices motivated by greed and jealousy. The commandment seems to be quite a particular rule concerning the love of neighbor, which Jesus subsequently identified as the second great commandment (Mark 12:31). The neighbor is to be loved as oneself, and the property of the neighbor—his house, wife, means of production—are to be protected even as one wants one’s own house, wife, and means of production to be left undisturbed.

Naboth’s Vineyard

The story in 1 Kings 21:1–29 provides a clear demonstration of the concerns of the tenth commandment. Naboth is a small-time farmer whose land is his “ancestral inheritance” (v. 3). It belongs to his family even as he himself belongs to the land. The relationship of person and land is close and beyond question.

The royal enterprise, by contrast, views all property as a tradable commodity. The royal couple, Ahab and Jezebel, will stop at nothing until they are able to “take possession” (v. 15) of Naboth’s ancestral heritage. In doing so, they destroy not only their neighborly relationship with Naboth but also the sacred connectedness of the neighborhood itself.

The Parable of the Rich Fool

In the parable of Luke 12:13–34, Jesus summarizes “two ways” that are as old as covenant and as poignant as the Naboth narrative. In response to the man in dispute with his brother over the family inheritance, Jesus provides the pivot point of his instruction: “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions” (v. 15).

The greedy man in the parable is a success in his own eyes, but he is destined for death in his self-deceiving foolishness. Jesus draws instruction for his disciples: do not be anxious (v. 22)! Do not worry about commodity goods. It is implied that an acquisitive way of life leaves one in anxiety about not ever having enough and always needing more. Thus discipleship, in this teach-

ing, concerns an alternative kind of life. That alternative is grounded in confidence that God provides what is needed, as energy is redeployed to “strive for his kingdom” (v. 31).

Conclusion

Our consumer society is grounded in the generation of artificial desires and urgent needs. The always-emerging new desires and new needs create a restless striving that sets neighbor against neighbor in order to get ahead, to have an advantage, and to accumulate at the expense of the other. The power of such a compulsion to “get,” of course, negates neighborly possibility.

We are left, then, with the question of how to break the lethal cycle of greed and jealousy. Sabbath is the practical ground for creating a public will for restraint. Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination for coming to the ultimate recognition that more commodities do not satisfy. Sabbath is an antidote to anxiety. Sabbath is an arena in which to recognize that we live by gift and not by possession, that we are satisfied by relationships of loyalty and not by accumulating more possessions. Sabbath is the regular, disciplined, visible, concrete yes to the neighborly reality of the community beloved by God.

Goal for the Session

Participants 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.

Preparing for the Session

- Read through this Leader’s Guide and determine how to best lead the session given the needs of your group. See the “Teaching Alternative” section at the end for additional ideas.
- Pray for all group members.
- Write out the text to the tenth commandment and post it in your meeting space for the Arriving activity.

Materials Needed

- Bibles
- newsprint
- markers
- pens and paper for each participant
- copies of the Participant Handout

Teaching Tip

If you have had a fairly consistent group throughout this series, consider using the “Teaching Alternative” at the end of this session to review the main idea of each of the six sessions of the series. Ask participants which of the sessions has made the greatest impact on them during this season of Lent.

Arriving (10 minutes)

1. The Tenth Commandment

As participants arrive, have the following posted on the wall in your meeting space so that it is visible for all: “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exod. 20:17).

Ask participants to think of a time when they coveted something that belonged to a “neighbor” (friend, classmate, etc.).

Gathering (5 minutes)

2. Reflect on the Tenth Commandment

Reflecting on their experiences of coveting, ask for volunteers to share:

- What is something you have coveted before? (Observe whether most responses are tangible items or something less concrete.)
- How does it feel to covet something?
- How does it affect our relationships with the people who possess what we covet?

At this point in the conversation, ask participants to note how many times the word *neighbor* appears in the tenth commandment. What do they make of this repetition?

Opening (10 minutes)

3. Summarize the Previous Week’s Session

For those who were not present the previous week, ask for a few volunteers to share what was discussed in session 5. Some key points to highlight include:

- While we may equate doing multiple things at once with achieving and acquiring more, the restfulness of Sabbath suffers when we divide ourselves during what is supposed to be a faithful act of worship.

- Worshipers in ancient Israel may have gone through the motions of the Sabbath, but because they did not stop work practices that abused their vulnerable workers, God became angry.
- Jesus also warned his followers against “serving two masters” (God and wealth) at the same time. Multitasking with a divided heart meant no real work stoppage, no interruption in the frantic attempt to get ahead.

4. Share the Goal of the Session

Drawing on material provided in the introduction to the session, share with the group:

- The tenth commandment warns against the greed that motivates individuals to crave that which belongs to their neighbors and the lengths to which some are willing to go to take what is not rightfully theirs.
- It is striking that in this final, very brief commandment, the term *neighbor* occurs three times. It is all about respecting the neighbor and, in doing so, preserving, honoring, and enhancing the neighborhood.
- It follows that Sabbath rest in that context means to protect the space and property of the neighbor from practices motivated by greed and jealousy.
- The neighbor is to be loved as oneself, and the property of the neighbor—his house, wife, means of production—are to be protected even as one wants one’s own house, wife, and means of production to be left undisturbed.

Explain that in today’s session, the group 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.

5. Opening Prayer

Open your group in prayer, either with your own words or with the following:

God who calls us to love our neighbors,
we are all guilty of coveting that which we do not have.

Help remind us in this time of the two greatest commandments

to which Jesus calls us:

love of God, and love of neighbor.

Through the gift of Sabbath, may we seek these above all else.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. Naboth's Vineyard

Form smaller groups (at least two) and ask them to read together 1 Kings 21:1–29, the story of Naboth's Vineyard. Ask the small groups to imagine this story in a modern-day context and create a short skit of this story in a contemporary setting. After each group has had time to prepare and present their skits to each other, discuss the following:

- Why did Ahab and Jezebel covet Naboth's vineyard?
- Why was Naboth hesitant to sell it to them?
- How do we see coveting take over in this story?
- How might Sabbath have helped avoid the conflict in this story?

7. Case Study: The Rich Fool

In the Participant Handout, participants will find the story of a modern-day rich fool. After they have had some time to read the story, ask for a volunteer to read Luke 12:13–34 (the parable of the Rich Fool) aloud to the group and discuss the following questions:

- What are the barns we build, and what are the things we store in them?
- How easy is it to find ourselves in the same position as the rich fool?
- 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" (v. 15). How do we live out this advice in our own lives?

Responding (5 minutes)

8. Reflect on How We Covet

In their Participant Handouts, youth will be asked to identify a source of jealousy or greed in their own lives and think about how they can be less anxious about this going forward. They may write their individual responses on their handout and keep these private if they so choose.

Closing (5 minutes)

9. Closing Prayer

Have the group close by praying together the prayer printed in their Participant Handout.

Teaching Alternative

If you have had a consistent group throughout this series, consider going back and briefly reviewing the lessons/topics of each session:

- **Session 1:** The commandment to keep Sabbath can be a faithful response to a culture of anxiety.
- **Session 2:** The Sabbath commandment encourages us to see our fellow human beings as neighbors, not competitors.
- **Session 3:** Sabbath calls us to remember where we have come from in order to help us discern where we are being called to go.
- **Session 4:** Sabbath keeping calls us to a more inclusive way of life.
- **Session 5:** Multitasking keeps us from observing true Sabbath.
- **Session 6:** Sabbath provides time, space, energy, and imagination to help us see that the things we covet ultimately do not satisfy.

Ask participants to name which one of the sessions has had the greatest impact on them and why.

Key Scriptures

1 Kings 21:1–29

Luke 12:13–34

For More Information

Brueggemann, Walter. *Sabbath as Resistance: Saying No to the Culture of Now*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

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