

# Extraordinary Rest

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[ 0 : 00 ] I'm pretty tired. This most recent round of restrictions from COVID has reminded me of how weary I have been from all of this.

And there's definitely a fatigue that comes from constantly having to think, how far am I allowed to go from my house? What am I allowed to do? Even throughout the week, how many people could I have over at my house?

There's no church. How do I get online? Where do I find the link for that? How do I do my job from home? All of these things are so exhausting. I'm not sure how you've been feeling, but I'm certainly feeling like I need a rest.

I've got holidays coming up, but even holidays coming up bring a certain sense of anxiety and stress. Will I actually be able to cross the border? I saw an ad the other day, which will come up on screen in a moment.

I saw this ad for a holiday in Tasmania. And it says, come down for air. And now it just feels like they're just torturing us with this advertisement for a holiday that we can't go on.

[ 1 : 08 ] But that advertising, come down for air, come down, and it's fresh. You can catch a breath. This is wonderfully restful. It sounds appealing. Now, while we're in Sydney in lockdown for the next two weeks, it doesn't necessarily mean that things are going to be restful, though.

I think that I find it easy to fill my time with things that aren't really restful. I'll just end up watching too much TV. I'll sit on my phone. And after the next couple of weeks, what could have been a rest from normal habits hasn't actually been.

Because I think what we need really is Sabbath rest. The rest that reminds us that we don't carry the burdens of the world. We don't carry the anxieties of the world because we have a God who does.

And he calls us to rest in him. COVID reminds us that, you know, these lockdowns remind us that we are really not in control at all.

And we have a God who is in control. And Sabbath rest reminds me that I can rest because God is in control of all things. We're continuing in our series, Ordinary People, Extraordinary God, through the book of Exodus.

[ 2 : 26 ] And we've been, today we'll be looking at God's command for Sabbath rest. And today, as we see this command, we'll see God's call for us to regularly rest in him.

But to do that, we're going to need a new definition of what Sabbath rest is and why it should be one of the most important parts of our week. So today, as we look at Sabbath rest, first of all, we're going to see the created rest, the recreated rest, and then how to actually rest.

So please pray with me. Heavenly Father, I thank you for this opportunity to look at your word, to be reminded about rest.

And Father, for those of us who are in Greater Sydney, who have been taken out of our normal habits over the next two weeks, Father, I pray that you would use this time to help us to rest in you. We ask this in your son's name. Amen. First thing we'll see this morning is created rest, which might actually be dropping off the bottom of your screen. You might be able to see it there. That's okay.

[ 3 : 33 ] In this series so far, we have seen that God has taken his people from slavery in Egypt. He has saved them. He has pulled them out through miraculous things, through plagues, through the Red Sea.

He has made a lasting covenant with them. God has bound himself to these people and he has made his home with them. He's instructed them to build a tabernacle so that God would be with them all of the time.

God has saved them to worship. And as we saw last week, the Israelites couldn't wait to worship. They get out of Egypt and as soon as they could, they set up the golden calf to worship instead of worshipping God.

But either side of that situation with the golden calf, there are commands in chapter 31 and chapter 35 for Sabbath rest. Sabbath rest in God.

And so God calls Exodus in chapter 31. Have your Bible open. It'll be on the screen as well. Have the Bible open. Then the Lord said to Moses, say to the Israelites, you must observe my Sabbaths. [ 4 : 42 ] This will be a sign between me and for the generations to come. So you may know that I am the Lord who makes you holy. The book of Exodus contains God's commands.

And many are framed in the negative. Think of the Ten Commandments. You shall not. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. But here, God is commanding the Israelites to do something.

But it's in the positive. You must. You shall do this. You must observe the Sabbaths. And so whatever we see about the Sabbaths, whatever difficulty there is for God's people and for us, first and foremost, we must see that it is a very positive thing for us.

Israel were told to regularly stop. To remember their relationship with God. To regularly Sabbath every week. Sabbath rest is a regular sign of relationship.

It's a picture of enjoying rest with God because of all that God has already done. He is the one who has saved them. He is the one who has entered into a covenant.

[ 5 : 55 ] He is the one who is coming down to heaven to dwell with them. And he requires them to rest with him. This is a call for Israel to regularly take time each week to stop and to invest in their relationship with God.

To remind themselves about who they are. Who has saved them. Who owns them. Who has bound them to him. And here in verse 13, it says that they would do this to know the Lord who makes them holy.

The word holy here means set apart. Special. These people were special to God. They were his unique people that he would bless.

And then through them he would bless the entire world. And they would just show that they were holy. That they were set apart. That they were special. By regularly taking time out to stop.

To stop work. And to rest in God. Not working. Not being busy. But to rest. To be forced to depend on God in a physical way.

[ 7 : 03 ] Resting and Sabbathing is a weekly reminder that God is the one who works. That we are dependent upon him.

It is active trust. It is a picture of saying to God, God, I have so much stuff I have to do. I need to gather food. I've got a family to take care of. I've got a job.

I've got to do all these things. But I'm going to stop. And I'm going to trust that you will take care of me. Look, God, I'm so used to being anxious and stressed out and busy.

But I don't need to be those things. Because God, you have promised that I am yours. And you will take care of me. Sabbath rest is the spiritual act of trusting God in physical form.

Let me say that again. Sabbath rest is the spiritual act of trusting God in physical form. It impacts our diaries. It impacts our weeks.

[ 8 : 05 ] And it resets us each week in relationship with God. Imagine how easy it would have been for Israel who have just come out of Egypt. Who are still trying to figure out what it meant to be a people who are living in a desert.

To have been frustrated by this. They didn't have modern technology. They didn't have electricity. Cooking is difficult. Cleaning is difficult.

Everything had to be done by hand. And yet God says, stop every week. Take time to rest. Don't work, but instead remember who I am.

And remember who you are. You are my people. God continues to describe the Sabbath in verse 14 and the purpose of it. Observe the Sabbath because it is holy to you.

Anyone who desecrates it is to be put to death. Those who do any work on that day must be cut off from the people. For six days work is to be done. But the seventh day is a day of Sabbath rest.

[ 9 : 11 ] Holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath. Celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant.

It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth. And on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.

It is crucially important that the people would regularly do this. And that's why there is such strong punishments. Two weeks ago we looked at the building of the tabernacle.

And we saw all of the connections between the building of the tabernacle and the building of the earth in Genesis. We saw that God had made a home with the people when he made the world. And again with the tabernacle God was coming and building a home with the people in the tabernacle. And here again as you can see on the screen we have those connections back to Genesis.

[10:17] Genesis. God commands Sabbath because it was good for God and it is good for us. God created the world and rested.

And we are to rest too. In creation God makes all of the animals and he makes people. And people can often think that there's no difference.

We're just smarter versions of animals. But God has made us to be different. God has made us unique to the rest of creation. Animals don't get a day off.

They have to keep looking for food. Because if they stop they'll either be eaten or they won't eat. But God has made us different. He has made us like himself.

Regularly Sabbath is a sign to remind us that God is the one who is in control. He is the Lord and we have been made like him. He is the one who provides.

[11:18] He is the one who continues to work. We are not made to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We are made for more than survival. We are made for more than busyness.

For more than chasing things in life. We are made to work and to rest in God. It's a beautiful picture of how things were in the Garden of Eden when work wasn't exhausting.

And God was there to be enjoyed. Just like we saw in the building of the tabernacle. God built the tabernacle to be at home with the people.

God restored in the tabernacle what was lost in creation. Now God is restoring something that was lost. God is restoring rest that was lost in the Garden.

God has had close relationships with people. He had them in the Garden and He is restoring them now.

[12:18] Bringing Exodus, bringing God's people back to relationship with Him. The relationship between God and His people, it's comparable to a marriage. And time is needed for any relationship and especially a marriage to thrive.

I know that in my relationship and my marriage with Alyssa, there is definitely seasons of life that have been busy. And we can be like ships passing in the night.

And then all of a sudden, after a couple of days, I'll just, I'll see Alyssa and realize, do you know what? I haven't, I haven't seen you. I haven't, I feel like I haven't spoken to you for days.

No wonder I'm starting to become passive aggressive or holding a grudge. This is true of all relationships, especially so with God.

Regular rhythm of time in relationships helps to keep them healthy. Regular time of relationship with God helps to keep our relationship with Him healthy.

[13:21] Israel were called to regularly take time to work on their relationship with God. That's our first point this morning, that God has created rest for us.

For Israel, this time was very specific. But the second question for us is, do Christians need to follow the same kind of very specific, ritualized Sabbath?

Does God require us to not do any work? Are we even allowed to light a fire on the Sabbath?

Should we celebrate the Saturday or the day that Christians celebrate, which is the Sunday, the day that Jesus came back?

And so that's, this is the second point for us today. Recreated rest. Recreated rest in Jesus. Many aspects that God instituted in Exodus have been fulfilled in Jesus.

God being at home with His people in the tabernacle. That is God being at home with us in Jesus. Sacrifices were constantly brought into the tabernacle.

[14:29] And Jesus is the once and for all sacrifice. In Jesus, we have a new covenant with God. But how is the Sabbath fulfilled in Jesus? Well, in Luke chapter 6, Jesus describes Himself as the Lord of the Sabbath.

He is the one who controls it. He is the one who brings it. And in Matthew 11, which Nick read for us, Jesus declared, These words are like a balm to a weary and burdened soul.

Jesus promises that He would give rest. The rest that was promised in the weekly structure of living for Israel, Jesus would give that rest.

There is something deeply appealing about these words. God's intention isn't for us to be constantly rushing and constantly being busy, to be burnt out in the hope that we would fulfill our lives and fulfill our to-do lists.

Jesus calls us to rest in Him because it's in Him that all of the work is finished. And because of that, we can find our rest and our hope in Him.

[16:09] At the heart of our busyness is our heart. Some would suggest that a life of over-busyness comes from a false belief that God is not enough.

God doesn't have enough for me, so I have to be really busy because I've got all of these things that I need in my life. And so as we consider the things that stop us from resting in God, it is good to question for us, what are the things that makes us busy?

Tim Chester, who's written a wonderful book on Exodus, he has six questions for us to question what impacts our busyness and what stops us from resting in God.

First of all, are we busy because we need to prove ourselves? You know, do I need to work really hard at work or at study to prove to my family or myself that I have value?

Are you busy because you need to prove yourself? Are you busy because of other people's expectations? Are you working yourself to the bone because of how other people view you?

[17:29] Are you busy because otherwise things will get out of control? Often this is one that I struggle with. If I'm not making sure the house is clean, if I'm not constantly working on that, I feel like it's going to get out of control and then it will all crash in on me.

That's one I struggle with, control. Are we busy because we actually like being busy? We like feeling like we're under pressure.

I work harder when I'm under pressure. Is that why we're busy? Are we busy because we just want more money? I'll rest.

I'll take time off when I've got enough money. But before that, I'm going to work so hard. I'm going to work job upon job. I'm going to have side hustle because I just want to get more money and I'm going to be busy until I get it.

But I'll rest later. Or are we busy because we want to make the most out of our lives? I want to fill it with all of these experiences, so I'm not going to rest.

[18:33] I can't take time out of my diary. God, I'm too busy. I'm going to enjoy this world you've created. These lies can work into so many different parts of our lives.

Being overly busy and not resting in God. It's a way of pursuing God-like status. I have to get these things done.

The world will not continue unless I do these things. But the only person who can say that is God himself. When we rest, we're doing the opposite of these six questions.

We're acknowledging that we have nothing to give God and that we are truly dependent upon him. It's the opposite of thinking that the world will fall apart.

Every emotion that fuels our over-busyness has been dealt with at the cross. Every fear that we have before God has been matched by Jesus.

[19:41] And instead of pursuing these busy things, God invites us to rest in him, to draw closer in him. And so, because of that, there are six truths that match these.

First of all, we can rest because we are accepted by God. We don't need to prove ourselves. God accepts us in Jesus.

We can rest because in Jesus, we have met God's expectations. It doesn't matter about other people's views. God, the one who created the whole world, loves us.

The highest being in the universe has a high view of us because of Jesus. We can rest because, you know, this is good for me.

I don't need to try and chase control because I've got a God who is in control of all things. I can rest because Jesus is my safe refuge.

[20:39] I can rest instead of working my side hustles and trying to get money because God has given me everything I need. And we can rest because through Jesus, we have life.

God gives us Sabbath rest and this principle to live by because that is how we have been made to be. We have not been made to be people who are constantly rushing around.

But the flourishing of the human soul comes from resting in God. The Sabbath isn't a rule for us to keep. It's an opportunity God provides for us to enjoy Him more because we show our trust in God when we take our time to rest and trust in Him.

Now, you might be convinced about this as a principle. Yes, I can understand this. I'm on with this idea. But how do we actually do this? How do we actually rest?

What am I allowed to do? Do I just shut off for 24 hours? Do I just sit still on my lounge and not do anything? What am I allowed to do? There's a little Pharisee in all of us.

[ 21 : 55 ] There's a person who likes to live by laws and rules in all of us. Our natural tendency is to define what we can do by rules. But the essence of Sabbath rest is not found in a do and don't list.

It's found in that first part of Exodus 31 that we saw. Observe the Sabbath to remember who our God is. And this is like breathing out.

I've lost a page. I don't know where it's gone. So there are...

As I... Please excuse me for one moment as I look for my lost page. There it is. So... As we rest in Him, we remember that God has made us His holy people.

Set apart from Him. That's what we saw in Exodus 31. That God has made us holy and set apart. When we do this, our hearts can be at rest even when our bodies are busy.

[ 23 : 05 ] And so, as we think about how to rest, I want to give you four R's. Four R's of Sabbath rest. The first R is to relent.

We actually just need to stop work. We need to relent from work. Actually stop working. Whether that's paid employment or around the house. Stop it. Don't check the phone for emails.

Let the dirty dishes and the dirty clothes pile up for a day. There is no end of washing clothes, it turns out. There is no end of washing dishes. Things can stop.

Stop thinking about the people you need to call for work. Cease. Desist from it. Relent from it. Just stop doing it. This is the very first thing we have to do. We actually just have to stop doing those things.

Turn off the mobile phone for a day. It's a fairly crazy thought. We are so used to now having our whole lives built by mobile phones. Just turn the thing off.

[ 24 : 07 ] Whatever you need to do to break that cycle of work for a day, do that so you can relent from work. And if it can't be for a whole day, at least do it for a very long period of time.

So that's the first thing. Relent. Just stop doing things. Second part of resting, it's going to be rest. It is actually rest. Now everyone has activities are restful.

Things that give back to us. Whether it's drinking coffee or cycling. Whether it's movies or surfing. Reading or even just sleep. Do something that is restful.

For a long time when we had little kids, Alyssa and I would take turns sleeping in. Alyssa would get the first sleep in. I'd get up early with the kids and I'd hang out with them.

And then we'd tag team and I would go and sleep and she would be up with the kids. Whatever it is that allows you to breathe a bit more, do that so that you can rest.

[ 25 : 09 ] Now, I find those two come most naturally to me. I find it really easy to rest, to turn off work on these days, on a Sabbath day.

It might be the Australian culture of living for the weekend in me. But these two are really important. My time off most looks like number one and two.

Resting and relenting. But they can actually be very self-centered. They can be very sinfully self-centered. I can think I have to do these restful things.

And if anything gets in the way, if I get a phone call, if my children interrupt me when I am resting, look out. So my rest can actually be quite sinful.

And I know I can also do some really unhelpful things when I think I'm resting. Have you ever binged a TV show, watched three or four hours of it, finished watching it and thought, I feel so rested right now.

[ 26 : 11 ] I feel so good. I know I certainly haven't. Whenever I've binged watching TV, I finally turn it off when Netflix allows me to turn it off before the next episode starts.

And I'm exhausted. I'm glassy-eyed. It's like one o'clock in the morning, something stupid like that. And I get tricked into thinking that this has been restful, but it's been exhausting.

Be aware of the things you do for rest, that they actually are restful. That's the first two. You need to break the cycle of work, take time to rest, but then the third and fourth hours are the most important for us.

To stop and to rest in Jesus. And so the third is to rejoice. Take time to rejoice in your Savior. Our Savior who has finished all of the work required for us for salvation.

Every desire that we have has been met in Jesus. If resting is breathing out, well, rejoicing is breathing in.

[ 27 : 20 ] It's being filled. It's being reminded of how great our Jesus is and how much He cares for us. Go and pray through Psalm 118.

This is the day that the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in Him. You might not be feeling that right now. You might be worried about the next two weeks of lockdown.

But you know what? You can stop and rejoice that God has another day for you. That Jesus still died for you. He was raised for you and He still loves you.

You can rejoice in that today. So go and read Psalm 118. When we rest, it is important to rejoice. It's also important to reflect.

Actually stop long enough to reflect on where you're at with God. Like any relationship, we need to reflect where we're at with God. Thinking about Jesus, just having thoughts about Him, it's not nearly as good as actually being in relationship with Him.

[ 28 : 27 ] Telling other people about Jesus isn't nearly as good as drinking deeply from the wellspring of grace. Rejoicing and reflecting are things we often do here at church.

And we do these things with other believers. Normally on a Sunday, we get a chance to sing. We get a chance to rejoice with one another. There's times to reflect on where our relationship with God is.

But one of the problems of our normal Sunday is that our Sundays have become so busy. Our Sundays have become full of things. There's kids' sports.

The shops are open on Sundays. We want to spend time with people. But so often, Sabbathing, resting in God, gets crammed down into the church time.

Maybe it's just an hour and a half. I'll get to church. Maybe I'll get there a little bit late so I actually miss out on rejoicing in singing. Rejoicing at other parts.

[ 29 : 30 ] I'll hang around for a coffee. And then I'm out. I've got other things to do. And those other things aren't Sabbath restful things. They're just things I want to do.

I've got to get to the shops. I've got to do these things. I've got things I need to do around the house. Instead, take time. We can't have a flourishing relationship with anyone, let alone God, if we're constantly checking the clock.

What time is it? How long have I been here? Have I finished my coffee? I'm leaving. Honey, we're going. Throughout the week, we had a friend come over and make dinner for us.

Our friend made hot pot. And it was really wonderful. What I love about the hot pot meal is the time that is built into it.

It's not a quick meal. It takes time. You get the hot pot bases and then you're ready. Then you're throwing food in. I'm going to throw some cabbage in.

[ 30 : 32 ] I'm going to throw some meat in, some noodles. And you're just letting it simmer and the flavors develop over time. And throughout the meal, it was wonderful because my friend was just throwing things in and the flavor was getting better.

I'll try this. I'll throw this meat in. Here's another meat. Let's throw dumplings and fish balls. And it was wonderful. And it was a great meal with my family. Other people came and joined in this meal and it was really wonderful.

One of the great things was that the flavor was developing over time and more things were going in. And I just had no reason to stop eating. And I ate too much. But that was also a wonderful thing as well.

If our friend had just chucked all the food in and then pulled it all out and said, Here, it's cooked. We would have had the same food. But we would have lost the depth of flavor.

I could have cooked a toasted sandwich for my friend and gone, Here you go. Eat this. Have a five-minute conversation. Get out of my house. I've got other things to do. But we wouldn't have had the same depth of relationship.

[ 31 : 40 ] The same amount of time sitting around food, eating and talking together. It's easy to think of ticking off the Sabbath requirement as eating a toasted sandwich.

It's food. I've got to get this time in with God. I'm just going to put it in my mouth. I know I need it. And I'm going to get it. I'm going to go to church. I'm going to leave. I'm going to watch this live stream at home. I'm going to watch the YouTube.

I'm going to leave. I'm going to read my Bible. I'm going to leave. I'm going to briefly reflect. I'm going to briefly rejoice in these songs. But that's it. And we can end up having a shallow, bland relationship with God.

Just a plain old toasted cheese sandwich with God. It can be nourishing, but it doesn't deeply satisfy the soul. That type of relationship with God is okay for a season.

God understands who we are. He understands the pressures on our lives. He understands Jesus is a human. He knows the pressures. And yet he still calls us to time with him.

[ 32 : 46 ] Look at Jesus' practice. He took deliberate and specific steps to spend time with God in prayer. Let me encourage you. The hot pot Sabbath is so different.

That's where we get to build in time in relationship with God. Where we get real depth of relationship. And so that Sabbath rest becomes a regular practice.

It's not just, my day off isn't just time off from work and time resting. But I actually build in time rejoicing and reflecting on how I'm going with God. Reflecting that God is bigger than my worries. God is bigger than my business, busyness. He is the one who is in control. I've got money worries at the moment. But God is in control of them. I've got family issues. But God, I know you love me. I know that you are taking care of these issues.

Now usually, at this point, I would encourage you to try and build a new habit. Build a new Sabbath habit. But Gladys has done that for us.

[ 33 : 50 ] For all of those in Greater Sydney, we are out of our normal habits for the next two weeks. We all have an opportunity now to build good Sabbath relationships with God.

When are you going to take time? Have a think about this. Are you going to take time today? When are you going to take time to relent from work? To rest in Jesus? To rejoice that He has worked so we don't have to?

And to reflect on all of God's goodness to you. When you find yourself with time in the next two weeks, take time to do this.

To rejoice. To reflect. To rest. To relent. Do it in little bits. But make big chunks of time for this. To say, I'm not going to work on this day.

Even though, you know, every day is going to blur together. I am going to take time. I'm going to call some family members. I'm going to pray with them. I'm going to FaceTime. I'm going to Zoom with them.

[ 34 : 53 ] I'm going to read some Bible with them. I'm going to pray. So that we would regularly build in time that is not just going to briefly feed us.

But that would deeply feed our souls in relationship with God. Let me pray for us. Heavenly Father. Father, I thank you for all of the good things that you give us.

Father, thank you so much for Jesus. Thank you that he offers us rest. Father, I thank you that he has finished all of the work.

So that because of him, we can rest in you. Heavenly Father, I also thank you for this opportunity to take the next two weeks as we're in lockdown, for those in Greater Sydney to reflect on our time. Lord, help us not waste the next two weeks. But build in us new habits of Sabbathing it with you, Lord. That we would be deeply in relationship with you.

[ 36 : 02 ] We ask this in your son's name. Amen.