

Living For The Weekend

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Date: 17 September 2023

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[0 : 00] Well, I'm not sure. Who here has heard about the five love languages? Who's heard about the five love languages? A fair number. Some haven't. Who's done a five love languages course and has actually helped you with your relationship?

Through two. It's a great course. It's very, very helpful. It's one of the best ways that you can grow in your relationship with someone that you love.

And the five love languages has got, essentially, there's five different aspects to it. We're going to look at one of them today, but just to give you what they are, there's something called words of affirmation.

There's quality time. There's physical touch. There's acts of service. And then there's receiving gifts. And in our passage today, it turns out that one of God's love languages is quality time.

And we want to pay attention to what he's telling us about spending time with him because it's intended to help us grow in our relationship with him. And so, have a look at Exodus 31.

[1 : 11] We're at the end of a long section in Exodus, at the start of a new section. And that section has been the building of the tabernacle and how God has created a space, a place to be with his people.

And just before the story gets going again in Exodus 32, we get this momentary pause where God says, you know, I've created this sacred space, but I also want sacred time.

I want my people to spend sacred time with me. And so, we've got this passage about the Sabbath. And it may be that you're struggling in your Christianity because you're not putting enough time aside to spend with God.

I don't know if you've ever thought about how the fact that God wants us to spend time with him. Like all people, time, like everyone else, time is in short supply these days. And God knows that we're not great timekeepers.

We waste a lot of it. Even when we're busy, we could be wasting it. And that's why God structures sacred time, quality time, into our relationship with him.

[2 : 28] Why time? Why this sacred time? Why this special time? Well, simply because relationships take time. We all know that. We don't often think of Sunday as our quality time with God.

But we need to have quality time with him, just like we've got with our other relationships. Time that's undivided with other loyalties or distractions. But focused on the person that you're building your relationship with.

So that relationship can grow. And when we do this regularly, we attend sacred time with God regularly. It not only confirms to God that we love him, but it confirms to us that God loves us.

We receive so much more when we honor the time that God has set aside for us to spend with our focused attention on him. So have a look at verse 13 and verse 17 in our passage.

Exodus 31. Exodus 31. Say to the Israelites. God is commanding Moses. Say to the Israelites, you must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come so that you may know that I am the Lord who makes you holy.

[3 : 43] It's a sign to God's people that God is in a relationship with them. And it confirms to them that he's the one that's in charge in their relationship and he's the one who makes them holy.

And then have a look at verse 17. Again, the sign language is there. The Sabbaths will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever. And he goes on to say about the six days.

So it's keeping sacred time, setting time aside that's holy to focus on God, confirms or solidifies or makes this link, this covenantal relationship between God and his people stronger.

And there's two things in our passage that highlights what we receive from God by keeping this pattern of Sabbath keeping. And the two things are rest and life.

Rest and life. And because it's mandated by God, it's not any ordinary rest or any ordinary life. We're talking about rest and life that comes from God.

[4 : 47] But for Christians, it comes through Christ. And so we're going to spend our time looking at what this rest and what this life looks like by setting aside sacred time. Now, as we start, just to make a note about what Sabbaths and Christianity and Sunday I'm going to be speaking about.

I'm going to be encouraging us to spend time together at church on a Sunday. And you need to know that doing that is not keeping a Sabbath. We're not Jews, so we don't have to keep the Sabbath.

Sabbaths. And in any case, Christ has, in a sense, kept our Sabbaths for us. I'll unpack that as we go along. So that even if we were Jewish, we wouldn't have to keep the Sabbath that the Jews used to in the olden days.

Because Christ has changed it. There's a change of how they keep sacred time. But nonetheless, we're privileged that we have got this sacred time to spend together. And even if it wasn't a day of rest, an actual, it's not really a public holiday, but it has been mandated and given to us by our politicians.

So even if we didn't have it, you'd still want to set aside sacred time where you come together and spend time as God's people. But it's not the same as Sabbath. So just when you hear me talking, please don't hear me saying that we must keep the Sabbath like we did in the Old Testament.

[6 : 01] We don't have to. And Sunday is not the same. But there are some things that link it together. So the first thing we want to notice is the Sabbath is about rest.

And isn't that an important thing in our modern world? Now, the word Sabbath itself means to rest. It comes from the same word as rest.

And so every time you hear the word Sabbath, you need to understand just rest. That's what it means. It's the cessation of work. And the idea of rest is at the actual very heart of this passage.

In verse 15, God says, this is why we're going to keep this time sacred. And he goes all the way back to creation. Verse 15, for six days work is to be done.

But the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest. It's a rest of rest. And it's holy to the Lord. Some translations have it's a solemn rest.

[7 : 05] Holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. That's one reason why you can give to your boss that you need to take one day off in seven if you're Jewish.

But this rest that the Bible talks about is more than just stopping from doing work every day, although it is that too.

It's sacred rest. So it's rest in relation to God. Rest that is provided by God from the things that make for not restful living.

So taking a day of rest but not spending it in relation to God is not doing what God wants you to do. Just have that in the back of your mind. Rest in the context of Exodus means, firstly, freedom from slavery.

We've seen God take them out of the land of Egypt. And not just slavery from anything, but slavery from evil enemy forces that want to hurt God's people. You can imagine why that's restful.

[8 : 15] Remember right at the start of our journey of Exodus, what was happening to the Jews while they were in Exodus? Were they having a great old fun time? No. They were being put under the cosh.

Whipped. They had to work to their bone. That's the whole point about slavery. They were getting no rest because their enemies were having authority, having their way over them. So rest in the context of Exodus means, firstly, freedom from slavery to evil enemy forces.

And then secondly, we've seen that it means provision from God for daily living. So remember, God saves them out of Egypt, and then they're in the wilderness, and now they need stuff to survive. And God is like, don't worry about it.

Here's some quail. Whish, bish. Have as much as you want. Oh, you're thirsty? There's a rock. Water. So anything God's people needs, God is so simple to provide.

And so rest here is the assurance through God's protective and providing presence that the covenantal promises of land and blessing and life will come true.

[9 : 29] They will happen for his people. Does that make sense? You follow me in how the rest is expanded if you look at it in the context of Exodus? The goal of this rest is the assurance that through God's protective and providing presence, his covenant promises will be given to his people.

They don't have to worry. They don't even have to work for food. And when the enemies come against them, they've got this pillar of cloud and fire to take care of it. So salvation, provision, and promise all come together if God's people are trusting him in them, resting in what he's doing for them.

The problem is, this level of rest was never really reached by God's people in the Old Testament. They were always looking for ways to get out of their obligations to him.

And working with all their might to make themselves as wealthy and as secure as they could. They hardly ever trusted him. Even after the greatest miracle that that world had seen up to that point, the drowning of the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, they get hungry, and they immediately stop trusting God.

And when God provides them for the stuff and says, look, just collect it for six days. Don't collect it on the seventh day because I'm giving you enough. No, no, no. We can't trust you. We're going to go and get that extra stuff just in case.

[11 : 02] They weren't trusting in God. They weren't resting in him. They didn't trust him to provide him for all their needs. Now, it's interesting because this is an ancient book.

It's telling us a story of an ancient people in a totally different part of the world thousands of years ago, and the world hasn't changed one bit.

Has it? This is exactly the problem with our modern world for people who are outside of Christ. rushing around after the things they think will provide them for their safety and security and comfort and protection and provision.

rushing around. And the Bible says these things are unattainable outside of Christ. And in fact, to try and chase after them is going to be a major source of stress in people's lives.

It's difficult enough as Christians for it not to be a stress in our lives. Well, here's a quote from an article from the Daily Mail in England about a career woman in her 30s and the stress and anxiety that goes with chasing after success.

[12 : 22] She's a top-level person that wrote this article. And she says, If you take medication A, it's likely to make you obese.

If you take medication B, you'll likely grow a beard. What could I do?

His answer, you need to give up alcohol completely. What? Medication B, you'll likely grow a beard. Ooh. If you take medication C, to help with your stress and anxiety, you will likely grow obese and grow a beard.

Ooh, what could I do? His answer, you need to give up alcohol completely. What? Impossible. That's what the modern world is like without Christ.

Got the career. But you sacrifice family, you sacrifice your own life, you sacrifice your own wealth, health, just to run after money and status and to get nowhere.

[14 : 03] Friend, if that's you, man, you need to lay all of that down and come to the one person that can give you rest from all of that. You can't do it by yourself.

She had to work, this lady had to work extra hard to give up one set of anxiety, and she just stopped it for another set. She had to work really, really hard to stop drinking and to be successful and to have some measure of stress-free living.

You need to come to the one person to find your rest and to get your peace from him, a person who's paid the price to secure everything we need for this life and the next.

You see, Christ is the one that fulfills this particular aspect of the Sabbath by giving us rest from our sins and from our attempts at saving ourselves and our attempts at creating our own identity and feeling like we've done something to earn someone's love and relationship.

Jesus in Matthew 11 says this, Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

[15 : 26] Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. He's not a slave master.

He's not a slave driver. And when you come to me, when you take my yoke upon you, you will find rest, not for this life, for the outside stuff, for the place that counts most, the inside place.

You'll find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light. By trusting in Christ, the believer rests from the work of trying to earn their salvation.

And all the stress and anxiety that goes along with running after the things of this world, you can give it up. It becomes not the number one thing in your life. It finds its rightful place.

It doesn't drive you. It's not your boss. Man was made for the Sabbath, not the Sabbath for man.

[16 : 37] It's the other way around. I'm going to let you just think about that. And I'm going to go back to my notes. We can give up this thing of trying to earn salvation.

We can enter a restful state, peace of mind and heart, knowing that we have full peace with God because of the work of Christ on the cross.

And that will be the greatest peace that we can achieve in this life. One commentator says, has there ever been a generation with so little time to actually take time and enjoy the world?

Always craving the next thing. We so often fail to savor the moment that is on offer. When we set Sunday apart, now that we're Christians, we show by our inaction that there's more to life than making money, getting stuff, and living for my own pleasure.

We stop work and instead rest in God's peace. We stop producing and rest in God's provision. We stop accomplishing and rest in our identity in Christ.

[17 : 59] We stop acquiring and rest in God's care. We stop worrying and rest in the sovereignty of the God who provides for our salvation and our daily bread.

But what about Christians who have found their rest in Christ but still don't seem to find the time to set sacred time or holy time or special time regularly coming to church?

One reason I often hear is that people need to earn money. because they want to be free from being dependent or free from economic oppression.

They want to free themselves. They need to get money. They need to have money. But they don't realize that by not living according to the way that God has set this world, He set the Sabbaths actually into the fabric of creation.

It starts in Eden. It gets re-established here in Exodus. This is the next big Sabbath passage in the Bible. And then of course it finds its fulfillment in Christ.

[19 : 18] But then further on after Christ it finds its ongoing practice in Christians meeting together. We meet on a Sunday. We could meet on any other day but there's a reason we meet on a Sunday.

We'll look at that in a minute. But if you decide to not live like that even though you're a Christian and one of the main reasons is I need to make money. There's other reasons.

I've got other things. I've got to take my kids somewhere. I've got to meet my family. Sometimes I'm just a little bit tired. All the excuses and we've all done those excuses ourselves of not wanting to come to church.

But if you do that if rest is freedom from your enemies that cause you harm and part of that rest is taking time off to remember that and you decide not to do that regularly by skipping church on a Sunday you're placing yourself back under the yoke of an oppressive force that is stronger than you and going to dominate you and not give you the rest that you think you're going to get by skipping church and working yourself to the bone for that little bit of extra money.

You're putting yourself back into slavery. Jesus says you can't serve both him and the God of money. So something for our Christians to think about.

[20 : 51] now because our world is so busy and it is we need to plan rest like we plan our holidays not just going to come our way. You need to plan to come to church and work it into your planning for the week.

Don't let other things rob you regularly of the rest that you have in Christ and the rest that you experience by coming to church on a Sunday and remembering the things that he's done for you.

Yes you can do it by yourself during the week but God has given us time to do that and it's a good thing to do and not to do that is to not build your relationship with God.

It's to say to him I'm too busy. if you do that with your on a regular basis with the other most important relationship in your life your spouse and they keep asking you hey listen come let's go do something nice with each other let's go to the movies let's go out let's go on a romantic date and then you say yes I will but I'm just too busy okay let's try next week okay oh but the kids oh but I need to work oh you know what I'm just a bit tired now if you keep that up how long is that relationship going to last?

Eventually the other person is going to go no but you know what you don't actually appreciate me you don't actually want to be in a relationship with me you keep that up long enough and the person is going to say you know what I don't think this is a relationship worth being in there are warnings in the New Testament for Christians not to stop meeting together because if you do that continually over time you might just find yourself outside of God's promises again where he says you know what if you really really want money that badly you go ahead and go for it you obviously don't want me you obviously think it's more important help yourself and good luck because you're going to see how much anxiety and stress that's going to cause you now by missing out on coming to Christ and then missing out on coming to church you don't just miss out on a reminder of rest you'll miss out on probably the most important thing about the Sabbath that the Sabbath represent and that is life itself and so we're going to spend a bit of time thinking about the life-giving power of

[23 : 31] Sundays of meeting together as God's people so that the main goal of the Sabbath is to renew life to give life and make it available to God's people so they could live life well with their time on earth now the one thing about Sabbath is rest you think okay well life where do you get life from in Sabbath other than resting is a good idea well that's pretty much where it is have a look at verse 17 again it will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever well let me start at verse 16 the Israelites are to observe the Sabbath they are to observe a holy time of rest celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant that's like a really special time not just any other special time 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 abstained from work and he rested other translations have on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed that's a better translation than what I was just reading from the

NIV he rested that's the Sabbath word and was refreshed now that refreshed word is an interesting word in the Hebrew it comes from the Hebrew word that really means life or soul even God was in a sense resold is not a right way of saying it its meaning is it's something that has life and has to do with taking a breath it's often translated as soul in the English but it's got to do with having life remember how God made us in the Garden of Eden he breathed into us the breath of life that's breathing into us this Hebrew word nefesh he gave us it's a life giving word so in a sense it's saying that God took a breather and when he does that it actually says it gives him a fresh burst of power to get the next thing done now of course this is

God we're talking about it's not like he needs it but he's patterning something here for us his people now we don't keep the seventh day special but we do keep the eighth day have you ever thought about why we keep Sunday and not Sabbath which starts on Friday and ends on Saturday we keep the first day of the week what's the significance of that well strange as it may seem or sound the eighth day is full of resurrection power not just the eighth day but there's a reason for that the reason is Jesus was resurrected on the eighth day and that's why Christians started meeting on the eighth day not on the Sabbath day to remember the big event in their life that set them free and gave them new life

Christ's resurrection resurrection and so you've got Jesus saying that he is the way and the truth and the life he says he's the resurrection and the life and that he's come to give life and give it to the full and the thing that proves beyond any doubt that he can actually do that was his coming out of the grave resurrecting from the dead on the eighth day the first day of the week what's so important about that he could have resurrected on the Sabbath he'd have been killed before that he's in the grave for three days but there's a sense where we're entering into a new time with God a new time into the world where God's power this resurrection power is this new beginning this new creation this new start it's not at the end of the week we starting a new thing we've got work to do but to do that we need to receive this life giving power from

Christ never since that first resurrection the Christian church has been meeting on a Sunday as a celebration of that reality in our lives Sunday is like a mini resurrection for us by meeting together by meeting under God's word by meeting under the gospel we're really meeting with Christ rather he's meeting with us and when we do this the strange thing is he says when two or three are gathered in my name I'm there the strange thing is that we receive resurrection power when we set time aside to meet together as God's people as we remember what Jesus has done for us he gives us this resurrection power to renew and strengthen us and to fill in the gaps of whatever each one of us is missing because each one of us have got different things in our life that we need help with I'll put this up on the screen

[29 : 08] Paul at the end of his prayer for the church in Ephesus we've been going through the book of Ephesians he says this in chapter 3 now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to the power that is at work within us that power is Christ's resurrection power in the book of Ephesians to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever amen that power is available to God's people as they meet together as his people can you see that from Ephesians there so it turns out that going to church has life-giving power but not just coming to church if you've got a living relationship with Christ then coming to church gives you this resurrection power going to church has life-giving power that's why when you skip church regularly you miss out on opportunities to impart that divine life to others and you've got like this amazing thing that God has given you the most amazing thing this life-giving power coursing through your veins it's not just for you it's for you to give it away to others as well in how you talk and how you act and when you don't meet together as

God's people you miss out on a time where you could be giving that to others imagine I'd received a my father passed away some years ago now and imagine he had left me a Ferrari in his will he told me he boycotted Ferrari he's never going to buy a Ferrari in his whole life but imagine I got a Ferrari and it's this cool gift and like I've got a car ready so I just got the spare Ferrari and now we know that people need lifts in the church but I never bring the Ferrari to church I never offered to anyone to be used you'd be thinking to yourself no but he's got this cool thing why doesn't he come and share it with us by missing out on meeting with God's people regularly you literally miss out on a time where you could be of use and benefit to others you know sure you can be a

Christian all by yourself at home on whenever but like what good is that to the rest of us we don't get to have God's life changing power channeled through you to me I need that I need it we all saw what a blessing it was to have Robbie with us yes he was going through a hang of a hard time but we could all see the power of God working in him and we were all encouraged by him being here but he could easily have said you know I'm too sick you know he walked from down past the spa to be here in that pain so that's sharing God's power knowing that hey I can play a role in someone else's life I've got an important thing to do even though I'm dying from cancer I've got something that I can give to people what's our excuse oh it's such a nice day outside

I thought I'd just go for a walk at Newlands no okay and then you've missed out on an opportunity to feed me to be fed and to feed others by staying away from church you are literally robbing others of God's life-giving power now of course it doesn't only happen at church but we're talking about sacred times set apart to be God's people not going to church means that you miss out on those things it means your Christian life will begin to wilt it won't be as effective you'll have to work harder at being a Christian because I get life giving power from you guys and if I'm not meeting with you and you're not meeting with me then those strands are not coming to me now I need that so now I've got to work harder at getting that and then the rest is gone the peace is gone because now

I'm working very hard to be a good Christian it's much easier to do that when I'm meeting with you because I'm getting power from God to you through to me and that tops me up and I can give it out to others easier just like in a cycling race for those of you who not mountain bikers now but you know those guys on the road where they hit that peloton you can try and do that by yourself but man it's hard work but if you're in a group you can fly well it's the same with Christians in church just to conclude then this life giving power that helps us rest and be refreshed to do God's work comes directly from Christ himself to us being at church is one way to access that life and that rest it is not an end in itself being at church coming to church but not being connected to Jesus is not going to do anything for you you've got to be connected with

[34 : 37] Jesus so let me leave you with this Jesus says we must remain in him so we can produce fruit so John 15 Jesus says remain in me as I also remain in you no branch can bear fruit by itself it must remain in the vine neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me I'm the vine you're the branches if you remain in me and I in you you will bear much fruit apart from me you can do nothing if you don't remain in me you're like a branch that is thrown away and withers such a bunch such branches are picked up thrown into the fire and burned up but if you remain in me and my words remain in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you this is to my father's glory that you bear much fruit showing yourselves to be my disciples part of remaining in

Christ is to remain as part of his gathered people to set time aside to remember what he's done for us it's to remain as active as an active church goer and to enjoy him with God's people set aside special time on a regular basis so you can be fed by him and then through him you can feed others well let's pray and ask Jesus to help us do that Lord Christ you've seen how important it is that you want us to rest you don't want us to struggle in life and fight for everything we can rest Lord in your provision of salvation of forgiveness of sin and in your mercies you give us our daily bread we don't have to fight for it Lord you give us life you came to give life and give it to the full and you want us to set time aside in quality time spending with our father spending it with you and spending with other Christians so that together we can experience rest and peace and blessing and life amen peace and peace...