

SOUL FOOD

Seizing a Sabbath!

"When summer comes, I'm going to..." Whoa, how many times have you caught yourself saying something like that? And then, when summer does come, you never make the time to accomplish all that you wanted. We seem to have conditioned ourselves to unrealistic expectations during the summer months. We look forward to that time as an opportunity to catch up on all those projects for which we ran out of time during the fall, winter, and spring! Then, sadly, when summer is over, we feel exasperated because we didn't get done what we had hoped to get done, much less set aside time for ourselves. We seem to be living in a culture of busyness, and, unfortunately, we let that busyness control our life and our family.

I have a challenge for you, why not "**SEIZE A SABBATH!**" The word "*Sabbath*" merely means **REST**. God made it a law for Israel because He knew that as sinners they would not choose to stop for personal rest and relaxation, nor would they choose to take time to think about His great mercies to them. They would keep right on working, scraping and scratching twenty-four/seven. That is a strange complication of sin on all of humanity! So, in the listing of the Law, God bound His people Israel to honor the Sabbath Day: "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5).

Can you imagine: God had to force the Israelites to take a day off. I guess they were no different than we are today! But did you notice in those verses that the concept of Sabbath is more than just **REST**, instead it is **ACTIVE RESTFULNESS**. On the Sabbath, the Israelites were to honor God by actively and intentionally focusing on His Word and worship. They were to meditate on His goodness and love to them. And, they were to tell the story of His "*mighty hand and outstretched arm*" to their children and all who sat at their table. They were to intentionally take time to be alone with God for meditation and prayer. For them, honoring the Sabbath Day meant keeping it a holy time. They were not only to "**remember the Sabbath Day**" but to "**seize the Sabbath**" as a special blessing to their life.

How can you "**seize a Sabbath**" for yourself and your family? Here are some suggestions. First, recognize that all **TIME** is a mercy from God. He gives you 168 hours each week. If you allow 8 hours per night for sleep, then you have 112 waking hours for rejoicing in Him. As you choose to honor God's **SABBATH**, set aside a 24-hour period specifically for "*God stuff*." Subtract 8 hours for sleep, and we are left with 16 hours for seizing our Sabbath. Ironically, those 16 hours amount to about 10% (*a tithe*) of the hours He has given us for the whole week. In "**seizing a Sabbath**", let us pledge to set aside those 16 hours each week for our Sabbath time. In doing so, let us **intentionally** take time alone for **SELF**, without guilt, without TV, and without a computer. Let us **intentionally** take time alone with **GOD**, in His Word, in prayer, and in meditation. Let us **intentionally** take time for **FAMILY** to share God's working in our life, and search out His will for our future. Let us **intentionally** take time to share Christ's love with **OTHERS**, as well. The operative word in this is "**INTENTIONALLY**"... it takes a conscious decision on our part to "**seize a**

Sabbath."

If you desire to "**seize a Sabbath**," remember that you do not have the Sabbath imposed as a law. Instead, as a New Testament person... as a follower of the One who said that *He was Lord of the Sabbath and that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath* (St. Mark 2:27-28) ... you can rejoice in His promise of mercy and grace. The Holy Spirit emboldens you to "**seize a Sabbath**"... and He empowers you to live out your pledge to honor it. When you fail in keeping your pledge, the Holy Spirit continues to enwrap you with the forgiving grace of Jesus Christ. He reminds you that cannot manipulate blessings from God by your obedience. Instead, your obedience is a Spirit-inspired response to the Giver of all blessings. He will also remind you that when, as a weakened sinner, you falter and fail in your intention, He, by the power of His grace, fulfills ... because He is faithful!

So, even though summer is almost over, there is still time to "**seize a Sabbath**" by setting aside time for the Lord and for yourself... **GUILT FREE! Seize... and enjoy!**

With Joy in Jesus,

Pastor Barrie Henke

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