

# The Gospel and Work: Sabbath

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[ 0 : 00 ] The scripture reading today comes from the book of Exodus and the Gospel of Mark. Please follow along in your bulletin. In Exodus we read, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant, or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.

Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. In Mark we read, And it happened that he was passing through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and his disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grains.

The Pharisees were saying to him, Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath? And he said to them, Have you never read what David did when he was in need, and he and his companion became hungry?

[ 1 : 24 ] How he entered the house of God in a time of Apathah, the high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for anyone to eat except the priests.

And he also gave it to those who were with him. Jesus said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

So the Son of Man is Lord even over the Sabbath. Mark 3. He entered again into the synagogue, and a man was there whose hand was withered.

They were watching him to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. He said to the man with the withered hand, Get up and come forward.

And he said to them, Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to kill? But they kept silent.

[ 2 : 28 ] After looking around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, Stretch out your hand. And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored.

The Pharisees went out, and immediately began conspiring with the Herodians against him, as to how they might destroy him.

This is the reading of the Lord's Word. I think I'm on. Okay, good. Wow. That was amazing and beautiful. Thanks, guys, for leading us to worship the Lord this morning.

Let's see who's on vacation already, and who's preparing to go on vacation, who's visiting, because they're on vacation.

If you're here for the first time, or haven't been back in a while, my name is Tobin Miller. I'm one of the pastors here, and we've been doing a sermon series on the gospel and work.

[ 3 : 35 ] How does being a Christian, or how should being a Christian, affect how we do our work? What does it look like? Should we work differently after we come to a relationship with the Lord, or do we stay the same?

So we've done two sermons so far with some testimonies, and today's the third. And just to kind of catch you up to speed, what we've talked about so far is we've said that in work, we looked at Genesis and the book of Ephesians, we've said that we all tend to suffer compartmentalization. So we've said that we all have this internal mechanism within us that we compartmentalize our lives. We have the office, we have the home, we have family and friends. And the problem with that is that often we ask different questions in those compartments.

At home, we might ask or tell our kids, is that the right thing to do when they beat up their brother or sister? That never happens in my home, but it could happen in your home. We ask that question, is that right?

But at work, we might ask the question, is it legal? In other situations, we might ask other different types of questions. And the problem is that we become confused, and we don't know what questions to ask, and what are the answers that guide our life?

[ 4 : 52 ] Just recently, a lot of the students in several high schools in Hong Kong were kicked out because they were smoking marijuana. And there's a big interview in a newspaper, I think last week, talking about what the school should have done.

There's several of the schools that are having this trouble. And as they're interviewing some of the students, the students had some confusion because their response was, I don't understand why it's wrong for me to smoke pot here in Hong Kong, whereas in my home state of California, it's totally legal.

I can do that. And so there was this confusion of what is right and what is good and what is should and what is truthful. And we all struggle with that. We said that God created us to work, and our work brings glory to God.

We said that work is a noble thing. No matter how we feel, sometimes we feel like work is just, I just want to get through this so I can do what I really want to do. But the scripture says that work is noble, and God created us for this.

We learned that our primary relationship is our relationship with God, and that relationship with God should govern how we interact in all the compartments of life, at home, at work, with our family.

[ 5 : 55 ] That relationship with the Lord guides us, it drives us, and it anchors us into reality. We talked about no matter where we work, our ultimate boss is God.

We talked about how sometimes we have this temptation not to come into work until our boss is there, and I know you never struggle with this, and not to leave until your boss leaves. But we talked about how Ephesians said that our ultimate boss is God, and he sees everything.

He sees the things that we do, and he sees the things that we don't do. We learned that we're not to worry about our future, because if God is our ultimate boss, he will take care of us. We might not receive that pay raise we expect.

We might not receive those promotions, but God sees all, and he takes care of us, and in the end, as we walk with him, he will watch us and guide us.

We learned that the garden, our world, our workplace is broken and filled with weeds and thorns and thistles, and all this comes from a broken relationship between us and our creator. The Bible calls this sin.

[ 6 : 57 ] We don't like to talk about sin often, but the Bible talks about it a lot, and it's something that happens because our relationship with God is broken, and because of that, our world has fallen.

We talked about in God's kingdom, our work, our calling, our ministry, are all the same thing. We ask sometimes, what is your ministry at work?

And some people will say, well, I lead a Bible study, or I pray for people, or I lead people, or I listen to them, or I talk to them. But the scripture says that our work is our primary ministry, and everything that we do in our work reflects on God and glorifies him.

Sometimes, if you're honest, we tend to separate. This is the secular, and this is the sacred, and we live in the secular Monday through Saturday, and we live in the sacred on Sunday. But the Bible says that everything is sacred, and that God is with us at all times, and he's guiding us.

And the last thing that we learn is the only way that we can fix the brokenness, the only way that we can come out of the thorns and the thistles, the only way that we can deal with the weeds in our life and in our workplaces by fixing our relationship with our creator, God.

[ 8 : 08 ] No matter what we try, no matter how we fix things or try to do things, and there's books and books and books written on it, that nothing's going to happen until we fix our relationship with God. It was 1972.

I don't know how many people weren't alive then. But in 1972, my family was moving from Trenton, New Jersey, McGuire Air Force Base, to Montgomery, Alabama, Maxwell Air Force Base, where my dad was going to attend a war college there.

We didn't know anything about the South. We had all these questions because we watched Huckleberry Finn, and we wondered if people actually wore shoes in the South. And I'm here to tell you that in 1972, about half did and half didn't.

Okay? It's true. And we got there, and it was a very interesting experience for us because my family were not churchgoers. And I remember the first Sunday, we woke up, and we slept in as we always

did, and we said, let's go get something to eat.

And we started driving around town, and all the restaurants were closed. I mean, everything was closed. The only thing that had cars parked outside of it was churches.

[ 9 : 21 ] And we didn't go to church. We just wanted food. And so we drove it around, and we drove around, and we ended up coming home because we couldn't find a place that was open for us to eat.

It's called the Blue Laws in the South. And some of them still exist, like selling alcohol on certain days or things like that. But there were these ideas that we want to keep this thing holy and sacred. And we didn't know that because we weren't churchgoers. We didn't know what holy or sacred or church was all about. We just knew that we couldn't eat dinner that night because everything was shut down. It was crazy.

I remember asking a friend of mine, his dad later, his name was Andy. I said, what's going on here? And his reply is, and you can't repeat this because back then I was called Toby instead of Tobin. He said, Toby, people are just too busy in Montgomery. People need to learn how to rest. People need perspective.

[ 10 : 24 ] And I've thought about that a lot. People need to learn how to rest. People need perspective.

We're going to look at a passage today. It's in the Gospel of Mark, but it's actually in Luke and Matthew also. And it's a story of Jesus coming against the religious leaders, and he's going to talk to them about rest.

He's going to talk to them about work. He's going to talk to them about perspective. In the Jewish culture, it's called the Sabbath. I know it's something alien to us in Hong Kong because we pride ourselves in busyness and working hard.

I was talking to a guy this week, and he says, what are we going to preach on this Sunday? I'm like, we're going to preach on rest. He's like, ha, ha, ha, good luck with that. I was like, yeah, you're right. And I struggle with even sharing this because I realize that often I'm a much better communicator of it than a practitioner of it, especially as a pastor.

[ 11 : 21 ] Because what I found out is pastors become very, very busy, especially on Sabbaths. People are very busy, and they need to rest.

They need perspective. What do you think about that? I've thought about that some, and I realize that in my own life, and this is a sermon towards Tobin, so if you hear me say we or us, it's actually me.

It seems like we just get busier and busier in Hong Kong. Life is busier and busier, and I challenge you this week to ask somebody how they're doing and write out how many times they don't say I'm busy.

And I challenge you this week, if someone asks you, how are you doing? Not to say in some form or fashion that you're busy, but it just seems like we're busy, busy, busy, and we all need rest, and we all need perspective.

And it seems like technology hasn't helped at all. I got this new, I got my Apple smartphone, and I felt like it's going to help me slow down. It's going to help me get perspective. It's going to help me organize my life, and it hasn't helped at all.

[ 12 : 33 ] I mean, I'm on the date night, Thursday night, and guys, this is not a good thing to do, okay? Christina and I are talking. I'm trying to pay attention to her. We're focusing. We're having this talking about feelings and emotion. She's using her 20,000 words for the day, and I'm trying to use my 500 words for the day.

And she mentions something that strikes this spark in my head, and I go, oh, yeah, I forgot all about that. And I pull out my phone, and I start to do a text message. And she goes, what are you doing? And I'm like, I thought maybe the kids called. And I wanted to check and see if they called. I lied as a pastor.

But I realized that my life is getting busier and busier, and that we're all getting busier and busier, and we're chasing after the wind. And guys, that is not a good thing to do on your date night, okay? And single guys, if you're dating a girl, put up your phone.

Don't take it with you. Just please don't do that. I was meeting with a friend this Friday. He's from another country, and we're talking about life. And I asked him how he was doing. He was in just for a couple days, and he said, things are crazy, and they're busy.

[ 13 : 43 ] And I think I'm going to get laid off at the end of this year because there's another massive round of layoffs coming in my industry. And I looked at him, and we started praying and talking about it. He goes, but you know, I don't know if that's a bad thing or a good thing because my family has been complaining about how busy I am, and I'm not spending enough time with them.

But then if I don't get laid off, other people are going to get laid off, and then I'm going to have to do their job also, so I'm going to even be busier. So maybe it's a good thing that I get laid off because I'm just too busy.

And you know, the Bible talks about that a lot. In the very beginning in your bulletin, we look at it in Exodus. It actually comes from Genesis. And it says in the very beginning that God creates everything. He creates everything in six days.

And on this seventh day, he says this will be a day of rest. He establishes this work rhythm. Six days of work, one day of rest. It's called the Sabbath.

It actually means to cease in Hebrew. It means to stop, to do nothing, to relax. And I thought about that passage because God's created it. That God finishes his creation, and God is God.

[ 14 : 49 ] He's not tired. He doesn't need to rest. He doesn't need to recharge his iPhone or his batteries. But for some reason in the Scripture, he lays down this day of rest for you and I as his creation.

And he says, this is the day I want you to relax. This is the day I want you to recharge. This is the day that I've made just for you to enjoy me. This is the day I want you to have perspective.

We read a little later on in Exodus passage, and it was printed for you in a bulletin, that God actually takes his Sabbath day, and he makes it a law. It's this gift that he gives to us. And it's not a gift that's supposed to be burdensome.

It's this gift that's supposed to give us freedom, to give us a chance to relax, to give us a chance to break. It's a gift to help us biologically and psychologically and spiritually to rest.

And so he puts it in his word, and the Jewish nation took this idea of Sabbath, and they ran with it. It was a huge part of the Jewish culture. I mean, if you go to Israel today, on Friday night at 6 o'clock, everything shuts down.

[ 15 : 54 ] And Saturday night at 6 o'clock, everything opens up again. And they prided themselves in the Sabbath, because for them, it was a covenant relationship between them and the creator of all things. The Jewish writers, from that time on, took this idea of Sabbath, and they started to write and to organize and to build upon it, to where it came to a place where the Sabbath was the most important thing in a Jewish culture.

It was a thing that separated them apart from all the other nations in the world. No other nation had a day of rest. It was totally alien and totally strange, just like a person driving from New Jersey down to Alabama and experiencing a closed-out place.

That would have been strange to them, and that was something that the Jewish people prided themselves in, because it meant they had a relationship. It meant that they had perspective with God. In Deuteronomy, we read later on that God actually says for the people in Deuteronomy 5, and I think it's printed in your bulletin, He says, I want you to practice this Sabbath because you need to remember that at one time you were a slave, and slaves got no rest.

But as the people of God, I've given you a day of rest. Slaves have no rest, but the people of God have a rest.

They have a perspective. One Jewish writer said it like this, and I thought this was encapsulated at all. He said that in the Sabbath, our greatest needs of rest, identity, self-worth, worship, security, are perfectly met.

[ 17 : 34 ] In the Sabbath, our greatest needs, our greatest needs of man, rest, identity, self-worth, worship, and security are perfectly met. But by the time of Jesus' day, they had taken this Sabbath, which was just this law, and they had added, and added, and added, and added, and added hundreds and hundreds of rules and regulations and things that should be good, and they divided work up into 39 different categories.

So when Jesus came on the scene, it wasn't just a day of rest, but it was a day that you had to do, do, do, do, do, do, do, or you weren't actually resting. Some of the rules were like this. On the Sabbath, you cannot walk more than 3,000 feet.

On the Sabbath, you cannot carry an object with any weight. Actually, the weight was this. This is a pine cone I picked up from the Garden of Gethsemane when we were on our Israel trip. And this is

the size of the weight that you could carry on the Sabbath.

That was it. Now, if you were walking with somebody and you got past your regulated time that you could walk, you could hand this off to them, and then they could carry it, and then they could hand it off to you.

Now, you didn't have to do it backwards like in rugby, but you had to hand it off after a certain period of time. No one got that right. Rugby, you run forwards, you pass backwards. Anyway, I'll try it later.

[18:47] Anyway, but this was the weight that you could carry. You couldn't toss something into the air and catch it with the other hand. That was work. That was a bad thing. You couldn't do that. You couldn't light a fire or you couldn't put out a fire.

Two trips ago, my birthday was on the Israel trip, and Christina was trying to throw a party for me and had this beautiful cake and all these candles, and we were going to have this party. We'd have an early party because everybody was going to go out, but it was on the Sabbath, and the guy says, here's your cake, here's your candles, but you can't light it.

I go, what? He goes, you can't light it because that's work. Well, how are we going to do a birthday cake without lighting? He goes, what? 601. 601, you can light it because at 601, the work can be happening because the Sabbath is over.

So my birthday party started at 601, May 14th, four years ago, but you couldn't do any work on that. A woman could not look in a mirror because she might see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out. That would be work. Now, I know that wouldn't happen to any of the women in our church because there are no gray hair, it's just frosted hair, but you could not do that. You could not open a can except for a Diet Coke can because a Diet Coke can was seen as holy and righteous and good.

[20:11] So that was the only, I'm teasing, okay, but that was the only can you could open. In fact, he says that you couldn't even heal people if someone was sick and they were beat up, you could keep them alive, but you couldn't heal them at all.

And so these Jewish writers put all these clarifications and they took this idea of a Sabbath, which was this amazing blessing. It was a day to rest and get perspective and they added all of these things on it and they basically turned this day of a blessing into a day of a curse.

And so on Jesus' day, there was all these rules that you had to do and what their faith became was a religion based on works. You had to do these things to feel secure. You had to do these things to get your identity.

You had to do these things to get your self-worth. All these things that the Sabbath was supposed to give us just as we rested and reflected on God, now they said that was not enough. You had to do, you had to do, you had to do, you had to perform, you had to be better than everybody else, you had to be better than those people around you, you had to keep the law more perfectly, and if you did that, God would be pleased.

Does that sound good? So you know what's gonna happen because Jesus is gonna come in here and Jesus is gonna say to them what he sees right away, he says you guys are adding all these rules and laws on all these people but the problem is you don't even do them for yourself.

[21:23] You just make them do them but you don't take them on yourself and so Jesus comes with his disciples and they go after him in this series of passages and they try to change him, they try to take grace in the gospel and turn it into works and you know what's gonna happen.

It's not gonna be good. You know, one of the neat things about this sermon series as we've been talking is that we've been able to have businessmen come up and share some of their journeys and stories and so I've asked Simon Wong to come up.

Simon, where are you? You're hiding. Simon almost ran away today because he came up and we said, we're gonna do the interview and I said, yeah and he goes, did you get my questions? I said, no and he said, are the same questions you're gonna ask me?

I said, I forgot what those questions were and we're just gonna go by ear and so he's pretty nervous here so Simon, thank you for coming up and you know, Simon, one of the things, Simon's in our community group his wife Sherman helps do the youth ministry, children's ministry and I just appreciate your, I just appreciate your transparency and your honesty, right?

And as you walk, it's been neat to see that and so is it cracking or you don't have to, you can do it if you want. I'll be like Oprah but I'll stand up because I'm the skinny Oprah. Okay, so Simon, maybe you just share with us a little bit about just your story, where you're at in this journey of work and experiences.

[ 22 : 45 ] Just a little bit background, my name is Simon, I work in IT industry long times ago, around 20 years ago. At that time, you know, computer technology, there's no, so everything is in English, right?

You are not able to see the internet page in Chinese, in Japanese, in all these other different languages. So, so I work in the Silicon Valley to actually, to, to build technology to represent those languages.

So right now, you are seeing smartphone, you are seeing the internet with those languages. I'm so proud to be part of that, right? So, and, no.

So as Bernard said, three, three weeks ago, you kind of took the garden, and you took all the loose pieces, and you're trying to interconnect and telecommunicate throughout the garden, right? And so now you're, he set up the framework, and now you're giving us the language to do that in, right?

Yes. Okay, okay, okay. So, in 2004, I think God has put in my, in my heart a burden to work with people rather than technology.

[ 23 : 56 ] So I start to think about, you know, how are we going to witness to Christ in work? How are we going to deal with people? And then, I decided to come back to Hong Kong to work on a totally different career, which is, a lot of people don't like it, is sales.

So I transform myself from an engineer to a sales, selling big software to company like AT&T.; But now we should sit down and talk about business.

And, basically, trying to enable, you know, IT infrastructure for mobile phone, smartphone, right, your iPhone apps, things like that. It's very interesting.

But a sales career is very different from an engineering career. So, God taught me a lot of things during that journey. I think God is still teaching me right now.

Yeah. So you're married and you have two kiddos, right, and they're here. So as you've been on this journey and changing from career to career and jobs and things like that, what would you say as we talk about the brokenness and the thorns and the thistles and just we live in a cursed work environment and everything else and we're here to redeem that, what would you say, how has that affected you?

[ 25 : 11 ] Right now, I manage a team of around 40 people, 30 people. So I talk to a lot of people, a lot of our colleagues, a lot of our business partners, a lot of our customers.

My view on the brokenness is that everybody thinks that they are not paid as they should or they should be paid. They're always looking higher than what they are.

So this is generally across the board, right. So I think this is kind of the brokenness that I'm part of. I'm also looking myself as higher than what I am and I'm also trying to ask for the salary, the promotion that I think I deserve.

So that is the brokenness that I'm seeing. That's good. That's good. So in the midst of that brokenness, would you ever say or how would you say you are tempted to compartmentalize and live by different sets of rules in different areas?

Has that been a struggle for you in that sense? Of course. So I think a few years back, just a short story, I don't want to make it a sermon.

[ 26 : 22 ] You're probably better than I am so that's okay. They're not going to remember anything I said, they're going to remember everything you said so it's okay. So I don't know if you ever pay for a promotion or a salary increment.

Have you ever paid? Okay, so I'm not alone. So four years ago I actually feel that in two years I was not paid as I should be paid.

I'm not recognized as a person in the organization based on the contribution that I have. So I'm sure that a lot of people actually think that way. So I go to the Lord, I decided that I set aside a date of fasting prayer to pray for promotion.

We're going to have a special class on that right after this, okay? So it's, yeah. This is not biblical, right? But it was my theology at that time. So I sit down and start the fasting day and the first thing I bow down and pray and God is telling me that you are praying the wrong thing.

Right? You are praying for your glory. You are praying for your approval in your work. You are praying for basically your identity with your peer groups. So that fasting prayer of promotion become a prayer of repentance.

[ 27 : 40 ] so that is a very good exercise because it geared myself toward a working attitude to serve God rather than serve myself. And this is not a head knowledge.

I have been, had that knowledge for a long, long time that I need to serve God in the working place. But having a head knowledge and actually doing it is very different. That's what I'm trying to share. So I think in that instance I never pray for any, I don't feel like I want to pray for a promotion anymore.

Because God has changed my heart that I should pray for the things that He cares. So I'm just going to break some confidence but in our community group we pray a lot about, if you're not in a community group you need to get in a community group because for us it's where life on life happenings and just people talking and getting to know in a lot.

So we've been praying in your community group about a month ago, right? You had this really difficult situation coming up where you were going to have to let off people. And your company basically said cut off 30% of everybody.

And we prayed for that for like at least a month and we've talked and the guys got together and talked. And can you just share what that looked like for you as you were praying as a follower of Christ in the workplace?

[ 28 : 53 ] And I think I appreciate one of the sacrifices you were willing to make if you want to share that what you said because I've never heard anybody else say that before. I think it was, to me it was just an example of God working in your heart.

So as I said I manage a group of 30 people and I was asked to lay off 30% of my workforce maybe two to three months ago because the business is not doing good and we need to downsize.

So first time I heard about this 30% I don't know how I can do this. I look at all the peoples that are reporting to me and they have families they have mortgages across Asia Pacific in different countries with different cultures.

Different people look at these things differently. So I think the pressure on me is that how are we going to do this? How are we going to execute this? Another complexity is that the headquarter actually assigned executive management team or executive to actually come and monitor us as part of the restructure.

So I was being asked to identify who are being redundant and being let go will be let go and basically I have a very burdened heart and I share with Tobin community groups Chris we pray about that and graciously God give me a peace that I have never experienced before so I have the peace that I can handle these things.

[ 30 : 31 ] I'm not saying that the issue was resolved I'm just saying that God is with me. So all along the process I think the challenge that I see at one moment moment is that when we actually identify the list of candidates to be let go one of them actually is myself.

So I find that I am part of the redundancy if I'm true to myself because this executive is coming to take my place. So in that context I struggle right?

Evil force human nature is asking me okay you can take one as a scapegoat put it into the candidate list and you can free and you have the job you know you're okay.

So I think I quickly realized that this is not a good thing to do. I quickly realized that this is not the thing that I can glorify God actually it's disgrace because I use the authority that God has given me to do it to my benefit which is not it's not a justice it's not a justice that God wants to do at the working place.

So in the end I just very open to give the list to my boss with my name on it saying that okay this is if you want to do it this is the list including myself and I was a little bit very a little bit excited actually because I went down to the HR department and asked for what kind of package I get and because I worked in the company for 17 years and the HR is telling me that you get one month of salary out of each year of service so I have 17 month salaries and I have big Sabbath so I was a little bit excited and then later they told me that there's a cap of three month salary so if you work for his company you work for three months and quit right so so I hope that this is a protect environment that when I share things don't really you know tell other people probably so this is company policy so in the end a miracle happen is that the executive which the headquarters sent eventually he doesn't want to join us so my boss is basically okay so if this guy is not joining us so you will be resuming your normal duty as a head of organization that was the outcome okay a physical outcome but the actual spiritual outcome

[ 33 : 10 ] I see is that my boss is looking at me very differently right now he's here how do I manage a guy who doesn't care to lose their job right so he I think he's starting not know how to manage me because you know if you you can manage people you can you know give them a salary

and they they work hard but if you are you don't care about your job your boss don't know how to manage you so I think I think this is a weird thing but I think you know Christian in the working place sometimes is weird and I think it's a it's a it's a glory to God good that's great yeah we're talking about the Sabbath today and just what it means to rest would you want to share anything that God's been teaching you in this in your life would just besides getting 17 months Sabbath free things like that there's something as you look at your work how have you struggled with being balanced in keeping perspective in your management

I think it's a very good lesson learned for me so I'm a work you know I work long hours and also I care about how my boss look at me I care about how people look at me and God has been changing me step by step right I'm not saying that I I have done my work I have finished my duty it's not that it's a journey that God has really coming to start with me so I think in the past when I you know you use iPhone you can set up SMS alert when you receive an email whose address is your boss's address so this is called VIP list so I set up a VIP list so every time my boss send me an email I get an SMS notification so that I can immediately respond so that you know I really perform but in the end when I get to a Sabbath day or a day of rest

I get a lot of this SMS so even if I go out with my kids and you know in a park or whatever I tend to go back to my iPhone and read my email and try to do things that is not a good practice so I think especially on date night exactly so I think the so I try to stop that and I try to really trust the Lord that even if I'm not taking care of those things God will take care of them I need to put that trust human nature is telling me that I need to handle all these things but you know heavenly thoughts is giving me the fact that I need to rest and really you know enjoy that Sabbath day together with God and my family I appreciate when you Simon and Sherman just joined our group recently and one of the first things he came in was he just said wow I got so many things going on in my life I really need a group of men around me to pray with me and that I can speak to and bounce things off to make sure

I'm not sounding that I'm not losing perspective so I really appreciate his urgency in that and I think that that's an encouragement I think I want to give to all the men and women that we need to have people around us where we don't lose perspective if we're by ourselves in that sense I want to pray for you and Sherman and their two kiddos and just thank you so much Father thank you for Simon and I pray for him Lord I pray that you would be upon him that he would continue to work in a manner that is showing everyone the primary relationship he has is his relationship with you I pray for perspective and wisdom as he walks with you and leads others pray for perspective and wisdom and mercy as he walks with his wife and kids and leads them in the midst of all this Lord we are so thankful that you don't give up on us that you continue to pursue us and even when we make mistakes your mercy and your grace just you're the God of second chances and third chances and we come before you and we just celebrate all you've done and this dear man and his family and we pray that blessing for all of us and we pray these things in your son

Jesus name Amen Thank you Thank you So if I ask you to come up here I promise you I'll follow the script next time okay so I'm not gonna hey you know as we look at the passage here Jesus comes and he has this massive collision with men who've lost perspective on rest and God and work in Mark 2 the story goes in 23 that he's walking through the greenfield with his disciples it's on the Sabbath and his disciples are basically walking through the edges because all the roads would be on the edges of the field and on the edges of the field there was a rule it's called a gleaning law that you wouldn't cut down the grain but you would leave it for the poor people or for the travelers and so the disciples are walking through these fields on the edge and they grab some grain like this and they rub it in their hands and they blow it to get rid of the husk which you do if you're out on the farm and then they start to eat it and immediately when the Pharisees see this they say look verse 24 what you are doing is not lawful on the Sabbath if you do some study and reading you're going to realize that it is lawful and you can do it but the Pharisees had taken the Sabbath and added all these rules that made it not lawful and it's interesting how Jesus answers them he doesn't say come on guys you don't know what you're doing you don't know what you're talking about but he just takes them right to scripture and he says to them have you never read so whenever Jesus says have you never read to you you know immediately what it's going to mean is he's going to take you to the word and say let's do some Bible study here have you never read what David did [ 38 : 58 ] King David when he was in need with his companions they became hungry they entered the house of God in the time of Abathar the high priest and in the house of God there were 12

loaves of bread that were baked every Sabbath and they were laid before the altar they were the show bread they were only for the priest to eat supposedly and David came in and he was hungry and he went to the high priest and said my men need food and we're on a mission from God God is annoying me and we're doing what God has called us to do and the high priest gives them the show bread and they eat it and they're filled and so Jesus says have you not read this is what King David did and how the priest and gave it to them and they were also with him and then Jesus says in verse 27 the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath what he's telling the Pharisees and what he's telling us is that God didn't create you and me so that we could serve our Sundays or whatever our Sabbath is but he created that Sunday that day of rest to serve us to come alongside of us to give us rest and relaxation and restitution that God's laws were meant to be a blessing to all of us they were never meant to put us into bondage but what you see really quickly is when people step into religion they take God's good and perfect law and they add things onto it and there's this expectation and the law then becomes not a good thing but it becomes a bad thing it doesn't become a gift it becomes a curse and you've had that happen in your life before haven't you someone asks you and they're going to give you something and you're like well if I take this what am I going to have to do to receive this

I'm going to have to go down I'm going to have to do this and this and this I'm going to have to register I'm going to have to fill out all these paperwork I'm going to get this gift and it's not going to be really what I expected and it's going to end up being more work than I thought it would be maybe I'm the only one who's had that experience but it seems like it happens a lot in Hong Kong when they want to give you things I just don't even want to take things because there's always something I have to fill out and it's something I have to do and that's the way it was in Jesus' day with the Sabbath it was meant to just be given to people as a gift and to relax and to observe and to remember what God has done and to worship Him and to know that they're not slaves but it became something that they had to take and they had to do for so the average person had to work harder on the Sabbath than they had to do on any day of the week and Jesus says that the Sabbath was not made man was not made to serve the Sabbath but the Sabbath was made to serve man and verse 28 he says so the Son of Man is Lord even over the Sabbath what he's basically saying is hey I'm God and I created these things and I know and I don't want to go on to it because we're going to get back to that later on but the minute he said that the Pharisees were not happy Mark 3 goes on and it says on another Sabbath he entered into a synagogue and there was a man there was a withered hand and I have a lot of questions like why was he there what happened most people think it was a setup most people think the Pharisees heard what Jesus said at the beginning and they said okay let's test him let's see if he really cares about people more than himself let's see if he really cares about people more than the Sabbath let's see if he's going to do what he says he's going to do and so they're waiting for them and they put this man with a withered hand in there and verse 2 they're watching him it's this keen intense eagle eye look everybody's watching to see what he's going to do is he going to heal this man on this day of rest this day that is not supposed to do anything with all these rules so they might accuse him he realizes that in verse 3 and he calls the man with a withered hand and he says come forward and basically he's coming forward in the midst of everybody so he's the center of attention and Jesus asked a question that could only have one answer if you knew God's word only one answer the answer is yes but the Pharisees had taken the yes and put all these qualifications and clarifications and it became a no and he says in verse 4 is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath to save life or to kill it and everybody knew that if you're on the Sabbath and your cow fell in a hole you pulled your cow out and if something else happened and someone was hurt you were supposed to help them but the religious people of Jesus' day had changed this good thing into a curse and so we're told that immediately after he asked it they kept silent they couldn't say anything verse 5 after looking around at them in anger and it's this incredibly deep righteous anger but at the same time you have anger and you have compassion he's grieved so he feels anger and upset how they've taken something amazing like the Sabbath it was meant to be a gift but they've turned it into a curse and instead of freeing people it's putting people in bondage instead of giving people perspective it's made people lose perspective it's made people lose God and so Jesus is angry with them and he's grieved at the hardness of their heart and so he calls the man forward and he says stretch out your hand and he stretched it out and his hand was restored did Jesus do any work?

no he didn't touch them he didn't do anything according to the Torah or the laws that would say he did something bad the man's hand was healed as he stretched out but in verse 6 we see that the Pharisees when they saw this in Matthew in Luke it says they were furious they were angry they were overwhelmed they were spitting fire and venom and they conspired with their enemies the Herodians it was so bad that the Pharisees who were the law keepers and Herodians who were in the government officials who were just the non-believers the licentious people the people who were doing whatever they wanted to do they were mostly Romans and Greeks it was so bad and Jesus offended them so much that they got together to figure out how they might destroy Jesus they realized that in Christ's teaching and in grace and mercy that their self-righteousness was going to be destroyed and their way of life was going to be destroyed their religion was going to be destroyed the moment people saw grace in the gospel and that happens in our lives doesn't it? [ 44 : 46 ] you see people who live religious lives and you look at them and you go wow I'm so tired I can't even I can't even think about being that type of person but then you see a person who understands the gospel and they understand grace and God's love and this free gift and their life is sweet their life is freeing their life is good so what do we do with all these stories?

I mean I've been thinking about these for a while what do we do with work and what do we do with rest and what do we do with perspective and what do we do with healing and what do we do with the grain fields and what do we do with all these laws? some people would say that these rules and these laws and this text they don't apply to us anymore because we're Christians and we have mercy and we have grace we don't need to observe the Sabbath we don't need to do it we can move on and live our lives the way we want to but I don't know I mean it seems to me that Jesus did it the perfect man the perfect God he observed the Sabbath and I don't think that we've changed so much as people did in Jesus' day I mean biologically we're the same psychologically the same sociologically we're the same we still struggle with these things in our life we still struggle with balance and legalism we still struggle with work and rest we still struggle with grace we still struggle with religion and not religion or the gospel I'm fearful to say this is what we need to do because you need to go before the Lord and ask him what am I doing here am I having perspective have I lost perspective how do I keep perspective in my time with you but these are some of the things that I've personally found in my life as I struggle with these passages these are some Sabbath questions I ask myself and I want to share them with you really quickly the first question I have to ask myself is where am I getting my identity and my security where am I getting my identity and my security from is it from is it from my work is it because I do a good sermon and everybody comes up and pats me on the back so that's a great sermon because things are getting good and people are growing and people are coming and people are coming and oh Lord is that where I'm getting my identity is that where I'm feeling secure I mean you can transpose that to your work where do you get your identity on Monday and where does your security come from where am I looking for my self worth and meaning and purpose and where am I finding it I mean if I don't focus on the Sabbath and creation and God giving us these things in a life cycle and he's given it to us to bless us and he's given it to us to free us from bondage if I'm not focusing on the Sabbath that answers all those questions about me and who I am then where am I answering those questions where am I getting the meaning of life questions answered where am I getting the meaning of am I good answered those are some questions I ask myself what does it really look like for Tobin to rest and worship

I mean what does it really look like for us as people of God's people to worship and rest I mean I have such a hard time slowing down sometimes and I know that you guys do too and I think about 1971 Montgomery Alabama and life was too busy and too out of perspective then and Hong Kong 2013 surely there's an exponential factor of like a billion there right but where where am I slowing down sometimes when I slow down I don't know if you feel this way but you you're actually just replacing one work with another form of work you ever felt that I'm not going to do this I'm not going to focus on this but what I end up doing is focusing on other things I'm just as busy I mean some of us we're about to go on a vacation and you can spend a lot of time just planning your vacation and doing things and have every minute every day and you sit back and go well I'm supposed to relax but you don't end up relaxing because you're just as busy on your vacation as you are at work and some people say well it's fun fun busyness maybe but it doesn't speak to our soul it doesn't speak to us about who God is it doesn't speak to us about the relationship that God wants to have with us it doesn't speak about the quiet times where he wants to meet us and spend time with us and listen

to us and talk to us where am I fitting in that busyness and where am I getting rest maybe I should ask the Deuteronomy 5 question the question

I ask myself is this what am I a slave to what is it that enslaves me today what is it in this world and in our workplace that has captured us what is it that drives us to do the things that we do what is it that drives us to do the things that we want to prove ourselves to be good workers in and good fathers in and good pastors in and everything else and what is it that drives us in those things and what Jesus is saying in his passage is if we don't focus on the Sabbath and what God has done in the relationship and that he's in control if we don't focus on those things then the things that are going to drive us aren't going to be him and they're going to turn into idols and idols are never a good thing in the Bible it's what in Exodus we're freed from but what is it that drives us and what is it that makes us do what we do when you go to work this Monday is there anything that's going to enslave you is there anything that's going to push out your margin and push out your time and push out your time with the Lord what does that thing look like another question

[ 50 : 31 ] I ask myself basically is this you know if I spent a day with God or half a day or three hours and I just spent time focusing on God and his creation which Jesus people did in the Sabbath they remembered the creation Genesis they remembered all that God did Exodus they remembered that God rested they remembered that God freed them from slavery Deuteronomy they remembered that God goes before them they remembered that God is there when it doesn't seem like he's there and things are out of control and we're about to get fired they remember that God is always walking with them as his people what does that look like in our lives if I were to spend three hours just focusing and worshiping and thanking him for doing that would that be a good thing what would it look like if I just trusted him and I rested in him I remember when those blue laws were taken away in Montgomery Alabama it was a huge thing there was a massive fight people were fighting don't do this don't stop these things don't do these things we're going to lose perspective things are going to get bad and the thing that always came forward was we have to do this because we need more money to survive and let our businesses work and if we take a break then we don't have the amount of money that we could have got on

Sunday and our lives are going to be worse off and I realize those are the same issues we struggle with aren't they I don't know if I can put my cell phone down and my Blackberry down because I need to do this business thing here and if I don't do this business thing here that I'm not going to get to this place and I'm not going to have the money that I need and things aren't going to be the way that I wanted them to and churches are going to work out the way I planned it because I wasn't speaking into everything what Jesus says and what God says is that he's in control and that if we're his people if we're his children we can trust him because he's good would it be a bad day or a bad thing to spend three hours just worshiping him and thanking him praying the Pharisees did not like this they were angry back to verse 28 Jesus says I am the Lord

I control even the Sabbath and what he's saying here in a very deep way in a very complex way what Jesus says is if you want to have rest the only way you're ultimately going to have rest is in me you can keep the laws you can do all those things but unless you have a relationship with me creator of all things you're never going to have rest you're always going to be busy that's my struggle I speak that and I think that but I don't live that often I think that most of us are like that also if you're weary if you're tired if you need rest throughout the gospel Jesus says the only way to get it is by trusting him coming to him because he's the Lord of the Sabbath he's our ultimate rest he's good he created everything for you he freed you from bondage he wants to walk with you on his journey the question is will you let him will you let him