

Gospel Community Guide

“The cultivated life is one of *persevering in our longing*. In the garden...*grace collaborates with dedication*. Our completion [in Christ] comes toward us as we move toward it...Spiritual completion is **not** a matter of willfully straining after an ideal. It is, rather, *a relational fullness of life that is forever unfolding and developing*, like the way tree trunks thicken as sun, water and nutrients are imbibed. In our living, we aren’t supposed to come to the end of our growing, or even of heartfelt yearning for it. Nor are we to become independent pursuers of growth...Through the lens of cultivation, we see our lives taking place in God’s garden.” (Susan Phillips)

Our Faith Practices are tools meant to help us flourish in this life in the presence of God. Allowing us to know, experience and feel all things in relation to God—his character, purposes and context. This is what it means to cultivate grace. To live ordinary lives in wonder of God and in responsive participation (worship) with God.

The most prevalent of the all our ordinary garden activities is work—whether in an office or home. And the most pervasive of garden resources is time. Yet work and time are often the most strenuous realities in the circus life that reduces us to performers and spectators. So how do we flourish in time through work? By **keeping the Sabbath**.

1 DISCOVERING OUR FAITH PRACTICE OF *SABBATHING*

Sabbath can be described as, **a rhythmic pattern of life** in which we physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually find **rest and refreshment in the work of God** as creator and rescuer. A day of stopping to attend to the Lord. A day, not just a few minutes, because of our tendency to grasp onto something other than God. A set time to recognize that God created and finished, God works and God blesses.

Think about your own history and understanding of Sabbath. How does this description align or differ?

2 PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

We have learned from our faith family throughout history that there is danger in both neglecting and over structuring the Sabbath. The Sabbath as a dedicated (disciplined) time to rest and be refreshed in the sanctifying beginning and finishing work of God in Jesus, is best *kept simple!* In the simplicity of Sabbath keeping we set aside time for Wonder and for Worship. To be awed by our creator and respond with attentive enjoyment of his rescued creation as a community. The following exercise is meant to help your GC or DNA group reflect in wonder at God creator and begin to see how they might worship in refreshment

- 1) Read Genesis 1-2 together aloud. Then re-read Genesis 2:1-3; taking note of how it connects chapters 1 and 2.
- 2) Spend some time prayerfully pondering the complexity & wonder of creation & God’s intention for Sabbath rest.
- 3) Now share! Make sure to help people connect work and Sabbath in the “very good” of creation.
- 4) Read Exodus 31:12-17 & Deuteronomy 5:12-15, and discuss how Sabbath, refreshment and freedom relate.
- 5) Now discuss the concepts of Wonder and Worship as way to keep Sabbathing simple. How might your GC practice Sabbath together? How does this shape the way you think and participate in the Gatherings?
- 6) End your time by reading the Wendell Berry poem below. Give people time to prayerfully reflect on the gift and weight of the Sabbath, as well as time to repent.

The mind the comes to rest is tended
In ways that it cannot intend:
Is borne, preserved, and comprehended
By what it cannot comprehend.
Your Sabbath, Lord, thus keeps us by
Your will, not ours. And it is fit
Our only choice should be to die
Into that rest, or out of it.

3 CULTIVATING GRACE THROUGH *SABBATHING*

Sabbath keeps us reverent and free in our work and time. **Commit to setting aside (making holy) a Sabbath each week for the rest of the year.** What will you do and not do in wonder and worship, and with whom?