

A SMALL GROUP CURRICULUM MADE BY PBC

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L.I.F.E STARTER JOURNALING

The Bible journaling method called LIFE Starter was developed to create an easy, yet effective way for people to study the Bible, remember what they read and allow their hearts to get ignited for Jesus Christ.

L.I.F.E. stands for Listen, Investigate, Focus and Engage

L=LISTEN

In your journal, write the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, listen to the Holy Spirit and focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal. Writing helps you remember the verses

I = INVESTIGATE

Next, you investigate the context around the Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating through this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: Bible Study Tools, or Easy English Bible.

F = FOCUS

The next step is focusing on the text to make it applicable for your own life. What does the text mean today? What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you've read? Write out a couple sentences detailing what God is saying to you through the text.

E = ENGAGE

The final step in the journaling process is engaging God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you've learned?

The beautiful thing about this journaling method is that it is short and only takes a few minutes, and it can be done every time you read or study a passage.

SESSION 1: BUSYNESS ASSESSMENT

Prayer, Welcome and Review of Busyness Assessment: 30 minutes

- •Introduce yourself and talk about why you are doing this study and what you hope to get out of it.
- •Take the first 20 minutes of this class completing the "Busyness Assessment!"

Jesus can sympathize with your busyness. You have bills that need to be paid? Jesus had lepers who wanted to be healed. You have kids screaming for you? Jesus had demons calling Him by name. You have stress in your life? Jesus taught large crowds all over Judea and Galilee with people constantly trying to touch Him, trick Him, and kill Him. He had every reason to be run over by a hundred expectations and a thousand great opportunities, and yet, He stayed on mission. Jesus knew His priorities and stuck with them. Isn't this astounding? Think about it: Jesus was not just turning down an opportunity to play in a community sports league, He said NO to people who had diseases that He could have healed instantly. The disciples struggled to understand why He was not attending to the urgent needs right in front of Him, but Jesus understood His mission. He was not driven by the needs, demands, or approval of others, but rather stayed within the direct will of the Father. Ultimately, Jesus was driven by His God-given mission. He knew His priorities and did not let the accumulating temptations of a busy life deter Him from His task!

In the current culture busyness becomes an addiction that is normalized, and often praised. It seems as though successful people are busy, so the temptation to remain busy and accomplished can become an ever-present struggle. Do not fall to the temptation of busyness: "'All things are lawful for me,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful for me,' but I will not be dominated by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12).

Do you take pride in your busyness and your ability to multitask? The reality is that NO ONE multitasks well! God did not design you to multitask or to remain constantly busy. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus said that man was designed to rest: "The Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27).

Research shows that multitasking is counterproductive! In fact, busyness blinds you and dictates your schedule, so you don't slow down enough to think about each task. At times, your demanding schedule and your desire for accomplishment can be symptoms of a deeper ailment. You may find your self-worth wrapped in what you can accomplish. It may seem as though you have an insatiable desire to always be one step ahead of where you are. It could be a coping mechanism to keep yourself from acknowledging certain feelings or thoughts. Your busyness may even be an attempt to live up to the expectations of others.

If you identify yourself as someone who is constantly busy, sit down and ask yourself: In all of my busyness, am I living the life that God wants me to live? Am I seeking fulfillment in my busyness and tasks? Am I seeking the approval of others in my goals and accomplishments?

If your current busy schedule feels more like a burden than a blessing, chances are you have taken on too much and have exceeded what is a healthy balance. It may be time for you to let some of your busyness go.

It is time to reorganize your priorities, and allow the proper priorities determine your schedule. You can actually accomplish more with less if you focus your attention completely on the valuable task at hand. Choose the worthy tasks, and challenge yourself to be fully present in whatever you are doing in each given moment. Allow time for just "being," – i.e. not always focused on "doing". Make time for the joy God wants you to experience. God desires for you to find freedom from your busyness: "For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefor, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). Surrender your priorities to God, and allow Him to show you what is most valuable in your life.

The bottom line is that how you spend your time is a reflection of your priorities. Throughout the Bible, God has made it clear that He should be at the top of the priority list, and remain there, even while carrying out each daily task. Now is the time to make time for God and His loving relationships that which you cherish most! "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

Please answer these questions honestly (and have your spouse independently do the same): (10 being MOST important or satisfying and 1 being LEAST important or satisfying. *Be totally honest!*)

How important are the relationships in your life?	Rate:
How important is your spiritual life?	Rate:
How important is it to maintain your health?	Rate:
How important is it to succeed in your career?	Rate:
How important is it to have adequate financial resources?	Rate:
How satisfied are you with your relationships?	Rate:
How satisfied are you with your spiritual life?	Rate:
How satisfied are you with your health?	Rate:
How satisfied are you with your career?	Rate:
How satisfied are you with your financial life?	Rate:
How well do you know what you spend your time on?	Rate:
Total up your scores:	Total:
Think hard and make bullet point notes of the following: Things you DON'T WANT TO DO, and actually DON'T NEED TO DO:	
Things you DON'T WANT TO DO , but actually NEED TO DO :	
Things you DON'T WANT TO DO , but actually NEED TO DO :	
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Things you WAN	NT TO DO and actually NEED TO DO:	
Things you DON'	I'T WANT TO DO, but actually DON'T NEED TO DO:	

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

Review your "Busyness Assessment" as a group and discuss...

- •Were there any surprises?
- •Discuss with your group.
- •Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes
- •What ere the biggest take-aways and personal commitment from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

Focus on the LIFE Journaling Method and it will give you more insight to become a spiritual leader!

- •Pray about your commitment to this study and rethink what you want to get out of it.
- •Review your "Busy Assessment" with someone close to you to discuss next week.

SESSION 2: ARE YOU A "BUSY-AHOLIC?"

Prayer, Welcome and Review of Busyness Assessment: 20 minutes

•Pray. Introduce yourself to the group again and discuss the findings of the "Busyness Assessment!"

Session #2 Teaching: Are YOU Addicted to "Busy?": 10 minutes

What is a "busyaholic"? If you find yourself addicted to busyness in much the same way an alcoholic is addicted to alcohol, it means you are likely struggling with an imbalanced life. You may find that you struggle to rest, as you are constantly worried about the next event or task. Remember, any fixation, other than God, is an idol. As a Christians, you must be careful not to let the busyness of the world distract you from your devotion to Christ. In your devotion to Christ, He will better guide you how to approach your responsibilities to your family, church, friends, and work. The principle of keeping God at the top of your priority list is clear in the Bible: "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

It is impossible to remain in a constant state of busyness and to develop healthy relationship with family, friends, and others. Busyness invariably puts a strain on the family, even when much of the busyness starts with the family.

Busyness endangers physical health, as attending to one's own body is usually not a high priority. Emotional health is also at risk, as busyness leads to more stress and anxiety. As a Christian, your focus on life is to be less on plans and more on how you plan fits into God's will for your life. Rest and recreation are by God's design (Genesis 2:2). One good test to know whether you are too focused on busyness is to ask yourself how much time you spend thinking about activities more than God, family, or other important subjects.

Is your busyness glorifying God. Even when involved in the seemingly mundane tasks, we should glorify God. As Paul reminded the Colossians, "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). Christ demonstrated the importance of intentionally taking breaks, spending time with loved ones, and using time alone to pray and meditate on the Word of God (see Mark 6:31 and Luke 5:16

Being busy is not directly comparable to worshipping idols; however, busyness is often linked to sin, discontentment, and misplaced priorities. If busyness takes up so much energy that it distracts from your relationship with Jesus Christ, then it could be considered idolatry. You should view your life as an opportunity to advance the kingdom of God through your time, talents, and treasure. You should be strategic in your approach and seek to lead a balanced life and likely even a SLOWER PACE.

Small Group Discussion: 25 minutes

- •Craig Groeschel said, "You cannot change what you do not confront. If you ignore the battle, you lose the battle!" Are YOU a "BUSY-AHOLIC?"
- •Discuss with your group about how being BUSY effects your spiritual, emotional and physical health.
- •Does the activity in your life glorify God? Discuss the benefits of a possible SLOWER PACE.

Small Group Wrap-Up: 25 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and action items from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

Focus on the LIFE Journaling Method and it will give you more insight to become less busy!

SESSION #2 WK. 2 DEVO 1

Read Genesis 2

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.
I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating throug this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: <u>Bible Study Tools</u> , or <u>Easy English Bible</u> .
F=Focus to the text to make it applicable for your own life. What is God saying to you personally through this passage? How can you apply what you've read?
E = Engage God. This can either be a short prayer or an action that you can take that day after reading the text. Is there a command to follow in the text? How are you different because of what you've learned?

SESSION #2 WK. 2 DEVO 2

Read Colossians 3

passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you your journal.	
I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: Bible Study	ne Holy Spirit communicating throug
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SESSION #2 WK. 2 DEVO 3

Read <u>Mark 6:30-44</u>

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.
I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating throug this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: <u>Bible Study Tools</u> , or <u>Easy English Bible</u> .
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Read <u>Luke 5:12-16</u>

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.
I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating throug this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: <u>Bible Study Tools</u> , or <u>Easy English Bible</u> .
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SESSION 3: A SLOWER PACE

Prayer, Welcome and Review of Busyness Assessment: 20 minutes

•Pray. Introduce yourself again and discuss the findings of the "Busyness Assessment!"

•Session #3 Teaching: Why do we need a slower pace?: 5 minutes

We need a slower pace to experience healthier relationships. These improved relationships will be filled with margin in your schedule and deeper intimacy! You must understand the cause of your busyness as well as the consequences. It is easy to cast blame on busyness without looking at your own heart to see why you might be so busy. To help escape busyness, ask these three questions:

- 1. Is the pace of my life really sustainable over a long period of time?
- 2. Do I like the person I am becoming as a result of the pace I keep?
- 3. Am I giving my loved ones my best during this season?

When you keep an unhealthy pace for too long, the answers to these questions are always no! Notice the warning lights of busyness, learn from past mistakes, and make choices that will result in a better, stronger, and healthier you. Keeping a healthy pace, allows you to value God and the relationships He has for you: And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39).

It is time to make the difficult decisions to un-clutter your life and to make more time for primary relationships.

Here are some common outcomes of staying TOO BUSY:

- 1. Constant clutter: Rushed lives are often reflected in clutter.
- **2. Addiction to speed:** This is when you want everything to go faster and faster in your life. You find your-self spending most of your waking moments fueling the adrenaline rush that comes from juggling your many "essential" priorities.
- **3. Extreme multitasking:** Do you try to accomplish too many things at once? Multitasking doesn't exist. Your brain is not wired to "multitask". What is likely happening when you multitask is you are simply paying less attention to each "priority" and giving your best to nothing.
- **4. Superficial relationships:** Staying on the surface with most of the people you know happens because busyness and a hurried life are the enemies of depth.
- **5. Relationship fatigue:** Relationship fatigue is when you have very little or no time for the people closest to you. You may not be superficial, but you're too tired, drained, and preoccupied to give time to the people who need and deserve it most.
- **6. Spiritual emptiness:** This can be seen when your desire for worship disappears, your compassion dries up, and you have little concern for spiritual intimacy with God.

It can be discouraging to see yourself in these descriptions. You are not alone, but don't allow the commonality of a fast pace become an excuse for ignoring these signs. Busyness won't simply resolve or disappear on its own. What will disappear is any hope for an abundant life. Knowing is the first step to making changes to your life. Do not try to fix all this on your own. Ask the Lord for help: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

Review what those closest to you had to say about your "Busyness Assessment."

•Were there any surprises?

Reread the 6 common outcomes of being too busy and discuss...

- •Which one reflects your current state most?
- •How do you want to improve?

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and personal commitment from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

Focus on the LIFE Journaling Method and it will give you more insight to become less busy!

•Pray about your commitment to this study and rethink what you want to get out of it.

Re-Read Genesis 2

passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you your journal.	
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Read <u>Matthew 11:25-30</u>

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Read <u>Hebrews 4:1-13</u>

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Read <u>Mark 9:42-50</u>

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.
I = Investigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How does this passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating throug this text? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: <u>Bible Study Tools</u> , or <u>Easy English Bible</u> .
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SESSION 4: PEACE IN CHAOS

- •Welcome & Review Last Week's Homework/LIFE Starters: 15 minutes
- •Session #4 Teaching: Can YOU have peace?: 5 minutes

Many Christians crave a conflict free environment which cause many to slip into an attempt of "keeping the peace." Most people crave internal and external peace. Why, then, does it seem that chaos is the norm? It may seem like you are living in chaotic times, as the issues that are plaguing your world and community have turned your live upside down. Peace and security have been disrupted. It can be quite easy to allow, every moment to be met with fear and anxiety, adding stress to your already chaotic life. There are growing divides over most issues faced in the modern culture.

So, how can you have peace with so much chaos?

Turn to Jesus. He is the source of peace, promising peace "at all times and in every situation" (2 Thessalonians 3:16). If you don't have peace, you can turn to Him and He will give you HIS peace. There is no true or lasting peace outside of God. He is the God of peace.

Biblical truths about having peace in the midst of chaos:

- •God's peace is different than the world's peace. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid."

 John 14:27 (ESV)
- •God's peace is reserved for those who trust in Him. "You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you." Isaiah 26:3 (ESV)
- •God's peace will guard your heart and mind. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV)
- •God's peace is a blessed gift. "May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!" Psalm 29:11 (ESV)
- •God's peace is available in times of suffering. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

 John 16:33 (NIV)

Take time to pray that God fills your hearts with *His* peace, removing all worry, anxiety, and fear. Ask God to help you trust God in times of uncertainty and chaos.

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

Discuss how God's peace is different than the world's peace.

•Which Scripture from today's discussion is the easiest to live out and which is the hardest? Discuss them together and why.

Pray Together: God, fill our hearts with your peace. Remove all worry, anxiety, and fear. Help us to trust You in times of uncertainty and chaos.

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and personal commitment from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Read John 14

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses your journal.	n - -
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Read <u>Isaiah 26</u>

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Read <u>Philippians 4:1-9</u>

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Read <u>John 16:16-33</u>

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SESSION 5: BIBLICAL BALANCE

- •Welcome & Review Last Week's Homework/LIFE Starters: 15 minutes
- Session #5 Teaching: Are you trying to "fit your Christianity" into your busy life?: 10 minutes

One of the greatest challenges is <u>finding balance</u> in the Christian life. Trying to balance all of life can feel like balancing on a tightrope. It can feel as though there is never a point where you can just stroll across effortlessly. **Balance requires continual effort**. Only God can help you balance it all. Of course, the demands of His work and ministry left Jesus exhausted at times – yet somehow He found time to be led by the Spirit and to live a sinless life. Jesus perfectly balanced the demands of life—with the same 24 hours we have.

The life of Jesus reveals a number practical ways to pursue balance in the Christian life. Everything the Father led Jesus to do, He completed. As described in John 17:4, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."

Jesus models a balanced life:

- **1. LOOK TO GOD TO DETERMINE YOUR PRIORITIES.** Jesus determined His priorities by spending time with the Father. Look carefully: Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there. Simon and his companions searched for Him; they found Him, and said to Him, "Everyone is looking for You.' He said to them, 'Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out." Mark 1:35–38...
- **2. SAY NO, SO THAT YOU CAN HAVE A STRONGER YES.** Jesus said no—so that He could say yes to what was most important. Only by gleaning your priorities from the Scripture and the Holy Spirit will you be able to make confident decisions amidst overwhelming demands. You can choose many good things and end up missing the best things—the essential priorities.

Do not fall for the lie that states that a good Christian should never say no to legitimate needs. "Balance is like a pendulum; it's that brief moment in the middle when you're swinging from one extreme to the other." Part of the pursuit for balance contains the realization that it is never perfectly achieved. The pursuit of balance is the goal. Do not be frustrated with the constant effort.

Saying no can free you to pursue the yes to what matters most: "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No" (Matthew 5:37, NKJV).

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

- •Discuss if YOU are trying to FIT Jesus into your hectic schedule? In what ways can you really put Him FIRST?
- •Are you willing to relook at your priorities? Discuss with your group.
- •How good are YOU at saying NO? Discuss with your group.
- •Does your "YES" really mean "YES," or "MAYBE?" Discuss with your group.
- •How can you start better focusing on God's priorities for your life? Discuss with your group.

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and action items from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

Read John 17

your journe	al.					
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Read <u>Mark 1: 35-38</u>

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Read Matthew 5:33-37

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Read Matthew 6:25-34

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SESSION 6: WHAT IS THE SABBATH?

- •Welcome & Review Last Week's Homework/LIFE Starters: 15 minutes
- •Session #6 Teaching: What Is the Sabbath?: 10 minutes

Why Did God Command a Day of Rest?

Sabbath essentially means "a day of rest." God commanded a day of rest because He wants His followers to trust Him. Taking a Sabbath can spiritually keep you from idolizing work and busyness. Physically, taking a Sabbath helps rejuvenate and provides your body necessary rest.

In **Exodus 20:8-11**, the Bible encourages us to keep the Sabbath holy.

""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 to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and 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."

This instruction is found within the Ten Commandments. The previous commandments, seem to come in the fashion of a list, while here, Moses pauses and provides more of an explanation regarding Sabbath:

- •People work six days a week. (**Exodus 20:9**)
- •On the seventh day, no one should work. Not your daughter, son, cattle, etc. (**<u>Exodus 20:10</u>**)
- •God, when creating the world, took a day off to rest, so why can't you? (**Exodus 20:11**)
 During this Foundational Study, dive into the significance of Sabbath, how the idea had gotten skewed during Jesus' time, and what it looks like for Christians today to choose healthy rest.

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

•How do YOU keep the Sabbath holy today?

•Read <u>Matthew 12:1-14</u> At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat (had to get their Wheaties). Watching this take place, experts of the law (Pharisees) raised their concern. Jesus quickly points out these experts of the law were misunderstanding the heart behind the rest. He ultimately revealed, that true spiritual rest is found in Him: the Lord, the Son of God, and God in human form.

•Many people have treated the Sabbath so rigidly that they miss the whole point. It is not a problem just today. It was way back in Jesus' time. What made them so angry about what Jesus did here? This group of people, the Pharisees, held onto power by being the ones who held the law over people's heads. If Jesus was going to turn that system upside down this represented not just an upheaval of what they had always known, but it would usurp their power. They controlled people's lives with these laws. The Pharisees literally made hundreds of rules that detailed how to do the Sabbath. The religious leaders took the simple law of remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy and used it for their power and prestige and control.

•Christians treat the Sabbath differently now than those who lived before Christ. Has theology changed or are we not applying it anymore? The Apostle Paul grants insight as to why the Sabbath is not practiced the same as it was before Christ came in human form: "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but he substance belongs to Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17). Rest is important. God still desires His believers to choose a balanced life, which includes physical rest. Spiritual rest can be found only in Jesus. Rest is meant to be a tool that provides relief, prevention from burn out, a weapon against stress, a time for what is important, and ultimately, a time for investing in your relationship with the Lord.

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and action items from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

Read <u>Exodus 20:1-21</u>

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does this	estigate the context around today's Scripture reading. To whom was this written? Why? How s passage fit with what comes before and after it? What is the Holy Spirit communicating throu? Feel free to use Bible study tools for commentary: <u>Bible Study Tools</u> , or <u>Easy English Bible.</u>
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Read Matthew 12:1-14

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Read <u>Mark 2:23-28</u>

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Read <u>1 John 5: 1-12</u>

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SESSION 7: WHY DID GOD GIVE US THE SABBATH?

- •Welcome & Review Last Week's Homework/LIFE Starters: 15 minutes
- •Session #7 Teaching: Why did God give us the Sabbath?: 10 minutes

God seems to mandate a Sabbath for a number of reasons:

1. God wants you to trust Him.

When the Israelites wandered the desert before they reached the Promised Land, God would make manna, a bread-like substance that would give them sustenance, and quail rain from the sky (Exodus 16). Every day they would go out and collect that day's rations and only that day's rations. Any extra they tried to collect would spoil by the morning. On the sixth day, God commanded them to gather twice as much so they would not work to get their food on the seventh day. God wants you to trust Him, just as we see demonstrated by the Israelites for sustenance outside of their control. He will provide for you, even if you choose to rest one day of the week.

2. You will fall apart if you don't rest.

There were also practical reasons God commanded rest on the Sabbath. Those who work without taking a break will encounter physical exhaustion and breakdown. You are not meant to work nonstop. When you work seven days a week, you exhaust your brain and will be unable to work well. You become more stressed and wear yourself out to the point we become susceptible to more physical and emotional illnesses. Your spirit is depleted by the cares of the world. Instead, love the Lord and His ways: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

3. You avoid idolizing work, accomplishment, and production when you take a Sabbath.

If you work and do nothing but work, you run the risk of placing it before God in terms of importance. Keep the Lord as your main pursuit, and avoid sharing God's place in your life with the stresses of this world: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8).

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

- •Do YOU trust God with your time?
- •Read Exodus 16. Think and discuss again about your willingness to trust God.
- •Are you spreading yourself too thin and running ragged?
- •Where does God fit into your priority list?

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and action items from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Prayer Time:

Pray on your own, or with your group about trusting God and taking more intentional time to worship Him. Let God bring to mind specific areas of your life that consume you and make some practical adjustments to give Him more space.

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes



Read Exodus 16

L=Listen in your journal by writing the date and the Scripture you're studying. After you've read the passage a few times, focus on a verse or two that stands out to you and then write out those verses in your journal.
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Read Proverbs 3

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SESSION #7 WK. 7 DEVO 3

Read <u>Hebrews 4:1-13</u>

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Read Colossians 3

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SESSION 8: DOES SABBATH STILL MATTER TODAY?

- •Welcome & Review Last Week's Homework/LIFE Starters: 15 minutes
- •Session #8 Teaching: Does Sabbath still matter today?: 10 minutes

Is it even possible to have a Sabbath rest TODAY?

In the world of busyness, 50-60+ hour work weeks, after work emails, calls, and texts, seem almost a necessity to pay rent and bills. Beyond the schedule of work, family and personal calendars find their place on top of it all. To take an entire day off is quite counter-cultural in a world that remains plugged in and at all times.

The Sabbath might look a little different for you. It is important to remember the heart behind God providing the Sabbath: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Jesus taught that God provided the Sabbath that man might rest from the stresses of life, and not simply for vain ritual.

In your life, Sabbath might mean avoiding emails on weekends or evenings, leaving your phone in another room during family time, or simply sitting down outside with no agenda. For those who work around-the-clock jobs, this might mean concentrating a set number of hours and dedicating them to rest, even if at this current time you cannot seem to designate 24 hours in a block. Take Sabbath seriously and start where you can. Maybe designate 24 hours for the whole week and space it out.

Ultimately, trust God and ask His help to dedicate 24 hours a week (whether spaced out or at once) to **rest** and **rejuvenate**. As you aim to turn these thoughts into action, spend time thinking on the promise of Jesus: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30). As you place more and more trust in God, and as you make a healthy spiritual life your priority, the cares and stresses of this world will become less important.

Use this prayer as an encouragement to observe the Sabbath and keep it holy:

Lord of the Sabbath, I admit that I have not always observed the Sabbath as I should have. You created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. I should do the same. I acknowledge that you have a plan for me and that the cares of tomorrow should not take priority above you. God, help me be a good servant of the time you have given me. Help me observe periods of rest. Help me to withdraw from a workaholic mindset that my culture perpetuates. Although it is important to work hard and do everything as if I was working for you, I should also withdraw and rest for you, and in your presence. Jesus, you withdrew from the crowds to spend time to pray. May I do the same with my work and my work week. Amen.

Small Group Discussion: 20 minutes

- •If you haven't already, open up your calendar and make some margin TODAY! Make a commitment to one other person in your life that will help hold you accountable to take a Sabbath day each week.
- •Pray the prayer below for YOURSELF!

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- •What were the biggest take-aways and action items from your small group time?
- •What is ONE thing that you will do different this week in order to make needed changes that came up in today's study?

Prayer Time:

Say the prayer Cory prayed for you and your family...

Lord of the Sabbath, I admit that I have not always observed the Sabbath as I should have. You created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. I should do the same. I acknowledge that you have a plan for me and that the cares of tomorrow should not take priority above you. God, help me be a good servant of the time you have given me. Help me observe periods of rest. Help me to withdraw from a workaholic mindset that my culture perpetuates. Although it is important to work hard and do everything as if I was working for you, I should also withdraw and rest for you, and in your presence. Jesus, you withdrew from the crowds to spend time to pray. May I do the same with my work and my work week. Amen.

Discuss This Week's Homework: 5 minutes

Read <u>Psalm 127</u>

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Read Ecclesiastes 4

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Read <u>John 5:16-30</u>

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Read Matthew 11:25-30

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SESSION 9: YOUR NEXT STEPS

•Welcome and Review Last Week's Homework: 15 minutes

Session #9 Teaching: Now What? 15 minutes

A common theme throughout these lessons has been the nature of our culture and its hunger for busyness, accomplishment, and its increasing ability to deliver instantaneously. It can be easy to be hurried often, and a ta pace previous generations would find unimaginable. As horse-and-buggies have given way to Mustangs, the time saving devices seem to only cause the time saved to be filled with more and more tasks.

It is no mystery why the constant access to tasks and accomplishments can tempt you to feel like a robot, rapidly moving from one task to the next. You can feel overworked, overstressed, and spiritually undernourished. Culture promotes "bigger and better" and subtly (or not so much) challenges you to keep up. Whew! Who made these rules anyway? Satan loves to keep you running in circles trying to beat the clock – even circles around good and noble things. If Satan cannot make you bad, he may settle for busy. If he can distract you, he can minimize your usefulness to the Kingdom of God. Satan may be the Prince of Darkness, but he is also the Duke of Distraction.

As a Christian, do not allow yourself to be swept away in the undercurrent of the cultural stopwatch. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." It may even be a good idea for you to review the last few lessons. The Bible places high value on spiritual, physical, and emotional rest. With spiritual health comes a life of increasing peace: "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He Himself escaped the busyness of the crowds to renew His strength and taught others to do the same. Mark 6:31 says, "And he [Jesus] said to them [His disciples], 'Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat." It is difficult, if not impossible, to hear God's still, quiet voice over the roar of busy life. You must make time to rest and hear from our Lord.

A great example of the consequences of busyness is showcased in Luke 10:38–42: "Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, 'Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me.'"

If you are honest, you likely resonate with Martha in the story. You rush around doing "what needs to be done," while missing the glimpses of Jesus all around. As difficult as it is, and as contrary to our culture as it is, you must intentionally make the effort to slow down and sit down. Sit down at the Lord's feet. Jesus replied to Martha's request: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

Let the phone go to voicemail. Chores can wait. Social media will be there, later, when you pick up your phone. Listen to the voice of Jesus: "One thing is necessary." Isaiah 55:6 says, "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near."

Small Group Discussion: 15 minutes

- •So as you reflect on this study, how has your priorities changed?
- •When you consider the YOUR "next steps," what excites you to continue this journey?
- Adjust as needed and redefine your goals and expectations often. Discuss as a group.

Small Group Wrap-Up: 15 minutes

- •What are the top THREE takeaways from this study?
- •What about this study could be improved to have MORE IMPACT?
- Was the LIFE Method of journaling helpful and did you actually do it? Why or why not?
- •Would you refer others for this class? Why or why not?
- •Are you ready to participate in the NEXT LIFE Study?

Be part of this movement and give us your feedback please!

- •Write out a testimony about how this class changed your parenting.
- •Shoot a short 2-minute testimony video if you feel led.
- •Fill out the assessment forms (emailed tomorrow).
- •Consider your involvement in the next semester classes (also emailed).

Please take the time to give us feedback, as we want to improve these classes and have the biggest impact for God's Kingdom and generations to come!