

“To Save Your Life”
Surviving the Pandemic: Ancient Practices for a New Normal
Genesis 1:31-2:3
Dr. Mark Foster
October 18, 2020

Introduction: We _____ what we pay attention to and what we do habitually.
A “Common Rule” has helped Christians live _____ for love of God and neighbor.

Daily Habits

1. Kneeling _____ morning, noon, and night.
2. Eat one meal with _____.
3. Turn your phone _____ for one hour.
4. _____ before phone. _____ before screen.

Who Tells You Who You Are?

The questions, “Who am I?” and “Who am I becoming?” are answered by our _____.

Four choices:

1. The habit of checking work _____ first every morning yields _____.
2. The habit of checking _____ first every morning yields anger and _____.
3. The habit of checking _____ first every morning yields _____ and vanity.
4. The habit of checking in with _____ first: scripture & prayer yield life and _____.

The Bible calls us children of God. (Romans 8:1-6, 13-17)

Suggestions for Social Media

1. Open social media to post or respond – not when you are _____.
2. Turn off _____.
3. Don’t use social media in _____.
4. Never fall for the _____.

Weekly Habits

1. Have a one-hour conversation with a _____.
2. Limit _____ to four hours choosing wise content: justice, beauty.
3. Fast from something for _____ hours.
4. _____: to stop, to cease; the weekly day of _____ from work.

The weekly habit of sabbath _____ us that God is God, and we are not.

“Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee.” – Augustine

When we don’t _____, we get sick, injured, and have emotional and spiritual breakdowns.

“A man who works with his mind should sabbath with his hands, and a man who works with his hands should sabbath with his mind.” – Abraham Heschel

Suggestions for Sabbath

1. Pick a day and _____ it to the people around you. Staff sabbath is Friday.
2. Don’t make _____ do the work you are choosing not to do. (*Exodus 20:8-11*)
3. Remember that the _____ can and will go on without you. You can rest.

Action Steps

On sabbath, I will _____ . On sabbath, I will not _____ .

This week, I will read my Bible _____ checking my phone.

Daily Reading and Reflection

October 19-24, 2020

Monday, October 19 – Exodus 20: *“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.” - Exodus 20:11*

The word ‘holiday’ comes from an Old English word meaning “holy day.” Time off, time away, time to ourselves is a sacred gift from God. We live in a culture that demands maximums. We prioritize making the best use of our time down to the last second of each day. When we live with an ‘around-the-clock’ mindset, we reject the gift of rest which God has given us. It is critical not just for our physical health, but it is essential for our emotional and spiritual health, too. Sabbath rest is holy and good for our souls.

Tuesday, October 20 – Mark 6: *“The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.” - Mark 6:30-31*

Today’s Scripture reading is filled with activity. It’s the first account of the disciples being sent out into the world to spread the Good News of Christ. They’ve encountered people who received them, and it’s likely that they encountered people who vociferously rejected them. When they return to Jesus, it’s easy to imagine how tired they would have been – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The two verses highlighted today sit right before a major ministry event. Thousands of people have gathered to hear Jesus’ teaching and to be healed. The disciples shouldn’t have had the luxury of a break; this is when they needed to lead. Jesus gave them permission and invitation to take a moment and rest, and that same invitation is given to us.

Wednesday, October 21 – Genesis 2: *“So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created.” - Genesis 2:3-4*

The Scripture we read together on Sunday came from the end of Genesis 1 and the beginning of chapter 2, when God rested from all of the work of creation. If God rests, why wouldn’t we? It seems simple enough, but too often we find ourselves submerged in work, family life and activities, visiting friends, and staring at our screens to keep up with all that is going on in the world. This fast paced, 24-7 cycle doesn’t allow us to have perspective on the world around us. When we rest, when we put our phones and tablets down for a while, we free ourselves to be more aware of God’s holy presence among us.

Thursday, October 22 – Ezekiel 20: *“Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy.” - Ezekiel 20:12*

Today’s Scripture reading comes from the prophet Ezekiel, who gives voice to God’s accounting of the Exodus story – Moses and the Israelites being freed from Egypt. In the passage, God is frustrated and disappointed that Israel has not been faithful to the covenant they have with God, and that they have abandoned God. Ezekiel’s prophecies came while Israel was under Babylonian captivity. God speaks through these words to cause Israel to remember another time when they were in captivity, and when God delivered them. With these words, God reminds Israel that the commandments, laws, and especially Sabbath were gifts from God to show God’s love – a love which sets us apart.

Friday, October 23 – Romans 8: *“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.” - Romans 8:14*

Last Sunday, Pastor Mark started his message by saying, “We become what we pay attention to and what we do habitually.” He gave us wise words in reflecting on how much time we spend staring into screens. When we wake up and turn towards social media and the news, we can be filled anxiety, fear, envy, anger, and vanity—sometimes all within a matter of seconds. When we wake up and check in with God first through the Scriptures and prayer, we are reminded of both who and whose we are: children of God. Allow your identity as a child of God define how you live and move through your days, and allow that sacred identity to give you peace.