

Sabbath

UU Community Church of Santa Monica
Small Group Ministry
August 2014

Chalice Lighting

The Sabbath is entirely independent of the month and unrelated to the moon. Its date is not determined by any event in nature, such as the new moon, but by the act of creation. Thus the essence of the Sabbath is completely detached from the world of space. The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to holiness in time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.”

— [Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*](#)

Sharing Silence 3 minutes

On Our Hearts 20 minutes

Covenant and Ground Rules

I commit myself:

- to come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group;
- to let the leader know if I will be absent or need to quit;
- to share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others;
- to not gossip about what is shared in the group, and tell only my own story to others;
- to honor the safety of the group by listening to what others share with an open heart;
- to refrain from cross-talk, judging, or giving advice;
- to ask questions gently and only if necessary;
- and to share as deeply as I can when it is my turn.

- Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins, *Heart to Heart* (adapted)

Readings

When we live without listening to the timing of things, when we live and work in twenty-four-hour shifts without rest – we are on war time, mobilized for battle. Yes, we are strong and capable people, we can work without stopping, faster and faster, electric lights making artificial day so the whole machine can labor without ceasing. But remember: No living thing lives like this. There are greater rhythms, seasons and hormonal cycles and sunsets and moonrises and great movements of seas and stars. We are part of the creation story, subject to all its laws and rhythms.

— [Wayne Muller, *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*](#)

Sabbath, in the first instance, is not about worship. It is about work stoppage. It is about withdrawal from the anxiety system of Pharaoh, the refusal to let one's life be defined by production and consumption and the endless pursuit of private well-being.

– [Walter Brueggemann](#)

The higher goal of spiritual living is not to amass a wealth of information, but to face sacred moments. In a religious experience, for example, it is not a thing that imposes itself on man but a spiritual presence. What is retained in the soul is the moment of insight rather than the place where the act came to pass. A moment of insight is a fortune, transporting us beyond the confines of measured time.

– [Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath*](#)

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwelling places. Leviticus 23:3

The command is "Do no work." Just make space. Attend to what is around you. Learn that you don't have to DO to BE. Accept the grace of doing nothing. Stay with it until you stop jerking and squirming.

– [Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*](#)

Questions for consideration

1. What is your experience with Sabbath, if any? What in your personal background or practice has been helpful and life-giving, and what patterns or attitudes would you like to let go of? Who are your mentors who "live Sabbathly"?
2. What are the barriers to Sabbath? What stands in the way of rest, play, renewal and delight? What is one small change you might make this week going forward?
3. What do you see as the goal of your Sabbath? Is it to recover from a week spent out of balance, to renew yourself physically and spiritually, or something else?
4. Would it be possible for you to take a "digital Sabbath"? Remove the computer, mobile phone, television, radio, internet; disengage from email and social media for an entire day each week? A few hours? Once a month? Would you find this unbearably uncomfortable or utterly wonderful? Why?

Sharing 60 minutes

Closing Activity / Reflecting On Our Time Together

Closing Words

Only in the stillness do we get in touch with our deepest selves and only in making time on a regular basis for being and not doing do we develop our greatest inner strength from which springs our most powerful action in the world.

--Tony Lorenzen