

Sabbath: Edenic Togetherness?

EVENING USHERED in a perfect sky at the end of a perfect day in a perfect world. God was delighted. Colors swirled and glowed around the setting sun just the way He'd imagined. The garden was glorious with fragrant flowers, juice-dripping fruits, joyful birds, and gentle creatures. It had taken time, creativity, energy, and love to grow this perfect place in which to meet His children for the first time. Now they had a whole day to be together!

Sabbath is packed with goodness.

It's a gift of grace, an experience of God's hospitality, a celebration of creation, a day to worship Him, a sign of trust and faithfulness, an oasis of peace.

It's also a day for building and restoring our relationships with Him and with each other. But that's much easier said than done in the pastor's home, where Sabbath is the busiest day of the week.

Sabbath in Eden had some key elements that can enrich our Sabbath experience today:

- S**implicity
- A**nticipation
- B**eauty
- B**lessing
- A**we
- T**ogetherness
- H**appiness

SIMPLICITY

Life in Eden was simple. Food was plentiful, fresh, and ready to eat. There were no rooms to tidy, no clothes to press, and no sermons to prepare. Sabbaths are usually super-busy days for pastoral families. Think carefully about your Sabbaths. Simplify your expectations, activities,





Take a few moments on Sabbath to focus on a single aspect of God's creation.

and meals so your mind is less cluttered and stressed. Slow down and take time to focus on God and each other. Bread and soup are just fine!

What changes can you make so your family's Sabbaths are simpler, slower, and more serene?

ANTICIPATION

While God was busy assembling Planet Earth, He happily anticipated spending time with us. Enjoy the anticipation of happy Sabbaths with your family. Plan ahead, spread your preparation throughout the week to make life easier, and share the workload so no one feels overloaded and resentful.

Plan Sabbath activities to be the highlight of your week, and then look forward to them together. Explore nature, worship God, use your talents, be creative, and find kind things to do for the people in your community. There are hundreds of quick and easy nature, craft, worship, and kindness projects available on Christian Web sites.

What does each person in your family look forward to the most (or the least!) when they think of Sabbath?

BEAUTY

Eden was a gallery of God's exquisite designs. He created us to appreciate beauty. Attractive surroundings inspire,

delight, and help us feel welcomed and treasured. Natural fragrances, fresh flowers, candles, sparkling tableware, and white tablecloths can transform the everyday into something beautiful.

What effect do beautiful surroundings have on you, your worship, and your family relationships on Sabbath?

What can you do, simply and quickly, to make your home a beautiful setting for Sabbath togetherness?

BLESSING

Sabbath is like a gift box full of good things. But Sabbaths in pastoral homes are often so chaotic that there isn't time or space just to be still and know God. Do whatever it takes to make Sabbaths a delight in your home. If your Sabbaths are leaving anyone in your family drained and miserable (including the pastor!), it's time for a serious rethink.

How can you rebalance life so everyone in your family can experience the rich blessing of Sabbath?

How can you prayerfully or practically bless each person in your family on Sabbath?

AWE

The infinite details of God's creation give us insight into His detailed care for us (Matt. 6:25-34). Sabbath is a day to focus on creation and be filled with awe at everything He has made. When we share moments of wonder, we are bonded closer to each other and to God.

Take a few moments on Sabbath to focus on a single aspect of God's creation. Explore a tree in detail.



Carve out and fiercely protect a significant time and space to be together as a family during Sabbath.

Watch the stars. Photograph nature. Stop. Look. Be filled with wonder and share the awe.

How can you and your family experience more moments of wonder on Sabbath?

TOGETHER

Ministry families easily skip the blessing of being peaceful, joyful, and loving together on Sabbath. But we need to appreciate the important people in our lives and heal any family relationships that have been hurt during the week. It's refreshing to slow down and talk about our faith and our experiences of Jesus.

Carve out and fiercely protect a significant time and space to be together as a family during Sabbath. The day needs to be special for *your* family too, not always shaped by the needs of your congregations. Take time to grow your family relationships with worship, conversation, and laughter.

How can you be together on Sabbath in ways that strengthen your important relationships and your faith in God?

HAPPINESS

Sabbath isn't just a day to *keep*; it's a day to *celebrate*! It's a day to pause and thank God for the gifts He pours into our lives. It's a day to experience the joy of putting aside work and distractions. It's a day for delighting in God's love and forgiveness together (Isa. 58:13). Creating happy Sabbaths for our children gives them powerful memories that can strengthen their faith in a loving God.

Discover what makes Sabbath a delight for each person in your family. Weave those delights into your Sabbath plans.

On a scale of 0-10, where 0 = very stressful and 10 = very happy, how would you rate your last four Sabbaths?

Ask each person in your family to list three things that will make your Sabbaths even happier.

Karen Holford writes from Scotland, where she loves to climb the hill behind her house on Sabbath afternoon.

