

July: Rest & Recharge

Introduction

There's always something that needs to be done. In our busy world today it's not uncommon to tick something off your to do list, only to have three more important tasks take its place. There are emails to send, people to call, deadlines to make, homework to do...

Did you call your mum for her birthday? Did you write that report you were meant to do? Did you do your piano practice today? When was the last time you vacuumed the house? Have you prepared enough for that meeting tomorrow? Have you organised that other meeting? When are you going to mow the lawn? When are you going to see your friends? When was the last time you read the Bible? I hope you've kept all your receipts for your tax return. How much have you given to charity this year? You could give more couldn't you? And you really should volunteer your time somewhere. And you should write a letter to the government about asylum seekers. And you really should learn how to cook healthier food. And you should get to know your neighbours better. And you should find a mentor. And you should spend more time with your kids. And you should pray more. And you should exercise more. And what are you doing about Africa? And have you called your mum yet?

It doesn't stop does it? And they're all good things too. It's good to work, to achieve, to learn, to build, but if we're not careful work can gradually take over our lives, filling all the space, until there's not even room to breathe. God knew this, and that's why - very early on in the story - God gave us the gift of Sabbath rest. "You can work six days every week if you want, but on the seventh you need to stop and rest. Don't do any work. Don't achieve things, don't build things, don't grow or plant. Just stop and enjoy life." It's one of the Ten Commandments - one of God's top 10 rules that Moses passed on to the Israelites. And if you follow the story you can see how much of a gift this commandment was for them.

For generations before Moses, the Israelites had been working as slaves in Egypt. Making bricks. Brick after brick after brick. Thousands of bricks, every day, under the baking sun and the watchful eyes of the slave drivers. Pharaoh's desire for greatness was insatiable. His greed for glory just kept growing. He cared only for himself, wanting more and more and he would have driven those poor slaves to death. And when Moses told Pharaoh to let them go, Pharaoh forced them to work harder. Make more bricks! Build more cities! Whip them harder! Don't let them rest! It got worse and worse. No rest, no play, no control over their lives. So much that at the end many of the Israelites couldn't even imagine a better life. Until finally God stepped into the fray like a superhero, guns blazing, and rescued every single one of those poor slaves. He took them away, far away from all of that. Sometimes we need to get away to find clarity, to think clearly. God led them into the desert, sat them down and blew their tiny minds with a brand new vision of what a nation could look like. "You're free now! No more making bricks! No more slavery! You don't ever have to live like that again. I've given you back your lives, now live! Love! Enjoy the peace! Share the joy!" Don't walk like an Egyptian, God was saying. No more constant work, achieving more and more and grinding yourself into the ground. I rescued you from that. You're free now.

Sabbath is a guarantee that we won't become like that pharaoh, wanting more and more. Or like those slaves, working harder and longer but not really living at all. It's a day of honouring God, being thankful for what we have, and trusting that he will provide everything we need. Sure we could work 7 days a week and earn more money, and achieve more, build more, grow more. Stopping work 1 day a week to rest and recharge sends a powerful message to the people around us that we are content with what we have, and we trust God to look after us.

So this month the challenges are about practicing these Sabbath ideas. We've been doing a lot of stuff through all the challenges of the other Big Year months - this month is about making sure that in all our doing we remember to **rest**. This comes first. This is about not doing. It has to be intentional, and it can sometimes be very difficult. Stop working, stop worrying, stop achieving things, stop checking the 'to do' list. This shows that we really are content that what we have is enough and we trust that God will look after us. And interestingly, many people find that this resting also brings more purpose and enjoyment to the work we do.

And **Recharge**... Use your free time to engage in things that refill your depleted energy tanks. What revives you? What recharges you? Maybe it's bush walking, or fishing, or playing Xbox? Maybe it's having a coffee with a good friend or water-skiing with some mates, or having a picnic with the family, or going wine-tasting, or roasting marshmallows, or cheering on your footy team? Maybe for you it involves more alone time, going for a ride, doing the Sunday crossword, playing your guitar, reading a book, or heading out somewhere with just your camera? Maybe it's a weekly slow-cooked Sunday roast with the family? As Jesus said, the Sabbath was made for us, as a gift. It's about stopping to smell the roses. Stepping out of the hamster wheel for one day so that we remember to live, breathe, taste, enjoy, listen, and play. Work is important but it's not everything. A healthy life involves balance - a regular rhythm of work, rest and play. Enjoy your rest this month! It's a gift.

Challenges

There are challenges listed for each version of a Big Year. Please select the challenges that best suit you and your group or family. Also, feel free to rewrite the challenges, or create new challenges to better reflect Jesus' teaching in your day-to-day setting.



ADULTS



MONK

- Take some time this month to discover how you best connect with God. A helpful resource for this might be to find something about 'Sacred Pathways' or the different ways we experience God.



CHEERLEADER

- Book in a whole day to spend with the person or people you love most.



ACTIVIST

- Write out a plan for your ideal Sabbath rest day. It might include doing an activity you enjoy, spending time with people who build you up, doing something or going to a place that restores your soul - 8 straight hours of resting and recharging. Once you have planned what you will do, book it in and make it happen!
- Help someone else to have a Sabbath rest day this month - look after their kids for the day, give them a day off work, do their housework... whatever it takes.