InWord

Wasting Time with Jesus
By Barry Shafer

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

● Quick Backdrop

You've probably heard of the word "Sabbath." And you may have a good idea of what it means. But as much as that word shows up throughout the Bible, it actually gets very little play in Christian circles today. You've probably heard that God rested on the Seventh Day after six days of work on Creation. You probably know that "keeping the Sabbath" is one of the Ten Commandments (number four, in fact). And you're probably aware that the New Testament changed the way Christians observe the Sabbath. So, while we don't observe the Sabbath the way God commanded Israel in the Old Testament, we can still benefit a bunch from its principles. In fact, Sabbath principles could be some of the most helpful tools to apply to our Christian walk.

❶ Digging In (God, Show Me!)

If you were to look up the word "Sabbath" in a Bible dictionary, you'd see that the root of that word means "to cease." In the passages below, you'll see the creation of the Sabbath along with a few other passages that give insight into the whole concept of "ceasing." As you read these, look for anything that tells you why rest or the Sabbath is so important. (What did it do for God's people? What did it do for God?)

Genesis 2:1-3

[1] Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. [2] By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. [3] Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Exodus 31:15-17

[15] For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a day of sabbath rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death. [16] The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. [17] It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.'"

Now let's shift gears a bit. The passages on the next page aren't officially connected to keeping the Sabbath, but they are connected to Sabbath concepts like rest and ceasing. As you read these passages, simply note what takes place during times of ceasing, rest, or solitude.

Fold or Cut

Psalm 46:10-11

[10] He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." [11] The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

Mark 1:35

[35] Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

Mark 6:30-31

[30] The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. [31] Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest."

❷ Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

What stands out to you as to why God created the concept of the Sabbath in the first place?

Did you notice in Exodus 31:17 how "rest" benefited God? It says he was "refreshed." Think about that---God was refreshed! This is like a giant megaphone from God to us: When you cease striving, you will be refreshed!

What do you learn about rest and solitude from the actions of Jesus and His disciples?

❸ Seal the Deal (God, Change Me!)

God rested, and He commanded His people to do the same. The psalmist was "still." That stillness helped him see that God was God. Jesus sought rest and solitude for Himself and His disciples. Sometimes He would teach them in this solitude. Other times they just rested. So, amidst all your busyness, schedule a block of time each week for the next four weeks to do something kinda crazy: schedule some quiet, restful time. Here are a couple ideas on how to "waste time" with Jesus:

- Take a one-hour walk with Jesus. Talk with Him just as if He is walking beside you. Because, well, He is.
- Sit in a park or on a porch and read a few psalms.
- Write out a prayer to God.

Remember, after God rested, He was refreshed. He's wanting the same for you.