



Keeping Sabbath

About this Faith Practice

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Let's Begin...

Now that you've downloaded the files for your faith practice and age group or setting, you can get started planning one or multiple sessions:

1 Open the .pdf file for your age group or setting. Choose an Exploration, the approach you think will help your group to best experience the faith practice. Choose any one of the following Explorations to use for one session:



Discovery



Scripture



Discipleship



Christian Tradition



Context and Mission



Future and Vision

Note: If you're planning multiple sessions, you can follow the order suggested above or feel free to use any order that fits the needs of your group. Some groups may choose to start with Scripture and then see where that leads them. Others may be more ready to act in their community and might want to start with Context and Mission.

2 Locate the Exploration you've chosen

3 Look through all 9 activities and select the ones you would like to do with your group.

- If you're planning a 30–45 minute session, choose 3 activities.
- It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving.
- For 45 minutes to 1 hour, choose 4 or 5 activities.
- For a 1½ to 2-hour session, you can use all 9 activities.

Tip: Look for this symbol  to find activities designed for Easy Preparation (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

4 Make copies of any handouts () related to your activities. Order posters () if using art (see "Ordering Posters," below).

Use of Art, Music, and Scripture in Faith Practices

Faith Practices activities include many opportunities to grow in faith through the use of scripture, music, and art.

Ordering Posters

If you choose activities that use an art image, you or your church will need to purchase posters of the art by clicking on the link provided in the activity. If you wish to use art, you will need to plan ahead, since it takes 1 to 2 weeks for the posters to arrive after you place your order.

Art

Six posters are used with the faith practice Giving and Receiving Hospitality and may be ordered by clicking on the links provided.

From Imaging the Word Poster Sets:

"Out of Work" by Käthe Kollwitz (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"The Public Fountain" by Manuel Alvarez Bravo (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

"Guatemala: Procession" by Betty LaDuke (<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>)

From AllPosters.com:

"The Dance of Youth" by Pablo Picasso (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>)

"Going to Church" by William H. Johnson (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>)

"Midday Rest" (after Millet), c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh (<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>)

Music

Three music selections are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality. We have selected music which is easily found in many hymnals. A web link is provided to give more information about each music selection.

Let Me Enter God's Own Dwelling, Tune: Unser Herrscher (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>)

I Woke Up This Morning, Tune: Woke Up This Morning (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>)

I've Got Peace Like a River, Tune: Peace Like A River (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>)

Scripture

Twelve Bible passages are used with Giving and Receiving Hospitality, two with each Exploration.

Discovery	Genesis 2:2–4	Luke 12:22–31
Scripture	Mark 2:23–3:6	Exodus 20:1–17
Discipleship	Luke 6:1–11	Deuteronomy 6:1–9
Christian Tradition	Mark 6:30–34, 53–56	Isaiah 58:9b–14
Context and Mission	Jeremiah 17:19–27	1 Corinthians 11:17–26
Future and Vision	Psalms 119:105–112, 129–136	Matthew 27:51–66 (Matthew 26:14–27:66)

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discovery

About this Age Group

Teenagers make decisions that have life-changing consequences: post high school choices, sexuality, and lifestyle issues. They crave independence, yet they also look to adults for guidance. Experiencing Sabbath disciplines can make significant contributions to their decision-making processes as they explore what their world is today and how that will impact their world tomorrow.

About this Exploration

Sabbath is intentional time taken by individuals and faith communities to integrate the Divine with humanity and creation. Jesus models how to keep Sabbath both inwardly (through prayer, solitude, silence, and meditation) and outwardly (through communal ritual and acts of justice). Our inward movement toward a life centered in the Spirit indicates the reign of God within us. Jesus embodies the depth of his Sabbath-keeping experiences through outward action to his followers and to those he encounters who have specific needs. Our practice of Sabbath is informed by God's resting on the seventh day after laboring for six days to create the world, establishing a day of Sabbath. Building on this biblical tradition, some faith communities dedicate a specific day of the week to rest, worship, and work for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Genesis 2:2-4

Luke 12:22-31

Leader Preparation

How do you prepare to lead youth in thinking about the Sabbath? Perhaps it goes without saying, and yet it needs to be said: You prepare by experiencing Sabbath yourself, which is more easily said than done for many of us. It may be easier to do a “quick prep” to talk about Sabbath than it is not to prepare or not to “do” for awhile. Give yourself an assignment to experience Sabbath. It doesn’t have to be on Sunday, and it doesn’t have to be a whole day. But it does need to be time apart from the busyness of life. If you were sick, if your life depended upon it, you would find the time. Just do it.

Prayer: Ruler of Sabbath, you created and rested. Empower me to create, and to rest, and to create again out of the energy born of rest. Teach me the value of time out. Teach me to wait upon you that my strength may be renewed. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1. How Crazy-Busy Is Your Life? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate a camera if you plan to use one.

Supplies:

- camera (optional)

Ask the youth to think about the following question: How crazy-busy is your life? Invite them to create a body-statue that demonstrates the answer. For example, someone who is totally stressed might have his/her hair all messed up and wear a freaked-out facial expression, while someone who is not busy or stressed at all would be in a prone position on the floor. Participate in this activity as the leader. Modeling what you want the youth to do encourages them and helps them see that you have challenges in your life, too. When everyone is posed as a statue, take a picture if you have a camera. Invite the youth to describe what their statue portrays.

Offer the following statements. For each one, ask if they believe it to be true. Those who say “True,” stand up; those who say “False,” sit down.

- The busier we are, the more important we seem to be.
- If we are too busy to spend time with friends and family, it is because we are being successful in other areas.

Discuss the responses. In what ways is this statement true for them? For their parents? For the people they respect?

2 Focus and Draw

Leader preparation: Check out the outdoor surroundings and determine the best place to send participants for this activity. If there is no available outdoor space, plan to bring enough nature objects so that each participant has one.

Supplies:

- sketch pads and pencils
- nature objects such as a pinecone, flower, intricate plant

Instruct the youth to go outdoors and select a particular plant, tree, or flower to observe. If there is no available outdoor space, provide nature objects such as a pinecone, a flower, an intricate plant such as an African violet. Invite them to study the object for five minutes. Then bring the group back together and give everyone a sketch pad and pencil. Ask them to draw the item as they see it in their minds, without looking at the item. It is important for participants to know they don’t have to be artists to do this. The sketch they make is whatever flows out of them as they recall what they observed. It will probably be best for the youth to do this alone, so they won’t be distracted by one another. Give the youth ten minutes to complete their drawings, then come together and share. What surprised them? What was unique and special about the part of God’s creation that they observed?

from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 Just in Time

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Share the following information with youth: “Shortly after World War II, executives of Toyota Motor Company in Japan decided to do something completely different in the world of auto manufacturing. Rather than stockpiling the parts to make their cars, they decided to order just enough parts to keep the lines moving. The parts arrived ‘just in time’ to be used. This worked for Toyota and has been used by many manufacturers since then.”

Hand out Bibles and invite the youth to read silently Luke 12:22–31. After they’ve read the passage, ask: What is the connection between these words from Jesus and the “Just in Time” story about Toyota Motor Company? Reflect with the youth about how living “just in time” could work for them. What is intriguing about this idea? What’s scary? Can they imagine doing it? In what ways do they live like this? Whom do they know who does this?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 4. No Worries (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- paper and markers

Ask the participants to turn to Luke 12:22–31 in their Bibles. Read the passage together one time, then pause for several moments. Invite someone else to read the passage a second time. Then ask the youth which words or phrases jumped out at them. After a third reading, ask the youth to meditate on those words and phrases. If they were a cow, they would be chewing their cud on these words. Discuss with the whole group the parts of this passage that really connected with them.

5 What God Did on the Seventh Day

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite youth to turn to Genesis 2:2–4 and read it together. After the reading, share the following information: “The ancient rabbis teach that on the seventh day, God created *menuha* — a word that means peace, tranquility, serenity. They teach that until the seventh day, the Sabbath, creation was not finished. Only after God created *menuha* — tranquility and rest — was creation completed.”

Divide the youth into small groups and give these instructions: Imagine what God might have done on the seventh day, and create a skit to show it. Don't assume that "rest" means doing absolutely nothing. Maybe God found some wild mint tea and made a glass of tea. Maybe God talked to a parrot or played with a monkey. Use your imaginations! What might God have done for "R and R"? Invite the youth to share their skits and affirm them for their creative thoughts.

No Lunch Break

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None.

Tell the following true story: Tuan (not his real name) is in the gifted program in his school. When he enrolled for his classes as a freshman, the counselor told him that he would be taking nine hours of classes so he would not have time for a lunch break. But, he could make arrangements with one of his teachers to eat lunch during a class period. Tuan's mother was not thrilled with this. She felt strongly that a high school youth should have a lunch break, that the break was important for him both physically and mentally. The school insisted that Tuan needed to be in the gifted program because it was part of his "college track," and his mother insisted that he should have a balanced life, which meant a lunch break.

Ask the youth: What do you think Tuan should do? Divide the group into two teams. Set up a debate with each team defending one position. After each side presents its case, give each side time for a rebuttal and a final presentation. Let the group make a final decision to resolve the issue based on the presentations. Is there a compromise position that honors both sides of the argument?

Sending & Serving Activities

Dealing with the Stuff (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- paper
- markers

Invite youth to place on a table what they carry with them in their wallet or pockets or purses. This is part of the "stuff" of their lives. Then have them draw an illustration or make a list of what other stuff fills their lives. What are the things and involvements that make their lives busy? When they complete that drawing, ask them to cross out anything they would like to take away or get rid of, if they could, to relieve the stress they might feel. Discuss: What could they eliminate to give themselves a break? Where does the pressure come from to be doing so much? What could they do to have less to worry about?

8 Seventh Inning Stretch

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None.

Introduce the topic as follows: God views rest as a really important part of creation -- and of our lives. But in reality, we don't always make it that important. We don't make time in our lives to rest and re-create. Sabbath gives us permission to stop. Another definition of Sabbath is that it is a time to remember who we are and what we know in relationship to our Creator God.

Encourage the participants to try the following experiment for one week: Every seven hours, take a break (exception: if they are already sleeping). The "break" could be any of the following, or something they choose to do:

- take three deep breaths, inhaling and exhaling slowly
- read a psalm
- take a walk
- say the Prayer of Jesus, or another prayer
- close your eyes and try to think about nothing, absolutely nothing, for a few minutes

Invite the youth to spend time doing all or some of the above-mentioned activities now as part of this session. Then ask them to decide what they want to do in their "seventh inning stretch" during the coming week. Figure out when the next "seventh inning stretch" would be so they can commit to implementing this activity at that time. Finally, help the youth follow through on those commitments by asking them to pair up as accountability partners who will check in with each other to see how it's going throughout the week. You may want to follow up with them as well. Note: The youth need to know this is optional. You are encouraging, but not requiring them to do this.

9 Give Someone a Break

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- heavy paper to make coupons
- markers

Reflect

God rested, and Jesus said, "Don't worry." But God didn't have kids in summer weekend sports camps, and Jesus didn't have to worry about paying the bills. Life is different now.

Certainly. Except for the fact that nobody said it was going to be easy. Certainly not Jesus. So, if you have a small cross to bear in order to experience Sabbath more and worry less, is it worth the cost? It's your choice.

Sabbath rest is not only something we need for ourselves. It is something we can share with others. Divide the youth into small groups and brainstorm about people they know who could use a break: parents of small children, caregivers of parents or spouses who are ill, families who have children with special needs, etc. Give your artistic youth the role of making coupons that say, "You Deserve a Break Today" on one side. On the other side, write down the service being offered by the youth to give someone a break, such as babysitting on a Sunday afternoon. Decide whom to give the coupons to and who will be responsible for making connections with the recipients and following through on this service opportunity. Does this information change your perspective? During the week try to view at least one situation each day from a variety of perspectives.

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Scripture

About this Age Group

Older youth are asking questions. They don't buy the answer "Because the Bible says so." Yet at the same time, they want to know what adults believe and why. Exploring the Scriptures with this age group gives them the opportunity not only to hear what the Scriptures say, but to see it modeled and to apply it to their daily lives.

About this Exploration

Scripture defines Sabbath in several ways. Our journey will help us explore how Sabbath was given as commandment and blessing, and how Jesus expanded Sabbath to be more inclusive. Jesus reinforced the concept that the Sabbath was about God but for people (Mark 2:23-3:6). Sabbath is a time of blessing, a time to rest from daily work and restore energy and "god-ness." Sabbath is not a time to worry about rules, but to work for God's reign, letting God take care of the rest. What helps us focus on Sabbath? Consider how we can recharge, refresh, and renew our spirits, minds, and bodies.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Mark 2:23--3:6
Exodus 20:1-17

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Which Rules “Rule”? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Invite the youth to consider the following scenario: They are going to form a society of their own, and it is their job to come up with the ten most important rules of that society. If there are more than ten persons in your group, ask each person to contribute one rule, and then the group needs to discuss and come to a consensus on which ten rules “rule.”

2 Still, Very Still

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- one large candle
- lighter
- CD player and CD with soft contemplative music

Invite the youth to spread out in the room so they are not near one another. Give these instructions: “We are going to spend a few minutes in silence, with just the music in the background. During that time, I invite you to concentrate on your breathing and on centering yourself. Try not to think about anything. Try just to be still with your body and your mind. When the song is over, we will continue in complete silence for several more minutes.”

Light the candle and turn on the CD. Depending on your group, allow 3-5 minutes on each part of this experience.

After the time is up, leave the lights off and talk quietly with the youth. Reflect with them on how this felt. Have they had any other times this past week when they were that still, other than when they were asleep? Did it feel good or uncomfortable? Would they enjoy having more of this kind of time? Why or why not?

3 Family Rules

Leader preparation: Download a video clip of “The Lost City” from <http://www.tinyurl.com/23lxtu7>.

Note: These are short clips that are available free of charge to nonprofit organizations.

Supplies:

- video clip and equipment to show it.

Watch the video clip and then ask the youth what they noticed about the family dynamics. What was more important — rules or family? Laws or people?

Assign roles to the youth and seat them around “the family table” similar to the video. (If you don’t have a table in your room, seat youth on the floor and imagine a table in the middle.) Roles to be assigned: father, mother, sibling who always pleases, sibling who always pushes the edges, other siblings. Give them the fol-

Leader Preparation

How much do the Scriptures inform your daily life? Whether or not you get into the Bible on a regular basis, the stories and the teachings found there have impacted your life. And what about your youth? How does their interaction with the Bible compare to yours at their age? What messages do they yearn to hear from God’s Word?

Prayer: Ruler of the Scriptures and of humanity, love these young people through me. May they understand that life flows from your Word, and that it is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

Keeping Sabbath

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

lowing scenarios and ask them to carry on a family discussion:

- a. Sibling who pushes the edges came in ten minutes after curfew last night. What does father say? Mother? Other siblings? What are the consequences?
- b. Sibling who always pleases lied about a test score to parents, and they found out. A firm household rule is “Don’t lie to your parents.” What do parents say? Siblings? What are the consequences?

If you have time, invite the youth to come up with other situations when choices have to be made between keeping rules and giving grace to people. How should those choices be made?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 The Bible Says (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies:

- Bibles for each person
- concordance (optional)

Give everyone a Bible and ask them to hold it, unopened. Say that you are going to ask a question, and you want to hear the first word that comes to their mind. The question is: “What do you think the Bible says about Sabbath?” Go around the group and share the quick thoughts. Then invite the youth to open their Bibles and find something that it says about Sabbath. If available, have them use a concordance to help locate passages. Allow time for them to search. Don’t “rescue” them by naming passages. Talk together about what they found. How does it compare to the “quick thoughts” they had when you asked the question?

5 Sabbath in the Field

Leader preparation: Locate the supplies.

Supplies:

- poster “MiddayRest,” (after Millet), <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters9>, c.1890 by Vincent van Gogh
- finger paints and poster paper
- Bibles

Place the artwork where all the youth can see it, and/or pass it around the group. Invite them to talk about what’s happening in the piece. What day of the week do you think it is? Does it matter? What feeling do you get when you look at this?

Invite youth to get a Bible, paper, and finger paints. Ask them to read Mark 2:23–3:6 and paint whatever comes to mind after the reading. Their painting may be a depiction of one of the stories, or it may be an expression of their thoughts about the stories. Reflect with the youth about their paintings. What similarities or differences are there with the “Midday Rest” art?

6 It's One of the Ten

Leader preparation: Locate the supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles for everyone
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Begin by asking the youth to name as many of the Ten Commandments as they can remember, and write them on the board. It's okay if the list gets longer than ten, because some of what's named may not be in the Ten Commandments. Invite the youth to open their Bibles to Exodus 20:1–17 and compare their list with that in the text. Reflect with them on the following questions: What were the easiest commandments to remember? The hardest? As you look at society around you, which ones seem to get broken the most? Which of these are more important, if any? Why do you think, when God gave 10 rules to live by, keeping the Sabbath was right up there with not murdering someone?

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Let's Go! (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None.

Gather the youth together in a tight “sports huddle” circle. Invite them to come up with a “send off” that will remind them of Sabbath as well as encourage and bless them for the week. Within reason, this could include some physical contact if it is appropriate and is nonsexual in nature. It might involve a loud chant, a prayer, a series of high-fives, or maybe they come up with their own set of hand signals that symbolize Sabbath and healing. If they create hand signals, these could be used to greet one another if they come in contact during the week.

8 Peace Like a River?

Leader preparation: Become familiar with the song “I’ve Got Peace Like a River.” (<http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong9>) Contact a youth prior to this session and prepare him or her to say “Stop!” at some point in the singing of this song and complain that it just isn’t relevant and “rivers aren’t always peaceful, what does ‘joy like a fountain’ mean anyway? and how are oceans lovely?” etc. Encourage the young person to make this interruption as authentic as possible, offering whatever reasons he or she wants to, as far as the meaning of this song.

Supplies:

- copies of “I’ve got Peace Like a River”

Invite the youth to sing “I’ve Got Peace Like a River.” If they aren’t into singing, then read the words together until you are interrupted by the youth who has been set up to do this. Use the interruption as a time to reflect with the youth on what the song is trying to communicate. Do they like this song? Does it “work” for them? Does it give them good feelings? Why or why not? What is it communicating? Are there other songs that communicate the same message that they enjoy? If you are using hymnals, spend some time in the hymnal, locating songs that are meaningful to the youth. Close your session with “I’ve Got Peace Like a River” or another song from the hymnal.

9 Now Go and Heal

Leader preparation: Locate the supplies.

Supplies:

- Bible
- colorful fun adhesive bandages
- anointing oil
- candle
- CD with background music

Invite the youth to listen quietly as you read Mark 3:1-5. After the reading, say: “Jesus was all about healing. He healed people physically, emotionally, and spiritually. And sometimes he did it on the Sabbath because helping people was more important to him than keeping the Sabbath rules. When we follow Jesus, we are called to bring healing to others. Maybe we don’t think we can do that, but we can . . . all of us. We all can bring healing to others with our words and actions, and that healing is more important than the rules of peer pressure or popularity or thinking we don’t have time. This morning, I brought some anointing oil. I would like to anoint you, if it’s okay with you, for the week to come. I want to anoint you as a vessel that can bring healing to others, and also give you a Band-Aid to wear to remind you to offer healing to others.” (Optional: Youth could wear the Band-Aid in the middle of the forehead, where everyone could see it and inquire about it, giving youth reason to explain its symbolism. This may be a bit much for your youth -- others may get into it.) Light the candle and play the background music. Offer the anointing and adhesive bandage to the youth. Anointing can be on the forehead or on the hand. It takes very little oil to do this, and be careful not to get it on clothing. Words to say with the anointing could be: “(Name,) I anoint you to bring healing to others. May God’s spirit anoint you with power from above.”

Reflect

In what ways did the youth demonstrate an understanding that the Bible message is life-giving, not sucking the fun out of life? Could they see that Jesus came to give “life more abundant”? Are you experiencing that abundant life? Does it shine through you? May this be your daily prayer: “Bless me, and make me a blessing to others.”

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Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Discipleship

About this Age Group

Discipleship means doing. The first twelve disciples of Jesus didn't just listen to his words and then continue to do their own thing. They dropped their nets, their business plans, or whatever else they were doing, and changed their lives to follow Jesus. If we are going to be followers of Jesus, what will we be called to drop in order to follow? What does discipleship mean to youth? Specifically, in relationship to Sabbath, when is it life-giving to rest, when is it life-giving to be active on behalf of someone else, and how are those choices made?

About this Exploration

Practicing Sabbath leads us to a fuller understanding of who we are as children of God. God calls the people of Israel to keep God's words on their hearts, to teach them to their children, to fix them as an emblem on their foreheads. Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the law is given to free people from oppression, not to oppress further an already downtrodden people. As we explore what it means to keep Sabbath, we will experience that Sabbath becomes a way of being, as well as a way of doing.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

Luke 6:1-11

Deuteronomy 6:1-9

Exploring & Engaging Activities

Leader Preparation

Discipleship is where the “rubber hits the road,” the talk becomes the walk. As you prepare to lead this session, consider the times and places in your life where discipleship has been alive and well. None of us is 100 percent successful, but we all have life stories of the Spirit enabling and inspiring us truly to follow Jesus. How has your discipleship intersected with the Sabbath? Prepare to share those times, as well as personal goals you would like to achieve as you strive to “remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.”

Prayer: *Christ, I do want to walk the talk, and I do want to respond with a “Yes” to the biblical command to keep the Sabbath and to keep people first. Help me to do just that. Amen.*

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.



1. My Sabbath and Discipleship Journey (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Be prepared to share your personal story of times of discipleship intersecting with the Sabbath, as well as areas that you want to work on to “remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.”

Supplies:

- paper and pencils

This activity involves vulnerability from you as the leader. Describe your Sabbath keeping or lack thereof, and invite the youth to come up with a “plan of action” for you. Share as much as you can with them about your life and if/when you find times to experience Sabbath. (Remember, it doesn’t have to be on Sunday.) When the youth know what your Sabbath life is like now, divide into small groups, with each group creating a plan for you. After each group shares their plan, create one plan of action based on their input and what you feel is realistic. Optional: Commit to the plan, and ask the youth to keep you accountable.

2 A Very Important Tattoo

Leader preparation: Come to this session with a “tattoo” on your hand or your forehead that you’ve created with a washable marker. The tattoo should be a symbol of what is most important to you in your life.

Supplies:

- washable markers

Invite the youth to get into groups of two or three to give each other a tattoo with the washable markers. Ask each youth to decide what he or she wants for their tattoo. Let the other persons apply it. The tattoo should be either on the hand or forehead, and it should be a symbol of what is most important to them. When everyone has been given their tattoo, go around the group. See if youth can identify one another’s symbols, and invite them to share the reason for choosing that symbol as. Talk about yours as well.



3 Can You Remember?

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- poster “Guatamala: Procession,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Betty LaDuke
- a piece of paper large enough to cover at least three-fourths of the artwork
- poster paper
- watercolors and/or markers

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Ask the youth to close their eyes. Cover a large segment of the poster “Guatemala: Procession” and place it where the youth will be able to see it. Invite them to open their eyes and describe what they see and what they think the whole poster might be showing. Repeat this process a number of times, covering up a different segment each time, until the youth think they know what the whole poster portrays. Then reveal the whole art piece. Reflect together on what the piece is communicating. How might this art piece be communicating about the Sabbath?

Put away the art and ask the youth to re-create it from memory. There’s a lot going on in this piece. What do they remember? What did they forget?

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Jesus and the Right Hand Man (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Print copies of the skit “Jesus and the Right Hand Man.”

Supplies:

- copies of the “Jesus and the Right Hand Man” Attachment: Activity 4
- Bibles

Invite volunteers to be take parts in the skit based on Luke 6:6-11. Following the skit, pose questions such as: Why did Jesus think he could do things that were illegal according to the law of his society? Why didn’t he obey the law? How did Jesus pay for ignoring the law? After the youth offer their thoughts, refer them to Luke 6:1-5. Reflect on what it means that Jesus is the ruler of the Sabbath. Invite the youth to create a skit that portrays a modern-day example of when ignoring the law of the Sabbath is okay. Encourage them to think in terms of how to balance Sabbath rest with Sabbath healing for others.



5 People of Value

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- poster “Out of Work,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Käthe Kollwitz
- Bibles
- magazines and newspapers
- scissors

Invite the youth to cut from the magazines and newspapers pictures of people that they think are “people of value.” Don’t offer any other explanation. When the pictures are accumulated, reflect on what made the youth identify these as “people of value.”

Display the art piece “Out of Work” (without telling its title) and invite the youth to study it for a minute. Then ask them to share one word, “popcorn style,” about the art piece. Go around the group several times, with the youth offering words that describe the piece or their feelings or impressions of the piece. After they have shared their thoughts and impressions, tell them the name of the art piece.

Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9 with the group; then offer the following information: Deuteronomy relates the Sabbath to the Exodus. In the Exodus, the Israelites, who had been valued by Pharaoh just because they could work, were now valued and loved by God, whether or not they were working. Work itself did not give them value. They were valuable simply because they were God's people. This art piece depicts people who are out of work. We've expressed feelings of . . . (repeat what youth expressed). Pose these or similar questions for reflection: What do you think society values in a person? What messages do you get from parents, school, society that your value is based on achieving and preparing for a successful career? How do these messages affect your ability to experience Sabbath? How do you feel about yourself even when you aren't achieving? How do we see others as people of value if they don't seem to be successful?

6 The Laws in Leather

Leader preparation: Become familiar with how to make the leather pouches (<http://www.tinyurl.com/2vvoq73>), and get the supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- leather and tools to make small leather pouches
- parchment paper
- pens

Invite the youth to turn to Deuteronomy 6:1-9 and read it together. Pose these or similar questions: Which commandments is Moses talking about here? Why is it important for Israel to follow the commandments? What are the people supposed to do to remember the commandments? Offer this information: In addition to memorizing the words from God, some of the Jewish people put these commandments in small leather pouches (called phylacteries) and tied them to their wrists or foreheads. Today, many Jews place verses in containers (called mezuzah) and attach them to the doorposts of their homes or doorways of rooms in their homes.

Invite the youth to look at Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Ask: Why does Moses say it is so important to keep the Sabbath? Invite the youth to reflect on what is important for them to remember about the Sabbath, and for them to do in relationship to the Sabbath. Have them write that on the parchment paper.

Provide instructions for making the small leather pouches.

(See <http://www.tinyurl.com/2vvoq73>)

Place the parchment inside the pouch when they are done. Encourage the youth to keep the pouches where they can see them on a regular basis and be reminded of the words inside. It doesn't have to be on their forehead or wrist, but perhaps hanging from the car mirror, a bedpost, the corner of the computer, etc. They may want to use the pouches to keep other words they want to remember and act upon as well.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Stand By (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Read Luke 6:6–10 with the group. Ask someone to read verse 8 again. Just as Jesus invited the man to come stand by him, Jesus also calls us to stand by people with disabilities: physical, mental, or emotional challenges. But what does that mean? Whom do you know that you already “stand by”? Whom do you know that you could stand by more often? Who stands by you? Invite the youth to contemplate these questions, and when they are ready, to stand and simply say the name of someone they stand by, or who stands by them.

When all are standing, close with a prayer for the youth in your group and for those whose names were mentioned.

8 A New Tattoo

Leader preparation: Carefully consider how your youth and their parents will feel about tattoos before you do this activity. That will affect whether you use washable or more permanent markers.

Supplies:

- Bible
- candle
- washable or permanent markers to be used for tattoos

Light the candle, dim the lights, and invite the youth to sit quietly and take several deep breaths — breathing in and letting it out slowly. After a minute or two of this quieting time, read Deuteronomy 6:4–9, except instead of saying “Israel,” say “my friends.” Then spend another moment or two in silence. Ask the youth to think about what words or concepts they would consider to be the most important active aspect of their spiritual life. This should be something that they do, or would like to do, as part of their faith, not just something they believe. Then ask them to think of a graphic or word that symbolizes and summarizes that concept, and create a tattoo. They may draw the tattoo on themselves or pair up with someone else to do the tattoos. Ask those who are willing to share with the group what their tattoo means to them.

9 The Gift of Sabbath

Leader preparation: You will need to purchase or create the small gifts that you will be giving. Wrap the gifts separately, and then place them in a large box and wrap the box.

Supplies:

- a small gift for each youth
- large box
- wrapping paper

Begin by making the following statements and asking the youth to state whether they agree or disagree.

- From everything I've heard so far, keeping track of this whole Sabbath thing can be a pain.
- From everything I've heard so far, this Sabbath thing is a pleasure.

Reflect together on the responses. When is keeping the Sabbath a pain or a pleasure? What was it to the people of the Bible? What did God mean for it to be? What makes it a pain? What makes it a pleasure?

Hold up the large gift-wrapped box. Sabbath is a gift. It is a gift that God created as part of the original creation, and it is a gift that we can now enjoy or ignore. Ask the group if they want to enjoy or ignore what's inside the box. (Hopefully they will want to enjoy it.) Invite them to open the box and have each person take one of the small gifts. After they have opened their gifts, explain to the youth that the gift is a reminder that Sabbath is a gift to them, and invite them to enjoy finding time to have Sabbath in their lives.

Reflect

The intersection of discipleship and Sabbath is both hard work and no work at all. For some cultures, it is hard not to be working hard. For other cultures, it is more natural to relax. What have you felt about Sabbath as you prepared and taught this session? What words do you want to write on your forehead and the doorposts of your home?

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Attachment: Activity 4

Jesus and the Right Hand Man

Characters: Jesus, Right Hand Man (his hand is clenched tight and folded back at the wrist), Scribes and Pharisees

Jesus is standing and preaching. Others are sitting and listening. Jesus is preaching while others are whispering to one another.

Scribe 1: (*whispers to Scribe 2*): Let's keep an eye on him. He talks a good line. But he doesn't always practice what he preaches, if you know what I mean.

Scribe 2: (*whispers back*): I know. He says he fulfills the law and the prophets but he disobeys the law.

Scribe 1: Especially on Sabbath.

Scribe 2: Exactly. See that guy over there?

Scribe 1: The one with the bad hand?

Scribe 2: Yep. Just you watch. You know Jesus won't be able to resist healing him.

Scribe 1: I'm watching, man, I'm watching.

Jesus looks over at the whispering scribes. He stops his preaching.

Jesus (*to Right Hand Man*): Come up here. Stand beside me.

Scribe 2 (*whispers*): See? What'd I tell you?

Scribe 1 nods and watches intently. Right Hand Man stands beside Jesus. He looks scared.

Jesus (*to scribes and Pharisees*): Okay, here's my question to you keepers of the law: Should a person do good or harm on the Sabbath? Should a person save life or destroy it?

Pharisees start whispering to one another.

Pharisee 1: We can't say, "Do good," because then he'll heal the Right Hand Man.

Pharisee 2: And, of course, we can't say, "Do harm."

Pharisee 1: He did it again - tricked us with his words.

Pharisee 2: I hate it when that happens.

Jesus stares at them awhile, but they offer no answer.

Jesus (*to Right Hand Man*): Stretch out your hand.

Right Hand Man stretches out his hand. As he stretches it out, he opens it up and he is amazed. He starts waving it around yelling about his hand being healed.

Scribe 1: This is getting ridiculous!

Scribe 2: What makes him think he can do that on the Sabbath?

Pharisee 1: This has to stop!

Pharisee 2: He has no respect for the law. He's gonna pay for this.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Christian Tradition

About this Age Group

The world is changing rapidly, and youth are often more aware of, comfortable with, and even in charge of the change than are adults. The young people in a sense are saying, "Since the old people don't understand the future, we must take charge." Youth question our institutions, including the church. Aging congregations confront a generation whose music, technology and dress clash with century-old traditions. Youth are more interested in having their needs met than having traditions sustained. So churches are incorporating contemporary worship, relaxed dress, and social networking modes of communication. It is important to help them discover the benefits of tradition, the dangers when it is lacking, and how tradition is always being reshaped to meet the needs of the day.

About this Exploration

Throughout the history of the church the practice of Sabbath has run from narrow to broad. Certain faith traditions establish restrictions concerning a Sabbath day, limiting everything from household tasks to social activities. Other traditions focus on the intent of the practice: worship, study, and rest. All these traditions highlight rest and re-creation. Current understandings have broadened Sabbath to embrace the practices of justice and of devotion in and around the moments of our daily lives. These various interpretations provide the foundation for our practices of Sabbath today.

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Mark 6:30–34, 53–56
Isaiah 58:9b–14

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1. Hand Designs of Church (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

Leader Preparation

Consider the traditions that have been part of your life and the Sabbath. Did you go to church because it was your family's tradition — “because it's what we do”? Did you wear certain clothes, sing certain songs, worship in certain ways because of traditions? And now, how do Sabbath and traditions intersect in your life? In the same ways? Is your tie to traditions helpful or hindering to your keeping of Sabbath? As you prepare for this session, take the opportunity to learn from the youth — young people who bring a different perspective to traditions. What can they teach you?

Prayer: God, you created Sabbath, and you created us with free will. You've instructed your people through the generations on the importance of keeping the Sabbath, and your people have made choices to observe it in different ways. Even Jesus acted differently on the Sabbath from how he was expected to act. Guide my choices. May I understand the value of traditions, as well as the value of giving them up to serve your people. Amen.

Play the church/steeple/people hand game. Some of the youth may know this finger play from their childhood. Interlock your fingers with the fingers inside. “This is the church.” Then point the two index fingers up together. “This is the steeple.” Move the thumbs apart. “Open the doors.” Keep fingers interlocked, but turn your palms up and wiggle the fingers. “And see all the people.” This game portrays a traditional view of a church: a building with a steeple, and it's full of people. And, traditionally, there are certain times when people gather in a church building, such as on Sunday morning or Wednesday evening. Pose this question: “For how many of you is Sunday morning a highlight of your week? Please stand up and do the game again if it is.” Allow time for the youth to respond, then continue: “Okay, for how many of you is your time in church kind of neutral, so-so. If that's you, stay seated and do the game again.” Allow time for responses, then continue. “Finally, for how many of you is going to church something you have to do, and if you had a choice, you would not do it? Put your head on your hands and pretend to sleep.”

Allow time for responses, then say: “What would you do if you could create a Sabbath of your own choosing? Let's say it has to include rest and worship, but from there, you design it. What traditions would you keep? What new things would you incorporate? Think of what it would include, when it would be, and then figure out how to communicate that with your hands only.” Allow youth the time they need to come up with their “hand designs,” then have them share them and see if others can guess what they are portraying.

2 Tradition!

Leader preparation: Locate a video of “Fiddler on the Roof.” Invite someone to come to share with the group some of the long-held traditions in your congregation.

Supplies:

- video of the song “Tradition” from “Fiddler on the Roof”
<http://www.tinyurl.com/2tsgob> and a way to show it

Begin your session by showing the video clip “Tradition” from “Fiddler on the Roof.” Ask the youth: In what ways are traditions good? In what ways are they bad? Invite your guest to name some traditions of your congregation. Encourage the youth to identify those traditions they like and those that have no meaning for them. Finally, narrow it down to Sunday morning traditions. What aspects of the building itself, the worship, the leadership, the music, where people sit, etc., are steeped in tradition? Which traditions do the youth appreciate?

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.



3 Going to Church

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- paper and paints
- poster “Going to Church,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters8>, by William H. Johnson

Invite the youth to study the art piece “Going to Church.” What feelings do they sense in the picture? What feelings does the picture arouse in them? What do they think about the people in the piece? What might those people be thinking? What are the similarities between this piece and how the youth go to church? What are the differences? Obviously, the mode of transportation is different, but encourage the youth to look deeper.

Next, invite the youth to create their own “Going to Church” art piece. Encourage them to portray feelings through the use of color and movement in their painting, as well as facts. Share the artwork with one another and talk about their feelings about going to church.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Move through Isaiah (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- Bibles

The Isaiah 58:9b-14 passage is packed with active, descriptive nouns and verbs, so get the youth moving through it! Work with them through the passage, one phrase at a time, coming up with movements to go with the words. Go through the passage several times until they know it well enough to do the actions as the words are read. (You may want to invite the youth to share this with the congregation.) Some of the interpretive movements may be obvious (such as trampling), and others may be more open to interpretation (pursuing your own interests could involve cell phones and computers).

Ask the youth to choose one phrase or verse that hit them right where they live — that the prophet could be saying directly to them.



5 Spring of Water

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- poster “The Public Fountain,” <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>, by Manuel Alvarez Bravo
- Bibles
- cold water and cups

Pass around cups of cold water. Invite the youth to study the art piece “The Public Fountain.” How do you imagine the water tastes to this boy? What other thoughts or impressions do you get as you look at the art? What might have happened right

before or right after this scene? What might the boy's life be like? Who provided this fountain? Why?

Divide the group in half: the IFs and the THENs. The IFs will read the IF verses in Isaiah 58:9b-14, and the THENs will read the THEN verses. Here's the breakdown: IF-9b, 10a; THEN-10b, 11,12; IF-13; THEN-14. Reflect together on the wonderful consequences of making good choices and doing the right things as addressed in this passage. Look again at verse 11 and at the art piece. When we do the right things, we experience refreshment as this boy may be experiencing it. Now focus on verses 13-14. Invite the youth to take off a shoe and throw it into the middle of the room as they say one way that they trample on the Sabbath. Follow up with the question: How would it feel not to trample on the Sabbath? What options do you have for change? To delight in God in a new way?



6 A Traditional Litany

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- copies of litany Attachment: Activity 6
- a pillar candle
- small candles for each youth

Dim the lights, light the candles. You or a member of the group will read the Leader portion of the litany. Explain to the youth that some aspects of the Christian tradition have endured through the years and are shared among many denominations. The litany is one of those long-held traditions. If they were to attend a Catholic mass, they might recite a similar litany. As they recite the litany, encourage them to be aware of the parts of the litany that address themes discussed in this session. Encourage them to enter into this time with solemn hearts, seeking God's presence and God's grace.

Sending & Serving Activities



7 Sick and Tired (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Make copies of the skit.

Supplies:

- copies of skit "Sick and Tired" Attachment: Activity 7
- Bibles
- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

Ask volunteers to perform the skit. Then read Mark 6:30-34, 53-56. Divide the group into two teams: The R and R team, and the Full-Time Ministry team. Ask the R and R team to create a top ten list for why Jesus and the disciples should take a break. Ask the Full-Time Ministry team to come up with a top ten list for why they should keep healing and helping everybody who comes to them. Ask the teams to write their lists on newsprint. Compare and debate the lists. Is there a right or wrong answer here? What do they see happening in the lives of ministers and other full-time Christian workers that they know? How can they serve others as well as take care of themselves?

8 Let Me In . . . and Out!

Leader preparation: You can hear the tune of the song “Let Me Enter God’s Own Dwelling” at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>.

Supplies:

- copies of hymn “Let Me Enter God’s Own Dwelling,” (Tune: UNSER HERRSCHER), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong7>

Invite youth to look at the words of the hymn “Let Me Enter God’s Own Dwelling.” If your youth know this song and are willing to sing it, that’s great! If not, invite someone to come sing it for the group. Either way, with or without singing, ask the youth to study the words of the song, especially stanzas one and two. What do these words say about going to church? Then, using either the same tune or a tune of their choice, or a rap beat, ask the youth to create their own song. One stanza should be about being eager to go to church, and the second stanza should be about being eager to go out into the world and share what was learned and experienced in church.

9 People Pillars

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Supplies:

- note cards and pens
- a church membership directory, if available

The church is a building, but a building is just bricks and mortar. The real church is the people. The first verse of the song “We Are the Church” by Richard Avery and Donald Marsh (1972) says, “The church is not a building, the church is not a steeple, the church is not a resting place, the church is a people.” Invite the youth to think about the people in their congregation. Who are the “pillars” that hold it up? Which people keep the traditions going? Which people bring in new ideas? In addition to the pastors, who does the work of the church? Who does a lot of work behind the scenes, but rarely gets recognized for it? Come up with a list of people to send note cards of gratitude for the services they provide for your congregation, and write those notes cards during this time.

Reflect

What did you learn from the young people? What perspectives did they bring to tradition and Sabbath? What elements of what they said could be shared with your church leadership? Does your congregation value their input in church life? These youth are not only the church of tomorrow — they are your church today.

Attachment: Activity 6

A Litany

In faith let us offer our prayer, saying “Christ, have mercy.”

For the peace of the whole world, and for our salvation, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

For your church, and for all who minister in it, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy,

For the leaders of nations, that they may ever seek justice and peace, we pray to you,
O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

For all who are traveling, and for those in danger, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

For those who are in need, especially those who are hungry, sick, and dying, we pray
to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

For those who are frightened and alone, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

For those who are oppressed and suffer injustice, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

For rest and refreshment for our souls and bodies, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

Remembering all who have died (especially _____) and all the faithful saints, grant
us eternal life with you, we pray to you, O Christ;
Christ, have mercy.

Grant us your protection as we sleep, and guide us in all that we do when we awaken.
For all these things, and for whatever may be best for us, we pray in your holy name.
Amen.

From The New Century Hymnal (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1995), #879. Used by permission.

<http://www.tinyurl.com/35uushb>

Attachment: Activity 7

Sick and Tired

(based on Mark 6:30-34, 53-56)

Characters: Jesus, Peter, James, John, person being healed

Peter: Jesus, can we have a minute? We need to talk.

Jesus: Of course, um, just a minute. I need to talk with one more person here.

Peter, James and John look at one another and sigh loudly.

Jesus talks to person being healed, touches the person's shoulder, and says, "Go in peace."

Jesus turns to Peter: Now, you have my attention. You wanted to talk?

Peter: Yes. It's about last night. It . . . didn't turn out the way we'd hoped.

Jesus: What do you mean?

James: He means that the intentions were good. We were all exhausted and starving. We'd been so busy helping people we hadn't even had time to eat. So you said we should get in the boat and go someplace away from the crowds for some R and R.

John: It was a great idea, Jesus. But you know what happened. The people got wind of where we were going, and when we landed, there they were. Crowds of needy people again.

Jesus: Yes, I know.

Peter: And you know what happened. You felt sorry for them.

Jesus: Yes, I did. They seemed so lost . . . like a bunch of sheep with nobody to tell them what to do or where to go.

John: So, you taught them. And that's great, Jesus, really it is. But when do we . . . when do you . . . get a break? We can't keep going like this 24/7.

Jesus: But they are so sick . . .

James: And we are so tired.

Jesus (*pauses for awhile, thinking*): You're right, James. It's time for us to get away. Tell the guys to stock the boat with supplies for a couple of days. I know a quiet place where nobody will find us. We'll leave as soon as possible.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Context and Mission

About this Age Group

Teenagers live in a world where all too often it is “all about me.” But they are also maturing in their worldview. When they are exposed to opportunities to think beyond themselves, they are interested and intrigued with seeing the world from a larger perspective. This Context and Mission Exploration offers some windows of opportunity, but truly to walk through open doors, the youth will need more exposure than can be offered in a session or two. If you wish, use this session as a jumping off point to lead your youth to new vistas of service and mission.

About this Exploration

The prophet Jeremiah goes to the busiest places in the city to call the people to observe Sabbath as a day intentionally set apart by God. In the same way, we are called to take the gift that is Sabbath to our communities and then to the wider world. As communities of faith, we are encouraged to model Sabbath living that is joyful, inclusive, and not burdensome. The Corinthian church was challenged to rethink the way they lived out the Sabbath together in community. Maybe we will have to do the same! What do you mean — change?

BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:
Jeremiah 17:19-27
1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Exploring & Engaging Activities

1 Sabbath Assumptions (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate supplies.

Leader Preparation

Youth take cues from adults. As much as they want to be on their own, they still see and emulate what they see in adults. So, when this Exploration addresses mission, it will matter how much as a leader your heart is into mission. That will be different for everyone, and God gives different passions to each of us. But it will be important, as you present these activities to the youth, that your heart has already been prepared, that you are not in an “it’s all about me” mode, and that you want your faith to make a difference in the world. Prepare yourself through prayer, awareness, education, and if outreach activities have been a part of your life, hallelujah! Plan for more!

Prayer: *God, in the words of Francis of Assisi, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.*

Supplies:

- newsprint or whiteboard and markers

We often make assumptions when we talk about the Sabbath and making time for Sabbath. Ask the youth to make a list of some of those assumptions. You might use these ideas as starters.

- Assumption: People are so busy, and it’s hard to take time off. (But, some people are not busy. They have too much rest.)
- Assumption: People can take time off. (But, some people have no choice about working all of the time. They have to, just to provide the basics for their family.)
- Assumption: Sabbath is Sunday.
- Assumption: All cultures view Sabbath the way we do.

When the youth have created a list, talk about how each of those assumptions might be challenged, or what can be done about those assumptions. For example, what could the youth do to minister to someone who has too much rest? How could they educate themselves about other observances of Sabbath? How could they work for justice for those who have no choice but to work all the time?

2 Bread and Juice

Leader preparation: Bring a loaf of bread and grape juice to share with the youth. Invite your pastor to come and talk with the youth about Communion.

Supplies:

- uncut loaf of bread
- grape juice
- small cups

Invite the youth to sit around a table or in a circle. Break the loaf of bread in half. Pass the halves around, inviting everyone to pull off a piece of bread and eat it. Then pass out the cups of juice and invite them to drink it. When everyone has participated, ask: What did it just feel like we did? Some may say, “We had Communion.” However, they simply shared bread and juice. While this is similar to a celebration of Communion, there were no words of institution or prayers.

Reflect together: Why wasn’t this Communion? What makes the eating of bread and drinking of wine/juice Communion? Reflect with the youth on the word “communion.” What does “communion” mean? It means sharing of thoughts and emotions. When we observe Communion, we are to be in communion with one another and with Christ. Invite the pastor to talk about the observance of Communion in your denomination’s traditions as well as other Christian traditions. (Note: This activity transitions naturally into Activity 4, “What’s the Problem Here?”)

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for “easy preparation” (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church). Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

3 Sabbath Shuttle

Leader preparation: Get a large box (refrigerator size). Fix the box so that it fits over a chair, or so that a chair can be placed inside. You will need one of the group members to sit in the chair and look out. This is a crude shuttle vehicle. Paint it, and put the words “Sabbath shuttle” on the side. Prepare folded pieces of paper, one for each youth. The papers all say the same thing: “If, once a week, for one day, you could go anywhere and do anything to help people and to make this world a better place, where would you go and what would you do? Close your eyes and imagine that place and what you would be doing.”

Supplies:

- Sabbath shuttle box
- small papers with instructions (see Leader Preparation)

Explain that you have a slightly crude Sabbath shuttle available for them to use today. Have them take turns getting into the shuttle where they will receive further instructions. When each person gets in, hand him or her a folded piece of paper that says: “If, once a week, for one day, you could go anywhere and do anything to help people and to make this world a better place, where would you go and what would you do? Close your eyes and imagine that place and what you would be doing.” Give each person 2 or 3 minutes in the shuttle.

When everyone has been in the shuttle, invite them to share. Where did they go? What did they do?

Discerning & Deciding Activities

4 What’s the Problem Here? (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Write the words “What’s the problem here?” on a large poster or banner and display it in the room. The bigger the better! It should be the first thing that the youth notice when they enter the room.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- poster or banner with the words “What’s the problem here?”

Invite the youth to open their Bibles to 1 Corinthians 11:17-26 and to take turns reading the passage, one verse at a time. Stop after each verse and have the whole group repeat the question: “What’s the problem here?” Let the youth determine the answer to the question, and then continue with the next verse, through verse 22. After verse 22, ask the youth to come to a consensus on what the overall problem was that upset Paul. Write that consensus on the banner. Then continue reading verses 23-26. After those verses, ask: How does this recollection of Communion fit into this problem? Is it part of the problem? Part of the solution? How? Write those responses on the banner.

Now turn the discussion to how the youth view your congregation. When Communion is served, are there problems beneath the surface? How do they see the congregation’s members relating, not only to one another, but to the community around them? Is there integrity in taking Communion if there are hurting people outside the door? Draft a letter to the leaders of the congregation, naming both affirmations and areas the youth feel the congregation could work on.

5 Lay Your Burdens Down

Leader preparation: Locate and bring some heavy stones — one for each participant

Supplies:

- Bibles
- heavy stone for each participant

Divide the youth into groups of three or four. Ask them reflect on Jeremiah 18:19-27 using the following outline:

- a. Read the entire passage.
- b. Read it again, this time discerning its literal meaning for the people of that day.
- c. Read it again, this time asking: What does this passage mean to us today?

Bring the group together and share the results of their discussions. The burdens that Jeremiah talks about are things that they were literally carrying. But burdens can be things we carry in our hearts and minds as well as with our hands and shoulders. As you think about the burdens that you would like to get rid of, even if just for the Sabbath, pick up a stone and carry it around the room several times. When you are ready to put down the stone and the burden, place it in the middle of the room. As you lay down the stone, say a prayer giving God the burden that stone represents for you.

6 Lightening Others' Burdens

Leader preparation: If possible, arrange for the youth to access your denomination's website during this session. If not, bring a number of options and materials for your youth to look at. If the youth go online, ask them to investigate some of the involvements of their denomination in the world. These are activities where the denomination is working to lighten the burdens of people around the world. Another option is to invite one or more persons to come share with the youth about some of these options.

Supplies:

- Internet access or denominational mission information materials

This activity involves youth becoming familiar with denominational involvements in lightening the burdens of people across the street and around the world. It is hoped this awareness will encourage them to become involved in one or more of these life-changing opportunities. They will access the information either online or through materials you bring to the session. Another excellent option is to have someone come and talk about his or her involvement in one or more of these service opportunities.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 We End Up Where We Focus (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: None needed.

Supplies: None

Share the following story: Carol was fifty-three when she decided to take a motorcycle riding class. If all went well, this intense weekend of both classroom and on-the-bike learning would end up in a certificate that would allow her to get a motorcycle license. In general, things did go well. She learned what clothing to wear, how to start the bike, shift gears, stop quickly, and how to lean into curves. The hardest task to perform was riding a figure eight in a rectangular box drawn with chalk on the pavement. Her instructor gave this advice: “Don’t look down at where your wheel is -- look ahead to where you want to go. You will always end up where you are focused.” Carol passed the class and got her license, but if you’d ask her today the most important thing she learned from that weekend, she would say: “You will always end up where you are focused.”

Another method of setting direction in our lives is visualization. Many people, including athletes, use visualization to achieve their goals. They see themselves, in their minds, accomplishing the goal. A high jumper sees herself going over the bar. A violinist sees himself playing in a world-renowned orchestra. These methods can be a part of our faith practices as well. Take 5 minutes to think about something you would like to do for humanity. Visualize yourself doing it. Where are you? What are the sounds, sights, smells? Who is around you? How are you making a difference in somebody’s life? When the time is up, invite the youth to share these goals with one another. Allow them to pass if they wish.

Offer this challenge: Make this a focus for your life. Write it on your wall, your Bible, your mind. Keep it as a focus. And see where you end up.

8 An Altar of Prayer

Leader preparation: Locate and bring to the session large stones — enough to build a small altar. Plan to meet outdoors if possible. Purchase incense.

Supplies:

- large stones
- incense

In the Old Testament, the people of God built altars to God, and they burned sacrifices on those altars. The Bible says the aroma of those sacrifices was “pleasing to God.” This is how the people of God understood their relationship with God. Christians believe that when Jesus came, he replaced the need for people to make sacrifices to God, because his dying on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice. But perhaps there is something to be retained from the building of the altar, and the offering of communication with God. Invite the youth to use the large stones to build an altar. When the altar is completed, place the incense on the altar and light it. As the incense wafts upward, invite the youth to offer prayers to God. These can be prayers of thanksgiving, commitment, supplication; prayers for others they know as well as those they don’t know; prayers for themselves and their families and friends. Make this a “prayer fest” where many prayers are offered to God. Close with “And all of God’s people said, Amen.”

9 Shoe Prayers

Leader preparation: This activity requires preparation well in advance of the session. Contact global mission partners or other workers in outreach ministry programs of your denomination or your community and ask for a pair of their worn-out shoes. (In exchange, perhaps your group could fund a new pair of shoes for them.) If you need contact information for a denominational worker, ask your pastor or other church staff person. All the shoes should include a note from their owner about their work assignment, whom they are working with, and what their prayer requests are. If you are unable to get these shoes, another option is to get shoes from members of the congregation — shoes they may not need anymore. For many missionaries, especially those outside the United States, cost would make this activity impractical, but photos of missionary shoes, perhaps alongside old shoes from the congregation, could serve the same purpose.

Supplies:

- shoes or photos of shoes from mission workers or persons in your congregation

Place the shoes or photos you have acquired in the middle of the group, and invite the youth to each pick out one shoe or photo. When everyone has a shoe or photo, invite each youth to read the note with it, describing the person who used to wear the shoes. Go around the group and spend time in prayer for each person represented by the shoes. Then invite the youth to take the shoes home and to set aside a Sabbath time each day during the next week to pray for the person represented by the shoe.

Reflect

So, how did this session change you? And what about the youth? What difference will this session make in their lives? How will you follow up with them this week to see if they are carrying through on any of the suggested activities? How might you extend this session beyond the short time that you met together? That is a mission for you.

Keeping Sabbath



Exploration: Future and Vision

About this Age Group or Setting

Is the future exciting or scary for teenagers? Probably both. What difference can keeping Sabbath play in their future? In yours? Of course, we don't have actual proof, but we do know that God's Word instructs us to honor Sabbath, and God's Word is trustworthy.

About this Exploration

Sabbath implies renewal based in reflection. Rooted in the past, Sabbath beckons us toward the future. It calls us to encounter God in the present moment. Sabbath is a way for us to remember that we are God's beloved children. Awareness of God's presence can guide us through all of life's experiences. As God's people, we often find ourselves facing challenging times, not unlike those faced by the psalmist and by Jesus' followers after his crucifixion. At such times, a sense of God's presence can guide our choices toward a future filled with the possibilities of Sabbath transformation.

Psalm 119:105-112, 129-136

Matthew 27:51-66
(Matthew 26:14-27:66)

Leader Preparation

Sometimes the best way to become centered is to start out going in different directions. A first glance at today's scriptures shows that neither of them directly addresses the Sabbath. But another look reveals that the psalm has much to say about God's Word, and we know that God's Word has much to say about the Sabbath. The Matthew story stops before the account of Christ's resurrection, leaving us in a story with an unknown future. The disciples don't know what will happen next. Of course we do, and it is Christ's dance over death that we celebrate, knowing Christ holds the future and Christ holds our hand as we walk into it.

Prayer: Ruler of the dance over death, Sovereign of all that has been, is, and is to come, thank you! From the bottom of my hopeful heart, thank you that I can trust my tomorrows to you. Lead me in your path, and help me to lead the youth that have been entrusted to my care. Amen.

Session Development

For each session leaders may choose from 9 activities that help learners engage the practice of faith. It is best to select at least one activity from Exploring and Engaging, at least one from Discerning and Deciding, and at least one from Sending and Serving. The first activity in each category is designed for "easy preparation" (able to be done with minimal preparation using supplies normally found at the church).

Exploring & Engaging Activities



1 Take It with You (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Be prepared to share what you will take with you into the future.

Supplies:

- pens and paper

Invite the youth to consider this: What do you have with you right now that you will take into the future? Hand out paper and pens and invite the youth to write down their answers, but do not put names on the papers. Then collect the papers. Read the answers out loud. Did they think about people? God? Their own skills and abilities? The Bible? All these are important. Our future is built on our past and our present. Who we have in our lives now, habits we establish, our expression of our abilities, our relationship with God—all of these play important roles in our future.



2 I Woke Up This Morning Singing

Leader preparation: Invite members of your congregation who enjoy singing to join your group for this activity. Encourage them to come early enough so they are singing "I Woke Up This Morning" when the youth arrive. You can hear the song performed at <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong8>.

Supplies:

- copies of "I Woke Up This Morning" Attachment: Activity 2
- percussion instruments

Invite the youth to join in the singing and to add percussion instruments and really get into the song with their bodies, minds, and souls. Sing it as an African American spiritual should be sung! Sing the song as long as it feels right, and then move to the next part of this activity. Say in a whisper: "This is the day that God has made." Everyone responds in a whisper: "Let us rejoice and be glad in it." Say the same phrase a little louder, followed by the same response. Continue until you are all yelling it!

3 Fast Forward to the Future

Leader preparation: Locate the supplies needed.

Supplies:

- poster paper
- paint
- markers

Invite the youth to imagine a Sabbath time for them exactly ten years from now. Where are they? What are they doing? Who is with them? What are their plans for this time? What is the rest of their life like that impacts the way they keep Sabbath? Invite them either to paint something, to create a cartoon strip, or to write a poem that depicts their lives ten years from now. Share the creations with the group.

Keeping Sabbath

Using all 9 activities could take 90–120 minutes.

* To plan a session of 30–45 minutes, choose 3 activities using one activity from each category.

* To plan a session of 45–60 minutes, choose 4 or 5 using at least one activity from each category.

Discerning & Deciding Activities



4 Sabbath and Psalm Connections (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Locate the supplies needed.

Supplies:

- 1" x 8" strips of paper, enough for each person to have one strip
- Bibles
- pens
- scissors
- newsprint or poster paper

Give each youth a strip of paper and pen. Assign one verse from Psalm 119:105–112 and 129–136 to each person to copy it on the strip. There will be sixteen strips total. Place these in a pile in the middle of the group. Then ask each person to take one (or more if you have fewer than 16 youth), read the verse, and think about how it might be connected with Sabbath. While they are thinking about their verse, make a large banner with the title "Sabbath." Have the youth affix their verse on the Sabbath poster, and write the connection they made. If they see no connection at all, they may write that as well. Look at the poster together and reflect on the connections they made.

5 Not Knowing the Rest of the Story

Leader preparation: Locate the supplies needed.

Supplies:

- Bibles
- a variety of 36" strips of cloth of different colors and patterns

Ask the youth to read silently Matthew 27:51-66. As they read, tell them to imagine that they do not know the rest of the story. They do not know that Christ is raised from the dead. All they know is what they are reading in these verses. What stands out for them in the story? What do they wonder about? What did they notice about the story that they may not have noticed before? How does not knowing the ending affect how this story feels to them? Invite them to choose a strip of cloth that has colors or patterns that symbolize how they feel after reading this story and reflecting on the questions. Use these strips to make a weaving. Half of the group will place their strips horizontally. The other half will weave their strips vertically through the horizontal strips. As each person adds a strip, invite him or her to say something about the reflections and the cloth strip.

6 Light My Path

Leader preparation: Locate a place where you can turn the youth loose while wearing blindfolds.

Supplies:

- blindfolds
- Bibles

Take the youth to the location where they will be blindfolded. Give the following instructions: Until you hear me say “Stop,” you will be blindfolded and free to go wherever you choose. Keep silent. No talking or noises of any kind. You must keep moving -- no stopping, standing still, or sitting down.”

Allow the youth to wander around for about 5 minutes. Then gather them together for debriefing. What did they experience? What did they think and feel? Invite them to read Psalm 119:105. Reflect together on the fact that God’s Word provides direction and lights our way in life. God’s Word instructs us to honor Sabbath. When we don’t listen to God’s Word, we get lost. When we do listen and obey, we stay on the path.

Sending & Serving Activities

7 Prayer of Jabez (Easy Preparation)

Leader preparation: Read the story of Jabez in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Optional: For further background, read *The Prayer of Jabez* by Bruce Wilkinson, available at bookstores or online, <http://www.tinyurl.com/336xwfy>.

Supplies:

- Bibles

Invite the youth to turn to 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. Note what is told in the verses before and after this. Buried in the middle of a lengthy genealogy is the very short mention of Jabez. His mother named him that (Jabez means “pain”) because she was in pain when he was born. Jabez asked God for a blessing, and God honored his request.

There are four parts to Jabez’s prayer: First, he asks God to bless him. Second, he asks God to “enlarge his territory” or, in other words, to increase his responsibility. Third, he prays that God will be with him and stay close. Lastly, Jabez asks that God will keep him from hurt and harm. Some people do not like this prayer because they say it asks God to give material blessings. Others say that God does want to bless us materially. Some say that when we pray this prayer, we are asking to be blessed with spiritual opportunities to witness for Christ, rather than to be blessed with material things.

It is important to remember that this is only one prayer in the Bible. It would be a mistake to take this as the only example of prayer and the only way to pray. No one Bible prayer teaches us all there is to know about prayer.

How about if you just pray the prayer and let God take care of the rest? Pray it in relationship to Sabbath. Pray that God will increase your responsibilities so that you will make time for Sabbath. Pray that God will enlarge your opportunities to give Sabbath breaks to others. Pray that whatever it is God wants you to have and to do, it will be revealed to you. Pray it now, and keep on praying it every day from now on.

8 “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow”

Leader preparation: Locate a CD with the song “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow.” You can listen to a Leann Rimes recording on <http://www.tinyurl.com/3a48ukh>, and read the lyrics at <http://www.tinyurl.com/2e4d76e>.

Supplies:

- CD and CD player
- one Halloween mask for each person

Invite the youth to choose a mask and put it on. Go around the group, and have each young person say, while wearing the mask, what scares them about the future. Then play the song, and invite youth to take off their mask whenever they feel it is the right time, based on what the song says. When all masks are off, listen to the song again. Reflect together: Even though we don't know the future, and there are things coming up that could be scary, we know that God is in control, and Jesus walks with us.



9 Dance Your Way Out

Leader preparation: Locate the YouTube video

<http://www.tinyurl.com/lkulr2>

if it is still available and download it or view it on the Internet at your church. Gather colorful streamers and a CD of Christian music with a strong beat that youth can move to.

Supplies:

- poster "The Dance of Youth," <http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters7>, by Pablo Picasso
- YouTube video "wedding entrance dance" <http://www.tinyurl.com/lkulr2>
- a CD with Christian music that youth can dance to
- colorful streamers

Sabbath is not only a time of rest, but also a time to celebrate all that God has done, and will continue to do. Sabbath is a time to rest from past activities and become rejuvenated for the future. Sabbath can lead to dancing! Display the poster "The Dance of Youth." As the youth study the art, ask them to describe the feelings they see. Then show the video clip, "Wedding Entrance Dance." Play the CD and invite the youth to dance their way out of the room and out of the church, carrying the streamers. For those who aren't into dancing, they can make the streamers dance as they walk or skip.

Reflect

God's Word is indeed a lamp for your feet and a light on your path, and God's Word clearly gives reason and direction for keeping Sabbath. Now it's time to dance. When and how will you dance with Sabbath? Will you ask someone to keep you accountable?

I Woke Up This Morning

(This African American slave song became one of the important freedom songs in the Civil Rights movement)

I woke up this morning with my mind / stayed on Jesus
Woke up this morning with my mind / stayed on Jesus
Woke up this morning with my mind / stayed on Jesus
Hallelu / Hallelu / Hallelujah

Singing and praying with my mind / stayed on Jesus
Singing and praying with my mind / stayed on Jesus
Singing and praying with my mind / stayed on Jesus
Hallelu / Hallelu / Hallelujah