

# **Sabbath and Holy Disruption**

*by Glynn Young*

When we first moved to St. Louis, we lived in a suburb that had two large synagogues or temples. In fact, we were the westernmost of three adjacent suburbs with large numbers of people of Jewish faith. On Saturdays, it was not unusual to see Orthodox Jews walking to their synagogue. In St. Louis society, this observance of the Sabbath set them apart as few other things could or did.

At the same time, Sundays were governed by state blue laws. Very few stores or businesses were allowed to operate on Sunday. Shopping malls were closed, as were grocery stores. As a result, Sundays were phenomenally quiet and relatively unhurried days.

Thirty-five years later, those notions of the Sabbath as a day of quiet and rest seem charmingly quaint. Our secular society has roared ahead, driven by frenzied schedules, the demands of commerce, and general “busy-ness.” We need those weekend days to get done what we don’t have time for during the week, and if we fill them with children’s and professional sports activities, entertainment, and yard work, well, the time is there to be utilized.

What happened to the idea of rest? Whether our understanding of the Sabbath means Saturday or Sunday, have we sacrificed the idea of rest in our rush to get things done and accomplish what we otherwise wouldn’t have time for?

Have we let the culture define the Sabbath for us?

We Christians know that Jesus delivered us from the stifling rules of the Pharisaic Sabbath. “Man is not made for the Sabbath,” he said in the Gospel of Mark, “but the Sabbath for man.”

But did Jesus liberate us from the demands of the Pharisaic Sabbath only for us to deliver ourselves into the demands of just another busy day of the week?

We’re freed from the religious constraints, but have we recreated the Pharisees’ practice of making ourselves for the Sabbath?

The answer is largely yes, I think. It’s an answer we’d rather not think about, because our lives are so busy, so crammed, so scheduled, that a change like observing the Sabbath would be a huge disruption.

Perhaps that is the point.

Perhaps that is what the Sabbath is meant to be—a disruption.

Perhaps God deliberately inserted a day meant for rest—rest—because he had to make it sacred for him if we were to observe it as a day of rest for us.

We need a day of rest for our physical and emotional well-being; to stop the crazy busy-ness.

We need a day of rest for our spiritual well-being, a time to reflect, pray, fast, and talk with God and with our families about God.

We need a day of rest to instruct and encourage one another.

We need a day of rest to improve and refresh our minds.

We need a day of rest to welcome God's blessing for ourselves, for our churches, for our communities, and for our nations.

We need a day of rest to define ourselves as the people of God, not as St. Louis Cardinal nation, the Little League coach, the movie fan, the grocery shopper, the Sunday gardener, or the consumer filling a shopping cart at the mall or the electronic shopping cart online.

Our neighbors will think us strange.

Observing the Sabbath would mean upset and disruption. But that is what God intended it to be – a disruption of those hectic, crazy schedules. It was man who burdened the Sabbath with rules, regulations, and prescribed ways of behaving. God didn't do that. And as Jesus knew, the religious Sabbath rules and regulations were ultimately meant to glorify man, not God.

Can we disrupt our lives, and the lives of our families this way? Can we say "Enough!" to further encroachment by secular society? Can we enjoy the Sabbath as God designed it to be enjoyed? Can the Sabbath become a day of sacred joy?

The answer is...

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### **Prayer:**

Creator God,

We ask for strength so that our answer to your invitation of Sabbath is yes! Yes, we will enjoy the Sabbath and allow it to be a day of sacred joy! We pray to find support with and our community so we may find true rest in the holy disruption. Help us to not feel discouraged when others find us strange or question what we are doing.

We pray this in your Son's name who taught us keep Sabbath. Amen.

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### **Questions:**

1. How has the American attitude toward rest changed in your lifetime? What groups or businesses still make a statement about their beliefs by taking a regular day off?
2. How does practicing the Sabbath give you perspective? Do you lose that perspective when you don't observe the Sabbath regularly?
3. What kind of a message does your current schedule send to others about your priorities?
4. We often think of disruptions as a bad thing. When have disruptions turned into a blessing for you?

<http://www.thehighcalling.org/faith/disruption-sabbath#.U9JpGfldXXd>