

# EPISODE 025 - WORK HARD, SABBATH HARD

WITH NANCY RAY

## Intro

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it Holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. Now, am I the only one who feels like this has been completely lost today? Sundays are exhausting. Saturdays are packed with house projects and family events, and the Sabbath feels like this antiquated notion from the Old Testament that just doesn't exist today. But the truth is the Sabbath didn't expire. It was a rhythm that God gave us quite literally from the beginning of time.

Today, I'm going to give you a little history lesson on what exactly happened, how we got to where we are today, why I believe that we lost it, and how important it is for us to embrace the Sabbath as a very real rhythm of our lives.

You're listening to Work and Play with Nancy Ray, Episode 25.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories, work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy take place. This is a podcast all about learning to work and play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Listen in.

## Content

I'm going to be the first one to say I love to work. It's a blessing and a curse. I can kind of be a workaholic sometimes. But truly, at the end of every day, I love the feeling that I gave it my all, checking off my list, being on my game, seeing my inbox dwindled to zero, sending completed projects to clients. I love it. I love the fulfillment that work brings, and God made us to work.

I believe that work is good and it feels good to know that you've done a job well at the end of your day. But, I also love to rest. I love to have a complete day of rest with no work, no thoughts of clients or emails, no stress, no obligation. I love to just get outside with my family. Love to go on hikes. I love just to spend as long as I want somewhere without feeling like

there's a timeframe or deadline that I have to meet. Yeah, I love it when there's no deadline. I love when I can just be somewhere as long as I need to be. I love praying. I love connecting with the Lord. I love having a movie night complete with pizza, my husband, my crazy, messy kids. I need that rest. We all crave it. Regularly we need it. We all do. But for some reason this Sabbath rest, this weekly rhythm of just stopping all work has been lost.

So let's first dive into the history of the Sabbath, starting at the very beginning. Sabbath was one of the very first rhythms that God created. He created day and night. He created a week over the course of seven days when He made everything. And at the end of the week, He created the Sabbath. He himself, the God of the universe, rested and honored this rhythm that He made. Think about it. Did he need to rest? He's God. Did he need to do that? No. Did He want to? Did He do it for our good? Absolutely.

Fast forward a few hundred years, and mankind got pretty self-dependent. We veered way off track from these rhythms that He made for us. We thought we could do it all ourselves in our own strengths, when we wanted, how we wanted. So that's when he gave Moses the 10 Commandments for our good, to keep us in these guardrails and boundaries that are good for us. The 10 Commandments are from the heart of a good father.

Now, when you're looking at all 10 Commandments, if you open your Bible to Exodus 20 and kind of read through them, it's pretty interesting. If you look at ... There's thou shall not lie, thou shall not have idols, thou shall not commit adultery, or envy, or murder. If you look at all of them, which one is the longest, most detailed, most specific, and almost seemingly most passionate commandment of them all? Keep the Sabbath. It's the only commandment that takes up several verses.

It says an Exodus 20:8-11, if you want to read it yourself, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it, you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

There's even a longer passage in Exodus 31, and he continues to expand on this. "Above all, you shall keep my Sabbaths. This is a sign between me and you throughout your generation that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath. It is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death." Let's just stop there for a second. Holy cow. That's kind of important. That's like an extreme consequence for not keeping the Sabbath. We should kind of be alerted. This is really, really important to the heart of God.

Continuing on, it says, "Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh is the Sabbath of solemn rest holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death." He says it again. "Therefore, the people of Israel should keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout

their generations as a covenant forever, never expires. It is assigned forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”

Okay, so I know I read a lot of scripture, but I kind of wanted to read a lot of it to say, “Hey, God talked about this a lot. It was really important to his heart.” And for a while, I think it was good, right? They took the 10 Commandments. They started obeying it, following it. They took one full day off. They stopped working. They really walked in obedience. The Jewish people really honored the Sabbath. And in Jewish culture today, they still do. Sabbath begins Friday at sundown. It ends Saturday at sundown. It’s something that every family worked toward each and every week. Life ordered around it, commerce ordered around it, worship ordered around it. Really, it was a rhythm that life was kind of centered around. So important to the heart of God.

But then, it kind of took a twist and turn in the Jewish community and culture it. It became a day of fear, like fear set in. Legalism took over. Pharisees made it a day of fear. We did what we do. We took this good gift from God, and we started to pervert it. We contorted it. Again, we proved how we can’t uphold the law. We’re not perfect. We cannot follow the 10 Commandments.

So it started getting twisted in the way that it became this day of legalism where literally they came up with so many other laws, and rules, and regulations to determine whether or not you were breaking the Sabbath. So taking a donkey home, washing the dishes, and in modern era, pushing a button on an elevator, all of that is definitions of work that you’re not allowed to do on the Sabbath. So it became this day where you’re terrified. I’m going to break the Sabbath. I’m going to break the law. And it was fearful, fear-based, and that’s not the heart of God either.

So continuing kind of on our history lesson, we saw that God made it in the beginning. We messed it up. He gave us the 10 Commandments. Again, we messed it up. Then, fast forwarding several thousand years, we come to Jesus, God himself with us walking this earth, a Jewish man walking into this legalistic day. And what does he do? He starts to kind of mess up people’s ideas of the Sabbath. He heals people on the Sabbath. That makes the Pharisees real mad.

But, I think it’s important to remember Jesus observed the Sabbath. He still modeled the Sabbath. The thing that he got in trouble for most of the Sabbath was healing someone, right? So thinking about Jesus’s model for us, a lot of us think, “Oh, the New Testament and Jesus, that means we don’t need to be legalistic and honor the Sabbath like we used to.” And while it’s true we don’t need to be legalistic or bound by the law, we have to remember this preceded the law. This was something that God gave us at creation, and Jesus himself honored the Sabbath and followed it.

Now, he taught us some really important things about the Sabbath. He said that man wasn’t

made for the Sabbath, but Sabbath was made for man. So he shifted our perspective on it, but I just think it's really important to remember that Jesus, honored the Sabbath, and he practiced the Sabbath, and it's something that we shouldn't disregard because we're in the New Testament now.

So in 321 AD, I thought this was really interesting, Constantine declared that Sunday was the new day off in the Roman Empire. This is the first big shift that happened with the Sabbath. It came from Acts 20:7. It says, "On the first day of the week, Sunday, we were gathered together." And with Christians and as believers, after Jesus rose again, it's recorded in the Bible that they started to gather on Sunday, and this kind of started this shift. So as New Testament believers, as Christians, Sunday became the new Sabbath and Monday kind of started the new work week, if you will.

Okay, now fast forward another couple thousand years and America comes into being, valuing freedom of worship. And since the Jewish culture worshiped Saturdays and still kept the Sabbath that day and Christians worshiped on Sundays, we really couldn't decide between Saturday and Sunday so we decided to take both days off. This is when a two-day weekend was born. Y'all, this is fairly new. It's as new as our country. In the thousands of years that humanity has been around, typically, it's been that you work six days and you take one day off. Or if you don't have any kind of faith, it just doesn't matter. You work all the days or do whatever you want. But, this rhythm of a two-day weekend is only as old as our country, 243 years old, right? A weekend is not the precedent in the Bible. The precedent in the Bible is you work six days, you take one off. But we can still be blessed by it, right? We can still be blessed by the two days off and use it well.

So here's where I think it changed. This is 100% my observance and opinion. I think for a long time America really did honor the Sabbath. Whether you're Jewish, you honored the Sabbath on a Saturday, or if you're a Christian, you honored it on a Sunday, I think for a long time we've honored it. When my grandparents were growing up, for example, the majority of stores used to be closed all day on Sundays. There were no restaurants open. It was expected. But with the rise of technology, with the rise of fast food, with the rise of convenience, and 24/7 stores, and two-day weekends, it all started to get muddled in our culture. I really think this has happened in the last 50 years. Weekends became this two-day zone of housework, eating out, doing family activities, filling our schedules with everything that the work week can't hold. And somewhere along the way, we lost rest. We lost what it looks like to cease working, to stop, to acknowledge the beautiful life around us.

Over the years, I'm sad to admit that I've become a workaholic. Now, I've been trying to practice the Sabbath regularly in my life for the last three years, but the three years before that I think I neglected taking a Sabbath for three years straight. I would work myself to death and then take a vacation and then start over again, and it's hard. We, our lives and our work, it was challenging. I was a wedding photographer, so I'd work on Saturdays. My husband was a youth pastor and he would work on Sundays, and so our weekends were very full of work. It was un-

healthy. I'm really thankful that God is teaching me and has taught me that Sabbath rest is a necessary part of our weekly rhythm of life that He made for our good.

So today, let's get back to the heart of the Sabbath. I'm going to share what I've learned about it and some practical ways to build your life around a Sabbath, to honor it as the Lord intended. I just think it's important to keep that history lesson in the forefront of your mind, that this veering off course from the Sabbath is relatively new in the context of the two-day weekend and kind of losing that cadence, but it's also happened throughout all of history. It's also something that we're going to have to fight for, that we as humans just automatically veer towards our own strengths and own schedules because Sabbath truly is a mark of trust, trusting God to take care of us in walking in obedience to him. So let's get back to the heart of it.

Now, at the basic level, let's talk about the definition of Sabbath. It is a day of religious observance and abstinence from work. Literally, it means a cessation of work. You just stop. It's kept by Jews from Friday evening to Saturday evening and by most Christians on Sunday. It's set apart as holy.

Now, let's look at the heart of the Sabbath. I think the heart of the Sabbath and the heart of the Lord in creating it can be boiled down to four points: stop, rest, delight, and contemplate.

The number one thing with the Sabbath: you have to stop working. You have to stop working completely.

Number two, you have to rest. You have to unwind. Take a nap. Don't do anything. Literally, just be. It shows that you trust. It shows that you trust that God is at work even when we're not.

Number three is delight. Look around you and delight. I have this picture in my mind. Of course I can't imagine what God looks like. But on the seventh day when he's resting, what was he doing? I think he was just looking at the world and delighting in it, just delighting in the beauty in creation. I think he created this beautiful earth, and humans, and animals, and plants, and the sky for us to enjoy it and delight in it.

And number four is contemplate. That simply means think about what God has done. Think about what he's done for you and me. Meditate on his word. Think about who he is to you.

So here are two keys to having a wonderful Sabbath.

Number one, work hard. In the six days that you have, work hard. And number two, plan for it throughout the week. Look towards the Sabbath. Know that that is almost like your finish line of work. And when you work hard and plan for it throughout the week, you can have a wonderful Sabbath.

So choose one, maybe two things, that really fill your cup to do on your Sabbath that's restful. And then, just leave the rest of the day as margin. So what fills up your cup? What are the things that make you feel like you can stop, rest, delight, and contemplate? For me, it's getting outside, listening to worship, going on a walk or hike with my family. For someone who hates exercise, maybe you just want to take a nap. You just have to ask yourself and your family, what are the best ways to enjoy a Sabbath? So when you're working for six days out of the week, work. Work hard. And when you're resting, rest.

One of the things I think that get a little bit difficult is all the household work. And a lot of times we work five days in our jobs, and then we have the two-day weekend to do all the household work. So this takes a little bit of planning ahead, right? You want to make sure that you're caught up on laundry, that all the dishes are done, that you plan some meals that are really easy, that take very little prep. I always love to use paper plates on a Sabbath just because you don't have to a lot of time cleaning the kitchen and you can spend more time resting.

Have strong boundaries. Take a break from social media on your Sabbath especially. Make sure that you talk to your husband and your kids and start to communicate these expectations and things for us to try together as a family to experience this new rhythm. The key to making this whole thing work really well is the boundaries of six days of work and one day of rest. When you're working, work. Bust it. Do everything you need to do as as much as you can in your work and in your home. All the work-related things in your home, house projects, laundry, cleaning, anything that you need to do, make sure it's all done before Sabbath comes. And then when Sabbath happens, you rest. You stop. Work hard, and Sabbath hard.

If you're like me and you love productivity and you love getting things done, this idea of a Sabbath can almost grate against who you are, which is why God is so good to command us to do this because it teaches us so much about His heart.

Think about it this way. Let's say there's a husband and wife, and this husband says, "Every Wednesday night is our date night. Every Wednesday night's our date night. I just, I want to spend time with you. I want to pursue you. I want to know you. I want us to spend time together. So no matter what, I want that night for us." The wife likes it at first, goes on the dates, does the thing. They're spending time together. They're pursuing each other, and it's so great. But over time, obligations come up. Work comes up. Household things come up. Kids need her attention, and it feels impossible, and so she starts to to reschedule or cancel these date nights. And over time, it just stops happening.

The husband is saying, "I want this time with you. We set this aside. This relationship is the most important relationship. This is all that matters. Why are you neglecting it?" I think that's the heart of God in the Sabbath. He wants to spend time with us. He wants us to fiercely protect it. He wants to remind us that rest, and being with him, and our relationship with him is the most important thing in this life.

Sabbath is also kind of like the tithe. If you think about it, it's this Old Testament principle that

didn't expire. It doesn't make sense logically to set aside 10% of our money and give it back to the church, to tithe our money. But God promise if we do that, then our money will be more blessed than you could imagine. And it's the same way with the Sabbath. If we set aside a day to not do any work, he blesses us. He blesses our work.

It's pretty amazing because the Jewish people are known for their prosperity, for their prosperous ways, for their wisdom, for their ways of managing money really well. They've always been known for that. It's just so cool because wouldn't it make sense in our logical minds, oh, you work seven days a week, so then you make more money or then you're more prosperous? But no. The truth is if you obey God and if you work six days and then set aside one for rest and just acknowledge that your relationship with him and obedience to him is the most important thing, he actually makes you more prosperous.

Come on, guys. Just think about Chick-fil-A, right? They're the most successful fast food chain there is right now, and I really believe it's because of God's blessing on them. They never are open on Sundays, which obviously we crave Chick-fil-A the most on Sundays. But I just honor them for that. I think that it's such an a beautiful example today of actually walking out this principle in our lives.

So, Sabbath rest is most definitely under the play category of Work and Play with Nancy Ray. A Sabbath is all about rest, and stopping our work, and enjoying life together, and enjoying the Lord. But I want to add that what I have found is that maintaining a Sabbath rhythm actually affects my work in a more positive way than I ever imagined. I show up Monday morning clear-headed, rested, reminded of all the reasons why I'm working so hard, which is to be with family, to invest in relationships, and to enjoy the life that God gave me.

So God said, "Six days you shall labor." Don't neglect that. He knows it's a good thing for us to find a job we love, to do it well, and to work hard. He knows that we have to work. There's no way to get out of that. Whether you're working for money or whether you're not working for money, but raising children, we all have to work. It's good.

King Solomon, the wisest person who ever lived, said, "I saw there is nothing better for people than to be happy in their work." Being happy in our work is a wonderful thing. But remember, Sabbath blesses our work. Sabbath is a good gift from a good, loving God for our good. God is passionate about it, and we should be, too. I think this practice of Sabbath should become more of an anchor to your work and your play than you realize. And I encourage you, try it if it's not a part of your normal rhythm.

Okay, it's time for the Work and Play Cornerstore. This is where I have a little bit of fun, draw stories from my personal life and experiences to bring you a book that I'm loving and a thing that I'm loving. And that's it. Could be funny, random, serious. Just know that it's always going to be something that I personally use or recommend. I'll get a tiny commission from anything bought, so I really appreciate it when you use my links because it's going to help me continue to bring this podcast to you every week. Plus, it'll just be fun. So stay tuned to the Work and Play Cornerstore features at the end of every episode.



Today, I'm going to be adding the book *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* by Peter Scazzero, as well as my favorite pair of sunglasses to the Cornerstore. So first, let's talk about the book. A friend of mine recommended this book to me about three years ago. This is so random, but I actually have this vivid memory of reading it in the bathtub and dropping my iPhone in the bathtub while I was reading this book. Ugh, that was before iPhones were waterproof. Then, I had to go to the store buy ... Literally, I think I had had the iPhone for like two weeks. It was brand new, and I had to go buy another iPhone, and it was horrible.

But I remember, I was reading this book, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, and it said something to the effect of we have the right to make mistakes. We're humans. I would have normally beat myself up so much about dropping that iPhone in the bathtub. But you know what I did? I got out of the bathtub, and I was like, "Hey, I have the right to make mistakes. I have the right to drop a iPhone in the tub. I'm just a human. It's okay." And it just brought me a lot of freedom.

But really, why I wanted to add this book to the Cornerstore is it talks about the Sabbath, and the daily office, and the importance of those two practices as believers. So this is one of the first books that really opened my eyes to the importance of Sabbath and taught me a lot of what I'm sharing with you today. Highly recommend the book. I think the church today really needs this book— it talks about emotionally healthy spirituality. Try to say that three times fast.

Okay, the second thing that I am recommending to you are my favorite sunglasses. Now, you can get these on Amazon. They're called Gamma Ray Women's Polarized Sunglasses. They are only \$15, 14.99 to be exact, and I love the brown lens on the matte beige. Now, I'm not a person who wears sunglasses a lot at all. I am not. I don't have very sensitive eyes. I really, most of the time when I'm outside I'm just not wearing sunglasses. But what I love about these sunglasses are the lenses are not super dark, but they just protect my eyes enough to not make it feel like it's crazy bright, and I love the way they look. And they're just \$15. So I can sit on them or a kid can break them and I can order a new pair. No big deal. So that's it for the Work and Play Cornerstore. I hope you enjoyed it.

Thanks for listening to Episode 25 of Work and Play with Nancy Ray.

Everything I mentioned today can be found in the show notes at [nancyray.com/podcast/25](http://nancyray.com/podcast/25). And you can find me at [nancyray.com](http://nancyray.com) or follow me at Nancy Ray on Instagram or Facebook almost daily. As we close, I want you to think about the Sabbath in this way:

*God set it apart as holy for our good so that we can stop, rest, delight, and contemplate. He cared about us so much that he would actually set this rhythm for us from the beginning of time, command us to do it, and then practice it himself during creation, but also when he walked this earth.*

Man, what a good God that he would weave that into the fabric and foundation of how we should live. I encourage you, incorporate Sabbath as a normal practice in your life if you haven't already.

Thanks for listening, and I'll see you next time.