

2-13-2018

# Remember the Sabbath

A.J. Swoboda

George Fox University, [aswoboda@georgefox.edu](mailto:aswoboda@georgefox.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes>



Part of the [Biblical Studies Commons](#), and the [Christianity Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

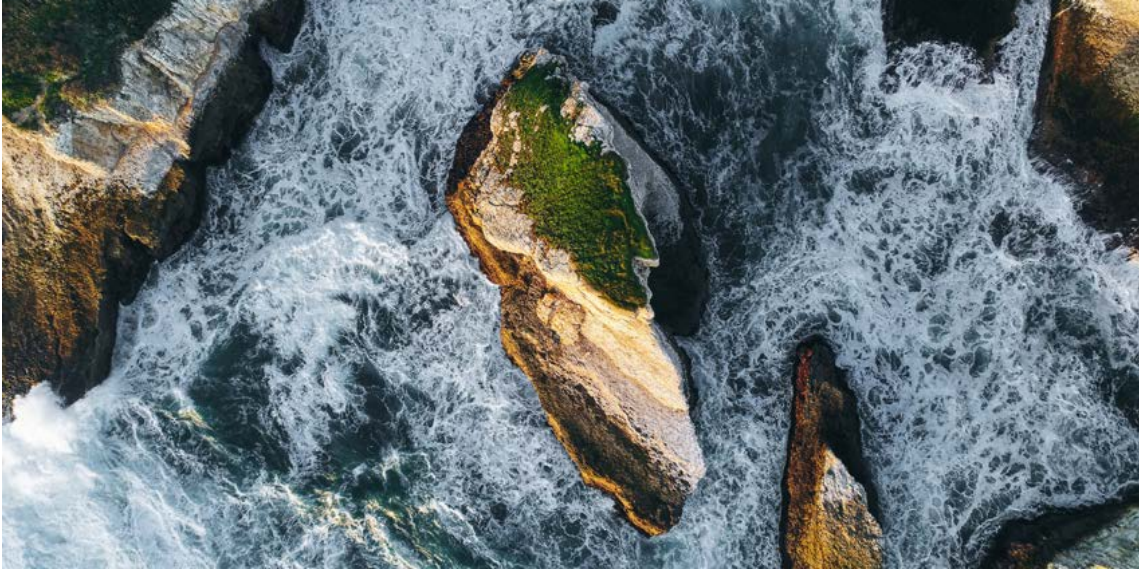
Swoboda, A.J., "Remember the Sabbath" (2018). *Faculty Publications - Portland Seminary*. 107.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/gfes/107>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Portland Seminary at Digital Commons @ George Fox University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications - Portland Seminary by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ George Fox University. For more information, please contact [arolf@georgefox.edu](mailto:arolf@georgefox.edu).

---

BY A.J. SWOBODA  
POSTED IN FEBRUARY 2018, SPECIAL  
TOPICS, THE INNER LIFE  
[PERMALINK](#)

## REMEMBER THE SABBATH



Microwaves. Smart phones. Cars. Our culture has more time-saving devices, technological conveniences, and cheaper mobility than any point in history. We now live in a 24/7 world in which every good and service is available around the clock at the touch of a button. We have more information at our fingertips and more options at our disposal and yet we are ominously dissatisfied. The rhythms that mark the success-obsessed West have taken their toll on our minds, bodies, relationships, and environment.

Sadly, the church has been swept up in the current of culture. We have become like the rest of the world: exhausted. It seems our souls are all but withering away; we're exhausted and on edge more often than we'd care to admit. So how do we work without becoming a slave to work?

It starts by remembering. "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (Exodus 20:8). Sabbath is as old as time, and yet is virtually unknown to most modern people, including Christians. As I explain in my new book *Subversive Sabbath: The Surprising Power of Rest in a Nonstop World*, we have forgotten how to rest.

Oddly, the reason for our exhaustion is often our devotion. We are well aware that God is the Lord of the Harvest. We work tirelessly around the clock to advance God's kingdom. Without even realizing it, we have been bowing to the altars of hyperactivity and progress. What we have forgotten is that he is also Lord of the Sabbath as well. The Western Church has been so busy working *for* God, that we have forgotten how important it is to simply *be with* God.

**WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT, WE HAVE BEEN BOWING TO THE  
ALTARS OF HYPERACTIVITY AND PROGRESS.**

In the beginning, humans were given rest. Genesis 1 unfolds in poetic rhythm, "Let there be light . . . Let there be a vault . . . Let the water . . . Let the land . . . Let there be lights . . . Let us make . . . By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of

creating that he had done" (Gen. 1:3–2:3).

The Genesis account tells us that God created humankind in a garden full of potential, yet their first day was not one of work, but of rest. Sabbath may have been day seven of the creation poem, but it was day one for humankind. Rest is so counter-intuitive to our culture, and yet humankind's first knowledge of God was that God rested and that they were to rest with him. Sabbath is that practice which reminds us that we were not created to *do*, but rather simply *be* with God.

God freely gave rest to the first humans; there had been no pre-requisite of accomplishment—they did not have to earn it. It appears to me, that Sabbath is the first image of the gospel in the story of the Bible. God's grace is given first, and work comes as a result, not the other way around. As it turns out, we don't work to please God, but we rest because God is already pleased with us. Sabbath, by nature, fights the instinct within us that says we are a slave—that we are what we do.

## AS IT TURNS OUT, WE DON'T WORK TO PLEASE GOD, BUT WE REST BECAUSE GOD IS ALREADY PLEASED WITH US.

It turns out that resting has tremendous benefits. When we practice the Sabbath, our whole lives change. We are able to sleep—and not just catch up. We thus have more energy and are more present with both the work we are doing and the people we are with. Practicing Sabbath is one way in which we allow God to heal our frenetic minds, our tired bodies, and our stressed relationships.

But humans are not the only ones to benefit from Sabbath. Imagine for a moment what it would be like if the whole world practiced the Sabbath. Imagine what it would be like for creation to be at peace, to experience God's shalom. The word shalom carries the meaning of both peace, as well as wholeness. Shalom is not merely the absence of aggressors, violence, or strife; it is the peaceful harmony that exists when things are as they should be.

It turns out that it is not only our minds, bodies, and relationships that are restored in Sabbath, but creation too. Sabbath hearkens back to how God created things to be. That, my friends, is a picture of Eden—a place marked by God's presence and peace. And in a world marred by chaos, that Sabbath is a powerful witness of God's goodness!

TAGGED: CREATION, GOSPEL, REST, SABBATH, SHALOM, WORK

---

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR



#### **A.J. Swoboda**

Dr. A. J. Swoboda is a professor, author, and pastor of Theophilus in urban Portland, Oregon. He is the lead mentor of a Doctor of Ministry program on the Holy Spirit and Leadership at Fuller Seminary, and teaches theology, biblical studies, and Christian history at a number of other universities and Bible colleges. He is the director of Blessed Earth Northwest, an organization focused on creation care issues and Sabbath in the Pacific Northwest. A.J. also serves as the executive director of the Seminary Stewardship Alliance—a consortium of Christian higher-ed schools that provide Christian training in creation care and are implementing sustainable practices. Previous to this, A.J. served as a campus pastor at the University of Oregon. His doctoral research at the University of Birmingham (U.K.) explored the never-ending relationship between the Holy Spirit and ecology. A.J. is also the curator of [www.greenjesus.com](http://www.greenjesus.com), a site on creation care. He is the author of *Subversive Sabbath* (Brazos Press), *The Dusty Ones* (Baker), *Tongues and Trees: Toward a Pentecostal Ecological Theology* (JPTSUP, Deo), and *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* (Baker Academic). You can find his website and blog at [www.ajswoboda.com](http://www.ajswoboda.com), or follow him on Twitter @mrajswoboda.