

# **Sacred Defiance**

## **Rest without Rigidity series**

### **by Chris Famisaran**

Good morning, everybody. Y'all have a good week? Enjoy the precipitation that fell earlier this week?

Let's pray.

God, we thank you for the opportunity to continue in our sermon series, "Rest Without Rigidity." As we continue to talk about the Sabbath, Lord, may we find rest and hope in you. In Jesus' name, amen.

How many of you love to exercise? Just a few of you? I like to exercise—I just don't like to exercise hard, because that requires hard work. But if you want to make gains, sometimes you have to put a little bit of effort into it.

However, there was one individual who went to the gym and got on the treadmill. This was no ordinary treadmill. Instead of just telling you how fast you walked or what incline you were on, it gave you feedback. When he started, it told him, "You're doing great, you're looking really strong, you're performing very well." But as time went by, the treadmill went a little faster and a little higher—the percentage grade went up. He was still doing okay: "You're doing all right, doing fine, doing good." Until eventually it said, "You've fallen a little behind. Work harder. Come on. What's wrong with you? Keep up." Nothing like a little bit of negative feedback for your life, amen?

Eventually, he doesn't get to the finish line. He just collapses because he's so tired. Even though he's running in the same place, every time he thinks he's just about to catch up, he falls behind. He's exhausted, but he's too afraid to stop. What if he loses everything? What if somebody else notices him not doing well? Finally, the man, in a fit of exhaustion, trips, and just like all the videos on YouTube, immediately falls back. The noise fades. He sits down. He breathes deeply for the first time in a long time, and he finally can catch his breath. He finally feels at peace.

How many of you feel like you've worked so hard and you're so exhausted, but by the time you get to Sabbath, you can finally breathe and have some peace? Or do you get to Sabbath and it's just another day—another day of being exhausted?

Sometimes people think you are what you produce. What are you contributing? Sabbath says, "You are loved because you are mine." When the world is telling you, "Buy more, do more, be more," Sabbath quietly says, "Be still and know that I am God."

Sabbath is not just another day. It's a declaration to say that I am God's, I am beloved, I'm a son, I'm a daughter, and I get to experience it. It's a weekly reminder. It's a reminder that it's not about what we can bring or who we are—other than that we are a child of God. My success, my reputation, everything that I try and do goes out the window, and I can simply be a child of God.

And yet, every day we're bombarded with messages saying that you need to do this, you need to do that, you need to do more, you need to be more.

Today I want to go to a couple of passages that we're going to look at. If you're joining us for the first time, especially online, there's a link in the description to a study guide. Bring out your study guides and your pen. Feel free to mark up—there's going to be some notes that we're going to share.

I'd like to go to the Book of Deuteronomy, chapter 5, verses 12 through 15. We're only going to briefly touch on this because I want to save this passage and also Exodus 16 for your small group lessons, whether it's today or later this week. If you're joining us for the first time, there are small groups either in person, and we also offer a Zoom option for some of them. So make sure—it's not too late to join.

Deuteronomy 5:12–15 says:

"Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, your daughter, your son, your male or female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest as you do. And remember—okay, this is what's different between Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5—remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day."

Imagine being an Israelite for many, many years. Several generations prior, you had been working under the conditions and enforcement of the Egyptian empire. Finally, you're released and having to start all over. God is having to teach—or in this case, remind—them of how he's called them to live. He reminds them, "Hey, I brought you up out of Egypt." The power of God was able to free them from their captivity.

There's a story told of a young professional who wakes up before sunrise—4:30 a.m.—checks his emails before brushing his teeth. He skips breakfast because he's got to get to work. Meeting deadlines, hustle, networking, meeting people, social media—every minute, every hour of his day is accounted for, every moment to ensure that he is succeeding. Even the idea of rest, intentional rest, feels like he's trying to hack the system.

Then one day, he walks past a sculpture in a park. There's a figure wrapped in chains, but the chains are made of clocks, dollar signs, and smartphones. He stares and says, "Oh, that's me." He's not physically tied up, not physically bound, but in many ways, he's enslaved by the expectations, by fear of falling behind. Just as we talked about being on a treadmill and this lie that all we have is to work hard and that's what we should do, God says, "No. Sabbath is here to break those chains." It's not just a break—again, it's a declaration: "I am not a slave to the clock."

Just as God takes the Israelites out of Egypt to give them freedom, he gives them the Sabbath. It's essentially a sign of freedom. We should also be reminded that we don't have to give in to the idea of this culture of absolutely hustling until we die, to not be bound by having to just buy stuff, to consume stuff. We're here not just to live, but to live well.

Now, am I saying that we shouldn't work hard? Absolutely not. In fact, I think you should be very diligent. I think you should work very hard Sunday through Friday. But as you work hard, ensure that you can create time, create space to be able to relax, to breathe, to experience Sabbath.

Today we're talking about sacred defiance—to protect that which God has given to us: a Sabbath, a sacred day, a Sabbath day. As we talked about last week, Sabbath is a day on the last day of creation that God set aside. God consecrated, God intentionally rested as an example for us.

So Sabbath is a return to God's rhythm, a sacred pause to walk in his ways and reject the noise of false narratives. Do we have a Sabbath every once in a while, or is it every week? It's every week. There's this rhythm: Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and finally Sabbath. We know it's coming.

When you think about Sabbath, do you get excited? Do you look forward to it? Or do you look at it as a time of dread—a sacred pause to walk in God's ways, to reject the noise, the opportunistic ideas, just to simply be at peace?

Every Sabbath we're here, we're called to worship. Sabbath is also a memorial of creation, a time where from Friday sundown to Sabbath sundown, we can simply clear our heads, clear our minds, and focus on our Creator, but also focus on our loved ones. The Creator is

the one, of course, who created and reminded us of our finiteness. Sabbath is a call to stop and slow down.

Sabbath is also saying no to the culture of hustle. I'm not saying that hustle is bad—it has its time and place—but it shouldn't be your whole life. When we think about this culture of hustle, sometimes the challenge is that when we're in this mindset, your identity is tied to that of the hustle. So you're constantly working hard, achievement and measuring worth by how much you can produce. Sabbath says, "Stop. I'm here to invite you to rest." Because if you don't rest, eventually the gas runs out and you have an empty tank, and then you have a broken car—that is, a broken body.

But there's also this sense of anxiety, because does the work ever really stop? Have you ever felt like you've been able to complete all of your assignments, or is there always somebody adding one more thing? Especially as an entrepreneur, when you have your own business, can you ever say, "It's all good and I'm ready to rest"? There's always going to be something there. Anxiety can creep up, and sometimes we're thinking, "Well, if I'm not working, somebody's out there to get ahead." Maybe, perhaps, you're also unable to rest because you feel guilt by even just taking a rest. Sometimes we think, "Well, if you're resting, you're just lazy, you're not motivated, you're not committed."

And then sometimes, too, technology—these devices. How many of you love to doom scroll at night right before you go to bed? What might be a 10-minute check could be three hours watching YouTube Reels or Instagram. Not saying technology is bad, but there's a double-edged sword because it can bring a lot of good, but it can also bring a lot of challenges. We're so connected, though. You can easily get a text, you can easily get an email notification, and sometimes, perhaps, maybe, just maybe, we need to be defiant and say, "No. Stop. Clear our heads."

A challenge I want to throw out to you—maybe today or sometime in the next couple of weeks: take a box, okay? And everybody in your family, put your planners, put all your devices in that box. I want to challenge you just to be together. How many of you—that scares you? "What am I going to do with my kids?" Be creative, okay? Detach, detox.

And then also, sometimes, even though we have technology, it can be the loneliest thing. I realized I cut social media out of my life for a while, and for the most part, I actually have. And yet I realized that there are three people that I don't have their phone numbers. It's kind of one of those things, like, I don't want to ask for the number, but I gave my number just in case they wanted to connect with me. Still, there's this gnawing sense of, like, I know overall it's better that I don't have social media consuming me, but I miss those friendships. Can anybody relate to that?

The last thing, too, is sometimes this culture of hustle—what is work and what is home? If you work from home, do you have a dedicated space just to work? And when you're on Sabbath, do you go to that space? Because oftentimes the lines are blurred. I could easily receive an email, a text, whatever, and all of a sudden it's like, I'm not able to rest. I'm thinking about how can I solve this problem?

Lastly, how many messages a day do you get saying, "You should have this, you need this, you need to buy this," or, "That looks tantalizingly affordable"? We lie to ourselves—just throw it on the credit card. Or we gamble and say, "I can afford it now and pay it off later." There's a quote from a movie that says, "The stuff you own eventually owns you." The stuff you own now will eventually own you.

I think sometimes it's nice being able to buy something. It's shiny, it's new. I don't remember who it was, but a famous individual moved—I think from Colorado or Connecticut to LA. He had never really had money. When he finally got that big payday, he went to buy his own place. It was a townhome or apartment or something. It was wonderful, beautiful, great. He had the greatest sound system, a pool table, everything he wanted. Finally, six months later, when he opened the door and walked in and sat on his couch, he realized, "Oh no, it's just a home. It's just the place I go to and sleep." While having all those nice things can be comfortable, he got accustomed to them. Again, I'm not saying that it's bad to have things, but what is your priority? Do you live for those things? Do they help you and enable you to succeed? Or are you looking at it as, "I've been able to succeed"? Much less, has God even helped me in this process?

We work so hard, but yet we don't take time to rest. So with that, we need to look to God to provide for our needs.

When you look at the book of Exodus, chapter 16—you're going to study this later in your small groups, but I'll briefly give an overview. The whole Israelite community goes to Elim, then to the desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. On the 15th day of the sixth month after they had left Egypt—roughly six months—what do they do? "I'm hungry." They start to complain. And what does God do? God provides. God provides manna. God provides their ability to eat and sustain themselves regularly. On Friday, what are they told? Get a double portion, giving this idea that God will provide. Just be faithful, preserve, and take care of yourself. So they ate manna for how long? Forty years. And yet God was faithful.

There's a story told of a man who was packing for a trip. He has a suitcase and a whole laundry list of things that he thinks he needs. He packs the clothes, the toiletries, maybe gadgets, books to read, snacks, maybe some things he doubles up—just in case. He tries

to stuff the suitcase to zip it up, and he's unable to. So he takes a few things out, but then tries to add two more things in. He's sweating, he's frustrated. "I want these clothes." His friend says, "Why don't you just take what you actually need instead of double or triple of what you're trying to fit in there?" "But what if I need more? What if I miss something? What if I'm not prepared?" You're not going to enjoy the journey if you're always worried about what you're missing.

How many of you have ever experienced FOMO—the fear of missing out? Sometimes, do we need to experience everything? Sometimes maybe we just need to take a time out, a break. The suitcase represents a culture that we live in because we're always trying to stuff more, do more, get more, and it never zips shut. Sabbath is a time to say, "Enough. Don't worry about the suitcase and just rest."

Dan Allender says, "Worry is anti-Sabbath." Worry is anti-Sabbath. It's easy for me to say that, right? It's another thing to really trust and not let that anxiety creep in. When you're worried about the bills, about how you're going to provide for food, how you're going to get things done—I've got all these things I need to accomplish and do, do, do, more, more, more. Perhaps God is just saying, "If you rest, you'll have a clear mind."

How many of you, when you were in high school or college and taking tests, would maybe stay up and get an hour's sleep, then go into that test at 8 o'clock in the morning, completely frazzled, hopped up on caffeine, with the jitters? How well did you do on the test versus doing the best you can, studying, getting a good night's rest so at least you can think clearly? Sometimes all we need is just a little bit of a break.

Now, I want to go to Luke 13. This is the primary verse I want to look at today. Luke 13—a story that some of us might be familiar with.

Luke 13, verse 10: "On a Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues. And a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are free from your infirmity.' Then he placed his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God."

How many of you, if you were in the synagogue there, would say, "Praise the Lord, we've just witnessed a miracle"? We'd all say that. However, verse 14: Indignant because Jesus had healed on what? The Sabbath? How dare he! The synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work, so come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

It boggles my mind. I can't put the two together—to see that you've just witnessed a miracle, a woman who's had an infirmity for eighteen years and is fully restored. If she's been crippled, if she's had an infirmity, meaning she probably can't work, she's had to rely

on other people for her sustenance. If she's even married, she's probably dependent on friends and family. Maybe she feels like a burden, or her loved ones feel like she's a burden on them. Who knows? What we know is the woman was crippled for eighteen years, and Jesus restores her, allowing her to finally have peace and rest for the first time in eighteen years.

Sabbath is not just about rest; it's about being restored. So of course, he then says, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing.

Jesus uses a story: Do you untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to water? Meaning, don't you actually care for your animals even on the Sabbath? There's enough rabbinic literature back then to support that this was a common theme. So Jesus goes one more: How much more than an animal, a human being? "Oh no, it's Sabbath, we can't heal that person." You're willing to help feed or water an ox or a donkey, but a child of God who's been hunched over by a demon for eighteen years—she's not worthy of being restored?

I think a question that maybe we have to ask ourselves is, even though we look for Sabbath, how many of us ask ourselves or say to ourselves, "I don't deserve that rest. I haven't accomplished my goals. I'm going to fall behind." I think sometimes the hardest thing that we have to get over is actually saying, "No, I do need rest." You need to give yourself permission to rest because God says it.

But we can easily read that, hear it, and yet it's another thing to actually let it sink in—to get behind the eyes or inside the ears to the brain and say, "No, I have to take a pause. I have to take time out. Not just because God says it, but because I need it."

So Sabbath is about restoration. Sometimes Sabbath means saying "no." I defy all of the cultural norms telling me I need to do this or that, and instead I go to that which is restful, sacred, and a gift. Sabbath was not made to be a burden. Man was not made for the Sabbath; Sabbath was made for us. Sabbath should be looked forward to, desired, and experienced—not approached with a sense of dread.

So Sabbath is about restoration.

I want you to reflect this week, okay? What barriers or chains do you need to break through that prevent you from experiencing God's rhythm of Sabbath? I was thinking about this last night: What chains do I need to break through that prevent me from experiencing God's rhythm of Sabbath?

This week, I want you to write down three ways you can plan ahead—Sunday through Friday—to create time and space to honor and experience the Sabbath, and then follow through on it. Don't just write it down. Don't just think about it—do it. Can we do that?

All right. I look forward to hearing what you discuss and share in your small groups. This week may be a powerful, powerful time of sacred defiance. Defy what you're being told—that you're less than, that you need to do more—and simply be able to find rest through our Lord.

Let's pray.

Lord, it is so hard sometimes to just stop, because we feel like we're going to fall behind, or that we're not worthy enough, that we're not good enough. Lord, we're simply your children. Help us, Lord, to be intentional with how we spend our time Sunday through Friday, so that by Sabbath we can experience peace and restoration.

Be with us this week. Help us to be ambassadors of your love and grace, and may others know the peace that you offer to us. In Jesus' name, amen.

Grace and peace, everyone.