

# THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

## GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 8

### CONVERSATION STARTER

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If you could do anything you wanted for 24 hours straight, what would you do? How would you spend your day if you had no other obligations or responsibilities?

### THE SABBATH FOR US

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In this week's story, Jesus comes under fire from the religious leaders for healing a man on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a key part of Jewish religious observance, with roots going all the way back to Creation and Israel's wandering in the wilderness. [Watch this video on Sabbath](#) from the Bible Project with your group. God created the world in seven days, a symbolic way of pointing to the world as God's Temple where God rules and reigns over the earth. In the wilderness, God tells the Israelites to gather manna, miraculous bread from Heaven, for six days, but then on the seventh day, they must rest just as God rested on the seventh day of Creation. But this was not just about putting their feet up and taking a day off. The Sabbath was about pausing, stepping back from their regular routine, and remembering how God saved them and continues to provide for them as the ruler of the universe.

The Sabbath is not just an ancient practice—it's one we can participate in today! By creating a rhythm of pausing from our regular routine to fix our eyes on God, we remember that we are not ultimately in control of our lives. Everything we have is a gift from God, each and every day. There's a growing movement of people who practice the Sabbath today, taking 24 hours to pause from work and the distractions of the world to rest, worship, and play. But even if this sounds too intimidating to you, there's another way we can practice Sabbath—by being faithful to attend worship each Sunday together. Instead of Sundays being only about rest, we ought to come together as a church to remember all that God has done for us and continues to do for us. It's a pause from our regular work week, from the hustle and bustle of our schedules. A time to pause and fix our eyes on God, the author and sustainer of our lives.

How do you typically break up your normal routine to refocus and remember God's presence in your life? What could a modern practice of observing the Sabbath look like for us today? Discuss with your group.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. What challenges come to mind for you when you think about the idea of spending 24 hours practicing a Sabbath?
3. Where the Sabbath was meant to be a time of restoration for God's people, the religious leaders turned it into a burden. Is it possible that there are times when our own religious tendencies or rituals get in the way of offering mercy to those who need it? How can we, as individuals and as the church, adopt Jesus' principle of *mission over model*?
4. We are all searching for healing, in one way or another. Where do you find yourself turning to receive healing? In other words, what are the things, places, or people that we think can heal us—and is that actually true?

## WEEKLY PRACTICE

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We're taking a cue from John Mark Comer's book, "The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry" this week for our practice. If you're not ready to commit to a 24-hour Sabbath, then why not try a **Digital Detox**? Digital addiction is real! For many, the idea of turning off all your devices for a full day sounds terrifying. Some people even label it irresponsible or lazy. But there are so many benefits to a weekly digital detox, not the least of which is an increased capacity to encounter God and one another in rest. Here's how it works:

1. **Make a plan.** Decide what you want to do. You can completely shut off your devices for a full 24-hour day or simply limit your time on your phone and/or social media. Select a few moments to check your phone in the event of an emergency. Use wisdom and start with what makes you comfortable. Just remember, there is an addiction in most of us to our phones, so we can't just wing it and hope for the best. And we should expect some "withdrawals" in the first few weeks of detox.
2. **Make any social plans ahead of time.** Include this in your preparation day. Schedule times for coffee, brunch, or your picnic at the park with family or friends, so you can stay offline as much as you want.
3. **Put your devices away.** Whether you completely power off all devices or just choose to limit your time, either way, put them away — in a box, drawer, or closet. Out of sight, out of mind.
4. **Spend an entire day in rest and worship.** If you think this is legalistic or far too impractical, just try it for a few weeks. Ideally, try it for a full month, as it takes a while to get over the dopamine addiction we have to technology. If after a month, you don't feel a marked increase in love, joy, and peace in your emotional health and spiritual life, feel free to try something else.