



SABBATH

KNOWING GOD | Connection Group Discussion Guide | Week 5

Connect (5 to 10 minutes)

Come together to build relationships through fellowship and sharing about this week's worship.

- Take a few minutes to share your thoughts about worship this week.
 - What aspects of worship did or did not connect with you?
 - What story or illustration made an impact on you?
- God creates an extra day for next week, and next week only, called Blursday. You have no plans and no commitments. You can do anything you want with that day. What do you do?

Context (30 to 40 minutes)

Dig deeper into the videos and scripture for this week through questions and discussion.

- Before diving into the scriptures of the videos, how would you define peacefulness or nonanxiousness in your spiritual life? What about your personal life?

Read Exodus 31:12-17. Pay attention to how God presents the idea of Sabbath to the Israelites. What are they to do with it? Why is it to be important to them? Is this something that many people would have practiced at that time?

- What does Sabbath mean to you? Can you remember a time where you practiced Sabbath or experienced meaningful rest?

Watch Part 1 of the Connection Group video.

- After creating everything, it says that God took time to rest. Have you ever thought of rest/Sabbath as a component of the act of creation?
 - Why would God need to rest? (You may not come up with a consensus answer to this question as a group. But take peace in knowing there are no wrong answers here!)
 - Is there a correct amount of time to rest? Should it always be a 6:1 ratio of work to rest?
- How does God view the importance of Sabbath when talking to the Israelite people?
 - Do you think God had specific actions in mind when talking to the Israelites?
 - Should Sabbath be seen as a gift or a mandate? Did God give us the Sabbath out of encouragement or necessity? Can it be both?
- In the New Testament, we see Jesus often retreat to pray on his own or spend time by his lonesome. Does this make the human side of Jesus more relatable? Or does it make the divine side of Jesus more relatable?
 - Jesus rested in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to his crucifixion. (See Matthew 26:36-46). What did he ask his disciples to do in that moment? What does this say of the role of others in taking time to rest?

Watch Part 2 of the Connection Group video for this session.

Father David G. Russell of the Archdiocese of Miami, Florida, worked alongside Myrna Gallagher to form the first Walk to Emmaus back in 1978 (interestingly enough, also in 1978 the United Methodist Church became enamored with the idea and established a protestant version of it). The original concept was to allow for women in the diocese to have an opportunity to minister to one another, a request that was initially denied. Russell and Gallagher continued their pursuit and eventually launched the retreat based around the passage of Luke 24:13-35. It would expand to minister to men and youth as well, giving all groups the opportunity to retreat from the world in order to regain spiritual clarity and connection to God.

- Do you practice Sabbath regularly? If so, what does this look like for you?
 - If you don't practice Sabbath, is there a reason why you don't?
 - What do you think can happen if you are willing to rest more?
- Research shows that less than half of all Christians practice Sabbath or claim that it is personally spiritual for them. Yet, over 60% still claim it is an essential part of Christian living. Why do you think this disconnect exists in society?
 - Do you think that valuing spiritual rest as a society would bring about any massive changes to how we interact with each other?
 - How might things like empathy and forgiveness for others be impacted by spiritual reflection that happens on a regular basis?
- Do you see rest as something that is done more in response to work that has been performed or something that is done in preparation for what is to come?
 - What can Sabbath look like in your life?
 - Is there a day or a time that would work best for you personally to take Sabbath?

Call (10 minutes)

We believe that God not only shows us who God is but invites us to participate in God's ministry by answering unique calls in our own lives. Join together in discovering how we can actively respond to scripture and God's presence.

- Put simply, take Sabbath this week. Spend some real time in prayer while doing so. Perhaps pray the Lord's Prayer during that time, pausing to reflect on each line of the prayer individually.
- Put some focus on the phrase "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." This will help prepare your mind for next week's lesson.

Closing (5 minutes)

God calls us into community by sharing our joys and concerns together in prayer and supporting one another in our walks with Christ. As we share testimony and stories of our lives, let us listen to where God is working within our community and how we can build each other up in Christian love.

- Share joys and concerns with one another.
- Close in prayer, either by inviting a group member to pray or by using the prayer provided below.

Closing Prayer

Peaceful, loving God. You gave us a gift of rest. You showed us the importance of taking time to be at peace and to reflect. You offered us the opportunity to experience this joy ourselves. Place upon our hearts the desire to feel this in our own lives. Encourage our actions to reflect this kind of retreat, in both a physical and spiritual sense. Let us know that when we take time to walk away from the distractions of this world, we know that we do so because you did so first. Allow us to be renewed from the work that has come before and strengthened for the work that lies ahead.

Amen.