

1

Celebrate Sabbath

MATTHEW 12:1-8



GOAL

Children explore the meaning of Sabbath and practice caring for others and resting.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

God of Sabbath rest, help us to care for ourselves and others over arbitrary definitions of work and rest. Let us follow Jesus, who is Lord of the Sabbath and who loves us completely. Amen.

THIS SESSION

In this session, we begin to look at the practice of Sabbath keeping. For this session, the children will explore what is Sabbath and what is not. Children will have the opportunity to think about rules and cultural norms in their family and larger community.

THE BIBLE STORY

Matthew is a recurring figure through all four sessions as he converses with Jesus to gain a new understanding of how to celebrate the Sabbath. In this story, the disciples are hungry and break Sabbath law by eating grain that is growing in the fields. Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees about this lawbreaking and responds by caring for human needs above laws.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Young children understand rules. Their lives are often governed by what they can and cannot do: Eat your vegetables. Don't cross the street without an adult. Brush your teeth before bed. Don't push or shove. Stay in line. They are learning that the choices they make and their actions have consequences. Understanding the nuances of breaking a rule or reinterpreting the greater good of a rule may be difficult for these concrete thinkers.

SESSION PREPARATION

- “Sabbath Mural” (p. 8): Write the word *Sabbath* in large bubble or outline letters on a piece of mural paper.
- “Matthew Learns about Sabbath” (p. 9): Cut out the Matthew and grain stalks figures from Resource Page 1. Glue or tape them each to a large craft stick to make puppets. Keep the Matthew puppet for use in sessions 2, 3, and 4.

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Celebrating Sabbath by Sharing Food” (p. 9): Obtain small flour tortillas, nut butter or butter, and jam or honey. Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.
- “Sabbath Service to the Hungry” (p. 10): Invite one or more guests who work with your church’s or community’s food pantry to tell the children about how it works and show them different items that are helpful and not helpful for a food pantry.
- “Celebrating Sabbath Collage” (p. 10): Cut pictures from magazines showing people spending time together, people celebrating, and people resting or connecting with God.



GETTING STARTED

- Prepared Sabbath mural
- Markers or crayons

SABBATH MURAL



Greet the children as they arrive. Invite them to color the letters that spell out *Sabbath* on the mural paper you have prepared. Tell them the word and explain that it is a very special word that they will learn more about in today's session. As the children are coloring, ask them about their week, being sure to call them by name. Wonder what times they were active and busy and what times they rested. When the children have finished coloring, display the mural in your space.

WELCOMING SABBATH



Gather the children in a circle and tell them that you will say the words of a verse from the Bible, Psalm 46:10, aloud: "Be still, and know that I am God." Explain that the person to your right will repeat the verse emphasizing the first word. Then the next person will repeat the verse emphasizing the second word, and so on. You may need to say the verse with each person until it is familiar. If there are more than eight people in your group, have the next person emphasize the first word again and continue on in the same manner.

After all have spoken this verse, wonder what it means to be still.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

- Internet-connected device or music player with lively music

SABBATH REST GAME



Draw the children's attention to the *Sabbath* mural they have colored. Say the word *Sabbath* and invite the children to repeat after you. Wonder if anyone knows what *Sabbath* means. Explain that the word means "rest." If children have connected Sabbath with Sunday (or Friday night to Saturday in the Jewish tradition) or church, wonder how those ideas connect with rest.

Have the children play a game to reinforce the concept of rest. Tell the children to spread out in the room so that they have space to dance without bumping into others. Invite them to dance when they hear the music and to *rest* in whatever way they choose when the music stops. When the music stops, say, "Sabbath begins"; and before you start the music again, say, "Sabbath is over." This will reinforce the idea that Sabbath is a time of rest. Play the game for several rounds, inviting the children to repeat after you as you say, "Sabbath begins" and "Sabbath is over."

If you are using an internet-connected device, play one or more of the following YouTube videos for lively music:

- "Every Move I Make—Dance-a-Long with Lyrics—Kids Worship" (bit.ly/FMEveryMove, 3:18)
- "Love the Lord—Kids Worship Motions with Lyrics—CJ and Friends" (bit.ly/FMLoveTheLord, 3:21)
- "Jump Around—Preschool Worship Song" (bit.ly/FMJumpAround, 1:55)



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

MATTHEW LEARNS ABOUT SABBATH



Gather the children in a circle. Tell them what you observed about the ways that different children rested during the game. Comment if some were sitting and others lying down or some were wide awake and others pretending to sleep. Explain that everyone does not agree on what it means to rest, and they will hear about that in today's Bible story. Introduce the children to the puppet you have prepared of the disciple Matthew. Explain that he was one of Jesus' friends, and that he will be with you each session of this unit.

Hold the Matthew puppet while you read, or invite a volunteer to hold it. Read aloud the story inspired by Matthew 12:1–8 on Resource Page 2. Hold up the grain stalks puppet when they are mentioned.

Help the children understand what Jesus told the experts in the religious laws. Explain that they thought the disciples should give up the idea of eating so they wouldn't be working on the Sabbath by picking the grain. Jesus thought that caring for the disciples' hunger was more important than following the rules about working on the Sabbath. Ask the children what they think.

- Prepared stick puppets of Matthew and grain stalks from Resource Page 1
- Resource Page 2



Keep the Matthew puppet for use in session 2, 3, and 4.

ACTING IT OUT (optional)



Invite the children to act out the story they heard inspired by Matthew 12:1–8. Use Resource Page 2 for your own reference and to prompt the children, remind them, or act as a narrator, depending on your group of children. Encourage them to use their own words as they act out the scene.

Have some of the children be the disciples and pretend to be hungry. Invite them to imagine that they are in a field eating their favorite food instead of grain. Wonder if they would try to hide the fact that they were eating or making food, since they weren't supposed to work on the Sabbath.

Have other children be the experts in religious rules. Encourage them to show how they reacted when they saw the disciples breaking the law. Remind them of Jesus' words and ask the children to act out how they think the story ended. Wonder how the experts in religious rules felt and responded to Jesus and the disciples.

- Resource Page 2



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

CELEBRATING SABBATH BY SHARING FOOD



Remind the children that the Sabbath is a time to rest and reconnect with God. Comment that, often, the way people spend some time on the Sabbath is eating together. Time set apart to remember and give thanks for the gifts of food from God, all the people who made the food possible, and the people you share a meal with is a holy act. Tell the children that they will make tortilla sandwiches, one to eat and enjoy with one another and a second one to give to another person to enjoy.

- Paper plates
- Ziplock plastic bags
- Plastic knives
- Small flour tortillas
- Nut butter or butter
- Jam and/or honey
- Napkins or paper towels
- Small cups with water
- Permanent marker



Be aware of food allergies and dietary restrictions. Make substitutions or provide alternative options.

- Guest(s) who works with your church's or community's food pantry
- Copies of Resource Page 3
- Crayons, markers, colored pencils



If you have a food pantry in your church, take the children to see it and talk with your guest(s) there.

Give each child a paper plate, a ziplock plastic bag, a plastic knife, and two small flour tortillas. Provide each child with a scoop of nut butter or some butter and have them spread it on one tortilla. Then give each child a scoop of jam or drizzle of honey and have them spread it on their tortilla. Show the children how to fold the tortilla. Fold one side a bit more than halfway. Fold the other side on top of that. Then fold both ends to the middle. Have the children place this tortilla in their plastic bag and close it securely. Repeat the process with the second tortilla, nut butter or butter, and jam or honey, but tell them that this one is for them to eat. Provide small cups of water and napkins or paper towels.

While the children are eating, use a permanent marker to write on the plastic bag the name of the person each child would like to give their other tortilla to. Wonder together how the children celebrated Sabbath as they ate this snack together.

SABBATH SERVICE TO THE HUNGRY



Remind the children that Jesus wanted his disciples to eat even when the rules of the time were that they should not. Tell the children that one way to celebrate the Sabbath is to help people who are hungry like Jesus did. Introduce your guest(s) to the children and invite them to tell the group about the food pantry at your church or in your community. Have them show different items that are helpful and not helpful for a food pantry and explain why.

Distribute copies of Resource Page 3 and provide markers, crayons, and colored pencils. Invite the children to color the pictures. While they are coloring, highlight some of the Dos and Don'ts to follow when donating food to a food pantry, especially the items that the children are coloring. Encourage the children to take their papers home and share what they learned with their families.



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

- Sabbath mural from "Sabbath Mural" (p. 8)
- Pictures cut from magazines showing people spending time together, people celebrating, and people resting or connecting with God
- Newsprint and marker
- Glue sticks

CELEBRATING SABBATH COLLAGE



Display the pictures you have cut from magazines in front of the children. Invite them to choose two or three pictures and examine what is going on in the picture that is related to honoring and celebrating Sabbath. Have the children take turns showing one of their pictures and telling the group their thoughts about it and Sabbath. Tell the children that, if they are not sure how Sabbath connects to the picture, they may ask the group for help. Write the key words or phrases they use on a sheet of newsprint. Repeat with the children's other pictures.

Provide glue sticks and invite the children to glue their pictures to the Sabbath mural from "Sabbath Mural" (p. 8). Write the key words or phrases that you recorded on the newsprint and write them in spaces around the pictures on the mural. Gather the children around the mural and offer the following prayer, or one of your choosing:

Dear God, thank you for the gift of Sabbath, a time to rest and reconnect with you. Thank you for the many ways we can experience Sabbath time. Amen.

SABBATH TIME AT BEDTIME



Tell the children that one way to celebrate Sabbath is to spend time with God. Introduce a practice that they can do as part of their bedtime routine. Explain that this is a time that they are preparing to rest, so it is a good time to have some Sabbath time with God.

Tell the children that you are going to lead them in bedtime Sabbath practice. Have the children spread out blankets and pillows. Have them take a few crayons and a book to use as a hard surface to draw upon if necessary as they find a comfortable spot to rest. Distribute one copy of Resource Page 4 to each child and tell them that you will lead them through this Sabbath time. Read the text aloud from each line, pausing for a minute or so to allow the children time to ponder what you are saying.

Encourage the children to try this practice at home with a parent, caregiver, or family member.

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- Blankets, pillows
 - Copies of Resource Page 4
 - Crayons



FOLLOWING JESUS

SHABBAT SHALOM



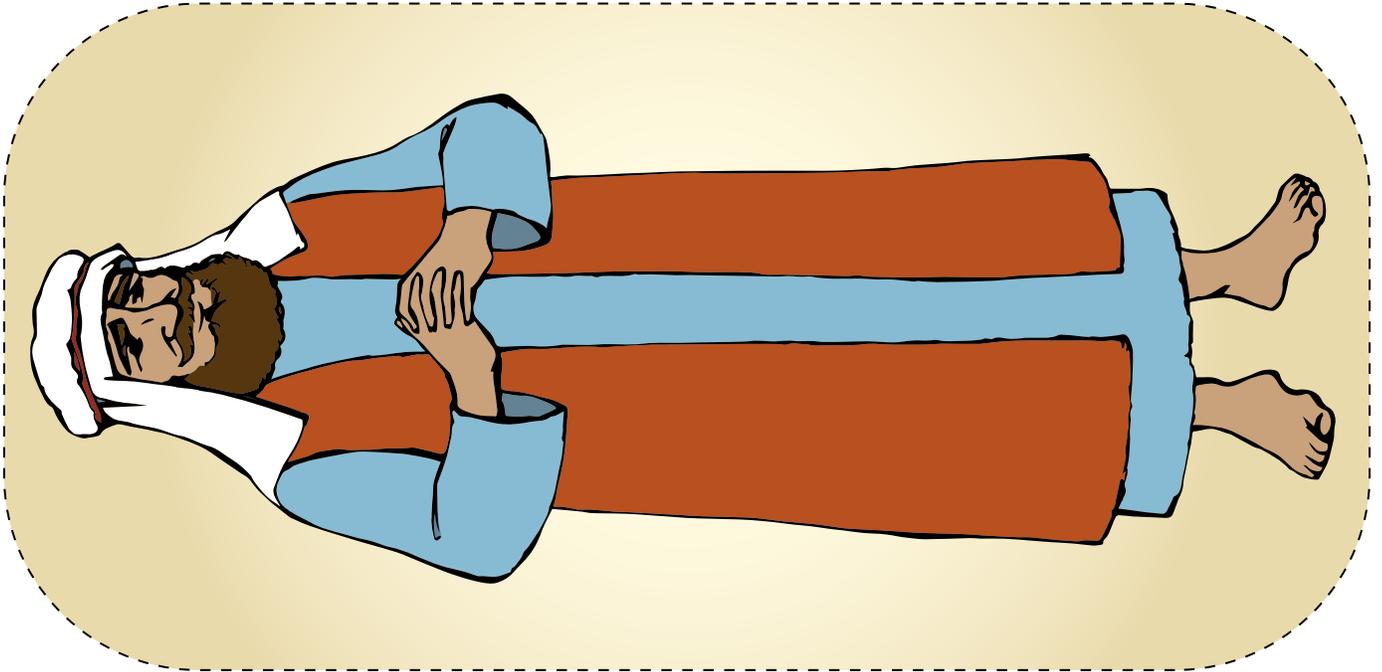
Invite the children to share how they plan to celebrate Sabbath time and connect with God.

Tell the children that in the Jewish tradition people greet each other on the Sabbath by wishing the other “Sabbath peace.” Demonstrate by saying the greeting in Hebrew: *Shabbat shalom* (sh-BAHT sh-LOHM). Comment that a song is often sung with children on the Sabbath in Jewish homes and places of worship. Invite the children to follow the motions and sing along with the song in the video as the words become familiar. Show the YouTube video “Shabbat Shalom—Hey! (The Bim Bam Song)” (bit.ly/FMBimBam, 1:56).

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- Internet-connected device



The YouTube video is used in each session so that children can become familiar with the song and its actions.





BIBLE STORY

BASED ON MATTHEW 12:1–8

Hi! My name is Matthew. I was one of the people who followed Jesus. In fact, I wrote quite a lot about this amazing time. Jesus showed me new ways of thinking and practicing my faith. Today, I want to tell you about what I learned from Jesus about celebrating the Sabbath.

“What is the Sabbath?” you ask. In my Jewish faith, it is a time when we rest and honor God from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. Those of you who follow Jesus Christ today choose Sunday for this day. During my time, there were many rules for what you could and couldn’t do on the Sabbath. Basically, they boiled down to not doing anything considered work. So, if I was a farmer, I wouldn’t be able to plant or harvest my crops on the Sabbath. If I was a doctor, I was not allowed to work toward healing people on the Sabbath. If I cooked for others, I would not be able to prepare food on the Sabbath. This last rule brings me to my story today.

We had been following Jesus and had walked many miles with him. We were tired and hungry. At one point, we were walking through a field of grain, wheat used in the making of bread. Some of us picked the grain and ate it because we were so hungry, even though we knew this was against the laws of the Sabbath.

(Pause and ask the children when they have been really hungry. Hold up the grain stalks puppet and ask them if they would eat a stalk like this. Wonder why or why not. Ask them if they would break the law and eat the grain if they were really, really hungry.)

If Jesus saw us, he didn’t say anything until a group of men, experts in the religious laws, saw us eating the grain. They were not happy we were breaking the Sabbath rules. They said to Jesus, “Look what your disciples are doing on the Sabbath!” Jesus reminded them that even our greatest king, David, broke the rules and fed his friends when they were hungry. Then he said something I will never forget. He told them that God desires kindness, not rules that require people to do without the necessities of life. Then he said that he understood what the Sabbath was meant for.

This sounded like a change from the way I had been thinking about the Sabbath. Maybe people and their needs were more important than following laws about what you could or couldn’t do. I wanted to know more and looked forward to a time when I could talk to Jesus about this. I’ll tell you what he said in another story, but for now, let’s celebrate!

Food Pantry Donation Tips

Donating to a local food pantry helps anyone experiencing food insecurity. Food pantries can always use donations, but some are better than others. Consider these tips when donating food and personal care items.

Check with your local food pantry: Find out the hours when they accept donations. Ask if they accept refrigerated foods and produce if you are interested in donating those items. They will also give you a list of what they need most at that time.

Do donate:

For healthy food options, look for low or reduced sodium, no salt added, and/or low or no sugar added, when applicable.

Fruits and vegetables: canned vegetables, canned fruits, applesauce, dried fruit, canned or boxed 100% fruit juice, canned tomato or pasta sauce

Whole grains: hot or cold cereals, brown or wild rice, pasta, crackers, rice cakes

Protein: canned meat and fish; canned beans; dried beans, lentils, and peas; nuts and seeds; nut and seed butters; protein bars

Dairy: shelf-stable, low-fat powdered or evaporated milk

Staples: flour, spices, salt and pepper, vegetable or olive oil (no glass), broth

Meals and mixes: boxed meals; canned or boxed stews, chili, and soups; mixes that need only water

Snack items: 100% fruit rolls, raisins, graham crackers, pretzels, granola bars

Baby items: baby food, formula, diapers, wipes

Personal care items: toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, disposable razors, tampons/pads, hand and body lotion

Do not donate:

Opened, dented, or punctured items

Expired items

Refrigerated or frozen items (unless you have checked first)

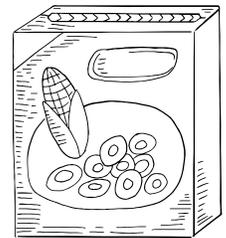
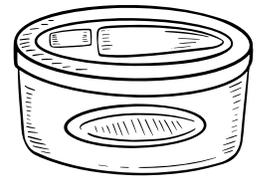
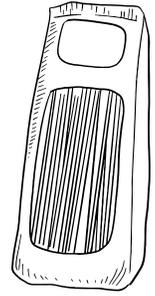
Glass containers

Fresh fruits and vegetables (unless you have checked first)—if donations are accepted, they should be simple to prepare, able to be used in many different ways, able to be stored at least one or two days without refrigeration, and familiar to most people

Homemade goods

Unlabeled items

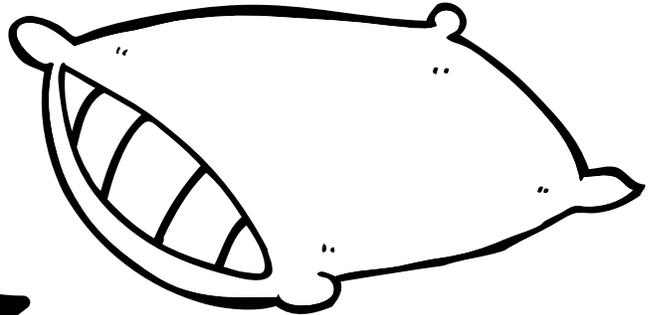
Specialty or gourmet items



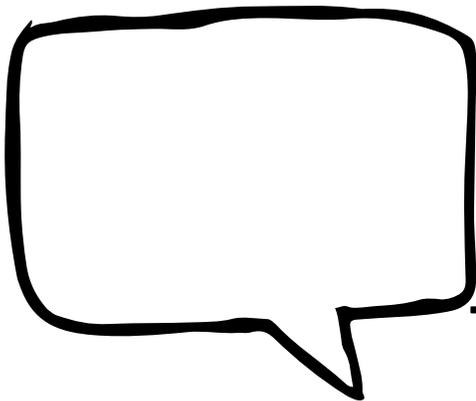
THIS IS SABBATH TIME.



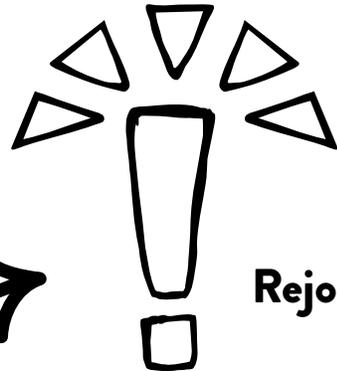
Know God loves you.



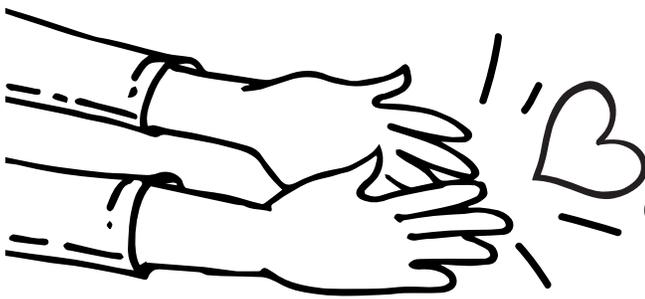
Rest in God's presence.



Talk with God.



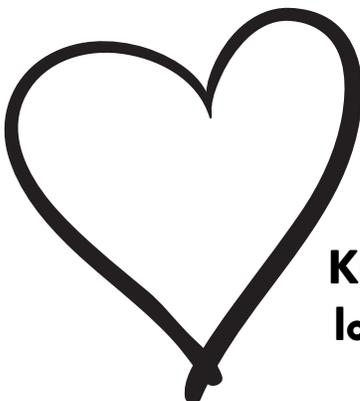
Rejoice!



Give thanks.



Say you are sorry.



Know God loves you.