

Today we're continuing our Lenten sermon series called *I Love Sundays*.

I hope that as we love Sundays, we are all going to have a better pace of life, better rhythm to life, and better outlook on life. Would you practice that with me now?

I'll say it, then you all repeat it: *I Love Sundays!* ("I Love Sundays!")

I want that *Sunday was meant to be the best day of your week*. God knew we would need a day to break from everything else we were doing. When we have taken the time to set aside a day for rest and refocus with God, our lives have gone better. We have felt better about ourselves, enjoyed our families more, and experienced the smile of God.

I love Festival Foods and Planet Fitness because they are open 24/7. 24/7 means that we live in a never-stopping culture. We can shop online all night, visit the 24-hour grocery store and hit the gym 24/7. Even weekends don't bring much relief as we try to catch up. The week's laundry and yardwork await our attention.

Shopping needs to be done, cars washed, and kids hauled to activities and birthday parties.

Day in and day out we live with pressure. Pressure, pressure, pressure, pressure, pressure.

Set the clock back in our country a hundred years, two hundred years, or three hundred years and there was a lot less pressure. Nobody worked on Sundays.

Businesses were closed for the day. People used Sunday for a rest day.

In prior generations Americans got a lot less done on Sundays. But as a result, they got a lot more done on Mondays. After a day of rest, they attacked the week eagerly. Work was considered a noble thing.

Athletes have found they perform better by working hard and then resting, working hard and then resting, instead of working hard all the time. Our muscles were designed for stress, and then release. Our souls were, too.

Way back in the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was about to enter the Promised Land. For forty years they had lived in the desert, without houses or jobs or responsibilities. As they got ready to enter the Promised Land, God visited their leader, Joshua, and talked to him about his priorities. In Joshua 1:8, God said, “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.”

God was saying, “Joshua, once you and your people settle in, you are going to be very tempted to work, work, work, work, work to get ahead. But if you work, work, work, work, work to get ahead, you won’t get ahead. You’ll fall behind.”

“Joshua, the secret to getting ahead is to spend time in this Book. Because if you get into this Book, this Book will get into you. And if this Book gets into you, you will become the kind of person who is prosperous and successful.”

People today say they’re too busy to read the Bible because they have to work more hours to get ahead. But the Bible says that if you’ll read it regularly, you’ll *become* the sort of person who gets ahead.

The same is true with the Sabbath. We think we can get ahead by working more. But sometimes the best way to be productive is to rest and refuel for a while.

That's the concept of the Sabbath, and God invented it. The way to make your Mondays better is to start with Sundays.

In the Bible, God prescribes fifty-two Sabbaths a year as part of our health-maintenance plan. That's seven and a half weeks of spiritual vacation! God constructed us to run best on a rhythm of engagement and withdrawal, or stress and then release.

Days were made for work. Nights were made for rest. Summers have more daylight so we can work more. Winters have shorter daylight so we can work less. God made Sundays as release days. A Sunday rest day is part of our divinely designed nature.

In Isaiah 58:13-14, God says, "If you refrain from trampling the sabbath, from pursuing your own interests on my holy day; if you call the sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, serving your own interests, or pursuing your own affairs; ¹⁴ then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Jacob, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.

Isn't that good? If you call the Sabbath a delight. I will makes you ride upon the heights of the earth.

God's secret for riding in triumph is to call the Sabbath a delight! Which means that Sunday ought to be the best day of your week!

How can we make that happen? What would it look like to make Sunday the best day of our week?

We have to honor God’s rhythm for our lives. Pastor Hal Seed, the author of the book, *I Love Sundays*, was at the Western Wall in Jerusalem as the Jews there brought in the Sabbath together.

Seed says, “It was a raucous celebration. Jewish men, dressed in their finest, were bobbing back and forth. Soldiers were singing Sabbath songs together. One little boy ran up to me with a huge smile on his face and shouted ‘Shabbat Shalom’ (‘Sabbath peace’) to me like I was a long lost relative. It was one of the most festive celebrations I’ve ever seen.”

Sabbath celebration is so sacred to the Jewish people that the entire nation of Israel puts their elevators on automatic during the Sabbath. To avoid even the slightest amount of work, like pushing an elevator button, Israeli elevators are programmed to stop and open on every floor from the beginning of the Sabbath to its end. This might seem extreme to us because we live in a country where everyone can do whatever they want to. But imagine if you lived in a high-rise and every Sunday your elevator stopped on every floor whether you wanted it to or not?

every stop will remind you that there is a God who created the world and He wants you to release and enjoy Him. That would be a great reminder, wouldn’t it?

Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath on the seventh day to remind themselves that on the seventh day God rested from His labor of creation (Genesis 2:2–3). Because the resurrection of Jesus happened on a Sunday, Christians adopted the first day of

the week as our Sabbath. But the principle is the same: take a day to rest. Build it around God and family. Make the Sabbath a delight!

How will we change the rhythm of our lives? ***Block out Sundays.***

What if you blocked out Sundays on your calendar and said, “We aren’t going anywhere on Sunday mornings except for church? You schedule it in your smartphone like you’d schedule an appointment with your friend. Then **Observe next Sunday.**

If you have to work on Sunday, you **set aside another day of the week to rest and to refocus with God.**

Hal Seed shared his story.

I recently officiated the wedding of a couple named Chris and Sarah Evans. While planning the ceremony together, I asked them how they met. Sarah said, “During the first day of class my freshman year, all the students had to introduce themselves. When Chris introduced himself, I automatically said, ‘Wow! This guy is great and cute and something special.’ Class met once a week. So the next week, I dressed up a little bit for class.”

She did that every week. Chris noticed. Now they’re living happily ever after.

Sarah thought Chris was special, so she took special care on the days she went to class with him. Not a bad model to follow.

Everybody repeats after me [line by line]:

Sunday was meant to be the best day of my week.

I’m going to prepare for it as if it’s the highlight of my week.

See you next Sunday!