

July 14, 2024

# Transformational Rest

## John 5:1-18

When I was growing up, the word *sabbath* was equivalent to “Sunday.” It also immediately brought to my mind a long list of things we couldn’t do, most of which I can’t even recall now. At the time, however, I felt my life was greatly diminished because I couldn’t, for example, go to the movies on a Sunday afternoon. Sundays were reserved for church and visiting with extended family. We were not supposed to work. Period. Somehow, I failed to notice the tremendous labor required of my grandmothers and my mother for the elaborate, made-from-scratch meals they put on the table each Sunday.

The focus of Bible stories I heard as a child in Sunday school, such as the man lying beside the pool at Bethsaida, was always on Jesus’ great compassion and miraculous healings. Only later did I notice that Jesus sometimes healed people on the sabbath, clearly breaking the Law. There must be more to sabbath, I realized, than simply resting, relaxing, at times doing nothing. After all, look at what Jesus did! He changed people’s lives, made them better, made them whole! “My Father is still working, and I am working too,” Jesus replied when the Jewish religious leaders confronted him about what he had done (John 5:17).

And there it is: an enactment of what Jesus meant when he said, “The Sabbath was created for humans; humans weren’t created for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). When we’re confronted with the suffering, need, pain, and grief of others on the sabbath, we should respond. When we do, we offer the transformational rest Jesus desires for everyone, perhaps especially for those who cannot carve it out for themselves. As the student book writer says, “God created sabbath as a gift for us to rest, and we should gratefully accept that. But there is also no time that is wrong for us to be compassionate, to love our neighbor, and to do good in the name of the Lord. Sabbath is created to be the center of a community that reflects the heart of God.”<sup>1</sup>

1. What sabbath rules or traditions did your family observe when you were growing up?
2. Are there things today that you simply would never, under any circumstances, do on the sabbath? Why?
3. What can you do on the sabbath to ensure that others experience the transformational rest they need?

<sup>1</sup>From *Adult Bible Studies*, Summer 2024, by Sue Mink (Cokesbury, 2024); page 69.