

June 28, 2026—“*Sabbath Worship*”

One of the staples of an ideal Sabbath in my world is my long run for the week. I'm sure some of you wonder how a long run can be compatible with a Sabbath experience; a friend of mine once said, “Running is for people who hate themselves!”

Especially if you saw my typical running route. If the weather's dry enough, my long runs will take me down to a trail, where I'll weave my way back to the park behind my house. And at the very end of this trail is a long, rather steep hill. To give you a picture of what this looks like, here's the elevation gain on a recent 8-miler. Do you see the sharp upward spike at the end? That's the finishing hill of many of my long runs!

Now, about halfway up this hill there are two pine trees, that drop their needles on the trail, so, when I'm about halfway up this climb—breathing like Darth Vader—this waft of pine scent hits me for a couple seconds as I run over the needles past the trees.

A few years ago, at the end of a long run—running up this hill, over these pine needles, past these trees, something very unusual happened. For the previous couple months, I'd been injured, and hadn't been able to run at all, so this was the first time on this trail in a while. And even though Darth Vader was in full force, running up this hill (out of shape!), the scent of the pine needles reminded me of how much I missed running on this trail. And, coming off injury, it flooded me with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to be healthy enough and for the weather to be nice enough to be out running.

Since then, every time I run up that long, steep, final hill, as brutal as it feels, when I pass by those pine trees and catch a whiff of the scent of the pine needles beneath me, I whisper to myself the simple phrase, “Grateful!” to reaffirm that sense.

And what's even more interesting is that, since starting to consciously do that—to declare my gratefulness at a surprisingly difficult time in my run—there have now become about a half dozen other markers along the course of my runs where I do the same thing. When I first get off the street and catch the trail, it triggers the thought of, “Grateful!” When I cross over a bridge that overlooks a waterfall in the creek, it sparks the feeling of, “Grateful!” When I crest the second-to-last hill, and it provides a panoramic view of the sun streaming down on the creek below, it makes me feel, “Grateful!” When I’m loosening my laces on my front porch after a run, I take a couple quick breaths scanning my street to breathe out, “Grateful!” And when I’m sipping my post-run Gatorade, I pause for a moment to, once again, declare my sense of, “Grateful!” Over the past few years, that pine needle moment has turned my runs—especially my longer runs on Sabbath days off—into some moments to experience God.

In this final installment of our *Rest and Recreation* series, this is what we want to consider today: incorporating God moments, particularly into our Sabbath experience. Because here's the thing: you can value Sabbath-keeping and its unforced rhythms of grace, and you can structure your life to power down and stop—even for a full 24 hours—and you can incorporate strategies of both restful activity and things that bring you joy and fill your Sabbath with delight, and through doing all that, you can experience a rest and recreation that even God Himself experienced and has designed you to too.

But if you've been tracking with this series, you've heard us introduce it somewhat confusingly—whether it's called *Rest and Recreation*, or *Rest and Re-Creation*. Today's focus is what differentiates these two, because it's only when you start incorporating God moments into your Sabbath that you start being *re-created*.

What I've been experiencing—especially these past few years—is that capturing God moments, especially during times of Sabbath, does two things. First, it **anchors your heart in God's grace**. The God moment reminds you that life is a gift from Him.

One of the most commonly-referred to verses in the Bible is Ephesians 2:8:

It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

In a sentence, this verse captures the essence of what's called the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus: that, no matter who you are or what you've done, you can experience the Person and Work of Jesus in your life, because it doesn't depend on what you do, but rather, on what Jesus has already done and is doing. It's a Gospel based on grace.

Here's what I want us to reflect on today, though: when the verse says you have been, "... saved by grace..." most of the time, people of faith apply that to the afterlife. We interpret this to mean that, because of Jesus, we've been saved from an afterlife apart from God and instead, will be welcomed at the pearly gates into the open arms of Jesus, as a result of His unmerited favour. But what if the Good News of Jesus isn't just, or even primarily, intended to be about an afterlife—but rather, an empowerment of this life, so we, today, can experience a way of life Jesus described as, "On earth *as it is* in heaven." What if being saved by grace doesn't just apply to *eternity* but to *everyday*?

Here's the point: something happens when you remember that life is a gift. Something happens in your heart. Something happens in your identity. Something happens in your drivenness, your hustle, and your risk of burnout. When you're reminded that everything that really matters in life is a product of God's unmerited favour, it changes your posture from one of desperately earning to deeply enjoying.

The other way that capturing God moments—especially during times of Sabbath—changes you is: it **aligns your mind on God's vision**. The God moment doesn't just remind you that life is a gift from Him; it renews your focus on His purpose.

This transformational dynamic is described by the Apostle Paul in Romans 12:

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.

See, when God has the transformational space to renew a person's mind, they go from "confirming to the pattern of this world" to embracing "His good, pleasing, perfect will".

Well, consider those options for a moment. What is the pattern of this world like, to which we tend to confirm? Busyness as a badge of honour. Never satisfied, always striving for more. Living in an overbooked constant state of hurry. Left feeling overburdened, under-satisfied, and impatient with the people around you. This is often what our society defines as the North American Dream of "success" we're busy pursuing.

Now compare that with God's will for humanity: a God defined as "love", who Jesus came to perfectly reveal. A Greatest Commandment defined by love, both for God and people. A death on the cross that didn't just demonstrate that love, but enabled a miraculous resurrection that can now empower it. And, as a result, a faith described in the New Testament that "counts" when it expresses itself in love.

This is what capturing these God moments, particularly through Sabbath, can do—it can shift our focus from artificial "success" to authentic love, and remind us of what ultimately matters in this life. And when that focus of what we're most living for changes, our purpose follows along with it from striving for success to savouring love.

Do you see the power of capturing these simple God moments in your life? Re-anchoring our hearts in God's grace can change your entire posture from one of desperately earning to deeply enjoying. And re-aligning our minds on God's vision can change our purpose from striving for success to savouring love. I once heard a pastor try to boil down a life of following Jesus, and they said, "With God, life is a gift, and love is the point." Capturing God moments as part of your Sabbath re-centres that reality.

Now, as you consider that, you might be wondering: why do I need a Sabbath to do that? Why are unforced rhythms, structured stopping, routine resting and deliberate delighting required in order to experience grace and love? Here's the thing: in an ideal world, they're not! Ideally, we'd be able to capture God moments all day, every day, in moment-by-moment kinds of ways—what Jesus referred to as "abiding in Him" and bear the kind of grace-based, love-driven fruit He intends. But our world is far from ideal, and if you think about it—using the imagery of both anchoring and aligning—you realize the role that slowing down through Sabbath-keeping can play. Have you ever tried to drop anchor while the boat was still speeding along? Have you ever tried to align a fly-swatter with a fly that's still buzzing around? Both anchoring and aligning require an inherent slowness and stillness to enable them. That's why John Mark Comer says:

**In ugly times, we need Sabbath to keep our hearts
alive to the beauty of God and life with Him in this world.**

Life is a gift. Love is the point. And we need Sabbath to slow us down enough to:

Be still and know that I am God.

Slowing down to still ourselves enough to capture God moments shifts our posture from earning to enjoying and our purpose from striving for success to savouring love.

In the church, we have a technical name for the act and process of slowing down and stilling our hearts and minds enough to capture God moments. We refer to it as “worship”. Worship, in its simplest sense, is like the Copernican Revolution—where Copernicus convinced people that everything didn’t revolve around the earth; the earth revolved around the sun. Worship—focused God moments—re-centres our minds and hearts around the Son, and reminds us that with Jesus, life is a gift and love is the point.

(As a bit of an aside, that’s why we encourage people to regularly gather together as a whole community in environments like this—to stimulate one another’s worship. Participating in our Sunday gatherings, especially as part of an intentional Sabbath, can help create God moments that have this effect. The songs we sing, the prayers and practices we engage in, and the teaching we absorb are all opportunities to re-orient ourselves around Jesus—especially considering the gravitational pull of the rest of our week to drift toward orienting around ourselves. And, most of all, the encouragement we receive from and provide for one another when and as we gather like this can serve as an influential God moment to once again re-shift our posture from earning to enjoying and re-shift our purpose from striving for success to savouring love. These gatherings serve as really helpful spaces to capture the God moments that worship is all about.)

But—to be clear—capturing these God moments can happen anywhere. And, ideally, we would learn and grow in capturing God moments (especially through the slowness of Sabbath) in ways that enable us to shift our posture and purpose enough to further capture God moments throughout our week, in moment-by-moment kinds of ways. This is the difference between participating in a worship service, and living a life of worship, where our time, money, work, and identity are all affected by God moments.

So, as we wrap up this series, the question today is: in your embracing of the biblical design of Sabbath, can you slow down and be still enough to capture God moments—that, in turn, can help shift your posture and shift your purpose to more fully embrace an entire life with Jesus where life is a gift and love is the point?

Practically speaking, can you embrace unforced rhythms, organize structured stopping, integrate routine resting and plan for deliberate delighting—and then, consciously, intentionally use that space to see God and His beauty in the world? Can your embracing of Sabbath go all the way from recreation to the actual re-creation of your heart and mind that God desires it to achieve? There might not be pine needles to smell at the end of your run, but are there spaces and places where you can awaken to capture these God moments and experience the power of worship in your Sabbath?

The next time you're near a shoreline or up north at a cottage, can the sound of splashing waves trigger worship in you? Can the smell of freshly cut grass while you're walking around your neighbourhood, or the gaze of the setting sun trigger worship in you? Can the taste of your favourite meal, or the deliberate questions of great conversation with friends or family during it, or at Harvest Kitchen or Community BBQ trigger worship in you? Can you begin to capture God moment in your Sabbath?

One of the ways Jesus facilitated this was through the practice of what's known as The Lord's Supper, or communion. Modeled after His final meal with His disciples, the bread represents His body broken for us (and the forgiveness we receive as a gift from Him), and the cup represents His new covenant (a relationship defined by love). Communion serves to create a moment, where we can slow down and be still enough to embrace that, thanks to Jesus, life is a gift, and love is the point. Let's celebrate that!