

Devotional #4

SHABATH - THE HEBREW WORD FOR REST

Genesis 2:2-3

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The Hebrew word for 'rested' in Genesis 2:2 is שָׁבַת (shabath). It's the word that we get 'Sabbath' from. This concept of rest means to cease or desist. Literally, God stopped! That is interesting, because our concept of resting often involves doing something enjoyable. But first, we are called to stop. Stopping is not something popular in our society. Mostly we want to be doing stuff. I can't Instagram stop, I can't boast about stop, I'm scared to stop.

The thought of God stopping is fascinating, because we know he could be doing stuff forever. He doesn't get physically or emotionally tired. God chooses to rest. That tells us a couple of things: rest is important, stopping is important, both for God and for us. Since we are made in the image of God, we need to rest also. Finally, if we think of the context of God's resting, it was after he had completed the initial stages of creation; and after each stage he looked at what he had done, and acknowledged it as 'good', as 'just right'. So, a component of stopping involves resting in confidence and appreciation of the work that has been done. It is a reflection on God and us, and what we have been doing together.

May we have the courage to establish a rhythm of stopping; that we might be refreshed by God to see what he is doing in us and through us.

Reflection Questions

- Have you ever experienced what it means to 'stop', to rest in God?
- What might stop you from stopping? Busyness? Fear?
- What steps can you take to establish a rhythm of stopping?