

Dear Lighthouse friends,

We live in an ever-changing society in which social media, cell phones, laptops, etc dictate a pace for our daily lives that we were simply not designed for. The result is a dramatic increase in burn-outs and depression as well as many other mental problems such as panic attacks, anxiety, fear, stress and sleeping disorders. Furthermore, we often struggle with an increasing sense of loneliness and feel disconnected from ourselves and others.

Do you know that God has set aside time in His calendar for a weekly appointment with you? Do you realize that He wants you to take a break, sit down and enjoy His presence – on a weekly basis? He does!

This weekly appointment is called the Sabbath, and God wants His people (us) to take a deep breath and focus on Him during this time. He wants us to keep this day holy and set apart.

Imagine the positive effect that this weekly time of focusing on God will have on your own life, health, marriage, family life and children! Healthy, joyful and strong marriages and families are a powerful testimony to others. As believing families, we can enjoy the blessing of a Christ-centred home and create an environment of peace and rest for family members by coming to the Lord's table.

This will bring the core of God's kingdom back into our homes; it needs to start with us!

However, it does not have to stop here. God intended this weekly time to be a blessing to **all** His children, and you will see its blessing multiplied when you choose to open your home to friends or people from your spiritual family or community – especially if you are aware that they are lonely and seldom are able to enjoy being part of a such caring family setup.

Furthermore, if you are a believer who are single, divorced or in any other season of your life, there is no reason for you to be missing out on this weekly appointment with God. Why not enjoy fellowship with and be part of **a loving wider family** by simply inviting others to your home to share a meal with you?

The kind of peace that the Holy Spirit brings to us in great measure on the Sabbath is called *shalom* in Hebrew. *Shalom* means peace that is the result of wholeness. In fact, a typical greeting on the Sabbath is "*Shabbat shalom!*", which means "Peace on the Sabbath!" and "May you dwell in complete wholeness on this seventh day!". This emphasizes that **when we dwell in Him, we will be made whole.**

Shabbat is the recognition of the joyful rest of the Sabbath. The Hebrew word *shabbat* translates into "rest or cessation." *Shabbat* derives from the root words *shevet*, meaning "to dwell" and *shevat*, meaning "seventh". When the meanings of these two words are combined, they convey the divine intention that we should cease from our work and dwell with God on that day.

The Sabbath is mentioned for the first time in Genesis 2:3, after God had worked for six days and then rested on the seventh. God created the Sabbath long before He gave the law to the Hebrew people on Mount Sinai.

The concept of Sabbath continues in the New Testament, where we see Jesus declare that He is the “Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8). This means that Jesus rules and reigns over this sacred day and will continue to do so until the establishment of the New Heavens and the New Earth! Scripture tells us, “From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me...” (Isaiah 66:23).

Theological context:

We see the principle of the Table (Shabbat) as timeless DNA of Gods kingdom. God himself established it on the seventh day of creation as he rested with his creation from all his work. It was also given back to the Israelites after their deliverance from slavery in Egypt in the context of the law of Moses - but we totally understand that we are not under this law anymore but have freedom of Christ through faith.

But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”

Galatian 4:4-7 NIV

As heirs of God we are free in Christ to enjoy the benefits of our sonship! Having a day off to enjoy family, friendships and all the blessings we have received are an expression of our faith and a strong statement in a performance driven society. We are not alone in this world, we have a loving father in heaven who cares for us – He has our back! That’s why we have the luxury to rest and give it all back into his hands.

THE SHABBAT DINNER

The *Shabbat* dinner is a joyful and festive meal to start our week. It consists of four important parts:

- **Lighting the candle(s)**
- **Communion**
- **Affirmative prayers**
- **Dinner**

Lighting the candle(s):

The purpose of lighting the candle is to illuminate your dwelling and to increase peace and harmony (*shalom bayit*) in it. Jesus is the Light of the world, and by lighting the candle at the beginning of the Sabbath, we usher in His presence and welcome Him as our guest of honour. When our guest arrives for dinner, He brings peace (*shalom*) into our home. Lighting the candle demonstrates that **Jesus is the Light in our home**, that we make time to enjoy His presence and that we have hope because He lives.

The light shines in the darkness, and
the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:5 NIV

Imagine a **network** of households across the city (and nation) that have the weekly habit of declaring that **Jesus is the Light of the world** in this way; people who **demonstrate** that their families serve the **King of kings!** That would be a true **“Light-House” movement!**

Communion:

The bread and the wine (or grape juice) are powerful symbols. The bread symbolizes Christ's body, and as we eat from the same bread, we announce that we are **one** in Him, and part of the body of Christ which is his church. The wine (or grape juice) is a strong symbol for the blood of Jesus that was poured out for us for the forgiveness of all our sins – through which we were adopted back into the presence of God. We drink this to affirm that his death has covered my former sins!

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying,
“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In
the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,
“This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you...”

Luke 22:19 & 20 NIV

It is also a powerful proclamation as the word tells us,

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:26 NIV

Affirmative prayers:

This is a time of healing and of restoring a divine order in the household/family that will release God's blessing. The head of the house (or host of the evening) prays a prayer of thankfulness, honour and gratitude over his wife. (If you are hosting the meal, you pray a prayer of blessing and thankfulness over your guest(s)).

He speaks blessings and prays over his children (and/or guests) with words of affirmation. In doing so, he takes his place as the "head of the house" or the "priest of the home".

In return, the wife (or a guest) speaks a prayer of blessing and thankfulness over the head of the household that honours his/her position as the head of the family. These prayers show the difference in the functions of the people involved but their equality in kingdom value. This system of honour of family looking to build each other up.

The same applies when we are celebrating with guests or friends. The leader (host of the dinner) speaks a blessing and prayers of affirmation over his/her guests. One of the guests can pray a prayer of blessing and gratitude over the host in return.

Imagine the effect of these prayers of affirmation on your children, friends and guests! Receiving these affirmative prayers can achieve more than listening to 20 sermons on a Sunday morning. It seals in them a positive and God spoken identity which will build them up for years to come.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33 NIV

*"Where order is restored, blessing
is released."*

- Ps Stovall Weems

Dinner:

We believe that the church should truly be a fellowship of believers; a community that invites the lonely into families. Creating a weekly dinner tradition will not only heal, restore and strengthen hosting families; it will also create family moments for singles and other church members who are lonely.

On the Sabbath, we have the opportunity to open our homes to the Holy Spirit in a special way and invite friends, family and others over for dinner to receive the kind of peace that only He can bring.

God sets the lonely in families, he
leads out the prisoners with singing;

Psalm 68:6 NIV

Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed
is the one who takes refuge in him.

Psalm 34:8 NIV

The Sabbath in its original form starts with the Sabbath dinner on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening at sundown. The Saturday should have a focus on rest, fellowship and recharging our batteries as well (This may look different for every individual) It is a time to count our blessings, enjoy life and spend time in God's presence.

We understand that this might be challenging and might collide with our busy agendas – but we will feel the positive effect of it, whenever we seek to make it work.

PRIESTS AND KINGS

The Bible calls all believers “royal priests” and even gives us a clear idea that we will reign with Jesus in future. Have you ever thought about that?

But you are a chosen people, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9

You have made them to be a **kingdom and priests** to serve our God, and **they will reign on the earth.” Revelation 5:10**

Often, we do not understand this aspect of complete adoption that also includes a transfer of divine authority. Jesus shares His power and kingship with us and He wants us to reign with Him. Unbelievable!

Bringing our homes under the Lordship of Jesus Christ is a very important step on this journey. As the leaders of our homes (whether in an “ideal” family setup or otherwise) we can make the same decision Joshua made in the Old Testament by saying:

But as for me and **my household**, we will serve the Lord.

Joshua 24:15

Celebrating the Sabbath is a powerful way to demonstrate that **Jesus** is the Lord of our households and will enable us to raise our children in the reality of a living relationship with **God** and have them see and taste it firsthand. We will also be connecting with other people and experience this time together as the family of God, where no-one needs to be alone.

We are convinced that bringing this special time back into our homes will have a huge impact. It will bless our church, heal relationships, restore community and build God’s kingdom in Antwerp. Join us!



What do I need?

- Candle (You can use a normal white candle.)
- Wine or grape juice
- Challah bread, matzah or any other bread
- Cup/Glass for communion
- Dinner

(All items can be found at major supermarkets.)

SCRIPTURES

Genesis 2:3

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

Deuteronomy 5:15

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

Mark 2:27

And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Isaiah 66:22-23

For as the new heavens and the new earth
that I make
shall remain before me, says the Lord,
so shall your offspring and your name remain.
From new moon to new moon, and from
Sabbath to Sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me,
declares the Lord.

**Shabbat dinner can follow
The Lord's prayer as found in
Matthew 6:9-13**

1. LIGHTING THE CANDLES

Scripture that can be read out loud:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come, your
will be done, on earth as it
is in heaven.
Matthew 6:9-10

ACTION: Light the candle

Opening prayer by host (use this prayer or find your own words):

“Jesus, You are the Light of the world! Whoever follows you will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life (John 8:12). We welcome you into our home and we thank you for this day of rest. We declare that you are the Lord of this house - the Light that drives out all darkness. (John 1:5)”

Response from table:

“Jesus, we thank you.” Or “Amen.”

2. COMMUNION

Scripture (read out loud):

Give us this day our daily bread and
forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those
who sin against us.
Matthew 6:11-12

ACTION: Serve communion. Take the bread, **or** arrange it on the table so that everybody is free to decide whether or not to take it (perhaps a good option if you have visitors or friends who are not believers or are unsure if they want to participate).

Declaration by host:

*(Taking the **bread** and lifting it in the air)* “We thank you, Lord Jesus, for your body that was broken for us so that we can be whole.”

(After this declaration, take some bread for yourself and pass it on to others – in a family setting, first to the wife, then to the children.)

*(Taking the **wine/juice**)* “Lord Jesus, we thank you for your blood of the covenant which was poured out for the removal of our sins.”

(After this declaration, everyone who wants to may drink the wine/juice.)

Response from table:

“Jesus, we thank you.” Or “Amen.”

3. PRAYER OF BLESSING AND AFFIRMATION

Scripture (read out loud): And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one.

[For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.

Amen.]

Matthew 6:13 **AMP**

ACTION: The host prays a blessing over family (or friends, if they are open for it and allow you to do so). As the host/head of the household, go from person to person, lay hands on your guest/child/spouse and pray a prayer of blessings over them. Thank God in turn for each of them and for the unique way each person is made in the image of God.

Prayer of blessing from table:

(Spouse/Family members place(s) hands on the head of household/host and pray aloud.

This can be done in a family setting as well as with friends. The wife can start, thanking God for her husband/the host. Children/friends can join in by speaking a blessing over the head of the household/host of the meeting.)

Prayer of blessing of the host/father:

‘The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.’ (SHALOM) Numbers 6:24-26 ESV

Now enjoy your dinner and the fellowship!

Shabbat Shalom!



Please share your experiences or the testimonies flowing from this weekly dinner tradition by sending your story to:

The Lighthouse Fellowship info@lighthouseantwerpen.be