



PRACTICING SABBATH



THE TABLE GUIDE

Aligning to God's rhythm



Dear Lighthouse friends,

We live in a dynamic society where our daily lives are heavily influenced by the presence of social media, cell phones, laptops, and other technological devices and demands on our lives. However, this rapid pace of living, which we were not originally designed for, has led to a significant surge in burnouts, depression, and various mental health issues such as panic attacks, anxiety, fear, stress, and sleeping disorders. Additionally, there is an increasing sense of loneliness and disconnection from both ourselves and others.

Did you know that God has allocated a specific time in His calendar for a weekly appointment with you? Are you aware that He desires for you to take a break, sit down, and bask in His presence on a weekly basis? Indeed, He does!

This designated time is called the Sabbath, and God encourages His people (us) to pause, catch their breath, and direct their focus towards Him during this period. He wants us to regard this day as sacred and distinct from the rest.

Just imagine the profound impact that this weekly practice of focusing on God will have on our personal lives, health, marriages, family dynamics, and children! A harmonious, joyful, and resilient marital and familial bond serves as a powerful testimony to those around us. As believers, we have the privilege of experiencing the blessings of a Christ-centred home and fostering an atmosphere of tranquillity and rejuvenation for all family members by gathering around the Lord's table. Regardless of whether we are single, married divorced or engaged. We are all able to grow in resting in Him in different ways be it alone or

with others trusting that God is the One who gives us strength. It's all about God filling us and as we honour His pattern of rest.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” Exodus 20:8

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

However, the benefits of the Sabbath don't have to be limited to just ourselves. God intended this weekly time to be a blessing for everyone, and its impact can be multiplied when we choose to open our homes to friends or individuals from our spiritual family or community, especially those who may be lonely and seldom experience the warmth of a caring environment.

Moreover, if you're a believer who is single, divorced, or in any other season of life, there's no reason for you to miss out on this weekly appointment with God. Why not enjoy fellowship and become part of a loving extended family by simply inviting others to share a meal with you in your home?

The end goal of Sabbath is not to say, “I practise the Sabbath.” Or “I practice the table”. It's to learn from Jesus to become a person who is marked by an inner spirit of restfulness and who is calm, at ease in their own body, unhurried, kind, and present. You will become aware of what God is doing around you and grow to be sincerely grateful, emotionally healthy, and delighted by the goodness of your life with God; a person who is like a rock in a sea of chaos, unmoved by the overwork, overconsumption, and overactivity of our host culture. It is about aligning with the fact that dwelling in God's presence leads to our own restoration and completeness.

Shabbat is a celebration of the joyful rest found in the Sabbath. The Hebrew word "shabbat" means "rest or cessation." It originates from the root words "shevet," meaning "to dwell," and "shevat," meaning "seventh." When these meanings are combined, they convey the divine intention for us to cease our work and dwell with God on that day.

The Sabbath is mentioned for the first time in Genesis 2:3, where after God had worked for six days, He rested on the seventh day. God established the Sabbath long before He gave the law to the Israelites at Mount Sinai.

The concept of the Sabbath continues in the New Testament, where Jesus proclaims Himself as the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8). This means that Jesus holds authority 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).

Please do not "add" Sabbath into your already overbusy and overfull life. Sabbath is about less, not more. It's about allocating time for God; for rest, for family and for fellowship.

THE SHABBAT DINNER

The Shabbat dinner itself is a joyful and celebratory meal that marks the end of the week. It consists of four essential components:

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

What do I need?

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

(All items can be found at major supermarkets.)

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. 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. In a Jewish home this was traditionally done by a women. However, feel free to choose what you works for you.

Communion: The bread and wine (or grape juice) used in communion carry profound symbolism. The bread represents Christ's body, and as we partake of the same bread, we affirm

our unity in Him and our covenant with God which brings us into the body of Christ, which is His church. The wine (or grape juice) symbolizes the blood of Jesus which He shed for the forgiveness of our sins, and through which we have been reconciled with God. As we drink it, we acknowledge that His death has covered our past sins and that we are washed clean through repentance.

“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 do this in remembrance of me.”*” **Luke 22:19**

& 20 NIV

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 for healing and restoring divine order within the household or family, releasing God's blessings. The head of the house or the host(s) of the evening offers a prayer of thankfulness, honor, and gratitude over their spouse. In turn, the spouse/ other house members reciprocates by speaking a prayer of blessing and thankfulness over the head of the household / host(s).

These prayers acknowledge the distinct roles within the family but also highlight the equality and value each person holds within the Kingdom of God.

When celebrating with guests or friends, the leader or host offers blessings and prayers of affirmation, and a guest can respond with a prayer of blessing and gratitude in return. The impact of these affirmative prayers cannot be underestimated. They have

the potential to shape the identities of children, friends, and guests in a profound way, instilling in them a positive and God-ordained sense of self that will benefit them for years to come. Receiving these prayers of affirmation can be more impactful than listening to multiple sermons on a Sunday morning.

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 whereas for singles and other church members who are lonely can feel part of something bigger. People connect best over food, it's important that the meal is something we share together. It's part of this evening's celebration and remembrance.

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 (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. Each person needs to find habits for themselves.

A nice guide is: “those who work with their minds should sabbath with their hands and those who work with their hands should sabbath with their minds”. For some that includes turning off phones or tablets and electronic devices and going for walks or gardening. For others it’s going for a coffee in a café or visiting friends or family. The essence is that we seek to take one day a week where we step back disconnect from the world and the busyness and rest.

Please Note:

If everyone at the table can say they follow Jesus, it’s a covenant meal which includes communion. If not then you can just do a simple sabbath meal which works similar to communion but is a little different. There’s an important distinction between the two meals. One is a covenant meal for believers in Jesus, the other a statement meal and everyone is welcome. The differences will become clear in the example guides below.



Example Guide - Communion

The dinner can follow the Lord's prayer as found in Matthew 6:9-13. This is just one example of how things can go. Please feel free to adjust and change things to make it suitable for your home and family.

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

Prayer (use this prayer or find your own words): Jesus you said "I am the Light of the World" we thank you that your light is present here with us and in us. We thank you for being with us and never leaving us. We light this candle as a symbol of your presence. We declare that you are the Lord of this house - the Light that drives out all darkness. (John 1:5)"

ACTION: Light the candle

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 *(This is a covenant declaration, please ensure people know what they are saying yes to! If someone does not believe, it is better they skip if they aren't sure.)*

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 and that by eating of this bread, we know we are part of your body.

(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. We thank you that because of your sacrifice, we are made clean in you and we have access to the Father.

(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): Matthew 6:13

And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

The traditional Lords prayer adds the following to the bible verse: “Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

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. Affirm them and build them up in your prayers.

A great prayer for children is: “may they increase in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”.

Just as Jesus did in Luke 2:52.

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:

info@lighthouseantwerpen.be



Example Guide – Sabbath Meal

The dinner can follow the Lord's prayer as found in Matthew 6:9-13. This is just one example of how things can go. Please feel free to adjust and change things to make it suitable for your home and family.

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

Prayer (use this prayer or find your own words): Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the light of fire. Jesus, you said "I am the Light of the World" we thank you that your light is present here with us and in us. We thank you for being with us and never leaving us. We light this candle as a symbol of your presence. We declare that you are the Lord of this house - the Light that drives out all darkness. (John 1:5)

ACTION: Light the candle

2. Sabbath meal

Scripture (read out loud): Matthew 6:11–12 (ESV): Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

ACTION: Serve the juice or wine. Take the bread or arrange it on the table so that everybody is free to decide whether or not to take it. Please note that with a Sabbath meal this is not communion so its just being thankful for God’s provision and sustaining of creation.

Declaration by host:

*(Taking the **wine/juice**)* Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who created the fruit of the vine. We thank you for your goodness in what you have provided for us.

*(Taking the **bread** and lifting it in the air)* Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. We thank you, that you have provided this for us and that you are the creator and sustainer of all life.

3. PRAYER OF BLESSING AND AFFIRMATION

Scripture (read out loud): Matthew 6:13

“And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from the evil one.”

The traditional Lords prayer adds the following to the bible verse:
“For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.”

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. Affirm them and build them up in your prayers.

A great prayer for children is: “may they increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man”. Just as Jesus did in Luke 2:52.

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**Now enjoy your dinner and the
fellowship!**

Shabbat Shalom!

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Theological context:

The theological context behind the Shabbat dinner is rooted in the timeless DNA of God's kingdom. It was originally established by God Himself on the seventh day of creation as He rested with His creation from all His work. This means He ceased from His activity. But we also know that in that resting, in that order the whole creation rests and relies on Him. It's not that God stopped being God; he just ceased from working, but life still happens. God is still engaging and interacting with His creation. This whole picture is about God ruling and reigning over creation as a victorious king. Then we His people are resting, knowing God is king on the throne and He rules over creation. He is our Provider.

Later, the Sabbath dinner was reintroduced to the Israelites after their liberation from slavery in Egypt. It was given within the framework of the Mosaic Law, creating a culture of rest within Israel's rules and culture. As Followers of Jesus, we know that He is our sabbath rest which is also a here but not yet. For it is a metaphor for salvation but also eternal life. But as Jesus says in 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."

This ritual is for our benefit and meant to be a blessing for our lives. Like it was meant to be for Israel. Their sabbaths of their own lives and of their land was a direct statement of trust in God and a healthy balance of not always needing to strive for the next thing.

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.

This also comes with the openness that no believer holier or more sacred than another. We are all equal at the foot of the cross and we are all able to lead and host communion. We are all able to pray for one another, pray a blessing over others and receive from others. This is what makes the body of Christ so special. No matter our background, we are equals and can serve one another and work together, all pointing to Jesus.

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 first-hand. 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. Sabbath is about looking back to Genesis where God rested as Lord over creation. When we celebrate the sabbath we are not only remembering and living from this truth, but also look forward to the return of Jesus who is coming back for His church. Knowing that we can rest in covenant, that our salvation is assured because if we are in Jesus and seek His kingdom, we have nothing to worry about. Rather, we live from our salvation and security. We rest because we can, and we honour Gods covenant and timing.

Ritual and routine

It's so easy for this to become a ritual or routine which just happens. It is important for us to remember, that when we break bread with believers and share the wine of grape juice, this is a covenant meal and should be done with active intent. What do I mean by this? That we choose to do this because we are reaffirming our commitment to Jesus and following Him.

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!