

CHRISTIAN RHYTHMS OF LIFE

It was 7:45 am, and Kristopher was replying to an email. He had been in the office for about fifteen minutes already, an early start. His four-year-old was already safely squared away at daycare too, and light traffic landed him at work early. He needed the time! There was a major project to complete by end of the week.

Ten minutes later, Kristopher's coworker was leaning against the side of his cubicle, holding a cup of coffee. "Hey, man. The way the boss has treated you, I would have thought that you would care less."

Kristopher's coworker was talking about the gossip of the office. All he knew for certain was that someone had leaked information about a clients. People kept telling him that the division head was going to blame him, and his supervisor was opening an investigation.

Kristopher was blindsided. He had even been interviewed by the his Human Resources Director and cleared of any wrongdoing. The rumors didn't stop. Everyone was waiting to see if someone would lose their job.

"What are you going to do?" his wife had cried.

"I'm going to continue to do what I've been doing," he told her. "I can't control the craziness." *God of Jacob, You will defend me*, he had prayed.

"Man, you know that I'm just going to keep doing my job," Kristopher said looking up from his screen. "I'm going to keep doing my job, to the best of my ability."

1 What does it look like to have Christ at the center of our lives while we work in the secular world?

2 What is the difference between receiving human approval and receiving God's approval?

¹⁸ And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?

¹⁹ And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. ²⁰ But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

²¹ No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filled it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse.

²² And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles.

¹⁸ Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. ²⁰ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

²¹ "No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²² And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

A Time for Feasting and Fasting

Why no fasting? the people are asking Jesus. They observe that John the Baptist's disciples and Pharisees are in the habit, but Jesus' disciples are not (Mark 2:18). It strikes them as remarkable, maybe even a sign that Jesus is not as devout as He seems.

Fasting was a significant practice in Judaism. The Old Testament prescribes fasting on the Day of Atonement. Even though weekly fasting was not required by the law, regular fasts were common. They showed a commitment to prayer, repentance, or even lament for national crises: war, famine, and plagues (see 2 Sam 12:16; Ps 35:13; Zech 7:3–4; 8:19). Fasting was an integral part of Jewish life, so much so that it raised doubts if Jesus' disciples were not participating. *Didn't Jesus care about the nation?* Of course He did! *Was*

Jesus setting aside time for prayer? More than most! Does Jesus keep the ancestral traditions? In most cases, He does!

Jesus responds with a wedding analogy: “How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them?” (v. 19). Subtly, Jesus is communicating that today is a special time, a joyous celebration. As long as the bridegroom is at the wedding, no one should be fasting. Jesus does not dismiss the legitimacy of fasting. He assures them that the bridegroom will eventually be taken away. When that day comes, His disciples will fast (v. 20). In the analogy, Jesus is the bridegroom. He is talking about His coming arrest and death. But for now, He’s right here. When Jesus is with you, it is time to celebrate. There will be time for grief and mourning later.

To emphasize that He is not just any important teacher, Jesus tells two miniparables. First, new cloth cannot be sewn onto an old garment. New cloth shrinks, and the clothes would tear (v. 21). Second, one tries to reuse old wineskins to store new wine. As the wine ages, the old wineskins would not stretch but burst (v. 22).

These tiny analogies are not as familiar to us as the original hearers, but the point is not hard to understand: something new is at hand. If people around Jesus are expecting Him to confirm everything they already think to be true, they will struggle. Jesus is the bridegroom, the most honored guest. Everything that came before was leading up to this moment. When He teaches, the people recognize that His words are full of authority (Mark 1:27). Mark doesn’t want to spoil the surprise, but if you are paying attention, you’ll know that Jesus is reconfiguring His contemporaries’ imaginations.

1 Why didn’t Jesus’ disciples fast?

2 Why can’t Jesus just go along with everything that the religious people thought to be important?

3 When have you had the experience of struggling to explain something about Jesus?

²³ And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. ²⁴ And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

²⁵ And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? ²⁶ How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

²⁷ And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: ²⁸ Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

²³ One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴ The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

²⁵ He answered, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶ In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.”

²⁷ Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

People Come First

Mark 2:23 introduces another controversial event in Jesus’ ministry. On the Sabbath, Jesus and His disciples are walking through some grainfields, and the disciples pick heads of grain to eat. The Pharisees see this and, once again, confront Jesus. The Pharisees accuse the disciples of doing something unlawful on the Sabbath (v. 24). But what starts out as a question of Sabbath rules turns into a deeper conversation about Jesus and His authority.

The Pharisees’ accusation against the disciples is rooted in their interpretation of the Mosaic law. They argue that by picking grain, the disciples violate Exodus 20:8–11, which prohibits work on the Sabbath. Even though Exodus 20 does not define “work,” rabbinic tradition identified thirty-nine categories of work, all prohibited on the Sabbath. Among the prohibitions is reaping. Isn’t that what the disciples are doing by picking grain?

Jesus responds with a compelling scriptural argument (2:25–26). He references a story from 1 Samuel 21:1–6, when David broke normal regulations. He and his men were starving and facing deadly peril. David asked the priest for bread; and he accepted consecrated bread, the kind placed before God’s holy presence. Only priests were permitted to eat it.

David’s actions are more serious than picking heads of grain, yet he is not condemned for them. In his case, hunger took precedence over the law. Sabbath was not intended as a rigid system of onerous observances, and Jesus knows better.

In Mark 2:27, Jesus makes a stunningly simple observation: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Pharisees are focused on displaying religious devotion. They placed a heavy burden on the people (see Matt. 23:4). But Jesus reorients the conversation, pointing them to the story of creation. *Which came first, humans or Sabbath?*

As Jesus reasons, people are not created to observe Sabbath. The Sabbath is intended for them. It is not designed as a burden, one that leaves hungry people unable to eat. Even the word *Sabbath* means simply “rest” or “cease.” Sabbath belongs to God, when all people turn their attention to the one who rescued them (see Ex. 31:13).

Jesus concludes His argument by saying, “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28). Here, “Son of Man” is Jesus’ title for Himself. Jesus is saying that He is the one who has authority over Sabbath. He has the rightful authority to interpret and to make judgments about Sabbath. The day that belongs to God is something Jesus claims is under His authority.

1 What makes the gleaning of the disciples objectionable to the Pharisees?

2 Why does Jesus refer back to David and the bread he ate?

3 What are the implications if Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath?

Jesus at the Center

Fasting and Sabbath observance are practices that can seem strange and foreign to the modern world. But notice that many people are obsessed with productivity, self-care, time-management, and dieting. We track steps, schedule rest, and follow rules about what we should and should not do with our bodies and our time. While we don't face the same religious pressures, many of us can relate to the burden of constantly trying to "do it right." Whether it's how we eat, rest, or work, the pressure to live by human-imposed rules can feel relentless.

This is what makes Jesus' teaching in Mark 2:18–28 so striking. He does not dismiss fasting or observing the Sabbath as outdated or irrelevant. Rather, He redefines these practices, centering them on Himself. When questioned about fasting, Jesus reminds the people that His presence invites joyous celebration. The time for fasting and mourning comes when He is absent. When His disciples are criticized for not following Sabbath traditions, Jesus responds by saying that the Sabbath is *for people*, not vice versa. As Lord of the Sabbath, He has authority to interpret a God-honoring Sabbath routine.

It is easy for people to focus on outward appearances, but Scripture shows that God observes the heart (see 1 Sam. 16:7). Fasting, which is useful in times of intense prayer, expresses dependence on God. Likewise, Sabbath serves as a reminder that God is our provider, giving rest to the weary.

Fasting and Sabbath are not ends in themselves, but they should point us to Jesus. He fulfills our deepest hunger and gives us true rest. He should be at the center of our fasting, prayer, rest, and work. When our lives revolve around Jesus, these practices become life-giving instead of burdensome. Only through Him can we find true rest and fulfillment.

1 In what ways can people miss the point of fasting and observing the Sabbath today?

2 How might knowing that the Sabbath was made for people challenge your view of rest?

3 What are some practical ways we can keep Jesus as the center of our lives?

Embracing Rest

The Sabbath is a gift from God, designed not as a burden but a delight. Once a week we are invited to rest and enjoy the Creator and His creation. If a Sabbath is already part of your rhythm, write down how you hope to spend it. If Sabbath is not your routine, plan a Sabbath with the Lord of Sabbath.

Jesus, may You be at the center of all my time. This is what I have in mind:

Key Text

And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. —Mark 2:27–28 KJV

Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” —Mark 2:27–28 NIV

Quiet Hour® and Cross Daily Bible Readings

Week of May 25 through May 30

- Mon.** Psalm 95—Let Us Sing to the Lord.
- Tue.** Psalm 122—Gladness in the House of the Lord.
- Wed.** Romans 12:1–8—Members of the Body of Christ.
- Thu.** Nehemiah 8:9–12—A Holy Day of Rejoicing.
- Fri.** Matthew 18:15–20—Restoring Healthy Relationships..
- Sat.** Acts 4:32–37—Fellowship Through Common Property.

Next Week: Matthew 28:18–20; Hebrews 10:22–25

This will be the last week of the spring quarter. In any of the studies the past several weeks, has God been inviting you to something new?