

Rest as Gift

Week 1 • Creation • Genesis 1:31–2:3

A Transforming Bible Study • Participant Edition

Bring paper and a pen. Keep your camera on if you're comfortable.

Opening

Check-in: Tell us about a time you really rested. What made it rest?

The Text

Genesis 1:31–2:3 (NRSVue)

Genesis 1:31 *God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

Genesis 2:1 *Thus the heavens and the earth were finished and all their multitude. 2 On the sixth day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.*

Looking Closely

1. In 1:31 God sees “everything” and calls it “very good.” What is included in “everything” at this moment? What hasn't happened yet?

2. Read 2:2 slowly. On which day does the text say God finished the work? Why might that be puzzling?

3. The text says God rested. Was God tired? What else could “rest” mean here?

4. Days one through six each end with “there was evening and there was morning.” Look for that line on day seven. What do you notice?

5. What two things does God do to the seventh day in 2:3? What has God blessed before this? What is new about blessing a day?

6. In the Babylonian creation story *Enuma Elish*, humans are made so they can carry the gods' labor while the gods rest. Many scholars think Genesis 1 took its final form among Judeans who had lived in exile in Babylon. Set the two stories side by side. What do you notice?

Imagining

Two Postures. On camera, show how your body holds itself on a typical workday. Then show the posture of the seventh day.

7. What did you notice in your own body? What did you see in each other?

8. Where did you learn what rest is for, or who deserves it? Whose voice is that?

Echoes

Exodus 20:8–11 (NRSVue)

Exodus 20:8 “Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. **9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work. **10** But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. **11** For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

Deuteronomy 5:12–15 (NRSVue)

Deuteronomy 5:12 “Observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. **13** Six days you shall labor and do all your work. **14** But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. **15** 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.

9. List everyone who is supposed to rest in Exodus 20:10. Then compare the reason given in Exodus 20:11 with the one in Deuteronomy 5:15. What changes when the reason for rest is “you were a slave”?

Mark 2:23–28 (NRSVue)

Mark 2:23 One Sabbath he was going through the grain fields, and as they made their way his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. **24** The Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” **25** And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need of food, **26** how he entered the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and he gave some to his companions?” **27** Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for humankind and not humankind for the Sabbath, **28** so the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

10. Who is hungry in this story, and who objects? In verse 27, who is the Sabbath for?

Psalm 127:1–2 (NRSVue)

Psalms 127:1 *Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.
Unless the LORD guards the city,
the guard keeps watch in vain.*

2 *It is in vain that you rise up early
and go late to rest,
eating the bread of anxious toil,
for he gives sleep to his beloved.*

Then hear verse 2 read from a second translation.

11. How does the meaning change between the two translations? Which one speaks to you, and why?

Living It

12. What does it mean that we were created after a full day of work and woke up into rest?

13. Look again at the list in Exodus 20:10. If a list like that were written for your week, who would be on it?

14. Who in our community can't take a day off without losing pay, housing, or safety? What, if anything, do tonight's texts say to that?

15. Is there anything from tonight you want to carry into this week?

Closing

Genesis 2:3, read aloud once more, followed by silence.