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## LUKE

### Luke 6:1-11

How can we become the Christ-centered church our world so desperately needs? Join us in Luke's Gospel, the most expansive biography of Jesus in the Bible. With the beloved physician as our guide, we hope to experience Jesus so we can participate with the new reality God is bringing into our world.

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## The Big Idea

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath; now we rest in Him and our resting can include doing good and saving life!

## Good to Know

- **Sabbath (vs. 1)** ("Sha-bot" in Jesus' native Aramaic) literally means "stop." Sabbath is God's expectation that every six days, His people would stop striving, coveting and worrying, and instead, join Him in delighting in His Lordship over creation (Gen. 2:1-3).
- **Sabbath is unprecedented.** In every ancient and modern culture, the only people who had the luxury of stopping to rest and enjoy life were the rich and powerful. But the very first thing God told the Israelites when they came out of slavery in Egypt was that in His economy, every single image-bearer of God, no matter their status or position, was invited to share in His delight (see Exodus 20:8-11).
- **Sabbath is the fourth of the ten commandments that God gives in Exodus 20.** It's the only one that begins with the word "remember" because it's the one people most often ignore or forget. Why is this? Because rather than trust God to provide, we tend to overwork ourselves and others. This is why the Sabbath command is probably the most repeated commandment in the whole Old Testament.
- **Sabbath is more than just taking a day off every week.** The Sabbath pattern of 6+1 was the template for the entire Jewish calendar. Debt slaves were to work for six years, then be released on the seventh (Ex. 21:2). Land could be sold to pay off debt for 50 years (7 sabbath years + 1), but then all debts were canceled, and all property was to be returned to its original owners in the Sabbath year of Jubilee (see Lev. 25).
- **If the temple was Israel's sacred space, the Sabbath was to be Israel's sacred time.**
- **What is the heart behind the Sabbath command?** Our sin-filled world has always driven people to do more, buy more and work harder. In ancient Egypt, ancient Rome and modern America, the rich and powerful tend to benefit from cheap labor by exploiting and enslaving the vulnerable. But from the moment God introduced Himself to His covenant people at Mount Sinai, He has called us to a "Sabbath way of life" (see Ex. 31:13-17)—a life of delighting in the goodness of God, trusting Him for provision while protecting the poor and extending mercy toward the oppressed.
- **"Unlawful" (vs. 2)** - The disciples were being accused of "harvesting grain" on the Sabbath. Actually, Deuteronomy 23:25 taught that you could pluck grain by hand if you wanted, and it wasn't technically "harvesting" until you were out in the fields with a sickle in your hand.

- While it may be tempting to read Luke 6:1-11 and think Jesus was playing fast and loose with the Old Testament commands, we need to be clear—that’s not what He was doing. **Jesus never set the law of Moses aside (Matt. 5:17-18), rather, He fulfilled it.**
- **“Consecrated bread” (vs. 3-4)** - Jesus alluded to how David broke the ceremonial laws in 1 Samuel 21 by eating the bread that was an offering to God in order to obey the higher law of fulfilling his kingly calling.
- The Pharisees were bent out of shape, not because the disciples were being unbiblical, but because they were going against the Mishna (a collection of sermons and essays by a bunch of famous rabbis) that went full OCD on the do’s and don’ts of Sabbath (they even had rules declaring knot-tying and stitching two stitches as “work”).
- Jesus came as **“Lord of the Sabbath” (vs. 5)** - He wanted to prove that not only did He alone have the right to interpret the Torah’s Sabbath laws, but He also came to fulfill the very essence of Sabbath by ushering in a Sabbath-Kingdom, lavishing healing and relief to people groaning under the oppressive weight of disease, debt and sin.
- **“To see whether He would heal on the Sabbath” (vs. 7)** - The Mishna taught that you could make exceptions on Sabbath for life-saving work (for example, there’s a passage that says midwives are allowed to help mothers deliver a baby because that couldn’t be delayed). So, according to the Pharisees, who elevated the Mishna almost to the level of the Torah, Jesus wasn’t allowed to heal this man on the Sabbath because a withered hand isn’t a life-threatening problem. Jesus apparently didn’t really care what the Mishna taught.
- Jesus **“knew their thoughts” (vs. 8)** and healed the man with the withered hand to prove that the Pharisees had lost the forest for the trees. They had obsessed so much about their traditions regarding Sabbath, that they lost the heart of the Sabbath.
- **“They were furious” (vs. 11)** literally means “they lost their minds” with rage! It’s ironic that their commitment to their Sabbath traditions was so deep that they believed they were justified in scheming to hurt the Messiah on the Sabbath.

## Group Guide

### Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

## Conversation Starters

1. Read the famous “Ten Commandments” passage in Exodus 20:1-17. Now read verse 2 carefully. How do you think the Sabbath law in verses 8-11 might have sounded to an exhausted tribe of freshly rescued slaves?
2. With Exodus 20:1-17 as a backdrop, what do you think Jesus meant when He said He is “Lord of the Sabbath?”
3. In Luke 6:1-5, a group of Pharisees accuse Jesus’ disciples of breaking the Sabbath by plucking grain with their hands, but did they (see Deuteronomy 23:25)? What does this tell you about how the Pharisees elevated their Mishna (a collection of their favorite rabbis’ sermons and essays)? How does this serve as a warning to those of us who sometimes take the words of our favorite preachers and teachers as if they are the inspired Word of God?

4. Why did Jesus remind the Pharisees that David ate the “consecrated bread”? What law did David break (see Leviticus 24:5-9)? What “higher law” did He fulfill by temporarily breaking the ceremonial law?
5. How did Jesus reveal the heart of the Sabbath in His healing of the man with the withered hand?
6. Reflect on Colossians 2:16-17. How does Paul’s teaching on the Sabbath connect to the idea that the Sabbath points to Christ as the fulfillment of the law?
7. In light of Jesus’ teaching and example in Luke 6:1-11, how can Christians today recapture the true purpose of the Sabbath—rest, worship and mercy—in our busy, tech-addicted, shopaholic, workaholic culture?

## Prayer

Jesus, You are the Lord of the Sabbath, and as Your followers, we want to become a people of Sabbath. Forgive us for the sin of forgetting and ignoring the Sabbath. Help us wisely enter Your rest while orienting our lives toward the poor, sick and vulnerable around us. Amen.

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