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Work-Life Balance through Sabbath Keeping for Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church in Markham, Ontario

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This ministry focus paper entitled

WORK-LIFE BALANCE THROUGH SABBATH KEEPING FOR CORNERSTONE CHINESE ALLIANCE CHURCH IN MARKHAM, ONTARIO

Written by

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and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Ministry

has been accepted by the Faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

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WORK-LIFE BALANCE THROUGH SABBATH KEEPING FOR CORNERSTONE CHINESE ALLIANCE CHURCH IN MARKHAM, ONTARIO

A MINISTRY FOCUS PAPER
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY FULLER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JOE MUN CHAN
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ABSTRACT

Work-life Balance through Sabbath Keeping for Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church in Markham, Ontario

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2017

The goal of this paper is to help English-speaking adults from Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church in Markham, Ontario achieve rest, renewal, and reconnection with God and others to bring a sense of balance between work and life. To achieve this purpose, a pilot project will be conducted within the Sunday School ministry with a small number of English-speaking leaders to enable them to practice Sabbath keeping through discussion, accountability, and peer mentoring. The content of this project will go over four key areas of Sabbath keeping, which are rest, recreation, worship, and relationship.

Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church is situated in the fast growing, affluent suburban community of Markham, Ontario, which many consider to be the high-tech capital of Canada. The affluent lifestyle is enjoyed by young professionals and families with dual incomes. Church members often lead aspiring careers with upward mobility and monetary returns. The drive to succeed, coupled with the value of hard work has led to an overemphasis on careers at the expense of self-care, family, and spiritual health. This imbalanced lifestyle is a breeding ground for issues such as burnout, depression, and divorce.

This paper contains three major sections. The first looks at Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church’s context: location, demographics, sources of growth, challenges and opportunities to teach and practice Sabbath keeping. The second section of this paper will focus on the theology of the Sabbath, which reflects on different theological viewpoints of Sabbath keeping to explore possible correctives to imbalanced lifestyles. The final section of this paper provides a strategy for launching an integrated approach through the Sunday School ministry that includes formal instruction, discussion, peer mentoring, and accountability groups. The end result should yield a renewed mind, a focused commitment to Christ, and a healthy work-life balance.

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INTRODUCTION

While many understand the need for work, they struggle with not knowing when and how to rest. Current society is often stressed, hurried, and exhausted. Richard A. Swenson, in Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives, states the problem well:

Margin, the space that once existed between ourselves and our limits, was an early casualty. . . . When we have no margin and our limits have been exceeded; when we are besieged by stress and overload; when our relational life is ailing; when it seems the flood of events is beyond our control; then problems take on a different dimension. One at a time they are perhaps manageable. But they just won’t stand in line. Instead, they mound up suddenly and then bury us without warning.¹

In essence, people are living at maximum capacity without emotional, social, and spiritual reserves, leading to burnout, depression, and a myriad of other psychological illnesses.

The goal of this project is to help prevent, reverse, and correct this unhealthy lifestyle for the English-speaking adults of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church (CCAC), located in Markham, Ontario, Canada, where I currently pastor. Burnout and depression are especially prevalent in a traditional ethnic Chinese church. Hard work and mission-mindedness are core values of CCAC. As a result of concentrated efforts to grow and build ministry on Sunday, which traditionally has been set apart as God’s day of rest, has become the busiest day of the week for well-meaning but misguided members of CCAC.

Despite this continual state of busyness, the church has plateaued in attendance. Some leaders and their families have become clinically depressed. Many have burnt out and stepped down from leadership. Others have left the church community entirely for various reasons. The busyness of work continues in the absence of vitality.

For many at CCAC, the process of spiritual formation is predominantly seen as being conducted through knowledge and works. While Sabbath was taught academically, a lifestyle of practical expression and modeling of the Sabbath is absent. The stress of full-time work compounded with the stress of ministry has resulted in a lack of work-life balance. CCAC and much of the world see attaining work-life balance as another chore on long lists of things to do and consider it low priority compared to other pressing matters. Finding time to rest can be just as stressful as the work itself.

Sabbath keeping is the primary solution to prevent, reverse, and correct burnout for two reasons. Observing the Sabbath means taking a physical day of rest. God commands in Ex 20:8-11:²

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

God modeled a day of rest to all creation as a structured rhythm of work and rest for mankind to follow. The importance of this day of rest is a command and not a suggestion.

² All Scripture citations come from The Holy Bible: New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).
However, while one may benefit from abstaining from physical work for a day, physical rest may not be enough to achieve renewal due to emotional, psychological, and mental stresses and worries. Therefore, true work-life balance can only be achieved when one keeps a Sabbath mentality. This is the same renewal of one’s mind that the Apostle Paul spoke of in Rom 12:2: “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

A Sabbath keeping mentality gives rise to a new perspective of life that creates room for an inner restfulness despite the busyness of life. Jesus invites people to have this inner rest in Mt 11:28-30. He says, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

The world has perverted God’s intention for work and rest. Work can be a form of enslavement although it is something people must do to pay bills and fulfill desires and wants. Often people enjoy the earnings from work but view work itself as drudgery. Yet, a busy society often perceives rest as laziness. As such, when one spends time to rest, it may evoke guilt because rest appears to be unproductive. However, a Sabbath keeping mentality reframes work to be worship and rest to be a blessing.

True Sabbath keeping is not simply observing a restful day in the week but rather about the renewal of the mind. When there is no division between the sacred and the secular, and every moment is sacred with purpose, there is inner rest in God. In that sense, work is not drudgery but blissful joy. Mark Buchanan, author of The Rest of God:
“Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath” reframes common everyday work experiences to be divine by describing and asserting, “This is a gift of God: to experience the sacred amidst the commonplace--to taste heaven in our daily bread, a new heaven and a new earth in a mouthful of wine, joy in the ache of our muscles or the sweat of our brows.”

When work can be seen as a joyful experience, it no longer becomes stressful, but restful. This renewal of one’s mind in Sabbath keeping is key to work-life balance.

My personal interest in this subject began when I first experienced burnout and depression while serving as a pastor. While depression and burnout are common among pastors, it was foreign to me. It was not until I attended a course in my Doctor of Ministry program that I understood what burnout was and why it was happening to me. Senior Professor of Psychology and Dean Emeritus at Fuller Theological Seminary, Archibald Hart, gives an insightful reason for why ministers experience burnout: “ Ministers are particularly vulnerable to burnout because they experience the greatest exposure to the needs of people and often have the least resources, from a human standpoint to offer.”

As a minister, I was constantly thrown into the frontlines of ministry in attempting to solve problems, care for people, and meet needs. Burnout taught me that I was not superman, but simply human with limited physical, emotional, and spiritual reserves. Depression showed to me that I had losses that I needed to grieve for and personal needs that were being neglected. While burnout and depression are not pleasant experiences,

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they had a purpose: to direct me to the need for renewal in mind, body, and spirit. I needed to trust that God had shoulders broad enough to carry all of the needs of the church, the ministry, and God’s mission. I had to stop pretending to be a savior and renew my faith in Jesus Christ as the only true Savior of the world.

To compound the problem, the church that I was serving prior to CCAC was ignorant of how to help pastors that experience burnout and depression. It is surprising that such a well-known problem amongst Christian workers has not been addressed well in churches. In fact, according to H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, co-authors of Pastors at Greater Risk, “45.5 percent of pastors say that they’ve experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.”

However, simply granting pastors a leave of absence, will not necessarily solve the problems of burnout and depression. As such, a temporary leave of absence can easily turn into a permanent resignation.

In addition, part of the problem is that churches can impose unrealistic expectations on its pastors to drive attendance growth. In the church that I was serving prior to CCAC, metrics were highly valued. The leaders set lofty goals to increase the church’s Sunday attendance, to equip more volunteers to serve and lead, and to increase overall tithes. Performance and year-end evaluations were always stressful because they were predominantly based on these goals.

As such, these expectations to drive physical growth in numbers without understanding God’s expectations for growth produced emotionally unhealthy leaders. In

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unhealthy leaders produced unhealthy followers. An unhealthy trend developed and was left unchecked, which led to an overall decline in my former church’s health.

To reverse that decline and trend, it is critical for leaders to be both emotionally and spiritually healthy. Peter Scazzero, author of *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* and *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, emphasizes that, “The overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership. In fact, the key to successful spiritual leadership has much more to do with the leader’s internal life than with the leader’s expertise, gifts or experience.”

The leaders’ emotional and spiritual health is important to the health of churches because many of the pains and problems that plague churches lie predominantly within social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Without addressing these dimensions in the personal life of leaders, it is virtually impossible to address these areas in churches effectively. I have personally discovered that Sabbath keeping is effective in addressing these issues through creating a space to develop socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

The ministry challenge of maintaining work-life balance, the solution of Sabbath keeping, and my personal journey to pursue emotional health led to the thesis of this final project: to help English-speaking adult members who have experienced burnout at Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church achieve a healthier work-life balance through peer accountability groups within the Sunday School ministry that teach and encourage Sabbath keeping in areas of rest, recreation, worship, and relationship. To address CCAC’s ministry challenge, this paper will contain three major sections. The first section

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6 Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 20.
of this paper focuses on the context of this new ministry. Chapter 1 examines CCAC’s location, demographics, and growth factors. Special attention is given to ethnic Chinese values of hard work, maintenance of the “Markham lifestyle,” and secularism that have distracted the CCAC community from keeping a work-life balance. Chapter 2 explores CCAC’s history, vision, values, and practices that contribute to the problem of imbalanced lifestyles. It includes a discussion on cultural differences between Canadian born Chinese and Immigrant Chinese, generational differences, and communication issues relating to “saving face.”

The second section of this paper is grounded in theological reflection. Chapter 3 offers a literature review delving into theological understanding of CCAC and its faith traditions. Literature for Sabbath keeping and the concept of self-care will also be reviewed. Chapter 4 sets forth the ecclesiology of CCAC and how its denominational tradition shaped it into the church it is today. It also explores insights gleaned from the Roman Catholic faith tradition as possible correctives to CCAC’s ecclesiology. Chapter 5 focuses on theology of the Sabbath in areas of rest, recreation, worship, and relationships. The practice of Sabbath keeping in Judaism and Roman Catholicism are included to widen the Evangelical view and further understanding.

The third section of this paper plans for launching an integrated Sabbath keeping strategy. Chapter 6 develops the plan which builds upon previous chapters that describe context and theology to provide updated theological education on the Sabbath and practical instruction on cultivating Sabbath keeping within the four aforementioned key areas: rest, recreation, worship, and relationship. This teaching will be disseminated
through a Sunday School class format. Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the implementation of the plan which requires timeline, leadership development, physical resources, and human resources to conduct this pilot project. The paper concludes with an evaluation process that will shed light on the effectiveness of the overall strategic plan.

The journey of life is a long journey. The Apostle Paul in 2 Tm 4:7 describes life as a race with his younger protégé Timothy saying, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” For Paul, finishing this race and keeping the faith is important. Therefore, implying how one finishes is far more important than how one begins.

However, with all the stresses and burdens of life, it is becoming increasingly challenging for anyone to finish well today. There are plenty of distractions that steer people away from the finish line. Sabbath keeping, while not a new concept, is an effective means to help God’s people stay the course, achieve work-life balance, and to finish the race of life well.
CHAPTER 1

THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF CCAC

Exploring the Context of Markham, Ontario, Canada

To better understand why the practice of Sabbath is needed in the church, a more in-depth exploration of the city of Markham will be discussed. There are cultural factors within the city that affect the residents in Markham, which also indirectly affect Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. These factors play an important role that undermines a healthy work-life balance.

Demographics of the City of Markham

The city of Markham is located in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) in the province of Ontario. The GTA consists of the central city of Toronto and its surrounding municipalities: Durham, Halton, Peel, and York. Markham, as a city within the municipality of York, is the fourth largest community within the GTA after Toronto and the cities of Mississauga and Brampton. Markham is ethnically diverse, but there is clearly a prominence of Chinese people. The most recent census conducted in 2011 showed that Markham’s population at the time was 301,709 residents, of which 114,950
were ethnic Chinese.¹ This means 38 percent of Markham’s entire population is ethnic 
Chinese, accounting for more than one-third of the population. Despite the high number 
of ethnic Chinese population, the rest of the city population is quite diverse with visible 
minorities. Almost three-quarters of the population (actually 72 percent) are comprised of 
visible minorities such as Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese.

Since there is such a large Asian influence, it is no surprise that Markham is full 
of many Asian restaurants and businesses. With such a rich population of ethnic Chinese 
population living in the area, Markham became home to Pacific Mall, the largest Chinese 
mall in all of North America. Pacific Mall is an ethnic Chinese mall surrounded by a 
Chinese plaza called “Market Village.” Together, Pacific Mall and Market Village house 
over 500 stores.² Pacific Mall serves as a common area to eat, shop, and loiter.

The density and traffic flow of Chinese people in the Pacific Mall area during 
weekends is so high that it almost feels like the busiest part of Hong Kong or China 
transplanted on a Western landscape. While the official languages of Canada are English 
and French, at Pacific Mall and other areas in Markham, businesses conduct their 
transactions primarily in Chinese (either Mandarin or Cantonese) and secondly in 
English. Most people understand English, but will speak it only when necessary in these 
dense areas of Chinese people. French is taught in school, but rarely used in the province 
of Ontario in everyday life.

¹ The City of Markham, “Statistics and Demographics,” The Corporation of the City of Markham, 
http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/AboutMarkham/FactsStats (accessed September 17, 2014).

Financially, residents of Markham are on the higher end of the scale for wages. The median income of households in Markham in 2010 was $86,022.³ Comparatively, the provincial and national medians were $71,540 and $69,860 respectively in that same year. From a median income standpoint, this is 23 percent higher than the national average. The larger incomes are reflected in the cost of living in the city.

Markham is mainly driven by the labor industry. As of the last census,⁴ almost half of the labor force (44 percent) was employed in sales and services (23 percent), business, finance, and administration (the last three areas were categorized together, which represents 21 percent).⁵ The remaining areas are management (13 percent), natural and applied sciences (12 percent), and education, law, and government services (the last three areas were categorized together, representing the last 10 percent).

**Rapid Growth in Recent Years**

In recent years, there has been an explosion of population growth in the city of Toronto and the GTA. From 2006 to 2011, the population rapidly grew from 255,548 to 301,709 residents in Markham alone. This represents a 15.3 percent increase in five years.⁶ In comparison, just south of Markham in the City of Toronto, growth was only 4.5

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³ The Official Site of The City of Markham, “Statistics and Demographics,” The Corporation of the City of Markham, http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/AboutMarkham/FactsStats (accessed September 17, 2014).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

percent in that same duration. Markham was originally formed as a “town,” but had its status changed to a bigger “city” in 2012 due to its rapid growth.

The construction of downtown Markham is currently underway which points to the booming growth of the city. After its construction, downtown Markham will be considered the central business district of Markham. Some of the main highlights of this current project include 10,000 luxury town manors and condos, two million square feet of retail and dining space, 3.4 million square feet of premium commercial office space, over 100,000 square feet of fitness facilities that will include running, biking, or swimming, and a 2,400-seat movie theater. 7

There is also discussion of a proposed National Hockey League (NHL) sized arena that will seat 20,000 people. The original proposal included a public-private financial partnership and was projected to cost $325 million. However, in December 2013, the Markham city council rescinded that proposal. 8 Canadian national newspaper The Globe and Mail reported that, “All of the 13 members of council said they like the idea of an NHL-ready arena for Markham. But the majority of them said they did not want to use public money for it. This echoed an opinion they said they received from the voters.” 9 Furthermore, without an actual NHL team committed, generating enough

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income to sustain an arena was in serious question. Currently, the league has expressed no interest in putting a franchise in Markham. A major reason for rejecting this arena is that Markham residents do not want to fund the project from their taxes. Money is an important factor that contributes to commonly shared values of Markham residents that will be discussed later in this paper.

**Growth Factors**

From the rapid population growth, to the construction of downtown Markham, to the discussion of building a $325 million sports arena, the city experienced incredible growth from a small town to a young, thriving city. It is not a coincidence that people are moving to Markham. There are a number of significant reasons for this growth.

One of those reasons is simply the availability of jobs. Markham is considered one of the high tech capitals rivaling Ottawa, the capital of Canada. As of 2014, there are more than four hundred head offices and one thousand high tech and life sciences companies in Markham. Some of those big companies include IBM Canada, AMD Technologies, ASUS Canada, Honda Canada, Honeywell, Oracle, Johnson & Johnson, and Huawei among many others.

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Common jobs available in these tech companies are in areas such as computer programming, engineering, management, and research. Most employees in these companies are both highly educated and skilled. This is consistent with the education level of residents in Markham. For instance, 59 percent of the population of Markham over the age of fifteen has completed some form of post-secondary education. Skilled and educated professionals are lured from all over the country and even the world to work for one of the big companies situated in Markham. Once they begin to work in Markham, living in the city becomes ideal.

Second, many people are attracted to Markham because of its close proximity to the much bigger city of Toronto. Not all Markham residents work in Markham, and therefore must commute to downtown Toronto, especially those who are employed at major financial institutions and banks where the primary head offices are located. From Markham, one can travel to the central business district of Toronto within an hour by car (through Highway 404) or train (GO Transit).

This commute to Toronto has become common practice for residents in Markham. People will travel to downtown Toronto to work while they choose Markham as their place of residence. This is especially true for those with young families. The residential areas in the heart of Toronto are generally expensive, crowded, and noisy. Young and single professionals may prefer the short commute to work and even crave the exciting

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lifestyle that downtown Toronto can offer. However, those with growing families and young children generally prefer a quieter and more spacious suburban lifestyle, which Markham is well-known for.

Markham is a diverse place. There are pockets of the city that are busy all the time, such as Pacific Mall, but there are also parts that are zoned to be residential only and remain quiet at night. There are even areas that are undeveloped and considered rural. The diversity of the city landscape reflects the diversity of its human population.

Third, Markham is an affluent city. By mid-2014, the average cost of a two-story detached home was $795,000, a townhouse $525,000, and a standard condominium apartment $355,000. By comparison, the average cost across the 905 area code region (“905 region” includes Markham and other areas in the GTA but excludes the city of Toronto) was $645,179 for detached homes, $410,270 for town houses, and $296,078 for condominium units. The cost of housing in Markham is significantly higher than the average, which indicates that one has to pay a significant premium to live here compared to other areas in the 905 region. Due to high demand for new and comfortable housing, property values in the GTA and Markham have been trending up in recent years, which have made the real estate market in Markham quite lucrative.

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One can also see affluence on the roads. A number of major luxury car dealerships are situated within a five-kilometer radius of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church, including Mercedes Benz, BMW, and Volvo. For example, the Mercedes Benz C-Class Sedan, one of their lower model cars, begins at $43,000.\(^\text{16}\) The high end Mercedes Benz S-Class Sedan, starts at $100,200. In comparison, the average annual salary in Ontario, as of February 2015, is $49,088.\(^\text{17}\) Therefore, an average annual salary of a person in Ontario will make just enough to purchase an entry level Mercedes Benz C-Class Sedan. Yet, surprisingly it is common to see not only entry-level luxury cars, but a variety of them and their higher-end models everywhere around Markham.

The cost of living in Markham is quite high relative to other areas in the GTA, yet it remains an attractive destination to live for those who can afford it. For instance, Canada is one of the most taxed nations in the world (slightly over 40 percent)\(^\text{18}\) and yet its citizens still have disposable income to consider luxury homes and cars. Furthermore, the availability of jobs, easy access to Toronto, visible affluence, and diversity make Markham a choice destination to live for many.


A Weak Sense of Community and Connectedness

However, there are also drawbacks to living in Markham. Markham residents spend a significant portion of their time in the workplace. As a result, their sense of relational community and connectedness among family members and the greater community are adversely affected. Coupled with that stress, there is an underlying stress to maintain an affluent lifestyle.

In addition to busy schedules that contribute to a weak sense of community and relational connectedness, the required time to commute to work is a contributing factor. While accessibility to downtown Toronto is considered relatively easy and convenient, it can still be a long and stressful commute when traveling twice a day on a daily basis. Markham commuters cannot but encounter early morning and late afternoon rush hour traffic jams on local streets, on the highways, and even on public transportation. During non-rush periods, the average commute from Markham to Downtown Toronto is about an hour. However, during rush hour, this commute time could easily double or triple.

However, not only do busy schedules and long commutes contribute to that weak sense of community but also the strong desire to protect individual interests can create tension and fragment the community. For instance, in 2011, there was an ongoing dispute and public opposition to a proposal to build a large mosque in Markham. This 25,000 square feet mosque was to feature a prayer area, school, community center, family counseling rooms, and even a cold storage room for bodies awaiting burial. It was

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reported that the residents, mostly Chinese neighbors, “strenuously” objected to the Muslim house of worship on purely secular grounds such as noise, traffic, and parking, as well as the 80-foot minaret, the temporary storage of bodies, and bad “feng shui,” a Chinese philosophical system of orienting objects and buildings to harmonize with the environment akin to superstitions. About five hundred Muslim and Chinese residents packed into the Markham council chambers, spilling out into the hall for the public meeting to discuss in heated fashion the building of this mosque.

The proposed building of this mosque reflected the nature of the residents in Markham and what they truly care about. Underlying the stated reasons that the neighbors gave in objection to the building of this mosque is a desire to protect the status quo and a certain way of living. The Markham way of life includes peace and tranquility in zoned residential areas. Also, there is the desire to protect their residential property values. Increased traffic flow, noise levels, and, particularly, the storage of dead bodies at this mosque would certainly decrease the demand for houses adjacent to the mosque and negatively affect property values. While different residents cared about different issues, there was one common reason that was agreed upon, which was the value of their property and homes, which translates to their wealth. The protection of this one value was enough for neighbors to temporarily band together and to protest a perceived threat in order to protect their interests.

In all likelihood, the religion would not matter. For instance, if this was a Christian church, similar actions would be taken. For instance, in 2003, in a separate building project case, the Markham Chinese Baptist Church had their building extension
and parking facility approved by the government.\textsuperscript{20} However, due to the outcry of neighbors, the church amended the design ten times to accommodate the neighbor’s request. At the time, the common reasons given were related to safety, noise and property values. While Markham is a great city, the secular values of desiring to protect one’s way of life and wealth are apparent when religious buildings are in opposition to those values.

Therefore, busy schedules, long commutes, and defensive protection against changes to the neighborhood all contribute to a weak sense of community and relational disconnection. People simply do not have time for one another outside of work and family. Yet, if an important common value is threatened, many people will unite, as discussed with the mosque or church scenarios, at least temporarily. Once goals have been achieved, they disband. There is no genuine desire to get to know neighbors much less to seek a deeper relationship with those neighbors. Purposefully building community is simply not a high enough value or priority.

**Cultural and Subcultural Influences**

There are a number of significant cultural and subcultural influences on the people of Markham. As mentioned previously, Markham has a predominance of ethnic Chinese people, which value hard work and have a strong work ethic. Many businesses and restaurants in Markham remain open almost all year-round without break, other than on Chinese New Year for just that one day. In areas of Markham that are heavily

populated by ethnic Chinese, the Asian work ethic is clearly visible in the schedules and rhythms of local businesses and has much influence over the city.

Secondly, the Markham lifestyle is a reflection of the relative affluent status of its residents. While some very wealthy people live in Markham, most residents work to earn a living and fall into the income category commonly known as “upper middle class.” To maintain such a level of comfort, most homes consist of two-income families. The traditional roles of men and women, the breadwinner and the homemaker respectively, are uncommon in Markham. Both parents of a family will often choose to work to maintain a certain standard of living.

The Effect on Families

There is a close relationship between the Asian work ethic and the lifestyle that many Markham residents have chosen. A simpler lifestyle will dictate a slower pace of life. However, the desire for a comfortable and affluent lifestyle forces people to work harder to gain promotions at their companies or work longer hours in order to increase their incomes. This means people spend much more time at work than at home tending to personal matters. This creates a work-life imbalance and family life suffers.

One consequence a family can suffer is divorce. As of the most recent data from the 2011 national census, 1.8 percent of Canadian households are separated and 3.8 percent are divorced.\textsuperscript{21} Therefore, 5.6 percent of the population are either separated or

divorced. There is a projection that 38 percent of those married in Canada since 2004 will be divorced by 2035.\textsuperscript{22} Finance is one of the top stated reasons for divorce, as it is a major stress to the family. Divorce becomes a looming threat when there is work-life imbalance in the family.

This imbalance not only causes relationships between spouses to suffer but parental relationships with children as well. In some families, the focus is placed foremost on acquiring wealth. That wealth is spent on externals such as the house, car, and other status symbols. Wealth is also directly invested in their children. For those who can afford it, it is a common practice to send children to Montessori or other private schools rather than the public education system, especially in the children’s early years.

The belief is that children will receive better education and thus gain a competitive edge later in life. Parents seem to have no issue investing financially in their children. However, the problem is that to acquire the resources to make heavy investments into home and family, the family ends up being sacrificed to work.

\textbf{Worldly Values Versus Spiritual Values}

Worldly pursuits of comfort are diametrically opposed to spiritual pursuits. Jas 4:4 says, “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” In other words, one cannot choose both the world and God.

Yet, the task for the Church is to reach out to people in this community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, this task is challenging when Markham residents believe that worldly pursuits and comfortable living are normal and needed. Work is overvalued while family is undervalued. Finding an optimal balance between professional and personal life is challenging for many families.

Consequently, priorities are easily misplaced, especially when it comes to spirituality. Some people live a dualistic life when it comes to their religious beliefs. Many want to be materially comfortable and spiritually blessed by God at the same time. However, these are opposing thoughts. A continuous and predominant desire for comfort is a threat to the Gospel and the Church in general. Alan Hirsch, author of *The Forgotten Ways*, poignantly states,

> There is something about middle-class culture that seems to be contrary to authentic gospel values. Middle class involves a preoccupation with safety and security, developed mostly in pursuit of what seems to be best for our children . . . middle-class culture fuse with consumerism, as they most often do, we can add the obsession with comfort and convenience to the list. And this is not a good mix – at least as far as the gospel and missional church are concerned.\(^\text{23}\)

The bottom line is that spiritual values are replaced with secular values.

> When spiritual values are misplaced, even a Christian family unit can easily buy into the consumerist and materialistic culture that is so readily available in Markham.

Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church and the people who comprise that church are certainly not immune to the allures of this secular culture. However, the Church does not need to conform to the existing culture of its environment. Instead, what is required is a

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transforming of the people’s minds, as Paul exhorts in Rom 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind.” Subsequent chapters of this paper will attempt to ascertain and address which aspects of the mind need the renewal as challenged by Paul.
 CHAPTER 2
CHURCH CONTEXT

Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church has built a workaholic environment that is both unsustainable and unhealthy. A possible solution is helping the church understand what Sabbath means and how it should be practiced. While most people at CCAC are familiar with Sabbath, its practice is largely neglected. To better understand why this is the case, it is necessary to delve into CCAC’s history and examine its current makeup including vision and values, cultural identity, spiritual formation, and members’ relationship to church structure, as well as any obstacles to a possible corrective.

History of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church

CCAC saw rapid growth at the church’s inception but ultimately that growth was not sustainable. A sharp decline in membership occurred due to a change in leadership in 2006, only to eventually reach a plateau with slow growth in subsequent years. These events played a major role in shaping the church to its current condition.

CCAC’s biggest growth occurred in the late-1980s and early-1990s due to a major immigration wave from Hong Kong. Hong Kong was scheduled for a transfer of
sovereignty back to Chinese rule from the British on July 1, 1997. Since many Hong Kong citizens feared the Communist regime of China, a large number immigrated to other parts of the world, most notably the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia as preferable destinations. This flurry of global movement created the perfect environment for the rapid growth of ethnic Chinese churches in Canada targeting immigrants from Hong Kong.

CCAC’s first official worship service was held on September 18, 1988 and the gathering consisted of six adults and one child meeting in the home of one of the attendees. By May of 1989, the congregation had grown to about forty people, and meeting in homes was no longer feasible to accommodate this increase in attendance. Therefore, the church rented George Vanier Secondary Public School in North York on Sundays. North York was an ideal location due to its centrality within the City of Toronto and easy access to public transportation. Eventually, the church moved buildings but remained within the North York community, renting out Don Valley Public School instead. By the end of 1993, average worship service attendance had grown to 230 people. In the following years from 1994 to 2006, the congregation grew to about 350 people at its peak average attendance. During those years, membership was comprised mainly of high school students, university students, and young professionals.

Meeting in a rented public school required physically setting up every week for worship. While the set-up process was laborious, the public school environment itself turned out to be an ideal draw to reach Hong Kong visa students who were the primary evangelistic target in those early years. However, this early growth was not sustainable
since much of the growth strategy was dependent on immigration patterns. World events and the economy played significant roles in the cessation of this particular Hong Kong immigration wave.

After Hong Kong’s rule was passed back to China on July 1, 1997, the Communist government of China promised that Hong Kong would be governed differently from the rest of China and be considered a “Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.” As such, while the political governing of Hong Kong changed hands, much of how life was perceived by Hong Kong residents remained unchanged.

In addition, China began to open its doors for business to the global economy. China was and continues to be a major producer of consumer goods in the global market. China’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1997 was $952 billion.\textsuperscript{1} By 2013, China’s GDP was $9.240 trillion. Within the short sixteen-year time frame, China’s GDP had grown by more than nine times. Accordingly, growth in opportunities for financial gain as well as availability of jobs in both Hong Kong and China followed.

With fears of Communist China waning and the economy of China booming, the immigration wave from Hong Kong to Canada naturally ceased. Instead, there was a reversal of immigration from Canada back to either Hong Kong or China. China’s growth and potential held allure, and this movement occurred in the backdrop of Canada’s slow economic growth. Canada’s average growth in annual GDP (%) from 1995 to 1997 was


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roughly 3.56 percent.\(^2\) China’s numbers for that same time frame was 9.12 percent, which represents 2.5 times the amount of growth. The availability of jobs and lucrative opportunities in China were enough for many to return to their country of origin.

These global events and economic trends greatly affected both the arrival and departure of immigrants, which in turn affected the growth and decline of the church. Eventually, the church could no longer depend on immigration patterns to sustain the growth previously experienced. Its landscape was changing and evolving. To keep with current needs and trends, the church also needed to evolve.

In the end, not everyone chose to go back to Hong Kong. The students who chose to stay in Canada transitioned steadily from student life to working life to family life. With these changes, the focus of the church moved away from evangelizing to visa students to creating family ministries including children and youth. While renting high schools was advantageous for reaching out to students, it hampered family ministries. Church families wanted a permanent location to house a growing children’s ministry and a place to call their spiritual “home.” They also desired ownership of a location to run weekday ministries without hindrance. Above all, they desired a church building to grow and build memories in, especially through milestones such as weddings and baptisms.

This is when the stress and decline of CCAC began. Finding a suitable location and facility for an affordable price was a big challenge. North York was prime real estate in the city and would be too costly. The church explored various options and chose to

uproot from North York to the town of Markham where a new church building was to be built. The property was purchased on January 4, 2000.

However, there were complications in this move. The first hurdle was Markham’s rejection of the application to rezone residential land for church usage. The church had to make an appeal to the provincial government to override this decision, and eight months later, the appeal to proceed was finally granted.

CCAC’s second obstacle was finance. The building project was budgeted at $2,942,016, and total collected offering for the building fund from 1992 to 2001 was $756,714.³ In 2002, the church set an offering target of $1,000,000 to aggressively raise funds for the building, leading to the collection of $756,792 in 2002 alone. The church of 200-300 people managed to raise a grand total of $1,513,506, slightly more than half of the cost of the building. However, the difference remained a great financial burden.

The third issue was the new location itself. The evangelistic target group and membership dynamics changed. Public transportation was not as readily accessible as it was in North York. Some people left the church simply because it was too far from their home. The move was costly to both finances and membership, leading to a decline in the church population and morale. However, this was not the end of CCAC’s troubles.

CCAC was originally an independent church without any denominational affiliation. Its original name was “Toronto Chinese Cornerstone Gospel Church” with “Cornerstone” referring to Eph 2:19-22 (NIV) which points to Christ as the chief cornerstone. The word “Gospel” has no affiliation with the denomination of Associated

³ Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church, Building Dedication Commemorative Program, 22-23.
Gospel Churches of Canada and the choice to include it was owing to the founding pastor and members who shared a common historical bond, for back in Hong Kong, they had attended another independent church called the “Peace Gospel Church.”

As CCAC grew, its ranks filled with members who transferred from different faith traditions. Naturally, their diverse denominational backgrounds led to differences in their understanding of theology and practice. Conflict was inevitable and unavoidable, and without a higher governing body to defer to, many conflicts remained unsettled. There was a need for a higher voice to settle existing and potential differences in both theology and practice.

A logical choice among several considered denominations was the Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA). C&MA was a respected denomination within evangelical circles that encompassed much of what already characterized CCAC: an “alliance” of members from diverse faith traditions with strong emphasis on global mission. On December 21, 1997, CCAC applied to be a member of C&MA, leading to a temporary name change to Toronto Cornerstone Alliance Church. The following year, on August 23, 1998, the name changed once more to: Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church.

Perhaps the greatest trauma to CCAC in its history was the loss of the senior pastor who founded the church. In July 2005, this pastor took a sabbatical leave of one year. The reasons behind the leave were not made known to the public. In May of 2006, just before the sabbatical leave was to have concluded, the senior pastor resigned. His loss had a crippling effect on the congregation.

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Church attendance at the beginning of 2006 wavered around 350 people, but by the end of the year, attendance dropped to 300 people.\(^5\) By the end of 2007, attendance hovered at a number not seen since 1993, averaging at about 220 people. The confusing and mysterious fashion in which the senior pastor departed added to the loss felt by the church. CCAC faced extreme uncertainty about the future. In addition, the church was in large financial debt due to the cost of the building project. The morale of the entire church was at an all-time low and recovery was slow. CCAC managed to grow in number again, but it never again neared the peak that it had reached in previous years. Currently, average attendance on Sunday is approximately 280 people.

CCAC’s initial accelerated growth was countered by many losses, and the accumulation of those losses altered the very identity of the church. The change in physical location became a loss in familiarity. Church dynamics changed from visa students to family ministries. The dissenting voices from different faith traditions created friction between members and leaders, leading to a loss of unity. The departure of the founding pastor caused division and a mass exodus of church members, representing a loss of stability. Losses in familiarity, unity, and stability had a huge impact on the church. These are not small changes but rather signaling a crisis. CCAC is currently at a major crossroad.

When a church is in a crisis, it is open to two things: danger and opportunity. Danger can lead the church to continue to spiral downward into permanent demise.

\(^5\) Ibid., 5.

\(^6\) Ibid., 32.
Opportunity will do the opposite and lead to change, creativity, and growth. One of the ways to determine whether a church has lost its identity is to see how it envisions the future. Without a clear vision, there is no focal point. A lack of vision will lead people towards burn out and depression due to repetitive activities devoid of meaning.

**Vision and Values**

CCAC is strongly rooted in the evangelistic tradition. From the beginning, the church has always emphasized reaching out to the community and sharing the Gospel. In its early days, reaching out was easy, with an influx of relatable immigrants from Hong Kong. However, the move to Markham created confusion as to the primary target group. The church needed to rediscover its identity in the new town.

Reestablishing the church’s identity involved stabilizing its then-current situation. A new senior pastor was eventually hired and his gifts in management greatly improved relationships and tensions. CCAC also needed a vision to unify the people. One vision that captured CCAC’s desire was the growth and nurturing of the church’s second generation.

Despite the church’s changes over time, CCAC has been identified as a church that focuses on family and the second generation. Unfortunately, the church’s external identity in the local community is not yet clear. Many in the church are still confused about their mandate and responsibilities within the greater community. However, the resounding positive fact is that the church’s youth consistently display signs of evangelistic zeal despite the church’s struggles.
For instance, the church youth participate in local evangelism training events to learn and practice how to evangelize within the city of Toronto. One such event is REMIX,\(^7\) which allows students to stay at a local college or church for a week. The students gain rich experiences of worshipping with other students from across the city, listening to messages that challenge them to reach out, and receiving practical training on how to engage non-believers.

Another example of CCAC’s desire to evangelize is the inception of an ALPHA program for Cantonese-speaking adults in 2014, which relies on a film series to introduce Christianity to non-believers.\(^8\) The format of the program usually involves church members and non-believers partaking in a meal together, after which they would watch a video and engage in group discussion. These meals are cooked by a church volunteer who is a retired chef and provides excellent, high quality food that lends cheer and festivity to the gatherings. As a result of running ALPHA in 2014, more than twenty non-believers attended regularly and six people came to faith for the first time.

These are only a few specific displays of how strongly rooted CCAC is in the evangelical tradition. Doing the work of Christ, reaching out to the lost, and sharing the Gospel are an ingrained part of the mindset of the believers at CCAC. Generally speaking, if a proposed work is evangelical in nature, there is often little opposition.


CCAC has a desire to reach out beyond the four walls of the church, both locally and globally. To be aligned with the C&MA denomination reflects how important global mission is as a core value. For instance, CCAC organizes a short-term mission trip to China each year. The duration of this trip is two weeks, during which the Gospel is shared indirectly by teaching English in a children’s camp. (In China, evangelism must be conducted indirectly since it is illegal to evangelize publicly.) The church allocated a budget of $35,000 for this short-term mission trip in 2014, which was a significant amount considering the downsized numbers at CCAC.

CCAC also runs an annual mission conference each November. The purpose of this mission conference is to spark desire and awareness for global mission within the church. Missionaries are invited to come and share stories and testimonies, and for a focused length of time, books about mission are promoted while members are encouraged to pray specifically for the advancement of global mission work.

On a local level, the church organizes an annual “Fun Fair” in the church parking lot, which is a mini carnival for children. At the end of each annual Vacation Bible Camp in July, the church runs a Fun Fair for the church children as well as non-church kids in the community. The Fun Fair has booths with games, BBQ and snacks, outdoor music, a garage sale, and a puppet show with an educational Christian message for the children. The entire church, young and old, are encouraged to get involved. The Fun Fair is meant to be “fun” as the name indicates, but more importantly, it expresses a desire to engage the local community in a very physical and tangible manner. The Fun Fair is also an
important venture to mend relationships between the church and neighborhood, strained from past conflicts over the building project.

CCAC gives great attention and focus when it comes to the next generation. This is both positive and negative. The positive is that no expense is spared to support and nurture the second generation. For instance, the church hired two full-time workers, a children’s pastor and an English ministry pastor, to care for the second generation. There is also intention to hire a youth pastor in the spring of 2016. If all three roles are filled, this represents at least $150,000 in cost for the church, which includes both salaries and benefits. The cost is substantial for a church that has less than 300 members. Potentially more than half of the payroll at CCAC will be spent on salaries of pastors ministering to the second generation.

On the other hand, the negative is that some parents can be overprotective and overbearing. “Helicopter parenting” is a term that is used when parents follow and hover around their children. If a challenge is present, the parent immediately rushes to aid the child, like a helicopter swooping down for a rescue, and this is very common at CCAC. Overprotection can potentially stunt a young person’s maturity and spiritual growth. By removing all challenges and obstacles, children are effectively living in a protective sanctuary, without any real understanding of how the world operates nor how to survive in a harsh environment.

Furthermore, CCAC is an ethnic Chinese church, which values hard work, practicality, and harmony. Many parents in the church are blue-collar workers. Some are professionals who earn a higher salary. Few own businesses, and most have to work hard
to support their families. This value of hard work carries over into the church as well. Many readily accept and understand the necessity of hard work in an immigrant church.

CCAC regards practicality as an important virtue. People understand sermons, Sunday School, mission trips, and Fun Fairs because they see the direct correlation of these ministries in building up either the mind or doing the work of God. However, spiritual retreats that practice silence, solitude, and reflection are entirely foreign. The church’s idea of a retreat is that it should be filled with messages, workshops, and much activity. The people of CCAC cannot see the practicality of a quiet retreat because it is not concrete and immediately considered useful. In contrast, other more contemplative traditions such as Anglican or Roman Catholicism conduct their retreats with a more personal meditative approach because it is helpful to their spirituality.

Harmony is another strong value in CCAC. There is a strong desire to maintain peaceful coexistence with one another and to see the church run well; this is also expressed both positively and negatively through sacrifices of time by the older generation. In addition to their busy lives outside the church, some volunteer their time and energy to the youth group to act as counselors, lead worship on Sundays, or teach Sunday School. Often, they volunteer in multiple roles and serve without complaint. About 20 percent of the church membership act in leadership positions and they represent the primary work force of the church. This is consistent with Pareto’s Principle.\footnote{F. John Reh, “Pareto’s Principle – The 80-20 Rule,” \textit{About.com}, \url{http://management.about.com/cs/generalmanagement/a/Pareto081202.htm} (accessed June 2, 2015).}
commonly known as the “80-20” rule: CCAC has roughly 20 percent of the people doing 80 percent of the work in the church.

On the negative side, conflict management is not conducted well at CCAC. When conflict arises between two parties, the likely outcome is that one party will end up leaving the church. This act of abandonment can actually be perceived as a continuing maintenance of church harmony. By choosing to leave quietly rather than assert their opinion and dominance, the departing individuals allow the other party to “save face.” In an Asian shame-based culture, it is understood that sometimes keeping the harmony is preferable to potentially causing others to lose face which may result in creating greater distress and conflict. But this method of dissolving a conflict is far from ideal.

**Spiritual Formation**

The spiritual formation of CCAC over-emphasizes knowing and doing but often neglects the idea of simply “being.” The church is heavily focused on “building up the mind” (knowing) and “making action plans” (doing) which are considered high values. When there are genuine problems such as conflicts in the family or low tithing, the typical solution is to find a speaker or pastor to teach and address these issues through sermons with some practical suggestions. This method is generally not very effective for sustained life change, as the same problems and issues continue to persist. The common assumption is that once someone knows what to do, they will do it. However, without the “being” aspect, being in right relationship with God, the driving force towards permanent change is weak or non-existent.
At CCAC, this understanding of being is very weak when it comes to spiritual disciplines. The Word of God is dissected and studied in Bible studies with the intention to acquire more biblical knowledge rather than enjoying an experiential relationship with God. The practice of spiritual contemplation is poorly understood by the church. Silence and solitude are not taught and rarely encouraged. Rather, in opposition, the church is a very loud and busy place on Sundays. The traditional prayer meeting is used more as a time to petition God instead of fostering a right relationship with Him.

When spiritual disciplines are poorly understood and practiced, the holy Sabbath is also minimized. Church on Sundays becomes just another work day, except that the work is done for God instead of a human boss. The concept of rest is foreign in CCAC, as many are too busy going to meetings or volunteering in a ministry. Some are even busier at church than they are at school or work. At the heart of this issue lies a form of idolatry and enslavement. Idolatry tricks the self into thinking that human works are trusted more than God. It is enslavement because there is no freedom and rest from the fatigue that continues to chain so many well-intentioned believers.

People and Structures

There are two main distinguishable groups at CCAC: Canadian-born Chinese (CBC) and overseas-born Chinese (OBC). CBCs have more of a Western mindset, which is more objective, direct, and individual. OBCs have more of an Eastern mindset, which is more relational, indirect, and group-oriented. While neither approach is wrong, conflict can arise when the two groups meet.
When there are potential conflicts in ministry between CBCs and OBCs, CBCs tend to be more direct in addressing issues and opening up discussions. However, OBCs tend to be more indirect and often take the conversation around in circles before addressing a particular issue. This behavior can be interpreted as a “face-saving” mechanism to maintain the integrity of the relationship when a conflict arises. However, for CBCs, addressing issues can be quite frustrating as the process becomes both time-consuming and tiresome.

In addition, there are generational and cultural differences between CBCs and OBCs. CBCs are informed by postmodern culture, whereas OBCs are the product of premodern and modern culture. Heath White summarizes in his book, *Postmodernism 101: A First Course for the Curious Christian*, the shifting cultural phenomenon as follows: “Premoderns placed their trust in authority. Moderns lost their confidence in authority and placed it in human reason instead. Postmoderns kept the modern distrust of authority but lost their trust in reason and have found nothing to replace it.”¹⁰ In other words, postmoderns are quite distrustful of authority and reason. Moderns abide by reason, which is why for them the sermon is central in a worship setting.

Furthermore, OBCs view God as a highly authoritative figure who requires reverence while CBCs view God as a highly compassionate being who requires acceptance of one another. These two different views of God are evident in how differently the Chinese and English worship services are run. The Chinese service

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requires a processional; those up on stage require formal wear, and those sitting listen intently to the message as a sign of reverence towards God. By contrast, the English service begins with the worship leader encouraging the congregation into song, and those on stage dress casually while people sitting are encouraged to greet one another. The main value communicated there is acceptance.

Another generational difference is that CBCs, relatively younger in age than OBCs, are more willing to take risks. They are not afraid to try different things and explore different methods of conducting ministry. The Fun Fair was a fresh idea to CCAC that was generated from the English congregation. However, OBCs who opt for stability generally favor routines and ministries that have been proven to work. Perhaps the best approach is to compromise and accept the best of both views. CBCs and CBCs can learn from one another as well as train each other. CBCs can learn to value stability so that the ministry has more time to grow roots and become secure. OBCs can learn to take more risks which can lead to great rewards and growth. However, where exactly the middle ground is will not easily be determined when there is a clash of cultures.

The church structure at CCAC is primarily comprised of pastors, elders, anddeacons. Pastors are paid staff hired by the leadership. Elders are nominated by members of the church for two-year terms for a maximum of six years. Deacons are appointed by the elders also for two-year terms. The primary leaders are predominantly OBC, and only three out of thirty leaders are CBC. Each elder is responsible for at least two major ministries, excluding the English ministry. The major ministries are categorized as such: fellowship, caring, worship, Sunday School, mission (locally and globally), and
administration. These same ministries exist within the English Ministry, with the exception of administration. Currently, there are not enough deacons and leaders to facilitate all of the ministries properly. Although currently running, the structure that supports these ministries is inflexible and resource-intensive.

Further compounding this structural issue, expectations from leadership are high. CCAC is a mid-sized church in the city of Markham, but the church goal is to grow large numerically. This is a challenging task since relationships with the immediate community surrounding the church are strained due to the building project and there is no desire to change the focus to evangelize cross-culturally.

Currently, church growth occurs mainly biologically rather than missionally. The leadership team already has an enormous amount of pressure to fill unmanned roles in the structure. Past leaders have been discouraged, left the church in bitterness, and in extreme cases, burned out and vowed to never serve in churches again. With little growth and core leaders leaving, it is no surprise that church attendance has plateaued.

Obstacles Towards Change

There are many obstacles towards change at CCAC. Members are already busy with their family, career, and current church life. Time restriction is frequently evidenced by the poorly attended weekly prayer meetings. The remaining available time that people do have for church is spent in fellowship, worship, and Sunday School. The general response of church members is that they are too busy and have no time. The busyness of church members is consistent with the busyness of many Markham residents.
Another challenge is the fear of losing face when interacting with members of churches that subscribe to more traditional ethnic Chinese values. Face is an important factor to consider, especially for OBCs in an ethnic Chinese church. What is meant by face in this case is not physical but a psychological image of the self, presented as a social image that can be affirmed or denied, given or lost, repaired or restored; it is the projected image that is offered in relational context; and its identity is defined conjointly by the participants in a social setting.\textsuperscript{11} Face can be both positive and negative. For instance, saving face can be positive, if it serves to protect a person’s honor. Face can be negative, if it hinders a person from sharing authentically and genuinely in a setting meant to create meaningful connections and ease burdens.

According to David Augsburger, professor of pastoral care and counseling at Fuller Theological Seminary and a diplomat of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors, face is intricately related to honor. Honor is a persona, image, mask, or role that attaches worth to a person. Dishonor is a loss of self before one’s ideal self.\textsuperscript{12} However, respect is different from honor. Respect is more about acknowledging the other person’s position. Honor is a deeper appreciation of the person whereas respect can be more superficial and points to manners and proper behavior. Honor is highly prized in Chinese culture. Losing face is the equivalent of losing honor, the loss of which brings

\textsuperscript{11} David Augsburger, “Face and Face-work” and “The Call to Soul-Mending and Soul-Making,” lectures presented at The Concept and Definition of Face Conference, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, February 27 to March 9, 2012.

\textsuperscript{12} David Augsburger, “Honor vs. Dignity” and “The Call to Soul-Mending and Soul-Making,” lectures presented at The Concept and Definition of Face Conference, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA: February 27, 2012 to March 9, 2012. Augsburger outlines the differences between honor and shame. Honor is persona, mask, role. Dignity is the real person, the self alone.
shame to not only the individual but to his or her entire family. Therefore, causing someone to lose face is the same as dishonoring a person and heaping shame upon an entire family. Such a powerful and deeply ingrained cultural message is difficult to understand, much less change.

Yet the ethnic Chinese church needs to help believers understand that feeling shame is not necessarily a bad thing. David Augsburger says the following about anxiety, shame, and guilt: “These feelings can contribute to finding resolution in authentic forgiveness and experiences of grace. . . . Pastoral counseling and psychotherapy, among all the helping professions, see anxiety as rooted in our human finitude, shame as a gift to our relatedness, and guilt as essential to our moral and volitional existence.” Good can abound from shame, especially if it leads to repentance. Change may be difficult for some ethnic Chinese people because it may entail placing them in vulnerable positions to grapple with even more complex issues they may not be ready or equipped to confront.

Despite these obstacles, there is opportunity for growth. There is a genuine desire for members to help one another. As previously stated, CCAC is a hard-working church. They believe their work makes a difference. However, there is discrepancy in what they believe and reality. The reality is that their hard work has represented only an effort to simply maintain what they have, as opposed to cultivating a strong vision for the future.

Also, tradition impedes change. There is a common attitude among the leadership that says, “If it is not broke, why change it?” People are leaving the church, but not

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enough stay. There are still newcomers visiting the church, albeit in smaller numbers each year. Offering patterns and amounts are more or less the same every year. The changes are not drastic enough to spur departure from tradition.

Change can be uncomfortable individually or corporately. From an individual standpoint, to maintain the status quo is to not grow spiritually. The motivation of every believer in Christ needs to be about changing their old self to become more the new self in Christ. The Apostle Paul points to change in Eph 4:22-24 saying, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” To change and be renewed by becoming the new self that is like God in righteousness and holiness is the intended goal.

A group of changed individuals is the church. When done correctly, it is attractive. Acts 2:42-47 depicts a scene of the early church where members gathered to learn about God, eat, pray, and share. Verse 47 recorded that “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” The early church was simple in expression but was effective in reaching out to others. Their mode of evangelism came natural and seemed effortless.

CCAC needs a new direction more than ever. Instead of focusing on existing outward strategies, perhaps the needed change is more internal than external. This change has to be both personal and spiritual, and it requires trust in God. That trust will be expressed in how the people enter into a rhythmic pattern of work and Sabbath rest. The
practice of Sabbath is an important part of self-care and the best possible remedy to an imbalanced lifestyle plaguing the church today.
PART TWO
THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION
CHAPTER 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

This project has been guided and influenced by several important resources. In this chapter, these works of literature will be individually evaluated as they relate to the primary thesis of this project. The contributions of each work as it relates to the practice of Sabbath keeping will be identified, and the areas of weakness will also be outlined.

*The Glory of Christ in His Church by Samuel J. Stoesz*

Sameul Stoesz delineates the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA) denomination’s ecclesiology. An understanding of ecclesiology will help clarify if Sabbath keeping is a spiritual discipline that is consistent with the church’s practice. Stoesz brings up two core values that every C&MA church should possess.

The first core value is mission. The founder, Albert B. Simpson, originally did not envision the C&MA to be a church but a sending body to unite various churches for the goal of third world mission. The word “alliance” was patterned after the Evangelical Alliance based in London in 1846, which Simpson hoped would encourage cooperation
and thwart competition. The C&MA evolved into a denomination with a strong emphasis on world evangelization.

Mission is the work the church should be engaged in. An understanding of the “work” of the church allows its members to focus its attention on that goal, efforts can be synergized, and unity created. Understanding the nature of the work avoids unnecessary expenditures of time, effort, and money that are not contributing to the intended goal.

Stoesz envisioned that C&MA churches would consist of members who are entirely committed to Jesus Christ. He says plainly, “Total commitment to the body begins with total commitment to Christ.” Members express that commitment through a desire to serve as part of a priesthood whose interest is to serve the Lord by serving others. The purpose of serving others is to advance God’s mission.

The second core value is the “deeper life.” The deeper life is a deeper spirituality that reflects a close and personal relationship with God. Stoesz sees the importance of the deeper life saying, “The church’s mission is not simply going; it is making—making disciples. It is not simply doing, but being—it is the focus of the all-sufficient Christ in

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2 Ibid., 8.

3 Ibid., 16.

4 Ibid., 73.
power and authority.” He further elaborates, “The first call of the church, then, is not missions or evangelism per se, but to maturity in Christ.”

Sabbath keeping is a spiritual practice that fits within the second core value of the deeper life. Stoesz states, “Evangelism and missions are not essentially methods or strategies, even though methods and strategies are necessary. Evangelism and missions are the result of a servanthood character and disposition.”

Work alone cannot produce this character. Sabbath must precede work, just as being must precede doing. For Stoesz, the deeper life must precede mission. Stoesz chooses to highlight prayer as the most important ministry in the church because prayer is a function of the deeper life that empowers all work within the church.

One of Stoesz’s shortcomings is that he did not explain how one is to acquire the deeper life. He points to the importance of prayer numerous times, such as prayer preceding revival, but he leaves little detail about how prayer deepen one’s spiritual life. One can only surmise that Stoesz must have believed that acquiring the deeper life was a simple matter that everyone could do simply.

While Stoesz did not once mention Sabbath in The Glory of Christ in His Church, the two outlined core values of the church, mission and deeper life, parallel the tenets of

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5 Ibid., 81.
6 Ibid., 87.
7 Ibid., 133.
8 Ibid., 237.
9 Ibid., 238.
Sabbath keeping work and rest fittingly well, respectively. Also, Stoesz’s decision to highlight the importance of the deeper life as greater than mission, inadvertently implies emphasis on practices that naturally develop that value, such as Sabbath keeping.

**Self-Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment & Spiritual Healing**

by Ray S. Anderson

Ray Anderson provides a theological framework as to how the self can be empowered and healed. The premise of how the self can be healed is based on Anderson’s view that the self is created in God’s image.10 There are two encompassing areas within Anderson’s writing that are critical to understand: emotions and shame.

The first area regarding emotions, Anderson writes “Self-recovery begins with a restoration of the full range of human emotions as an integral part of God’s image, in which each person is created. Restoration of that image entails the recovery of the self as God intended it to be and as revealed in His own person.”11 Restoration of a person includes the emotional and spiritual sphere, not only the physical.

Emotions are comprised of feelings. Feelings are not to be ignored. Anderson expresses, “Feelings may be the most critical indicators of well-being that we possess. . . . While our emotions may be distorted by making incorrect interpretations of what we experience, feelings are connected directly to the self and serve as a guide to restoring the unity and health of the self.”12 Feelings are the primary indicators of the self that are not

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11 Ibid., 56.

12 Ibid., 64.
easily changeable, and therefore, are a more accurate indication of the state of the self than emotions.\textsuperscript{13}

While feelings cannot be altered, emotions can lead to growth and change in the recovery of the self. In other words, emotions can be altered and reframed cognitively. Anderson writes, “Reason receives its direction through emotion, and emotion receives its stimulation through feelings, for the self is its feelings.”\textsuperscript{14}

Therefore, emotional health begins when one discerns what his emotions are telling him about his feelings. Discernment is not an exercise to be undertaken alone. A supportive community is necessary to achieve emotional health as recovery requires accountability. Anderson gives a simple reason for this need saying, “Accountability is what keeps us from slipping back into self-deception.”\textsuperscript{15}

While it is agreeable that processing emotions hold a critical key to self-recovery, it also poses limitations, especially within an ethnic Chinese context. Traditional Chinese people do not easily share their emotions. Unfortunately, Anderson’s discussion of emotions does not address cultural differences.

Nevertheless, there is a need to process emotions properly for any person to live a healthy life. The Sabbath creates space coupled with a safe and supportive environment allowing a person to process feelings and reframe emotions. Those who choose to ignore

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[13] Ibid., 67.
\item[14] Ibid., 71.
\item[15] Ibid., 219.
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their emotions are left in a precarious situation that deepens existing psychic and emotional wounds.

The second critical area is shame. There are positive and negative shames. Not all shame is destructive or negative. Positive healthy shame keeps people within an acceptable boundary. Anderson writes, “A capacity for shame keeps us from violating our dignity by exposing ourselves in such a way as to cause discomfort and offense to others.”\(^{16}\) The shame that is more relevant to this discussion relates to the negative sense, which has more to do with a loss of one’s identity and being.\(^{17}\)

Anderson defines the nature of the problem well saying, “Shame, as the deeper problem of the self, means that one has suffered loss of being, not merely loss of status.”\(^{18}\) It involves a deep fear of being exposed to other’s scrutiny. Destructive forms of shame involve feelings of unworthiness, rejection, and self-condemnation.

It is well known that most Asian cultures, including Chinese, are shame based. In a shame based culture, adherents often wrongly believe that they are not up to standard and inferior to others. This may explain in part as to why some Chinese parents drive their children to succeed. It can be a means to mask shame.

The key to self-recovery begins with uncovering.\(^ {19}\) Uncovering rests on the premise that shame thrives on secrecy and self-deception, which reflects a false image of

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 148.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 151.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.

\(^{19}\) Ibid., 158.
the self. However, once the feeling of shame has been revealed, likely from a third party outside of oneself, self-deception has been broken and recovery can begin. Again, this points to the importance of community in Anderson’s theology of self-care.

Overall, Anderson provides a good theological framework for self-care. It gives thorough explanation as to how self-recovery is personally empowered and spiritual healing can occur within a Sabbath keeping strategy to correct imbalanced work habits. Challenges exist in applying Anderson’s corrective model of self-care within an ethnic Chinese culture. However, it can be overcome in a context of supportive relationships.

From Sabbath to Lord’s Day by D.A. Carson (editor)

From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical and Theological Investigation is a comprehensive scholastic work authored by several theologians and edited by D.A. Carson. The work traces the origin of the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day biblically and historically. The contribution of this work rests in understanding how the Sabbath Commandment from Ex 20:8 should be interpreted.

There are two points that are particularly helpful in the discussion of Sabbath keeping. First, it addresses whether the Sabbath is a legalistic matter. Second, it differentiates the Sabbath from the Lord’s Day.

The Sabbath law can be observed in three ways: ceremonial, moral, and natural. The observance of Sabbath depends on how one views this law. The view also dictates the amount of freedom in its observance.

First, a ceremonial view looks back to creation in Genesis 2 as the basis for its observance. The institution of the Sabbath became a sign of God’s redemptive goal for
mankind.\textsuperscript{20} God rested from all of His creation work on the seventh day, therefore the emphasis of observance is the seventh day, Saturday.

A moral view sees it as a standard of behavior that applies to all humans and transcends time as with the other commandments. The moral law contained in the Mosaic corpus was still binding because the Sabbath commandment was indeed directly applicable to Christians by its inclusion in the Decalogue.\textsuperscript{21} A moral perspective of the Sabbath Law demands that all the other laws, should be followed. This includes circumcision and sacrifices. In addition, the punishments for infringing upon moral law should be applied as well. For instance, the punishment of death for violating Sabbath law (Ex 31:14) should be applied for a consistent moral approach to law.

A natural view understands that all creatures need to rest at some point from their labors. Natural law requires only that humans spend some time in rest and worship. It does not prescribe how long or at what specific times they should rest.\textsuperscript{22}

The Sabbath law in Ex 20:8 is best considered as natural law. The reason is simply because a moral or ceremonial perspective of this law does not fit today’s context. Baukham supports this notion saying, “The Decalogue \textit{qua} law of Moses was binding only on the Jews. The Decalogue \textit{qua} natural law is binding on all men.”\textsuperscript{23} Therefore, the Sabbath in the Decalogue should not be legalistically applied in modern day context.


\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 305.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 314.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 313.
The second point of importance relates to the differentiation of the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day. Lincoln states the problem well, “In the history of the church many Christians have virtually equated the Lord’s Day with the Sabbath and have therefore based their observance of the day on an application of the regulations of the fourth commandment to the first day of the week.”²⁴ In other words, there is confusion as to why the stipulations of the Sabbath are transferred to the Lord’s Day.

The authors make a compelling case as to why the Sabbath should not be considered synonymous with the Lord’s Day. There are three strong reasons. First, the purposes for the days are different. Sabbath points to rest, while the Lord’s Day points to worship. Also, there is no evidence that the Lord’s Day was treated as Sabbath in the Bible.²⁵ Finally, there are no extensive teachings on this matter. Lincoln ponders, “If Sabbath observance on these grounds is binding for present day Christians, should it not have been equally so for the first generation of Gentile Christians, and if so, why did the apostles fail to teach this?”²⁶

Sabbath as natural law coupled with discussion of the Lord’s Day is liberating and grants freedom in choosing when to practice Sabbath without infringing Sabbatical Laws. However, this is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in that it encourages

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²⁵ Ibid., 400.

²⁶ Ibid., 393.
flexibility. It is a weakness in that it minimizes authority leading to the neglect of its observance.

Lincoln clarifies, “This need for physical rest and recreation is worth underlining particularly when many people are succumbing to the neurosis of work addiction or ‘workaholism,’ as some are calling it by analogy with alcoholism.” Clearly, the key thrust is not to devalue rest, but rather to show that the Fourth Commandment of Sabbath in Ex 20:8 should not be legalistically applied to the Lord’s Day. While rest is permissible on the Lord’s Day, it is not a commandment to bind individuals.

*Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting*

by Marva J. Dawn

Marva Dawn’s understanding of the Sabbath resembles the Jewish practice of Sabbath keeping. The only difference is that she advocates any day of the week, not restricted to only Saturday, the day of rest for religious orthodox Jewish people. Though, she encourages an entire day, a twenty-four-hour period of rest, that occurs every seven days. Also, worship is centered around Christ.

Her practice of Sabbath keeping involves four steps: ceasing, resting, embracing, and feasting. The first step is ceasing from work. Dawn says, “To cease working on the Sabbath means to quit laboring at anything that is work.” Ceasing includes anything related to work such as productivity, accomplishments, including feelings of worry.

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27 Ibid., 404.

The definition of Sabbath requires ceasing. However, it is not always easy to cease thoughts, feelings, and emotions from work. Many cannot Sabbath properly because there is a plethora of demands from either school and work. Unfortunately, Dawn does not offer a practical solution to help a person cease from life’s worries.

Also, the aspect of ceasing is different for orthodox Judaists than Christians. The Sabbath Commandment is still in effect for Jewish people and therefore authoritative. For Christians the Sabbath Commandment has value but is not considered law. While, it would be helpful for Christians to rest from their work, it is not a biblical commandment that binds them to do so.

The second step is resting. A person can rest when one ceases working. The idea of rest applies to many dimensions of life, which include physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social, and more.

The third step is embracing. Dawn’s idea of embracing includes community and building relational bonds, time instead of space, calling, wholeness or shalom, and the world, which are all good and important. However, Dawn believes the most important aspect of embracing in Sabbath keeping is intentionality.29

Intentionality is the value of taking care of how one does what one does. This is the reason why Dawn’s Sabbath keeping practice resembles to a large degree the Jewish practice of Sabbath. She values how attention to details, strict rules applied to the preparation of food, and how ordinary homes are transformed into sacred places

29 Ibid., 103.
culminate to set Jewish people apart from the world.\textsuperscript{30} Dawn encourages Christians to follow suit saying, “If we were more deliberate about our lifestyles, we might be more conscious ourselves of God’s grace. . . . Paying such close attention to living a truly Christian lifestyle would give better witness to the world.”\textsuperscript{31}

In addition, intentionality is about the direction in which character is built. Dawn says, “All of this means that the Sabbath rhythm leads to an ethics of becoming (how our character is being developed) and not of doing (how we react in specific situations).”\textsuperscript{32} What one becomes is far more important than what one is doing.

While the point of intentionality is well taken, one must be careful in distinguishing the line between intentionality and legalism. If the meaning behind the practice is not clearly understood and communicated, it can be reduced to an obligation to obey rules and follow routine. Following rules is not the end goal of being a Christian.

The fourth and final step is feasting. Dawn’s view of feasting is a celebration of God which includes music, beauty (art or literature), affection (relationship with others), even festivals, as well as food. Feasting is about relinquishing control in trying to create one’s own security to worship God who is their security.\textsuperscript{33} Feasting grants permission to enjoy God’s creation.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 108.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 109.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 96.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 164.
However, there are some concerns with feasting. First, feasting on beauty can lead to the worship of creation instead of the Creator. A person needs to be constantly mindful that it is God that created beauty and the world.

Second, feasting on food can lead to gluttony. Dawn draws from Jewish practice that opts for simpler meals during the week while saving a more delightful meal on the Sabbath as one approach to avoid gluttony. However, this leads one to wonder if simpler meals can be enjoyable. Also, enjoyable may not necessarily be healthy. The Sabbath is not a license to eat anything, even if it is desirable. Further, Dawn does not give much advice as to the quantity of food that should be consumed.

Overall, Dawn’s work is helpful as a general guideline to Sabbath keeping. While there are some limitations, especially when her form of Sabbath keeping borrows heavily from Jewish practice. An overly Judaist approach to Sabbath can become legalistic. However, Dawn’s careful presentation of Sabbath keeping requiring intentionality and regularity is well taken.

*Margin by Richard A. Swenson*

Richard A. Swenson presents the need for margin in four areas: emotions, physicality, finance, and time. People need margin because they lead overloaded lives that have exceeded limitations. Swenson believes the main culprit for the lack of margin
is productivity and progress.\textsuperscript{37} The desire for greater productivity and efficiency was at
the expense of people’s emotional, physical, financial, and time reserves.

Margin is defined by the simple equation “Power − Load = Margin.”\textsuperscript{38} Power is
made up of factors such as energy, skills, time, training, emotional and physical strength,
faith, finances, and social supports. Load consists of factors such as work, problems,
obligations and commitments, expectations (internal and external), debt, deadlines, and
interpersonal conflicts. An overloaded person is one whose load is greater than power,
representing a negative margin status. A healthy lifestyle reflects a positive margin status.

Swenson demonstrates support for a Sabbath keeping practice in at least two
ways. First, Swenson identifies that the human body has limits in his definition of
“Power.” While intuitive, many have exceeded that limit. Swenson, as a medical
practitioner, makes a good point about how people are exceeding their emotional limit
through the widespread usage of tranquilizers. He says, “The use of tranquilizers has
become so prevalent that for decades they have been among the most widely prescribed
drugs . . . while these drugs did assist in controlling symptoms, they did not cure the
underlying problems.”\textsuperscript{39} “The underlying problem is a disrespect for emotional limits. The
cure can be Sabbath keeping because it requires a person to place trust in God while
acknowledging and respecting one’s limitations.

\textsuperscript{37} Richard Swenson, \textit{Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 70.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 83-84.
Sabbath keeping addresses four specific areas that Swenson believes are necessary to be healthy. He claims, “To be healthy, we require margin in at least four areas: emotional energy, physical energy, time, and finances.” These four areas are areas that likely produce the most stress in a person’s life. Sabbath keeping creates the necessary space or margin in all four areas.

While Swenson identifies four areas where margin is needed, he believes margin in emotional energy is paramount. Swenson states the reason, “When our psychic reserves are depleted, however, we are seriously weakened. Emotional overload saps our strength, paralyzes our resolve, and maximizes our vulnerability, leaving the door open for even further margin erosion.” Sabbath creates space for emotional margin.

While Swenson’s work makes a compelling case to build margin, there are two weaknesses in the principle of margin. First, the concept of “power” and “load” is subjective and unique to the individual. Since everyone’s power is different, then each person’s margin can reflect significant fluctuation and variance.

Second, the formula for margin is not quantifiable. There are no numerical units to define power or load in regards to emotions. Numbers can be plugged in for units of time and money, but the meaning is not always clear and practical. Life is much more complex than a simple arithmetic formula.

However, the concept of margin is paramount to understand because it reflects the limitations of the human body which points to the need of rest in the physical, emotional,

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40 Ibid., 78.

41 Ibid., 79.
and psychological spheres that points to Sabbath rest. While the practical outworking of the formula of margin is overly simplistic and subjective, the main principle cannot be undermined. A proper Sabbath keeping lifestyle creates margin that replenishes and restores a person’s overall health.

*Working the Angles: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* by Eugene H. Peterson

Eugene Peterson shares three angles in pastoral ministry namely prayer, reading Scripture contemplatively, and giving spiritual direction. These angles, often referred to as spiritual disciplines, hold great value in maintaining the shape and visible lines of pastoral ministry, which are preaching, teaching, and administration. These angles give rise to an inner character that allows a pastor to perform their priestly function.

While these angles are important, they are often overlooked and cast aside. Focus is placed on the outward over the internal as that is of more concern to members of the church. Peterson describes the nature of the problem of how parishioners perceive success for the pastor: “They are concerned with our image and standing, with what they can measure, with what produces successful church-building programs and impressive attendance charts, with sociological impact and economic viability. They do their best to fill our schedules with meetings and appointments so that there is time for neither solitude nor leisure to be before God, to ponder Scripture, to be unhurried with another

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43 Ibid., 5.
In other words, pastors are encouraged to lead from a position of external productivity as opposed to a position of inner quietness.

Pastors often feel there is no time to practice these angles in view of all of the demands of the congregation; which is why Peterson believes there is a biblical provision to fulfill these demands within the Sabbath. Peterson asserts that true Sabbath is not a day off, which he coins a “bastard Sabbath.” Rather, Sabbath time points to other spiritual work, such as prayer, contemplating Scripture, and seeking spiritual direction.

These angles are particularly important on two aspects regarding the nature of the work of a pastor. These two aspects are teaching and inherent value of people. To lose sight of these angles, would significantly diminish the effectiveness of a pastor.

The first aspect relates to the pastor’s preaching and teaching ministry. The power of a pastor’s pulpit ministry is directly related to the pastor’s inner life that the three angles nourish. For instance, Peterson gives the example of prayer. He says, “Anything creative, anything powerful, anything biblical, insofar as we are participants in it, originates in prayer.” Sermons are creative pieces that flow directly out of the prayer life of a pastor.

The second aspect relates to the people. The Sabbath reminds the pastor that people are not instruments to be used in their ministry work. Peterson warns, “The moment we begin to see others in terms of what they can do rather than who they are, we

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44 Ibid., 4.
46 Ibid., 40.
mutilate humanity and violate community. . . . Sabbath-keeping is commanded to preserve the image of God in our neighbors.”47 People have tremendous inherent value to God. Success and accomplishments are not as important in comparison to the value that God attributes to His people.

There are two areas of weakness in *Working the Angles*. The first weakness is that Peterson only identifies three angles. While prayer, reading Scripture, and spiritual direction are paramount, there are likely more angles to consider, such as practicing simplicity, fasting, silence, and solitude to name a few.

Second, the Sabbath cannot be the only time to practice these angles. While the Sabbath is an ideal time that creates opportunity and space for the pastor to practice these spiritual disciplines at a deeper and greater length, it should not be exclusive to the Sabbath. The importance of these angles should suggest a daily practice of these angles, albeit to a lesser degree, be incorporated into the pastor’s lifestyle.

*Working the Angles* calls for the need of three spiritual disciplines. They are important for everyone in the Church, not only for the pastor. However, it is crucial for the pastor to practice inner quietness and shepherd from that position as opposed to outward measurable success, e.g. attendance numbers. Peterson reminds his readers that productivity is not the end goal of Christian service. Rather, the end goal should be a relationship with God. This is the entire point about Sabbath, a trusting relationship with God always precedes work.

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47 Ibid., 71.
Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry by Gareth W. Icenogle

Biblical Foundations for Small Group Ministry provides in-depth insights for building effective small groups. Gareth Icenogle’s contribution to Sabbath keeping relates to the importance of small group interactions. Small group work is necessary so that Sabbath keeping can be effective.

There are three important reasons as to why small groups are effective for Sabbath keeping. The first is small groups pattern after the very nature of God. Icenogle claims this theological position saying, “God lives as a small group, but the church has historically described God as Trinity, three persons in one.” 48

A healthy individual exhibits supportive relationships within a small group; that models the communal image of the Trinitarian God. Icenogle says, “Small groups are microcosms of God’s creation community. Wherever two or more persons come together, they become an actual reflection of the image and likeness of God.” 49

Conversely, a dysfunctional individual is lacking in supportive relationships. A lonely single image is reflected instead of a communal one. This can be true for a plethora of pathological behaviors such as workaholism, burnout, depression to name a few. Recovery requires community. Icenogle says, “Community flows out of the very nature and presence of a covenant God, a God who convenes people into healing and intimate relationships.” 50

49 Ibid., 20-21.
50 Ibid., 33.
The second reason relates to small groups reflecting Sabbath living. The dysfunction of society is that people are often too busy to spend time with one another, which leads to poor relationships. Icenogle understands as he says, “All human communities exist in a state of brokenness and ambivalence, caught between the seventh day shalom (peace) of God and the temptation to withdraw into the ‘darkness’ and ‘chaos’ of the first day.” However, Icenogle’s vision of a small group lives out the call of God to become part of the seventh day as they discover ways to rest and enjoy the presence of God and of one another.

The third reason is small groups provide a vehicle for spiritual growth. The three main disciplines of small group ministry are face-to-face conversation, Bible study and prayer. Within the face-to-face conversation, there is opportunity to practice confession, and seek accountability which are necessary group processes for effective Sabbath keeping. The ideal small group setting allows a person to process complex emotions in a safe and supportive environment which fosters accountability, restoration, and maturity.

There are three areas of limitation for small groups in Sabbath keeping. The first area is the integrity of the leader and the group. Icenogle says, “Dysfunctional small groups breed more dysfunctional groups. Dysfunctional group leaders breed more dysfunctional groups.” Conversely, healthy leaders produce healthy members.

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51 Ibid., 27.
52 Ibid., 25.
53 Ibid., 111.
54 Ibid., 29.
The second area of limitation is time. Icenogle states, “Group space and time must be managed in such a way as to give all members abundant opportunity to share themselves and to receive the feedback and sharing of all other members.”\(^{55}\) Face-to-face conversations have a time limit that adheres to the group covenant.

The third area of limitation relates to the purpose of small groups, which is discipleship, not healing. Icenogle affirms that healing does occur in the group, but he also says, “Healing is always a gift and surprise of God.”\(^{56}\) This is a reminder that healing is not the intent of small groups. The true purpose of small groups, in a ministry context, is to foster a relationship with God and others leading to deeper discipleship.

Despite its limitations, Icenogle has demonstrated that a small group format is a powerful vehicle of community that can work well within a healthy Sabbath keeping practice. The reason why this works well for Sabbath keeping is because Sabbath is about a relationship with God, that is both individual and corporate. That corporate expression for this practice is a small group. A Sabbath keeping practice devoid of any small group interaction is significantly lacking in effectiveness.

These resources have been invaluable in shaping the scope of this project. The next chapter will attempt to provide insight into the ecclesiology of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. A proper understanding of ecclesiology will help give definition as to how Sabbath should be approached that is allowable within the local church context.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., 60.

\(^{56}\) Ibid., 306.
CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGY OF THE CHURCH

This chapter will provide insight into the ecclesiology of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. The church is often understood as a family comprised of members both young and old that helps and encourages one another towards God’s purposes and agenda. Therefore, the chapter will begin with an understanding of the church as a family and the characteristics of members within this church family. The next section will discuss the calling and nature of work and rest within the church family. Finally, the chapter will conclude by understanding the church as it is shaped by the Christian and Missionary Alliance faith tradition, discuss its limitations, and then look at a possible corrective to Christian and Missionary Alliance ecclesiology by exploring insights gleaned from the Roman Catholic faith tradition.

The Church as a Family

Jesus taught his disciples to pray addressing God as “Father” (Mt 6:9), an intimate and relational term. Those who follow Jesus are often referred to as “God’s child” (Gal 4:7). These two biblical assertions create an image of the Church as analogous to family.
A family is typically a group consisting of parents and children living together in a household. Family members most often share descendants of a common ancestry (adopted children may not). The common ancestry is God. Eph 3:14-15 says, “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.” F.F. Bruce interprets “Father” as being an archetypal Father: all other fatherhood in the universe is derived from His name.¹ Francis Foulkes believes “every family” means strictly “lineage” or “pedigree” (on the father’s side) or more often a “tribe” or even “nation.”² If every person is related through the spiritual lineage of God, the Father, then the Church can be construed as a family.

Every Christian church family shares three features. While church families vary in geography, size, ethnicity, and religious practices these three features are common to all. It allows different families to claim solidarity with one another.

The first is Christ is the head. The Apostle Paul speaks of the marital role relationship analogous to Christ’s relationship with the Church. Eph 5:23 says, “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.” Bruce says, “The word ‘head’ has the idea of authority.”³ As such, those within the Church must submit to the authority of Christ, as wives submit to the authority of her husband.


³ F. F Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 384.
Second, members of the church are co-heirs with Christ. Rom 8:17 says, “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” The language of inheritance was very prominent in the Old Testament and Judaism. In the Old Testament, it referred to the land promised to Abraham and his lineage.

From a New Testament standpoint, Rom 8:14-17 refers to an eschatological reality reserved for those that are God’s children. Douglas Moo says, “Christians are, then, ‘heirs of God’—meaning probably not that Christians inherit God, but that they inherit “what God has promised.” The promise is the blessings of the Kingdom of God (Mk 12:1-12; Gal 3:18-19; Heb 1:2).

In addition, the church family shares in Christ’s suffering so that it may share in His glory. The suffering the Church shares is mainly persecution for Christ. Moo believes that “What Paul is doing is setting forth an unbreakable ‘law of the kingdom’ according to which glory can come only by way of suffering.”

Third, brothers and sisters in Christ are to do God’s will. Jesus states in Mk 3:35, “Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” Christ’s statement clarifies who belongs to the true family of God. In other words, anyone can be an insider who sits at Jesus’ feet and does the will of his Father, and no one can be an insider who does not.

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5 Ibid., 506.

The Characteristics of Members within the Church Family

Members of an ideal church family strive to attain three distinctive characteristics. These characteristics are highly valued. While not all church members are genetically related, they do share three observable behavioral patterns that act as if they were related.

The first is that members are to be Christ-like. In other words, members within the church family are to model and pattern their lives after Christ. Recalling the words of Jesus in Mt 16:24, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” Therefore, it is critical that a proper understanding of what “deny themselves,” “take up their cross,” and “follow” mean.

Leon Morris says, “The natural tendency of the race is to affirm oneself, to concentrate on what serves one’s own interests, to make oneself as prosperous as one can. Jesus calls on all his true followers to renounce such self-interest.”7 While Morris’ view is correct in pointing out that humankind has selfish tendencies, it is limiting in what renouncement of self-interest should mean.

Denial of the self cannot mean that one should not engage in anything pleasurable because it is sinful. Neither does it mean one should abstain from self-care. Hart clarifies, “We must love Christ more than our own selves. But this is not a mandate to hate ourselves in the sense of being self-rejecting and self-punishing.”8 A denial of oneself is not self-hatred, which is a prevalent view amongst some churches. Rather, a denial of


8 Archibald D. Hart, Me, Myself & I (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1992), 56.
oneself is to put God as a higher priority than self. Selfishness is the issue and concern. In other words, commitments to give and serve God’s church should precede selfish desires. “Taking up the cross” relates to “denying themselves.” The cross in Roman times was a means of torture and death for criminals, as reminded in Christ’s passion story. Blomberg says, “Take up his cross” is again likely metaphorical, referring to submission to God’s will wherever it may lead and explained further by the parallel phrase “deny himself.”9 Taking up the cross is not advocating physical death but putting off inner drive to self-preservation and care for one’s own interests for the sake of a greater good.10

Finally, “follow” is about discipleship. Morris says, “And when we come to follow, we should not miss the present imperative: ‘let him keep on following me.’”11 This implies that Jesus is speaking about an entire lifestyle and not a one-time event after conversion. Therefore, members within God’s family are to put off selfish desires for the greater good as a way of life.

The second characteristic is that members of the church family love God and neighbors. Jesus deflects an expert of the law’s query about how to inherit eternal life by countering with his own questions asking, “What is written in the law? How do you read it?” (Lk 10:26). The expert replied in the next verse, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and,

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‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Jesus affirmed the expert’s response saying, “Do this and you will live.”

Jesus then shared the Parable of the Good Samaritan to clarify who is the neighbor. Eventually, the neighbor is understood to be those who seek help and mercy. A true member within the family of God will show love and mercy to anyone, including those outside of the church and faith. A true member of God’s family who extends such love shall inherit eternal life. Eternal life is part of God’s promise and inheritance that all children share with Christ. Therefore, loving God and neighbors is a characteristic of being within the church family.

In addition, Christ also highlights a key trait that distinguishes whom are his disciples. Jn 13:34-35 says, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The command is not new because the Mosaic covenant had mandated two love commandments to love God (Dt 6:5) and neighbors (Lv 19:18). D.A. Carson says, “Its newness is bound up not only with the new standard (‘As I have loved you’) but with the new order it both mandates and exemplifies.”

Love for one another should reflect the love relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. Love is a key trait of Christ’s disciple and being a member of the church family.

Finally, a characteristic of being a member within the church family is submission to God through Scripture. God is revealed through Scripture as it says in 2 Tm 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and

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training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” John Stott says, “Scripture is the chief means which God employs to bring ‘the man of God’ to maturity.”\(^{13}\) The children of God submit to Scripture as it helps them to grow through the maturing process of teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training.

**The Calling of Work and Rest within the Church**

The Church is called to five actions. God is the one who calls and sends the Church into action. These actions are considered the work the church is to perform.

First, the church is called to make disciples. Christ commanded in Mt 28:18-20, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Often this passage is quoted for the call and support of third world missions. However, Blomberg makes clear, “The main command of Christ’s commission is ‘make disciples’ \((\text{mathēteusate}).\)\(^{14}\) Disciple-making involves baptism and teaching, a one-time event and a lifelong process, respectively.

The practice of Sabbath keeping is legitimately a part of the discipleship process. Though, Sabbath keeping has been relegated compared to mission. The church has a

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mandate to teach all members the whole council of God through Scripture, which includes living a life that incorporates the Sabbath.

Second, the church is called to serve and intercede as priests. In 1 Pt 2:5 it says, “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” Peter exhorts believers to build a spiritual house, where the believers are the “living stones” connected to the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ. This house is to become a holy priesthood which offers spiritual sacrifices.

It is unclear as to what Peter refers to as spiritual sacrifices. The word “spiritual” seems to imply two things. First, they are offered by the work of the Holy Spirit. Second, animal sacrifices as performed by priests in the Old Testament, are now obsolete.¹⁵

However, 1 Pt 2:9 defines the nature of the work of priests saying, “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.” God’s chosen priesthood are to be evangelistic in praising God and leading others to worship. The priestly intercessory work that leads to that purpose is Peter’s intent of spiritual sacrifice.

From a practical standpoint in relation to Sabbath keeping, there are two points of significance. First, as a priesthood of all believers, the church must be able to support one another at its membership level. It is not solely the pastor’s responsibility to keep every

single person accountable and to care for every member. The priesthood of all believers demonstrates that every single person functions as priests and has ability and authority to care for one another. Secondly, the priesthood of all believers, reflects a theological understanding that each person has direct access to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, each person assumes their own responsibility to connect with God as an actual priest is not necessary. Therefore, each person within the church has flexibility to choose the time and day in which a person can commune with God for their Sabbath.

Third, the church is called to witness faith. Jesus Christ says in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Followers of Jesus Christ will receive power from the Holy Spirit to witness their faith in Jesus Christ to two ends: the end of the age (Mt 28:20) and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Stott believes that these two ends would coincide when the Gospel has been preached in the whole world as a testimony of all nations, only then “will the end come” (Mk 24:14).¹⁶

The testimony of faith is reflected not only when the church works, but also when the church rests. The product of the church’s work is important as it feeds into the idea of mission and saving souls. However, the rest of the church is also important as it attests belief that God’s mission is accomplished not solely by human works but reliance upon God.

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Fourth, the church is called to worship. Ps 95:6-7 calls people to worship saying, “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” The Psalmist illustrates that the Church is a flock following God as their shepherd. The notion of shepherd here is more than a metaphor. In the ancient Near Eastern context, it is a title that means the same as king. In other words, God is a king that deserves to be revered and worshipped on bended knee as God created and cared for man.

Sabbath is a time to worship. It is a time to lift one’s hearts and prayers to God. The church is called to cease from work so that people can worship. Sabbath is changing one’s channel from work to worship.

Fifth, related to worship, the Church is called to enter God’s rest. Heb 4:9-10 says, “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.” The Church entering Sabbath rest is paramount as it ultimately reflects profound trust in God.

In its most mature expression of entering God’s rest is to see work as worship. The worship of God is not strictly set upon a day, but to see that every day and moment of one’s life is a time to worship and find meaning. It is not a place, or a day, but that every moment lived out, the Church is called to worship God. This is what it means to enter God’s rest as defined in the book of Hebrews.

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Shaped by the Christian and Missionary Alliance Faith Tradition

The church is shaped by the C&MA faith tradition. The denominational values place emphasis and priority on the church’s practices. There are three pertinent values.

The first value is the authority of the Word of God. This is one of the core values of the denomination as it states, “We are committed to the authority of the Bible. Therefore, we adhere to our statement of faith as a summary of key truths from the Bible that we agree on as a family of churches. We affirm the ministries of preaching and teaching in order to understand, obey and apply the Bible to our faith and practice.”  

This is consistent with the tradition’s statement of faith saying, “The Old and New Testaments, inerrant as originally given, were verbally inspired by God and are a complete revelation of His will for the salvation of people. They constitute the divine and only rule of Christian faith and practice. (2 Tm 3:16 & 2 Pt 1:20-21).” Work under the umbrella of a C&MA church must adhere to the authority of Scripture.

The second value is sanctification. Paul writes in Romans 6 that Christians are dead to sin and alive in Christ. There is a sense of dying to the self and living in Christ, which is sanctification. Sanctification is a separation of sin. But it is even more than that. A.B. Simpson, founder of the C&MA, writes, “The deeper spiritual experience into which the fully consecrated heart must come, when even the sanctified self is laid upon the altar like Isaac upon the mount, and we become dead henceforth, not only to sin, but

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to that which is worse than sin, even self.”21 It is a sense of dying to self that produces a more intimate relationship with Christ.

This sanctification experience is defined by the onset of a “crisis” moment. An analogy of a crisis moment is likened to be at a significant crossroads in a person’s faith journey. Someone can choose by faith to reject or accept Christ’s calling to a deeper relationship with Him. If she accepts Christ’s calling, it would lead to an important secondary spiritual experience characterized by the filling of the Holy Spirit or sometimes referred to as a “baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

George P. Pardington in his article *The Crisis of the Deeper Life* reinforces this understanding. He says, “Sanctification is the result of the gracious inworking of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, after regeneration the Holy Spirit is with us; but after sanctification He is within us.”22 This filling of the Spirit is a different experience from that of conversion and water baptism. Simpson describes its importance by contrasting his life before this secondary crisis experience and says, “My religious life was chiefly that of duty, with little joy or fellowship, and my motives were intensely ambitious and worldly. In a word my heart was unsanctified and I had not yet learned the secret of indwelling Christ and the baptism of the Holy Ghost.”23 The C&MA yearns for this spiritual experience of sanctification because it represents the deeper spiritual experience which is a core distinctive.

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23 Ibid., 13.
The third value is mission. Mission, particularly to the third world, has always been at the heart of what the C&MA represents. For instance, Simpson in 1887 never envisioned the C&MA to be a denomination, but rather a fraternal union or alliance of different churches with the clear objective “to carry the Gospel to all nations, with special reference to the unoccupied fields of the heathen world.” This objective arose out of Mt 24:14 which says, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” Churches wanted to expedite Christ’s return, therefore they agreed to an alliance to reach the nations. The C&MA originally was simply a mission agency.

In 1974, the C&MA became a denomination. Today, mission is still a core value within the denomination as it states, “We are committed to missions. We give priority in our missionary activity to evangelizing those people who have had the least opportunity to hear the gospel, thus expediting the return of Christ.”

Limitations within the Christian and Missionary Alliance Tradition

There are some limitations within the C&MA tradition. Pointing out these limitations is the first diagnostic step for a possible corrective. There are three key limitations: namely, an overemphasis on mission work, acquiring knowledge before experience, and less emphasis on being in God’s presence.


First, overemphasis on the work of evangelism and mission relates to the aspect of doing. Perhaps one contributing factor to why a person overly emphasizes the work of evangelism and mission is due to their interpretation of Mt 28:19 to “Go and make disciples.” The emphasis is on “go” more than “make disciples.” Blomberg points to imbalance saying, “When all attention is centered on the command to “go,” as in countless appeals for missionary candidates, so that foreign missions are elevated to a higher status of Christian service than other forms of spiritual activity.”

There is abundance of mission activity within a C&MA church. Generally, the participation of mission-related events is well attended and resourced. Whereas other important Christian works such as prayer pale in comparison. Without devaluing the importance and necessity of mission, the overemphasis of it in the church can overshadow other spiritual activities.

From a Sabbath keeping perspective as it relates to denominational influence, most of the activities promoted to the local church level have been skewed to constantly participate and “do” things for God’s mission. For instance, the Jaffray Offering is a sacrificial offering promoted by the denomination to give to the mission to the least reached peoples of the world. Mission conferences are organized every single year at the local church level. Joint Mission Conferences, is a larger mission conference that joins multiple C&MA churches together, are organized once every three years and there is much promotion and many are encouraged to attend these conferences.

In contrast, the denomination organizes a Prayer Retreat once a year, though not many people attend. There is little to no promotion and follow-up of people who do not attend the prayer retreat. Most do not see the importance of the prayer retreat compared to that of a mission conference as reflected in sheer attendance. This appears to reflect emphasis upon working, giving, and doing much more so than ceasing, resting, and praying. Therefore, a C&MA church can emphasize that doing aspect much more so than being, and therefore, Sabbath tends to be de-emphasized.

Second, acquiring of knowledge before experience reflects the authority of Scripture. As such, the Bible is treated as a textbook to be quoted to support all Christian activity. When Scripture is approached in this manner, there is a tendency to minimize relationship and experience while maximizing truth and the desire to be correct.

While knowledge has value, Paul in 1 Cor 8:1 warns that knowledge can “puff up” a person leading to pride. The goal of reading Scripture should be spiritual transformation, not pride. Further, Scripture can be approached relationally, engaging not only the mind, but also heart, emotions, body, curiosity, imagination, and will.27

The high emphasis of knowledge factors into the understanding of spirituality in the Church. A high-level knowledge of the Bible does not necessarily correlate to a high level of spirituality or mature expression of both emotions and faith. If the emphasis is only about acquiring knowledge, then a living daily relationship with God gets sidetracked. Sabbath keeping is about getting back on the right track, that is building a

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meaningful relationship with others and God. The Bible is a means to foster that relationship.

While Sabbath is clearly written in many occasions within the Bible, it somehow gets overlooked at the Church level. For a C&MA church, where doing God’s mission is heavily focused upon, it is often forgotten that Sabbath rest is one of the Ten Commandments. It is somehow treated less than the other nine Commandments and assumed to be much more forgivable than murder and stealing, for example.

Finally, there is less emphasis on being in God’s presence. The practice of being in God’s presence should be placed at a much higher priority. An example is decision making, whether personal or corporate, should flow out of a relationship with God. Gordon T. Smith, author and president of Ambrose Seminary, believes that presence should resemble a friendship, which extends the concept of presence, that gives divine guidance in the realm of personal decision-making. He says, “We have the potential for a unique, personal and dynamic relationship with God; and it is from this relationship—not as servants, but as friends—that we can encounter and respond to God and his will.”28

Collectively, this points to the problem of emphasizing upon the knowing and doing as it forms a person’s spirituality. The C&MA church is heavily invested in making sure people “do” the right things such as serving and participating in God’s mission and “know” much about Holy Scripture through Bible studies. However, the denomination’s limitations are reflected when the “being” aspect is not elevated, promoted, or

highlighted. Since Sabbath Keeping is very much a spiritual discipline of “being”, it is fair to assume that it is also not elevated, promoted, or highlighted.

In the context of CCAC, the “being” aspect of spirituality is a foreign concept. There are many programs that highlight “doing”, and “knowing”, but almost nothing for “being”. Therefore, the concept of Sabbath to many at CCAC, is just an optional day off. The current understanding of what constitutes a spiritual person at CCAC is one that serves and knows a lot about the Bible, which is an incomplete and imbalanced picture of true spirituality.

While the necessity and importance of God’s presence is not denied but encouraged within the faith tradition, there is imbalance as weighted against mission and the authority of Scripture. The rally cry to reach the world for Jesus Christ overshadows the need to pray for the world. In other words, the doing and knowing is so dominant that being is often diluted. Without that strong sense of being in relationship with God, in the long haul, all the doing and work in the Church can become overly burdensome and devoid of joy and meaning.

**Ecclesiological Insight from the Roman Catholic Faith Tradition**

The Roman Catholic faith tradition offers a possible corrective to C&MA ecclesiology. Roman Catholicism tends to place stronger emphasis on the being aspect and better balances the knowing and doing of spiritual formation. There are three spiritual practices known within the tradition that can be helpful: contemplative prayer, *lectio divina*, and being in God’s presence.
First, to contemplate is defined as thinking profoundly and at length; to meditate. Therefore, contemplative prayer is meditation that focuses on one’s relationship with God. It is not petition that asks for things and circumstances. It is not hurried. Rather, it is restful and peaceful.

Henri Nouwen, a Catholic priest and renown author on spirituality, believes it is “through contemplative prayer that we can keep ourselves from being pulled from one urgent issue to another and from becoming strangers to our own heart and God’s heart.”

Christian workers that become overburdened with work can lose sight of themselves and God. Selfish desires and motives begin to creep, enlarge, and overshadow God’s purpose that can lead to divisiveness. Contemplative prayer brings the person back to the primary reason for any Christian work, including mission, which is God. Pondering on that divine relationship grants wisdom, courage, and inner fortitude to face all circumstances and hardships one must endure. It also corrects an overemphasis of mission as it focuses on pause and spending time to reflect and pray.

*Lectio divina* is experiencing God through Scripture reading. *Lectio divina* literally means “divine word” or “divine reading.” It is a practice of divine reading that puts a person in the posture of listening and experiencing as opposed to information gathering and analyzing. *Lectio divina* is rooted in the belief that through the presence of

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30 Ibid., 45.
the Holy Spirit, the Scriptures are indeed alive and active as disciples engage them for spiritual transformation.\textsuperscript{31}

The Word of God is not only a textbook or manual with rules to memorize and quote. The practice of \textit{lectio divina} reflects the theological view that God is revealed through Scripture. Therefore, God can be experienced through Scripture. This practice balances authority and experience.

Finally, the practice of being in God’s presence involves living every moment realizing God is present. It is “praying continually” as the Apostle Paul advocates in 1 Thes 5:17. In the seventeenth century, Brother Lawrence, a Catholic monk that cooked within the monastery, discovered the art of being in constant communion and conversation with God in everyday life. He says, “To be with \textit{God}, there is no need to be continually in church. Of our heart we may make an Oratory, wherein to retire from time to time and with Him hold meek, humble, loving converse.”\textsuperscript{32} In other words, one can enter into God’s presence at all times, whether doing significant or mundane activities.

The practice of being in God’s presence involves being constantly mindful of God in everything. There is no differentiation between sacred or secular tasks. All can be sacred when one is deeply engaged in constant conversation with God akin to one continuous prayer. This corrects the idea that God can only be found in spiritual activity.


\textsuperscript{32} Brother Lawrence, \textit{The Practice of the Presence of God} (London: H. R. Allenson, 1906), 37.
or within the confines of the church. Brother Lawrence attests that God can be present everywhere and at any time.

The Roman Catholic faith tradition is rich in its development of spiritual formation. There are many elaborate and detailed exercises such as “The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola” to practice the art of contemplation. While Roman Catholicism has shortcomings in theology and practice, the insights gleaned from their path of spiritual formation can create a deeper, richer, and more purposeful Christian life that adds to the current C&MA ecclesiological position and practice.

The ecclesiology of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church (CCAC) is shaped both by Scripture and faith tradition. This helps in understanding the work CCAC is mandated to perform. It also minimizes unnecessary work that does not contribute to the ethos of the church. In the next chapter, a theology of the Sabbath will be presented. Since Sabbath keeping is the main strategy to help English speaking leaders at CCAC, it would be pertinent to understand what is Sabbath and how it is practiced.
CHAPTER 5
THEOLOGY OF SABBATH

Both the Old Testament and New Testament in the Bible is rich in its examples and teaching of the Sabbath. This chapter will present a theology of the Sabbath that begins with a definition citing specific Biblical examples. Following will be a discussion of Sabbath rest for the people of God from Hebrews 4. The next section will then introduce four specific areas of Sabbath keeping that will lay the foundation for the development of a strategy to help English speaking leaders at the Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. Finally, it will explore Sabbath keeping in other faith traditions, Judaism and Roman Catholicism, to gain further insight to widen the current perspective within Evangelicalism.

Definition of the Sabbath

The word “Sabbath” is derived from the Hebrew word šabbāt (שַׁבָּת) and designates in the Bible the weekly seventh day of festal rest which is a day of abstention from secular work that follows each six-day working week.¹ The Hebrew noun šabbāt

occurs 111 times in the Old Testament. The Greek noun σαββατον (σαββατον) translates to the Hebrew noun שַׁבָּת (שַׁבָּת) and is used 67 times within the New Testament.

The verb form of “Sabbath” šābat is translated as “rested” and can be found in the creation account in Gn 1:1-2:4a. God rested on the seventh day and declared it holy (Gn 2:2-3). Therefore, God had modeled a rhythmic pattern of six days of work and one day of rest for all of creation to follow. When God “sanctified” the seventh day because on it God ceased creating, God was not celebrating or commemorating days one to six, but declaring this new state of not creating to be blessed and holy.²

God had instituted the command for Sabbath in the Decalogue for the Israelites as a means of rest (Ex 20:8-11 and Dt 5:12-15). The first giving of the Sabbath commandment in Exodus draws its reason from the creation account (Ex 20:11). Therefore, Sabbath points to God ceasing from work and resting on the seventh day.

The second giving of the Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy is different from Exodus in that it points to God as a liberator of slavery. Dt 5:15 says, “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.” Sabbath points to how God had liberated the Israelites from Egyptian captivity.

Both legal texts for Sabbath in Exodus and Deuteronomy complement each other and emphasize humankind’s dependence on God.³ God ceased from creative work and

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rested on the seventh day thereby setting an example for man to rest. God liberated people from slavery, and set an example of rest from slavery. Sabbath rest comes from God.

The importance of following the Sabbath command can be seen in the penalty of its infringement. Ex 31:15b states, “Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day is to be put to death.” This was a serious matter for Israelites in the forty years of wandering in the desert. It was still a serious matter in the New Testament as Christ was facing death on the same charge (Jn 5:16-18). The observance of the Sabbath was one of the principal distinguishing marks of the Jews as the people of God.4

However, God’s intention for the Sabbath was never intended to be a legalistic matter. There was an incident where Jesus was questioned by Pharisees for picking heads of grain on the Sabbath that was deemed unlawful (Mk 2:23-28). Jesus appealed to Scripture, calling attention to the incident recorded in 1 Sm 21:1-6 when David was hungry and in need. Jesus cited that the priests gave some food to David and his companions, which was only lawful for priests to eat. The fact that God did not condemn David for his action indicated the narrowness with which the scribes interpreted the Law. Jesus showed that the tradition of the Pharisees was unduly stringent and exceeded God’s intent for Sabbath.5

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Afterwards, Jesus summarized in Mk 2:27-28, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” The pronouncement was remembered and transmitted for its assertion that the Sabbath was instituted by God to benefit humankind. The Pharisees’ legalistic attempt to apply the Sabbath Law revealed weakness of a human system that consisted of restrictions that obscured the original intent. Jesus not only found fault with most of the Pharisees of his day but he actually used them in a proactive manner as an anti-model when making disciples.

In addition, the Sabbath was not only created for humankind’s benefit, but it was a gift. Is 58:13-14 calls out the reward for keeping the Sabbath holy that if one does not break the command, blessings will ensue. The two verses say:

If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day,
if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable,
and if you honor it by not going your own way
and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,
then you will find your joy in the LORD,
and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land
and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.

This demonstrates that true Sabbath keeping brings three-fold blessings. First, it brings joy. Second, it rises above earthly difficulties. Alec Motyer says, “We will ride on the heights, rise above earthly difficulties, enjoy an uplifted life (Dt 32:13; 33:29; Hb

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6 Ibid., 119.

7 Gary Tyra, Defeating Pharisaism: Recovering Jesus’ Disciple-Making Method (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 34.
Third, it brings a feast. The feast reflects God’s provision that was promised and covenanted from your father Jacob.

Finally, the Sabbath is about placing faith in God and not strict observance. The Apostle Paul chastises the Galatians for adopting and enslaving themselves to strict adherence of calendar days. He says in Gal 4:8-11: “But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.” These “special days” are the Sabbath and other religious fast or feast festivals, “months” are new moon observances, and “seasons” are feasts or festival seasons lasting more than one day (Lv 23), and “years” are Sabbatical or Jubilee years. Strict observance of these calendar days are no longer simply a custom, but a means of bondage.

Bondage is not God’s intent for Sabbath. Outward rituals do not save a person. It is faith in God that saves. True Sabbath keeping is about that very faith in God’s provision that permits rest. To religiously follow rituals on the Sabbath believing its observance saves misses the point of faith.

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Sabbath Rest for the People of God

One of the critical passages for understanding Sabbath comes from Hebrews 4. The passage attests that the heart of true Sabbath is a spiritual phenomenon, not simply a legal or physiological event. Hebrews speaks of five essential points that relate to this spiritual phenomenon.

First, the people of God are called to rest out of faith and obedience. Heb 2:2-3a says, “For we also have had the good news proclaimed to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because they did not share the faith of those who obeyed. Now we who have believed enter that rest.”

The context of Hebrews 4 contrasts two people groups: the Israelites in the desert and the true Christian community. The difference between the two groups depends on the type of listening of being performed. The Israelites heard the word of God but there was “no value to them” because they did not have faith and thus did not obey. They heard God’s Word but it did not produce any sign of outward obedience, rather only disobedience. As such, the Israelites could not enter God’s rest. The author quoted Psalm 95:11 twice giving emphasis to “They shall never enter my rest” in Hebrews 4.

Next, true Sabbath rest is found in Jesus Christ. Verses 2 and 6 both mention “good news proclaimed.” This is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This supports Jesus’ claim in John 14:6 which says, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” In context, it represents the Christian community entering God’s rest through faith in Jesus Christ.
Third, God’s rest is available “today.” This is written in Hebrews 4:7a stating, “God again set a certain day, calling it ‘Today.’” F. F. Bruce says, “Promised rest was still open for the people of God centuries after the wilderness period, for the writer of Ps. 95 urges his contemporaries to listen to the voice of God ‘today,’ instead of hardening their hearts in obstinacy like their ancestors and being debarred from entering into the rest of God as they had been.” There may be a day where God’s rest is not available, but the promise of rest is still available “today.”

Fourth, physical rest is an outward manifestation of spiritual rest. Spiritual rest is both present and future. Hebrews 4:9-10 says, “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.” The present aspect of Sabbath rest can be entered “today,” as previously noted. The future aspect Sabbath rest parallels the Kingdom of God, which is both “already” and “not yet.” It depicts present rest as foreshadowing future eternal rest. George Ladd says, “There is a proleptic experience of the eschatological blessing. The ‘rest,’ is both present and future; people enter it, and must strive to enter it.” Physical rest is a manifestation of that belief in a future spiritual Sabbath rest.

In other words, the Kingdom of God fully realized is a picture of eternal Sabbath rest. There is no more toil, sweat, or tears. Many people today believe there is a need to

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10 Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 107.

toil because of insecurity and misplaced hopes. People who believe in Christ can rest because they believe in an eternal Sabbath rest.

Fifth, people need to be eager and zealous to enter God’s rest. Hebrews 4:11 says, “Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will perish by following their example of disobedience.” This requires intentionality and actively striving, as opposed to passively receiving.

The latter part of Hebrews 4:11 also warns that disobedience can lead one to perish. Disobedience is exemplified by the Israelite’s inability to enter God’s rest due to their lack of belief in God. Today’s disobedience is exemplified in people’s idolization of pleasure, possessions, and power that leads to disbelief in God. Those that choose worldly pursuits over spiritual ones, cannot enter God’s rest.

Overall, the promise of Sabbath rest as argued by the author of Hebrews 4 is not concerned about physical, emotional, or spiritual fatigue. While restoration in all those areas are important, and implicit within God’s promise of Sabbath rest, the author is advocating so much more. Entering God’s Sabbath rest has more to do with a spiritual state of right relationship with God. A right relationship with God is the beginning and heart of true Sabbath keeping.

Alternative Views and Practices of Sabbath Keeping

There are two alternative views of Sabbath keeping that come from two different faith traditions: Judaism and Roman Catholicism. Both have their strengths and

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limitations. Discussion of these traditions and their practice of Sabbath will help gain insight to widen the Evangelical perspective.

Within Judaism, Sabbath is practiced as strict observance of law. This is readily seen in Jewish dwellings where stoves can automatically turn on at various times within the Sabbath. Some traditional Jews light candles at the beginning of the Sabbath. Elevators in some Jewish establishments stop on every floor on the Sabbath. There is a long list of what is allowable on the Sabbath.

Not only is work prohibited, but anything related to starting a fire is a violation as well. This is understood in Ex 35:3 where it states, “Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.” This is the reason why Jews light candles and have stoves that turn on by themselves. Even driving a car is prohibited since the process of ignition is equivalent to starting a fire.13

There are two key ideas within Judaist practice of Sabbath that are noteworthy. First, is the idea of time being sanctified. Abraham Joshua Heschel, renowned rabbi and author, penned, “Judaism teaches us to be attached to holiness in time, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals; and our Holy of Holies.”14 The sanctity of time is a foreign concept for many Evangelicals.

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Within the Bible there are two Greek words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. Chronos is regular measurable passing time, which is the root of the English word “chronological.” It is quantitative in nature. *Kairos*, however, is the appointed or right time, that is qualitative in nature. A distinctive amongst Judaists is their view of Sabbath as *kairos* time whereas most Evangelicals view Sabbath as *chronos* time.

The second idea that is noteworthy is the Hebrew word for rest in Sabbath coined as “*menuha*.” Heschel says, “*Menuha* means here much more than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. . . . To the biblical mind *menuha* is the same as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony.” In other words, the Hebraic understanding of Sabbath rest implies complete peace and harmony. It adds to the Evangelical view in that Sabbath is not simply absence of work.

The over emphasis on outward practice can lead to legalism for which Christ rebuked the Pharisees. Yet, at the same time, the Judaist view of Sabbath expresses reverent worship of God. As such, the Sabbath sets the Jewish people apart.

As for Sabbath keeping within the Roman Catholic tradition, the emphasis is not strict observance but contemplation. Tilden Edwards, an Episcopal priest within the contemplative faith tradition, states, “One implication for Sabbath observance is the need to provide better opportunities for contemplative practice on that day both within and apart from worship.”

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15 Ibid., 22-23.

Contemplative spirituality is a way of being and of praying, a way of connecting to God. It involves the practice of surrendering to God, and letting go of personal agendas. Contemplative prayer reveals His will to those who seek Him.

There are many practices that fall under the umbrella of contemplative spirituality. For instance, there are *lectio divina* (sacred reading of Scripture), centering prayer (silent prayer), the daily examen (reflecting on the day to see the presence of God), and Labyrinth (prayer walk) to name several. There are also the spiritual exercises created by St. Ignatius of Loyola from the Roman Catholic tradition.

While these exercises help in experiencing God, it must be tempered and balanced with Scripture due to the subjectivity of the experience. Rv 22:18-19 warns of adding or subtracting words from Scripture that entails serious repercussions. Therefore, all Christian spiritual practices and disciplines must be balanced with the authority and sufficiency of Scripture as outlined in 2 Tm 3:16-17.

However, these alternative views help to widen the traditional understanding of Sabbath-keeping. The value of the Jewish practice of Sabbath demonstrates great emphasis of a personal rule that is regularly practiced with attention to detail under the premise of their love for God. While perhaps overly legalistic, it does reflect an attitude of placing importance in the Sabbath whereas many Protestant Christians often see the Fourth Commandment of Sabbath within the Ten Commandments as flexible and less important. The value of the Roman Catholic’s practice of Sabbath reflects another area of spirituality in growing in relationship with God. Within an ethnic Chinese church context, the spiritual path of contemplation is rarely taught or communicated relative to the other
spiritual paths such as service to God and knowing Scripture. These values gleaned from different faith traditions could possibly correct and balance the current understanding of Sabbath and its practice.

**Four Areas of Sabbath Keeping**

There are four areas to healthy Sabbath keeping. There is no order in which these four areas are to be applied, although ceasing work logically should be the first, and the following three can be considered at the person’s discretion. The four areas are: rest, recreation, worship, and relationships.

First, rest represents a two-step process: ceasing of work and rest. The notion of ceasing from work is supported from the Decalogue (Ex 20:10). Ceasing from work does not necessarily mean ceasing from all activity. The cessation of work refers to work that receives monetary compensation. Whatever one considers as regular work, the person should cease and rest during their Sabbath.

While the need to cease work and rest is intuitive, its application is not always straightforward. This is especially true considering pressure and demands. The line between work and rest often becomes blurred.

Those who cannot cease work must understand the concept of a boundary. Henry Cloud and John Townsend, co-authors of *Boundaries*, share, “Any confusion of responsibility and ownership in our lives is a problem of boundaries. Just as homeowners set physical property lines around their land, we need to set mental, physical, emotional,
and spiritual boundaries for our lives to help us distinguish what is our responsibility and what isn’t.”

Sabbath keeping is about maintaining boundaries. To traverse a Sabbath boundary will entail physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual complications. Wayne Muller, author of *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in Our Busy Lives*, says frankly, “If we do not allow for a rhythm of rest in our overly busy lives, illness becomes our Sabbath – our pneumonia, our cancer, our heart attack, our accidents create Sabbath for us.” Sabbath is a boundary that must be respected not because it is a commandment, but simply because all creatures require rest.

There are many people who are constantly worried about the outcome of ceasing their work which often leads to stress and the feeling of helplessness. Hart describes the root of the issue saying, “Worry anxiety, therefore, is rightly characterized in Scripture as a lack of trust in God and a failure to fully understand His plan and provision for us. It is clearly harmful to us and, displeasing to God.” Sabbath is the antithesis of worry, as its expression to cease work, relies on a profound trust in God.

While stress is normal in any working situation where productivity is demanded, it must work together in harmony with rest and relaxation throughout the day and week. A consciousness for the need of rest should be developed. This consciousness is not

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automatically developed so God mandated Sabbath rest for people. Sabbath was so important for the Israelites that an infringement of the Sabbath law was death. Today, death is not a relevant sentence for the violation of Sabbath, although death is still the eventual outcome for those who neglect rest, albeit slow and self-inflicted.

The second step that follows ceasing from work is rest. There are many ways to rest, but the most beneficial form of rest is sleep. Sleep directly affects restorative processes of the body and mind, but often sleep is undervalued and minimized.

It is not uncommon for people to sacrifice sleep to meet the demands of work, school, and family. Over time, sacrificing sleep will hurt productivity. Hart says, “Too little sleep leaves us drowsy and unable to concentrate. It also leads to impaired memory, impaired physical performance, and reduced ability to carry out even simple math calculations.”21 Sleep deprivation over a long period can even cause hallucinations.

The Sabbath day can be used to recover some incurred sleep deficits. However, Sabbath keeping is more about good management of work and rest within daily and weekly rhythmic patterns. Sabbath keeping is not an event, but a lifestyle.

Overall, the ceasing of work and rest in a Sabbath keeping practice should be regular. God defined the rest period to be one day within a week. This is the rhythmic pattern of work and rest: six days of work, and one day of rest. While God created a pattern at creation, this does not mean it is inflexible. Some weeks may allow more than a

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day’s rest, while other weeks may only afford part of a day. Without being legalistic, a person should intentionally schedule time to rest within the work week.

Second, recreation is another area of Sabbath keeping that renews body and mind. The idea of renewal is contained within Lv 25:1-7 that speaks of a Sabbath year. The Sabbath is observed as not only a day within the weekly cycle, but also a year within a seven-year cycle. Lv 25:4-5 says: “But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest.”

Land requires rest because the nutrients within the soil need to be replenished. The land’s resources would be conserved and its continued fertility ensured. This is a common agricultural practice. Using this similar analogy of land renewal within the Sabbath year, the body also renews itself through the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath year would not only be a time to rest but also a time to trust God’s provision and enjoy the fruit of labor. Surely, the Israelites would have concerns and worries about living within the Sabbath year if they are not to work the land. God puts to rest those concerns in Lv 24:20-21 saying, “You may ask, ‘What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?’ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years.” God promises an abundant

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crop yield the year before the Sabbath year so that people have more than enough to rest the land before the next seven-year cycle begins.

Of similar token, God’s people can spend time on recreation because of an underlying trust in God. People can stop toiling to enjoy the fruit of their labor. God blessed and approved the Sabbath so people can enjoy recreative activities to restore both body and mind. As such, the Sabbath is a gift and a delight.

There are numerous recreative activities that one can engage in. What is considered recreational is unique to the person. However, there are two that are universal. They are feasting and playing.

Feasting is an activity that recreates the body and mind through its provision of nourishment. The idea of feasting on the Sabbath is not the same as eating. Everyone needs to eat daily. It is common knowledge that there are at least three meals on any given day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Eating is a daily and frequent affair that is not particularly special.

Feasting is special. The word feast is often tied to celebration. The Sabbath is a day of celebration of God and His provision. In other words, the purpose of the day makes eating special. Management of foods heightens the experience of eating. Dawn suggests, “One way to increase our sense of the delight of the Sabbath day is by eating more simply during the week and saving favorite foods for our holy celebrations.”

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When eating is managed well within the week, feasting on the Sabbath can be a great delight. God created food to be enjoyed. Something that is enjoyed likely renews both body and mind.

In addition to feasting, playing is also an activity that renews and recreates. There are many forms of play such as sports, games, jokes, and toys. While play is highly encouraged in children, it is rarely fostered in adults. Play is often seen as childish, unproductive, and equated to laziness.

Stuart Brown, a physician and researcher, counters this wrong view of play stating, “With enough play, the brain works better. We feel more optimistic and more creative.”24 The reason why play enhances creativity is that it allows imagination new possibilities that have never existed. It allows lessons to be learned without being directly at risk.25 Creativity is an asset in many fields, and therefore play should be encouraged.

Conversely, when play is denied over the long term, mood can darken and optimism is lost. This is a warning sign of becoming anhedonic, or incapable of feeling sustained pleasure.26 Insufficient amount of play adversely affects the individual.

Excessive play can be a concern as well. The pursuit of highly stimulating, adrenaline-driven activity in play overloads the pleasure center and diminishes the pleasure response in the brain.27 Play that unleashes high adrenaline activity is also in

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25 Ibid., 34.

26 Ibid., 43.

danger of anhedonia. Play must be controlled in moderation. This also suggests some highly competitive sports may not be compatible practices for Sabbath keeping.

From a spiritual standpoint, the Christian community should be able to engage in recreation and play. Gordon T. Smith offers a spiritual reason saying, “We know the kingdom has come; and we know it will come. . . . Therefore, we can play; recreation is an extraordinary demonstration of this hope.”28 While productivity is important, people can play because of the hope God provides.

Worship is another area of Sabbath keeping that reconnects the person back to God. In Lk 10:38-42, Jesus came to a village where Martha opened her house to him and his disciples. Martha called out to her sister Mary to help her with the preparations, but Mary instead chose to sit by Jesus’ feet to listen to him. Martha was frustrated with Mary for not helping with preparation so she asked the Lord to tell Mary to help her.

Within this short story, there are two approaches to life and discipleship. Martha’s approach represents fretting and fussing over many things. She represents a hurried lifestyle that parallels the busyness of both the church and world today. Martha was overly worried about what others are doing and she wrongly judged her sister’s inaction. Martha’s busyness was not necessarily wrong, it was just not the better choice.

Mary’s decision to sit and listen to Christ was clearly the superior choice. Leon Morris offers insight regarding the better choice saying, “Life has few real necessities and at need we can do without much on which we lavish time. The one thing is not defined,

but clearly it finds expression in Mary’s sitting at Jesus’ feet, learning from him.”  

The one thing that is important revolves around Christ: being present, listening, and adoring. Contrasted to Martha, Mary’s approach was unhurried.

The world lives in a time that puts productivity and efficiency at a premium. This puts people in a hurried position to perform. The world’s values are diametrically opposed to God’s. Productivity is not the “one thing” that Christ believed to be necessary. Sabbath creates space in both daily and weekly rhythms to be reminded that being in relationship with God is truly the one thing that is necessary.

Relationship is the last area of Sabbath keeping and focuses on reconnecting people with others. The relational focus of Sabbath is mainly within the nuclear family. More than ever, this is an area that needs to be addressed considering a broken world filled with divorce, deranged children, and socially unstable homes. Sabbath keeping creates space for both the marriage and parental relationships.

The focus of Sabbath is all about ceasing work to rely and trust God. That trust of God also encompasses love. Sabbath is about building a loving and trusting relationship with God.

However, loving God has two aspects, namely vertical and horizontal. The vertical aspect, focuses upon relationship between an individual and God. For the practice Sabbath-keeping, this aspect was covered in the previous area, which is worship. The horizontal aspect, focuses upon relationship between an individual and others. To love

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God in a complete manner always requires both aspects, vertical and horizontal, which correlates to worship and relationship, respectively.

The Bibles attests to the importance of both these dimensions. The understanding of loving one’s neighbor as it relates to loving God comes from Mt 22:34-40, commonly known as the Greatest Commandment. Jesus is asked the question “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’

The word ‘neighbors’ could be defined as the people who lives next door. Though the wider understanding of neighbors likely refers to others, which includes family, friends, co-workers, and even those within the greater neighborhood, community, and city. Therefore, to love God always involves loving others. Sabbath keeping is all about loving God, which in turn, also involves loving others. The love of God renews and revitalizes relationships amongst friends, family, and church family. This cannot be understated as it is the premise of why a person would engage in any Sabbath-keeping practice.

While all relationships are important, there are some that have higher priority. The marriage relationship is one of those high priority relationships that must not be neglected. For the marriage relationship, Eph 5:21-33 explains that both wives and husbands ought to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives are to submit to their husband, as the Church submits to Christ. Husbands are to love their wives, as
Christ loved the Church. The source of marital breakdown from a Christian household originates from a lack of reverence for Christ.

To correct marital concern at an early stage is to recognize that there is spiritual concern. It requires spending time with God to rebuild that reverence for Christ. Any earthly relationship with another begins with a personal relationship with God. Love for one another is a distinctive characteristic amongst Christ’s disciples (Jn 13:34).

After spending time with God, one must then spend time with their spouse. This might require sacrifice of productivity in their careers or time in their recreational hobbies. Cloud and Townsend in Boundaries in Marriage bluntly assert, “A life to ‘yes’ to everything else ultimately results in a ‘no’ to your marriage. You simply do not have the time, resources, or energy to do everything you want to do.”30 An intentional choice has to be made.

There are many activities that spouses can enjoy together. Whatever the activity may be, interaction within that activity should reinforce trust, emotional availability, and sensitive responsiveness.31 This is love demonstrated by quality time. Quality time demands togetherness which requires focused attention.32 Sabbath creates both reason and space for a person to spend quality time with one’s spouse.

30 Henry Cloud and John Townsend, Boundaries in Marriage (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999) 149.

31 Archibald Hart and Sharon Morris, Safe Haven Marriage (Nashville: W. Publishing Group, 2003), 29.

To maintain and build upon a relationship is always easier than to fix a broken relationship. For instance, a marital affair is likely the result of neglect of a spouse over a long period. In the case of a marital affair, while not impossible, it is highly improbable to salvage the marriage relationship. Therefore, it is better to spend quality time within the Sabbath to build a strong and safe marriage that will last.

The other high priority relationship that cannot be neglected is between child and parent. For the parental relationship, there are two essential dimensions of parenting to consider, mainly relationship (support) and empowerment (guidance). Children are not tools that parents use. Children are valued to Christ as he said in Mt 19:14, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” Parents have a tremendous responsibility to help their children to become mature and Christ centered people that will bear much fruit. (Jn 15:1-8)

The relationship of parents and children are described in Eph 6:1-4 saying:

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—‘so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.’ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” Children are to obey their parents echoing the fifth commandment after Sabbath in the Decalogue. Obedience comes with a promise of longevity. Foulkes offers the rationale behind the promise saying, “When the bonds of family life break up, when respect for parents fails,

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the community becomes decadent and will not live long.”

Conversely, fathers are not to exasperate their children. Parents have a right to demand obedience though not in a manner to provoke the anger of their children. Authority will always be more respected where a relationship has been built up.

Dysfunctional children often reflect dysfunctional parents. The reason for this arises when God is not placed at a high priority within the family unit. Edwin Friedman believes some behavioral and emotional traits are inherited saying, “The problems in the emotional system of the congregational family also can be understood by setting them in the framework of its own extended family (the hierarchy) and by tracing its own multigenerational transmission down through the years.”

The Sabbath creates space and time to develop the child-parent relationship and correct dysfunctions by replacing neglect and unhealthy working patterns with emphasis to rebuild relationship with one’s children under the premise of loving God.

While some relationships within the family are difficult to renew and recover, especially relationships with years of neglect and abuse, it is not necessarily impossible. If God is indeed a high priority, forgiveness is possible. While impossible to reverse time to recover the years and forget painful words spoken. Forgiveness is possible only because God chose to forgive humankind first. To let go of the past, and to let God work

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is very much a Sabbath keeping principle. In practical terms, from a relational standpoint, there may not be an appropriate means of restitution available to make all things in the relationship right. However, to recognize that all parties is human, fallen, and has need for God’s grace may be enough to forgive past grievances and begin the journey of renewing relationships. However, this is not natural, especially in broken relationships. It is always intentional and requires discipline. Sabbath keeping is that spiritual discipline that could be the starting point in helping individuals begin the difficult work of rebuilding relationships.

The four areas of ceasing and resting, recreation, worship and relationship form the backbone of the practice of Sabbath keeping. There is much flexibility in practicing the four areas after ceasing. All four areas are significant and should be balanced within the daily and weekly rhythms of work and rest.

The next chapter will develop a ministry plan on Sabbath keeping to bring balance to work and life. The ministry plan will be comprised of providing theological education on the Sabbath and practical instruction on cultivating Sabbath keeping within four areas: rest, recreation, worship, and relationship. The context and mechanism for support, accountability, and monitoring of progress in the four areas of Sabbath keeping will be discussed at length to help maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle.
PART THREE

STRATEGY
CHAPTER 6

MINISTRY PLAN

This chapter will begin to integrate the context and theological reflections of past chapters into a workable ministry plan on Sabbath keeping bringing balance to work and life. The ministry plan will be comprised of providing theological education on the Sabbath and practical instruction on cultivating Sabbath keeping within four areas: rest, recreation, worship, and relationship. The teaching will be within the existing structure of Sunday School ministry over a term of three months. The support, accountability, and monitoring of progress in the four areas of Sabbath keeping will be primarily through small group discussion within the class. The class will conclude by helping participants draft a personalized Sabbath keeping plan and will be kept accountable by their existing accountability group as a concrete strategy in maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

Theological Implications and Ministry Overview

There are four theological implications that guide the ministry thrust of this project. These implications all relate to the practice of Sabbath keeping. Sabbath keeping
will be the main strategy to help English leaders at Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church attain work-life balance.

The first implication is that God calls people to a rhythmic pattern of work and rest (Ex 20:8-11 and Dt 5:12-14). The biblical rhythmic pattern was six days of work and one day of rest as God modeled at Creation. The ideal modern-day weekly rhythmic pattern should contain a day of rest.

Part of the challenge is to help leaders adopt this pattern as a lifestyle. Students cite the pressures of exams and projects as one of the main culprits for their lack of rest. Career people are compelled to work harder for a promotion. Young families cannot rest as they are required to support their children. Rest is something everyone desires but cannot afford due to the pressures of life.

God calls people to rest just as God calls people to work. The observance of Sabbath rest will inadvertently lead to better work-life balance. Since God calls people to rest, it is construed as a spiritual issue that gives permission for rest.

The purpose of rest is synonymous to worship. Christians are to worship even in the busiest times because God calls Christians to offer themselves as an act of worship (Rom 12:1). Similarly, God calls Christians to rest.

The second implication is that Sabbath is a gift from God to humanity (Is 58:13-14). The Sabbath was created for humankind’s benefit (Mk 2:27). Therefore, the Sabbath is intended to be a delight and joy.

For those addicted to work, rest is perceived as a waste of time. There is always one more item from their to-do checklist to complete. As such, workaholics may believe
that they are undeserving of rest, which further propels them to work harder and longer. This behavior contradicts the intention and meaning of “gift.” One does not work for a gift. A gift is meant to be received with thanksgiving. Gift giving is a practice that expresses love to another. Sabbath rest is God’s gift to bless humankind.

For those who are lazy, the Sabbath can be abused. People can use the name of Sabbath to disguise slothfulness and contempt for work. True reasons and motive are only beknown to the person and God. Ultimately, it is God who will judge conduct. A worker that consistently requires more than a day of Sabbath in the work week reflects a mismatch of the person’s skillset to vocation. The Sabbath, being a gift, was not meant to be used as criteria for judging others.

The third implication is that faith is required to enter God’s Sabbath rest (Heb 4:1-11). Many are worried about what the future holds for them. As such, they are not able to cease their work with the backdrop of their worries. However, faith is the antithesis of worry. Without faith, people’s security blanket rests upon money and power. People strive to accumulate wealth and power to feel secure. The pursuit of money and power is never ending. One can never have enough of either. Therefore, worldly pursuits are false dreams that enslave people to continuously toil.

With faith, people place their trust in God. They find their security outside of the earthly realm. Therefore, those who place their faith in God can enter rest because ultimate security rests on a plane that exists outside of their current visible spectrum. Believers can rest because they are not of the world (Jn 17:16), even though they live in the world. Entering God’s Sabbath rest is a testament of that faith in God.
The fourth implication is that keeping the Sabbath requires effort in the areas of rest, recreation, worship, and relationship. Entering rest requires the same level of intentionality as that of work. Ceasing work is only the first stage of Sabbath keeping.

Rest requires putting down the stress and burdens of work to allow the mind and body to recover. Recreation helps facilitate that process of recovery in the spheres of mind and body. Recreation literally recreates those areas after the toll it receives from the hardships of work.

Worship and relationships mend the soul. Human beings have souls as they were created in the image of God. The soul is not a separate entity as in the view of dualism that separates body and spirit. The soul is the inner core of the whole person, the personal and spiritual dimension of self. Therefore, it is relational with respect to others and God. Work can deplete the soul’s vitality through strained relationships and moral dilemmas.

The soul requires mending. Worship mends the spiritual dimension of the soul. Relationships mend the emotional dimension of the soul. These areas cannot be ignored as rest only recovers the physical aspect, and not necessarily the spiritual and emotional faculties. This is primarily the reason why a vacation will not necessarily restore a person, as it does not address spiritual and emotional areas.

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2 Ibid., 102.
Discipline is necessary to work upon the areas of rest, recreation, worship, and relationships. The areas address needs in different aspects of body and soul that help in revitalizing a person sufficiently so they can continue their work. These areas should be balanced so that a person does not neglect an area that requires restoration.

To summarize, the Sabbath is more than optional but a calling from God to maintain a rhythm of work and rest. It is a gift from God to be received with thanksgiving as opposed to contempt. As such, faith in God is required to enter Sabbath rest. Faith would supersede trust in earthly securities and provides reassurance that calms worries and anxieties. Finally, the practice of Sabbath keeping entails effort in the areas of rest, recreation, worship, and relationship that restores a person holistically. Ultimately, the preferred future for adult members within Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church is that they cultivate a habit of Sabbath keeping to maintain work-life balance.

**Goals**

The goals of this ministry project are five-fold. There are many aspects of Sabbath keeping to track and assess progress. However, these five goals are the minimum that constitute a healthy Sabbath keeping practice.

The first goal is that participants within the project can articulate a theological understanding of Sabbath. Understanding Sabbath includes the theological implications previously stated in the last section. Ultimately, the practice of Sabbath is a spiritual issue that requires the same intentionality and discipline as required in prayer, Bible study, and corporate worship.
The second goal is that participants would understand that work-life imbalance can be directly correlated with the observance and practice of Sabbath. The goal is not to just help people take a day off. The rationale behind Sabbath is trust in God, which permeates beyond the weekly event but fosters an entire lifestyle. The goal is to help people understand the Sabbath’s meaning so that this lifestyle is adopted which will create work-life balance.

The third goal is to build a supportive community that encourages and keeps one another accountable in Sabbath keeping. Accountability requires the help of others, and is critical to maintain. Carson Pue, author of *Mentoring Leaders*, writes about the danger of not having accountable relationships saying, “When leaders are trying to protect their ego and image, they often withdraw from other people-cutting themselves off. They do not want to be open and vulnerable with others for fear of eroding or destroying the image or persona they have worked so hard, albeit subconsciously, to construct.”

Workaholism is often encouraged in ministry circles but is destructive. As such, accountability is necessary to be reminded of both the need for rest and to steer clear of workaholism.

The fourth goal is to experience rest, renewal, and reconnection with God and others. It is obvious that no creature on earth can work continuously without rest. Renewal includes the physical, emotional, psychological, and emotional dimensions of a person. Renewal will grant a person vigor and a new sense of optimism for the next day’s

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3 Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 245.
challenges in work. Reconnection with God and others also revitalizes the spiritual and emotional core of a person.

The fifth goal is to enable members to consistently value and practice Sabbath keeping. While every person may vary in their choice of emphasis in the areas of Sabbath keeping, the overall practice is maintained weekly. The embracing of Sabbath as a value is observed as desire to enter rest as opposed to dread. The success of this goal is the adoption of the practice as a lifestyle beyond the duration of this ministry project.

Content of the Strategy

Sunday School as the Primary Vehicle for the Strategy

The primary vehicle to implement the strategy is through Sunday School. Sunday School is a well-received program that is widely accepted amongst many Chinese Evangelical churches. Its acceptance is related to the ethnic Chinese ethnic culture where doing and knowing is strongly valued. Therefore, seeking support, approval, and resources from the Elder Board would not be difficult.

Generally, Sunday School is scheduled either before or after the corporate worship service with a short transition period between. Specifically, for the English Congregation at CCAC, it is after the worship service. The two most attended programs within the church are corporate worship and Sunday School. One follows the other on any given Sunday morning.

Each Sunday School term is three months at CCAC. Three months is roughly ten-to-twelve classes of Sunday School, which is a reasonable amount of time to incorporate
a behavior into a lifestyle. There are a few weeks where running Sunday School is not possible due to various events, such as joint baptismal services, unavailability of a teacher, out-of-town retreats, or church-wide conferences. Each Sunday School class is approximately one hour.

For participants, attending Sunday School has become a natural tradition within the church. Fatigued and plagued leaders would not perceive attending Sunday School as a stressor that deters their participation. Sunday School is not an additional task that burdens the people within CCAC.

The traditional mindset of Sunday School is preoccupied with the unidirectional transfer of information from teacher to student. This Sabbath keeping class is set up to resemble more a caring small group in that it encourages two-way discussion, high accountability, and unconditional encouragement. At the time of this writing, the English Ministry was running a fellowship model for adults that met weekly but commitment was weak, which led to poor attendance. The implementation of a new group and model for ministry would be overly taxing on the existing system and its leaders.

Therefore, the strategy proposed in this paper is not the traditional Sunday School format. The teacher is more of a facilitator akin to a small group leader. Students are more akin to a member of a small group that functions as a peer mentor that contributes through accountability, coaching, and teaching which encourages group learning as opposed to unidirectional transfer of information such as a lecture.

The traditional setup of Sunday School consists of classes, teachers, and students with a defined period of focused learning on a topic. For this pilot project, the
presentation to church leaders for approval and promotion to people will use the traditional nomenclature such as “class”, “teacher”, and “student”. However, the running of this pilot project will be expressed more of a small group learning format. For the duration and simplicity of this written project, the proper term used would be “facilitator” as the one leading the group. The word “participant” or “member” would be used to describe those involved in this pilot project.

While the proposed strategy appears slightly subversive, it is merely attempting to use an existing system to implement learning in a different manner. At the time of writing this paper, small group ministry was not in existence. A small group format would be the much-preferred vehicle and format for growing and implementing Sabbath, since it encourages relationship, bonding, and accountability much more so than Sunday School, which tends to highlight the transfer of knowledge and information.

**Core Outcome is Spiritual Transformation**

Ultimately, spiritual transformation is the core outcome of this entire exercise. However, it is a long process that goes well beyond the scope of a three-month class because everyone is unique and learns and grows at different rates as people move through different stage in their spiritual journey. Per Janet Hagberg and Robert Guelich in The Critical Journey, faith development is divided up into six fluid stages.\(^4\) If the faith journey can be categorized into stages, then the Sabbath keeping strategy falls within the second stage catering mainly to discipleship and progressing towards the stage of

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productivity. Discipleship is a life-long process that oscillates between subsequent stages of productivity and mission.

Within this second stage of discipleship, spiritual transformation requires the mature development of spiritual formation. Spiritual formation is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite “form” or “character.” It is the intentional communal process of growing in relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation involves the development of the inner being within a person. However, the achievement of this inner being is not something that is entirely human, which involves self, others, and God. Further, Christlikeness of the inner being is not a human attainment, but a gift of grace. This is exactly why Paul would attest in 2 Cor 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”

This is important to understand for Sabbath keeping because this is at the heart of what this practice is about. It is about understanding that humanity’s entire life is about God’s grace. Those that feel entrapped by their work or become burned out do not understand this very point. They do not understand that each day lived and worked is a gift of grace. Somewhere at some point, there is a loss of perspective. Conversely, the reason people can cease their work is because they live out of that grace.

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However, grace can be abused and cheapened. This is sin. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, renowned theologian and author, penned, “Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our church. It is grace without a price, without costs.”

The practice of Sabbath without a cost is cheap grace, that is Sabbath keeping without the cross and the atonement of Jesus Christ. In plain and practical terms, people commit the sin of idolatry, that is to worship creation over the Creator. Work is good; however the idolization of work is not good. The belief that work alone fulfills, sustains, and completes humanity falls short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23).

Therefore, follow-up within a group setting that keeps one another accountable and the constant reminder to put trust in God using Scripture is necessary for effective Sabbath keeping. The reason why this is necessary is because the world constantly bombards all people with a lie that there is no God and one must make a life for themselves through their work. Their work forms their identity as opposed to working from their spiritual identity, which is a beloved child of God.

While most leaders know that it’s not about them, and about God, it is very easy to get lost and confused within the world’s lies. It is a constant struggle to juggle between spirituality and the world. It is a messy process and not a straight line up. It takes discipline to continually focus on God and recognize that something good such as work, can become a god. Also, it does not happen naturally or automatically. This is one of the significant limitations of using a class setting and its nomenclature because it may give participants a false sense of completion. Relationships and accountability ceases since the

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class has concluded. Therefore, they are unable to see that Sabbath keeping is a lifelong journey that requires ongoing accountability and input from others to practice it well.

The hope from this course is to at least start a conversation about the need for God’s grace and to hopefully build authentic and meaningful friendships or relationships that grants permission to speak some truth into one another’s lives. This is what peer mentors do. This is the process of spiritual transformation. Further, it is also a hope to help these participants see that the church is a family that supports one another. Any person belonging to this church family would contribute and help, not because they are being paid, but that this is what true brothers and sisters in Christ would naturally do.

**Transforming Sunday School into Effective Discipleship**

As mentioned earlier, the challenge is to transform a well-known and accepted program of Sunday School into an effective discipleship process that puts spiritual transformation as a high priority and goal. The problem with programs as a transformational discipleship process relates to the uniqueness of every individual. Greg Ogden, author of *Transformational Discipleship*, says, “Programs are characterized by regimentation or synchronization. The nature of most programs is that they do not take into account an individual’s growth rate, which is essential to growing disciples.”

This is the reason why simply preaching about Sabbath would not be effective for lifestyle transformation.

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Preaching in corporate worship obviously does have its place and value. Every space has a purpose for relational connection. Joseph R. Myers suggests that there are four spaces where humans relate and connect with one another: public, social, personal, and intimate. Corporate worship is a public space which has relational value and should not be undermined. However, the small group setting which constitutes a personal space is where transformation occurs. All spaces have value as a place of belonging that help connect people to God and others.

English speaking leaders would be invited to attend this unique Sabbath Keeping Sunday School class for a three-month term. This class would have limited enrollment and only those who have been invited could attend. The content of the invitation would include commitment, participation, and accountability. As such, the invitation process would begin at least two months prior to the first class. This would allow leaders sufficient time for consideration.

The class would be further subdivided into groups of three or four members. Groups of three or four allow for high accountability, relational transparency, and truth-centeredness which is the optimum context for transformation. Each group would consist of one group leader that is selected by the primary instructor. Group leaders would be assigned with the task of facilitating group discussion, supporting members through prayer, and keeping one another accountable.

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Accountability would be further incorporated through assigned partnerships. Each person within the group would be assigned an accountability partner. Each week partners are to contact one another within the week to keep one another accountable in the areas of Sabbath keeping and for prayer support. Partners will be paired by same gender.

The additional level of accountability through partnerships is to highlight its importance as a critical factor for life transformation. Dallas Willard, author of *Renovation of the Heart* believes “Spiritual formation cannot, in the nature of the case, be a ‘private’ thing, because it is a matter of whole-life transformation. You need to seek out others in your community who are pursuing the renovation of the heart.”\(^{12}\) Even after the conclusion of the course, participants would be encouraged to continue their relationships if they find it helpful to their spiritual journey.

However, accountability is only one aspect that is helpful in partnerships. The goal of partnerships is to provide avenues of peer mentoring that help and guide growth in character, calling, and competency. Leaders often lack self-awareness because of a lack of feedback, insecurity, and busyness.\(^{13}\) A peer mentor can help address these issues by correcting thinking and sharpening thoughts. Every person has blind spots that require another person to point out. Pue is correct when he says, “I believe that all leaders need to have someone in their life who is close enough to them and loves them enough to be able to look at them straight in the eye and say “bulls—t” when needed.”\(^{14}\)


\(^{13}\) Carson Pue, *Mentoring Leaders: Wisdom for Developing Character, Calling, and Competency* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 32.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 34.
best be served in a private one-on-one scenario in an assumed relationship that permits frankness and honesty.

In addition, assigned group leaders require training. Ideally, the training of group leaders would occur before the class begins. This might consist of a session prior to the class to go over responsibilities of a group leader. The training of these group leaders will help manage the smaller groups within the class.

The class would be focused on educating participants on the theology of the Sabbath and its practice within the four areas: rest, recreation, worship, and relationships. The materials would consist of power point presentations, hand-outs, and discussion questions. The education process involves discussion, sharing, and prayer.

In addition to accountability, support is critical to the success of the group. The necessary support required is likened to a scaffold. A scaffold is a temporary framework of support for the builder, used until the structure can stand on its own. Therefore, scaffolding is described as the gradual withdrawal of adult control and support as a function of children’s increasing mastery on a given task.\(^\text{15}\) While participants are all adults, the process of learning requires scaffolding.

The class is to provide the necessary support through education and exercises that are conducive to the practice of Sabbath keeping. The hope is that participants will be able to overcome roadblocks and regularly upkeep the Sabbath after the duration of the

class. Every person will be closely monitored in their discussion and feedback to assess progress.

The final exercise of the members of the class is to draft an ongoing personalized Sabbath keeping plan that contains rest, recreation, worship, and relationships. This plan is tailored to suit the needs of the individual. Therefore, each plan will be unique. The ability to draft their own plan demonstrates understanding of materials and context. The submission of the plan to the primary facilitator is mainly to allow input to suggest balance and alternative ideas to help participants maintain and adopt the practice of Sabbath keeping as a lifestyle beyond the duration of the course.

The resources drawn for theological education on Sabbath keeping would include: *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting* by Marva J. Dawn, *Sabbath Time* by Tilden Edwards, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives* by Richard A. Swenson, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* by Ruth Haley Barton. Dawn’s work will give insight to Sabbath keeping as a regular weekly practice. Swenson will reflect some medical and scientific content that helps in understanding restoration in the emotional and physical spheres. Edwards will contribute in the understanding of contemplation as a practice within the Sabbath. Finally, Barton’s work provides spiritual exercises such as *lectio divina*, the prayer of examen, and solitude that are insightful and practical.

**Content of the Sabbath Keeping Course**

The content of the course would be comprised of theological education about Sabbath and four specific areas of Sabbath keeping. The four areas of Sabbath keeping
are: rest, recreation, worship, and relationships. Clarity, movement, alignment and focus are important in this education process.\textsuperscript{16} Discussion within assigned groups of the four areas would regularly occur within the class.

The first session would involve the purpose of the class and give an overview of the content. It would introduce the need for a spirituality that consists of being as opposed to simply knowing and doing. Ultimately, it would explain that Sabbath keeping is a lifestyle and not only a day off.

Members will be assigned to both a group and a partner in the first session. The groupings would be mainly for discussion within the class. The pairings are for keeping one another accountable during the week. If there is an odd person without an accountability partner of the same gender, they will be assigned to an existing pairing forming a triad grouping.

In addition, a survey will be performed to assess the class’s understanding and practice of Sabbath. Further, a covenantal agreement would be distributed to the class as a means of commitment to attend, participate, respect others, and uphold confidentiality. The covenantal agreement is important in any group setting.

The second session will define the Sabbath. It begins with the creation story in Gn 1:1-2:3 to understand the reason why God chose to rest on the Seventh Day. It will also consider the Fourth Commandment from Ex 20:8-11 and its practical application in modern day context. Jesus’ proclamation in Mk 2:27-28 that “the Sabbath was made for

man, not man for the Sabbath,” will also be considered to help the class understand that the Sabbath was instituted for man’s benefit.

There are three main points for the second session. God sets an example for all creation to follow. The Sabbath was intended to be holy (set apart). Finally, Sabbath was intended for humankind.

The third session will look at the concept of sanctifying time. This session draws from the Jewish practice of Sabbath keeping and their perception of time as holy. It will introduce God’s priority of time over things and space, the concept of margin and people living overloaded lives without emotional, social, and spiritual reserves, and the need to be unhurried even though busy.

There are three main points for the third session. Time is holy. Margin is necessary to maintain healthy living. Faith allows people to be unhurried even during busyness. The model of unhurriedness is the lifestyle that Jesus advocated. It is the essential foundation for the tranquility that protects from the ravishes of anxiety.\(^\text{17}\)

The fourth session will go over the rhythmic pattern of work and rest. The origin and God’s intention for work will be explained. Work came into being because of the Fall of Man (Gen 3:17-19). God expects all to work (Ex 20:8). Work produces blessing (Ps 128:2; 2 Tm 2:6). God does encourage working smarter (Ex 18:18-23). All work can be done for the Lord (Col 3:23). In sum, work is considered good.

Contrasted with work, God’s intention for rest will also be explored. God also commanded rest (Ex 20:10-11). Only God can give true rest for the soul (Ex 33:14; Mt

\(^{17}\) Hart, *The Anxiety Cure*, 257.
11:28-30). God restores and replenishes through rest (Jer 31:25). One should not be legalistic about rest (Mk 2:23-28).

The fifth session will begin to explore the area of recreation as part of the practice of Sabbath keeping. It will look at the value of play and the consequence of ignoring play, which brings about the dysfunction of anhedonia—in capable of feeling sustained pleasure. The session will highlight playing to promote creativity and learning. Ultimately, God grants permission for people to play on the Sabbath.

The session will also look at sleep to rest and recreate the physical body. An introductory understanding of sleep will be presented. The benefits of REM (Rapid Eye Movement) or dream sleep and other stages of sleep will be discussed.

Finally, the session will conclude with the principle of feasting as a joy and delight within the Sabbath. It will contrast the biblical differences between the sin of gluttony (Prv 23:20-21; 1 Cor 3:16-17) and feasting (Ex 23:16; 1 Cor 10:31). The idea of feasting is mainly to point to the meaning and celebration of a special occasion. The point of the session is to encourage participants to find recreational activities that rebuild the body, mind, and soul in the practice of the Sabbath.

The sixth session will introduce the area of worship that complements the Sabbath keeping practice. The session will consider praying and lectio divina (reading Scripture meditatively). It will contrast the differences of reading Scripture for information versus experience. In addition to rest, sleep, and food, participants need to understand that God’s Word provides nourishment for the soul. Therefore, lectio divina is a means to penetrate the deepest parts of a person that leads to spiritual transformation, which is one of the key
goals of the Sabbath keeping course. In addition to going over the need of prayer, the practice of *lectio divina* will be facilitated by the instructor. Discussion will follow to unpack the group experience.

The exploration of worship goes beyond the Sabbath. A worshipful attitude and perspective can also be applied to work. Work as worship is another way to dismantle the sacred and secular divide. All work, with the proper frame of mind, can be considered holy and good.

The seventh session will look at the final area of relationships within the practice of Sabbath keeping. The relationship area will include spousal, parent and child, church, and friends. The basis of these relationships is love (1 Cor 13; Jn 13:34-35). It will also address the issues of conflict and the need for forgiveness.

In family relationships, the emphasis is on building positive relationships. A successful portrait of marriage is described as the submission of the wife to her husband and the husband loving his wife (Eph 5:21-33). A child’s responsibility is to honor his parents and a father is not to exasperate his children (Eph 6:1-4). Canadian statistics of divorce will be shared to highlight and forecast the seriousness and widespread epidemic of broken families within the nation. Lack of time is often the most quoted reason for this breakdown. Therefore, the practice of Sabbath keeping creates time and space so that participants can see that intentionality and effort is required to build healthy families.

The eighth session will point to the dysfunctions that arise from the lack of Sabbath. The issues of stress and burnout will be discussed, defined, and contrasted. A prevention strategy will be outlined. This includes a healthy theology of success and
failure (Mt 25:14-30), maintenance of healthy boundaries (both physically and emotionally), and a proper understanding of the Sabbath.

The ninth session could be an optional retreat experience, if people are available. The retreat session is mainly to spend time away from the busyness of life to focus attention on spiritual practices. Most of the spiritual practices that help build the inner life are foreign and unfamiliar.

The tenth session is mainly to review the main key points of the previous nine sessions. It will be a time to work out individual Sabbath keeping plans as understood from what was learned previously. It is also a time to complete the initial identical survey to assess progress of the class.

Leadership and Target Population

I, the author of this doctoral project, will be the primary teacher and facilitator of the class. In addition to creating content for the class, I will support group leaders. The purpose is to keep the group leaders accountable so they can keep members of their group accountable for their Sabbath keeping.

There will be three accountability group leaders. I will select group leaders who must be spiritually mature Christians. The pilot project population will be ten English speaking leaders. This is sufficient for three groups: two groups of four and one group of three. Keeping the size of the group relatively small allows for easier control and follow-up of the group leaders. I can support up to three leaders for a total group size of twelve participants.
CHAPTER 7
IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

The last chapter describes an implementation strategy to introduce Sabbath keeping in four key areas to English-speaking leaders of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. The timeline, leadership development, physical resources, and people resources that are necessary in conducting this pilot Sunday School class will be discussed. The chapter will also provide an assessment plan that involves questionnaires given before and after the course and interviews with participants of the pilot project to evaluate the stated goals of this ministry initiative. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a report of this ministry and implications for future Sunday School classes that teach Sabbath keeping at Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church.

Pilot Project Summary

The pilot project will be a three-month Sunday School class on Sabbath keeping with discussion groups. These discussion groups will have three to four members. Each person will be assigned a partner for prayer and accountability. The class size will be ten students with one primary instructor. The goal of the class is to help participants adopt the practice of Sabbath keeping as part of their lifestyle.
Timeline

Theological research was completed in fall of 2015. This included biblical exegesis of pertinent passages, literature and books, spiritual exercises, and course work regarding the Sabbath. I, author of this project, also needed to learn, understand, and integrate Sabbath in my own life before imparting it to others. This research was helpful in creating materials to be used within the class.

The development of materials was completed in the winter of 2016. This included the survey, covenantal agreement, handouts, discussion questions, and power point presentations. These materials will serve as the primary teaching content regarding the Sabbath and its practice.

The English-speaking leaders were invited to participate in this new English Sunday School class beginning in the spring of 2016 (May). Ten participants were identified by the end of June 2016. This gave sufficient time for leaders to consider the commitment level required.

From these ten participants, two groups of four and one group of three were organized. I selected three mature participants from the class to be discussion group leaders to undergo a training session prior to the start of class. This training occurred in the summer of 2016 (July and August). The purpose of the training was to help group leaders understand the importance of discussion, support, and accountability.

The pilot project began October 2, 2016. The Sabbath Keeping class ran until December 4, 2016. There were ten Sundays between the start and end dates. CCAC’s Mission Conference Sunday was on November 20, 2016. Sunday School classes were
cancelled due to a special missionary sharing during the English Sunday School time frame. Therefore, only a total of nine class sessions were available.

After the conclusion of the pilot project, surveys and interviews were conducted in the winter of 2017. An analysis of the beginning and end surveys were contrasted and compared to indicate decline, stagnation, or progress of participants within the course. Interviews provided feedback for improvements of the class. The gleaned information of both surveys and interviews was helpful in assessing the benefits of future classes and projection of this ministry.

**Leadership Development**

I, the author of this doctoral project, am the primary leader, developer, and educator of the Sabbath keeping class. As such, I play a critical role in this pilot project. It is imperative that I must understand and maintain a Sabbath keeping practice in my personal life to effectively facilitate a Sabbath keeping class.

My training required reading materials that relate to the Sabbath. This included books, articles, course materials, and Internet resources. This built a wealth of knowledge in the practice of Sabbath keeping.

In addition, I personally engaged in the four specific areas of Sabbath keeping: rest, recreation, worship, and relationships. My Sabbath day falls on Tuesdays. The other six days of the week are considered work days, although Saturdays are more flexible unless called upon. The practice of the Sabbath is intentionally applied to the weekly cycle. Daily, the four areas of rest, recreation, worship, and relationships are applied as
well but to a lesser degree relative to the Sabbath day. Work days within the week are primarily designated as “work” because productivity is the goal.

For an ongoing support plan, a mentor was recruited that would keep me accountable to maintaining a weekly rhythmic pattern of work and rest consistent with a healthy Sabbath keeping practice. This mentor is an older gentleman that is seasoned and mature in faith, which will contribute ideas, direction, and prayer. My family members, spouse and son, also help keep the author accountable.

The design of the pilot project also requires group leaders. These group leaders are mature in faith, and have the spiritual gift of administration. The spiritual gift of administration is helpful in leading, organizing, and keeping members within their group accountable. The group leaders are trained to emphasize the support of their group members, which includes not only accountability, but a definition of their role, introduction of materials, facilitation of discussion, group communication, and prayer.

**My Personal Journey in Sabbath Keeping**

In implementing this personal ongoing support plan, I have learned quite a few things about myself, the process, and God. However, there were three critical learning points that stuck with me through practicing Sabbath keeping as a lifestyle. First, I noticed this endeavor cannot be accomplished alone. While, I knew this in my head and learned this through books, I really understood first hand why this process must be communal. The reason is mainly because I found myself cheating and breaking my own

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rule. Why I broke my own rule of Sabbath is because I think my heart was deceptive and in short, sinful. I did not fully believe in my heart that Sabbath would indeed change and transform me. Therefore, I needed accountability from others.

Second, I found that work was very important. Although, I have caught myself saying that I dread work from time to time, I have come to realize that through this exercise, work plays an important role in giving me purpose. For instance, originally, I enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry program at Fuller out of a response to burnout in ministry as a local church pastor. I used to believe it was because of my work that led to burnout. However, I now understand that is not the case. Burnout occurred out of a loss of purpose, and meaningful relationship with God, not my work. I learned that work, as well as rest, is a gift from God.

Third, I have learned from this exercise that I need to work from my identity as a Christian and child of God as opposed to work forming my identity. There’s a difference. If I work from my identity as a Christian, I would still work diligently because I want to glorify God and be a witness to those in the workplace. Essentially, work becomes a tool to glorify God. I can rest because I know that I am not the Creator, but creature akin to a child of God trusting that God would care for all my needs. However, when work forms my identity, it becomes a tool to glorify myself. That becomes a problem of idolatry because work becomes the primary vehicle to attain money, approval, and status. In this situation, work becomes a tool to glorify myself as opposed to giving God the glory. While having money, approval, and status are not wrong in and of themselves, they are wrong when elevated to the same status of God.
I believe this is the crux of the problem when implementing work-life balance in the lives of the people. It should be about helping people understand the need for God. I have learned that true Sabbath keeping is not just about taking a day off, it is about learning to trust God in everything.

**Resources**

Theological research into materials that are suitable and practical for participants is necessary. Some books are overly scholastic and not suitable for the average layperson. The challenge is to distill key principles of important works regarding Sabbath keeping and communicate it to a level where participants understand and absorb it.

For instance, Tilden Edwards’ work *Sabbath Time* speaks about contemplative aspects of Sabbath keeping that are important and necessary. However, it is also not an easy read for the average layperson. A more suitable read would be Ruth Haley Barton’s work *Sacred Rhythms*; however, her work is not entirely focused on Sabbath keeping. Some research is required to find materials that communicate Sabbath in a manner that is easily understandable and practical.

A room needed to be reserved for the class on Sunday from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This was challenging as the church facility has limited amount of rooms and space during that time frame. The room had to be large enough to form three groups for group discussion so that each group should have an arm’s length of space between them. The groups should not be so close together that another group’s discussion becomes a distraction.
A budget was drafted to include teaching aids, transportation, refreshments, and materials. Teaching aids were simply dry erasable markers and a white board. Transportation was possibly necessary if there was an outing, which was reflected in the budget. Refreshments are already supplied before Sunday School class on any given Sunday within the church premise. If an outing was organized, this is an additional cost. Finally, materials are simply printed as handouts.

Other resources include written materials. This includes a waiver form for a possible field trip, readings and weekly assignments, group covenant, and surveys. These materials can be printed at the church.

Finally, audio/visual equipment was necessary. The materials are presented in a power point format, which requires a computer and a LCD projector. I provided the computer or notebook. The LCD projector needed to be reserved through the church. Speakers are also necessary if a media file is presented, which I provided.

**Additional Support Personnel at Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church**

There are several people within the church that need to support this pilot project. Their support will ensure that resources are available, misunderstandings amongst ministries are minimized, and can assist in recruitment of potential participants. One of the potential hurdles in running this pilot project is that most participants are existing leaders within the English Ministry that are already driving various ministries, including the Sunday School Ministry. Some existing Sunday School teachers may not be able to teach their class if they are attending this special Sabbath keeping class. As such, it would
be imperative to first gain understanding within the ministry through these key personnel to avoid unnecessary friction.

The first person that should be consulted is the senior pastor of Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. The senior pastor holds a prominent position within CCAC because he is also the chairman of the Elder Board. He dictates the agenda at both the pastoral staff and Elder Board, provides leadership, and casts vision for the church overall. His support would include bringing this Sabbath keeping class as an agenda item for the Elder Board’s approval and understanding. Generally, topics of Sunday School class do not require Elder Board approval but since it affects a fair number of leaders within the English Congregation, it would be a positive move to gain their understanding.

The second person that should be consulted is the English Ministry Elder. The English Ministry Elder can assist in budgeting the project. The church budget for the next year is drafted in the fall. Therefore, consultation with the English Ministry Elder should occur in the spring or summer of 2015 so that he/she is cognizant of this class to draft the 2016 budget.

The third person that should be consulted is the Sunday School Ministry Deacon who looks after this specific ministry. His or her support would help avoid misunderstandings amongst existing teachers such as lower-class attendances for the duration of the Sabbath keeping class. In addition, the Sunday School Ministry Deacon can assist in identifying a suitable classroom.

Finally, after the approval of the senior pastor and Elder Board, the church secretary should be informed of the class. The church secretary can assign rooms within
the church facility and provide the usage of audio/visual equipment. The secretary can also print announcements to promote the class and communicate the existence of the Sabbath keeping class in the worship bulletin to build awareness to the congregation.

Assessment Plan

All participants within the pilot project are required to sign a covenant agreement. The covenant agreement is attached as Appendix 1. The covenant will help participants to abide by group rules such as being respectful and understanding others, promising to participate in discussion, keeping personal information confidential, and committing to do any assigned homework within the Sabbath keeping class. The covenant also seeks the participant’s voluntary agreement to have information collected anonymously be used as research material to be analyzed within my pilot project.

To measure the progress of the project, a questionnaire will be created and distributed before and after the course. The questionnaire will be created with closed-ended structured questions,\(^2\) scaled, and open-ended questions.\(^3\) The closed-ended structured questions are simply “yes or no” questions. The scaled questions are rated from one to ten. The open-ended questions are to solicit the participant’s feedback by filling in the blank and creating his or her own response.

Conducting the exact same survey before and after will allow a comparative study between the two responses. The survey will be conducted in a blind fashion in that the


\(^3\) Ibid., 222.
respondent remains anonymous to the surveyor. Therefore, the comparison will be an overall response to specific questions as opposed to specific individuals. The survey distributed amongst participants is displayed in Appendix 2.

Since surveys do not directly measure behavior, there is some limitation. For instance, what people say may have discrepancy with what they do. Further, the overall average may not necessarily reflect the minority voice. Therefore, it would be important to interview participants to test observational impressions of behavioral change in lifestyle.

Finally, the results will be tabulated and analyzed. For closed-ended structured yes or no questions, the absolute number will be reported instead of percentages since the batch sample is relatively small. The number will be compared between the before and after survey.

For the scaled questions an average will be taken. These averages will also be compared to assess either improvement or decline. For the open-ended questions and interviews with the participant’s trends and significant insights would be reported.

**Report on Results**

To understand the results, it would be pertinent to observe the survey that was distributed before and after the course. The survey is displayed in Appendix 2. Most of the numerical results are tabulated in table format and displayed in Appendix 3. Tables

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4 Ibid., 227.

5 Ibid., 208.
Appendixes 1 through 3 correspond to the survey results. Table 1 comprises of most responses. Additional results related to factors that inhibit rest are in Table 2. Finally, fill in responses for a question related to the enjoyment of work or school are displayed in Table 3.

From the survey, there are some notable results regarding improvement in Sabbath keeping. For instance, the first question asked participants whether they felt they had enough time in the day to do what they needed to do; all of the correspondents responded “no” the first time. However, the second time they answered the exact same question, five out of ten people responded “yes.” The very next question asked about feeling guilty for resting, seven people originally responded “yes,” whereas the second time answering the question, no one answered “yes.” Another key question asked was “Do you practice a regular Sabbath each week?” Three correspondents originally said “yes,” whereas seven correspondents answered “yes” the second time. Therefore, there was positive improvement from the first time the survey was conducted. There seems to be a general trend that people understood what Sabbath is and choose to practice Sabbath after completing the class.

However, there were some ambiguities and negative results from some questions. For instance, one question asked, “On average, how many hours do you work each day?” An average (hours) was taken, and originally it indicated that people worked 8.67 hours each day. The average in the survey afterwards was 6.93 hours, which represents a decrease in the number of hours worked originally. The reason for the decrease is inconclusive from the survey.
Further, regarding exercise, people responded that the average number of hours engaged in exercise was originally five hours. However, afterwards, it was only 3.75 hours which is less by 1.25 hours on average per week. This is particularly puzzling as to why exercising decreased after the class concluded.

Other categories, such as sports, sleep, relationship with family, and amount of time spent in prayer were approximately the same before and after the class. Participants generally felt their relationship with God improved (from an average of 5.4 to 6.75 out of 10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent) and their general perception of their own health improved (from an average of 6.4 to 7.6, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent).

Factors that prevented people from resting were quite varied, though the reasons of “too much work,” “I need to make money,” and “worried” were significantly less in the post-survey compared to the first. When asked whether people enjoyed their work or school, some people did not fill in this response; of those that did respond, most responded that they did enjoy their work/school. The positive responses cited these reasons: “I engage in activities that I enjoy,” “I am learning,” “It brings purpose to my life,” “I do what I love,” and “It’s fun.” The two negative responses to this question cited these two reasons, “I do not have time to do the things I want” and “Because it’s school.”

While the batch sample of ten participants is too small to draw any definitive conclusions, the pilot project did reflect some general improvement that Sabbath education has some correlation in one’s engagement of Sabbath keeping practices. To the very least it allowed individuals to understand what Sabbath was. Whether individuals
applied the Sabbath as a regular part of their lifestyle is inconclusive from the survey alone.

As such, interviews were conducted to gain a better perspective of incorporation of Sabbath keeping, as well as feedback for points of improvement of the class. The interview session was approximately half an hour for each person. The interview was conducted several months after the conclusion of the course. The list of questions asked is included in Appendix 4. The complete distilled responses of the interviews of all ten individuals are tabulated in Table 4 in the Appendices.

After completing the interviews, there were many opinions and feedback expressed regarding the class and the Sabbath keeping practice. There were both positive remarks as well as points for improvement. Regarding the class, most people expressed that it was a worthwhile experience.

There were three common positive points. First, most participants expressed that they appreciated the small class size which allowed for intimate discussion. Second, some felt that the accountability in smaller groups was helpful to encourage the practice of the Sabbath. Third, the people enjoyed going in depth about the topic of Sabbath.

There are several points of improvement. First, the room needed to be larger. As there are numerous classes being held in the same time frame, some classes being quite large, the only available room was the church library, which could fit ten to twelve people. Unfortunately, this was only for seating capacity as the size of the room and setup was not suitable for splitting off for group discussion.
It was not suitable because it was difficult to listen and concentrate on the group member’s input because one could be easily distracted with input from a person in another group. Further, there was a large table in the center that restricted groups and movement. In other words, discussion within the groups would be across a large table, which is not an ideal setup.

Second, related to the small size of the room, there was no space for a projector screen. Power point slides were created but were shown on a notebook on the table. Some people sitting further away from the notebook had difficulty reading the content of the slides. I should have insisted on a larger room, but it was difficult to arrange when there were other larger classes that required a larger room. If the slides were projected as was intended, it would have likely been easier to display content and discussion questions.

Third, some people expressed that they would have liked a weekly challenge or activity to be followed up during the week. The challenge would allow participants to put their learning of the Sabbath into practice. Further, a challenge for that week would allow group leaders to understand what they would need to follow up with their group members.

Fourth, the participation and commitment could have been emphasized even more. Part of the difficulty with this point was mainly due to a few member’s service in the Cantonese worship service, which directly overlaps the English Sunday School time frame. For instance, one participant was a pianist that had to play for the worship set and choir in the Chinese congregation. Another had to chair the Cantonese worship service.
Unfortunately, this had an impact in the class as their absence affected their group discussion.

As for rest, recreation, relationship, and worship, the responses were quite varied. Part of the reason for the varied responses had to do with the life stage of the participants. Some were well into their careers and followed a regular schedule. Others were university students and have a very irregular weekly schedule. There were still others that either had no job but were looking for work or had part-time jobs. This could be one of the reasons why the survey resulted in either no change or sometimes even negative results for some categories. However, the interviews did show that how individuals practiced the Sabbath was correlated with their current life stage and context.

For rest, the interviews showed that most people attempted to balance their work and rest. One person mentioned that part of the struggle related to the issue of maintaining healthy boundaries. Another person affirmed that rest was certainly needed, but their challenge was to rest with consistency. Quite a number also mentioned that they do not find that they are rested due to the demands of their work.

Regarding recreation, most feel they do have sufficient time within the week for recreation. The activities that each person finds recreational are varied. Some enjoy playing video games and watching television shows, others enjoy walking and biking, and another person enjoys sports such as softball. Most of the recreational activities are simple activities that do not require a lot of money or effort. One person shared not having much recreational time because of church meetings and ministry.
As for worship, most dedicate some time for personal worship in the week and within their Sabbath. Two people mentioned they do not have a time of personal worship. The reasons cited were mainly because they needed more rest, forgetfulness, and laziness. For those that do engage in a time of personal worship, the sense is that it is not very long. Several mentioned that they could use more time to worship by engaging in prayer and reading Scripture. However, one person emphatically pointed out that personal worship is rest for them.

With regards to relationships, most feel they are close with their family members. Most attempt to spend time with their family. One person mentioned they spent too much time with them mainly because they are not working. However, most feel quite relationally close to their family members.

As for challenges in implementing the Sabbath, there were three commonly mentioned points from the ten participants. The first was consistency. One participant mentioned they needed to establish a pattern and plan for their lives and stick to it. Another participant mentioned how Christian Sabbath keeping was so different than Jewish people where they have a dedicated structured day. It appeared that part of the struggle was to find focus and intentionality about keeping the Sabbath.

The second area was accountability. One participant said it was so easy to forget without someone reminding them to Sabbath. Unless the change has been adapted into a person’s lifestyle, this person felt that accountability was crucial to implement Sabbath. This was apparent for this person once the course concluded, as the accountability relationship within the group dissolved.
Finally, participants mentioned time management. Time management could be quite challenging for some in high-pressure work environments. For instance, one participant pointed out that they had limited time each day and the little time they did have they used it in getting closer to God or serving in the church. There was struggle in managing time between work, family, and church ministry. That participant felt that they either needed to enter a new life stage or change their jobs to do better at Sabbath keeping. This is quite a challenge when either school or work is overly demanding.

**Future Implications**

After conducting the survey and interviews, it is worthwhile to have education on the Sabbath. One person during the interview mentioned, “Sabbath is something we need to learn. It’s not automatic. The term ‘being’ has to be learned.” CCAC cannot assume that everyone automatically understands what Sabbath is and its implications.

Of course, changes are needed from that of the pilot project. As noted, a list of improvements, and a specific practical challenge would better enhance the course and allow for an easier time to follow up on participants. Further, a larger room that allows for A/V projection would lead to better group discussion and transmission of information.

Though, for future implications for CCAC, a small group ministry setting would be much more ideal. This would avoid misunderstanding what Sabbath keeping is which is more about life learning and transformation in discipleship as opposed to the transference of information. A small group setting that meets weekly on a regular basis would be excellent and ideal moving forward.
The Sunday School setting, as mentioned earlier, sets itself up to be focused more for transfer of information in a limited time frame. Sabbath keeping requires knowledge, but the emphasis and focus is more about lifelong growing that requires relationship. Since Sabbath keeping is a relational process akin to discipleship, stable and meaningful relationships are necessary for accountability. Without that relationship, it is difficult to speak in a manner that is honest and truthful. A safe environment conducive for sharing of emotions and values need to be created to challenge those behaviors that arise from them. The group needs to be small and consistent because people need time to share. If the group is too big, it is intimidating to share and there might not be sufficient time for everyone to share in a meaningful way.

As noted earlier, at the time of drafting and creating this pilot project, small group ministries did not exist at CCAC. However, by the conclusion of this project, a small group ministry within the English Ministry has launched. This would be the best platform to run future Sabbath keeping material. Perhaps multiple groups could potentially be learning the same material for a period. A coach could be recruited to keep multiple leaders accountable so that in turn they would keep their group members accountable.

Also, there appears to be a need to run some form of Sabbath keeping material within the Chinese congregation. One participant made this observation during the interview, “I think Sabbath keeping could be a wider topic and could be taught more often. . . . Especially, in the Chinese church, I think most Chinese are very dedicated but this topic is seldom introduced or addressed, even in preaching. . . . Sometimes, they are so overworked, they don’t even know that they are.” While this doctoral project is mainly
limited to the English leaders at CCAC, there seems to be some need to run a similar course or group within the Chinese congregation. Of course, this would need to be thought out further. The materials would have to be translated and contextualized for the ethnic Chinese culture.

Further to this point, it could also mean that leaders could be overworked not only in their careers and family, but also within the church. Many may believe that it is okay to ignore the Sabbath since they are performing work within the church. This may include taking on numerous leadership positions and tasks and therefore being overworked to a point where there is little to no margin in the leader’s life. There needs to be change in the sense of defining and communicating the healthy expectation of church member’s service. For instance, one example of definition could be one major ongoing regular service throughout the year, e.g. fellowship counselor and one minor area that is time limited, e.g. one-week children camp. Without that definition, a leader’s capacity can be exceeded to a point of infringing upon the Sabbath and rationalizing behavior as being obedient and faithful to God. Though ultimately, the leadership of CCAC would need to define those expectations.

Overall, the pilot project has shown some promise that Sabbath keeping education can potentially help people to better practice the Sabbath. While not specifically within a class or course per say in the future, the project has shown that there is simply a need to understand what Sabbath is and how it can be better practiced. While there are points that could be improved, generally, people who have taken the pilot project class found the
course enjoyable, different, and refreshing. This was particularly encouraging to hear during the interviews of participants.

If the church is willing, a wider scope could be implemented with a larger audience of both Chinese and English congregations. Perhaps a sermon series coupled with small group discussion over a period of four months every few years would be even more effective in teaching the concept of Sabbath and transforming the cultural landscape of the church. It would require recruitment of more leaders and training as well as printed materials appropriate to both English and Chinese languages. This would be an ideal situation that would propel the church further in understanding and practice of Sabbath.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Often people are driven to work long hours in search of wealth, power, and accolades. There could be a trade-off of physical health, emotional well-being, and family relationships to acquire such success. However, success cannot be the end goal. Bob Buford, in his book *Finishing Well*, interviews many retired persons suggesting that significance as opposed to success, is what each person should strive for. He says, “Success commonly means using your knowledge and experience to satisfy yourself with fame and fortune. Significance, however, means using the same knowledge and experience to serve others—that is, to change lives. The outcome defines the difference and changes your attitude toward what you do.”

That significance is found in calling, as opposed to career. A career is what someone is paid to do; a calling is what that person was made to do. A career and a calling are not synonymous. A career ends when retirement begins. A calling continues after retirement. People who have retired from their careers, point out that wealth, power, and accolades are not all that important in the end.

Buford interviewed Armand Nicholi, who teaches at Harvard, and discussed this pursuit of “fame and fortune,” which his students seek. He mentioned that this specific pursuit is pathological and stressed the fact that if his students thought they only had a brief time to live, they would be spending it mending their relationships with friends,

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2 Ibid., 125.
family, and God. Yet, Nicholi’s students will spend their next thirty years in a mad scramble for fame and fortune, which are antithetical to their declared values.\(^3\)

The pathology of this pursuit could entail mental illness, broken families, and tranquilizer abuse. The Church needs to have a positive message of God’s intention for healthy and holistic living and the dangers of workaholism. That message should be communicated in large part through the teaching of the Sabbath. The Church, especially in an ethnic Chinese context, has lost this message.

It does not help in that pastors, leaders in the faith community, either do not practice Sabbath keeping entirely or not practice it well. Senior leaders who choose not to practice a Sabbath keeping lifestyle set unhealthy patterns under their leadership. Ethnic Chinese churches elevate senior pastors that never seem to keep the Sabbath holy and thus give off the impression they are working non-stop for God’s Kingdom. It is consistent with Chinese cultural values of hard work and dedication. This is unhealthy in at least three ways.

First, it can potentially destroy the pastor and their family. Humankind was not created to work unceasingly. Working non-stop sacrifices self-care and family relationships. Over time, that will certainly take a toll physically, emotionally, and relationally. Marital breakup that leads to divorce in a pastor’s family will almost certainly mean the loss of the pastor’s credibility and position.

Second, it leads both the staff and congregation to work at the same intensity and rate as their senior leader. People cannot stop because the primary leader becomes the

\(^3\) Ibid., 85.
example that everyone should follow. This would inevitably propagate dysfunction within the organization from the top down.

Third, the senior leader begins to lose energy and creativity to lead. To continue to move the organization towards growth and health, one requires a certain level of energy and creativity. That creativity is not found on the treadmill of constant doing. Rather, creative ideas and energy is found in Sabbath. As such, the senior pastor finds rejuvenation and creativity in the Sabbath. Especially in a postmodern context, creativity and ingenuity are strong assets to possess. However, when pastors do not practice Sabbath keeping, they lose that creativity, energy, and even optimism to continue.

John Piper calls out all pastors to remember and reflect on what is truly important in being a minister of God. He says, “We pastors are being killed by the professionalizing of the pastoral ministry.”\(^4\) This statement implies that the calling of a pastor is beyond the paycheck earned for services rendered and the accumulation of power, position, and possessions. Pastors are treating their calling more as a career. The calling of a pastor should be eternal and spiritual. Piper emphasizes, “The world sets the agenda of the professional man; God sets the agenda of the spiritual man.”\(^5\)

Regular Sabbath allows the pastor to consistently remember God’s agenda and dispel myths and wrong beliefs. For instance, the Church is not a company. Pastors are not CEOs. Success is not the end goal.

\(^4\) John Piper, *Brothers we are not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 1.

\(^5\) Ibid., 3.
Instead, a healthy practice of Sabbath helps correct these views and puts them into proper perspective. For instance, the Church is a community of faith. Pastors are servants of God. Faithfulness is the end goal.

There are already misunderstandings about what the Sabbath is. Sabbath is not a curse. God does not impose Sabbath to hurt mankind. Sabbath is not a form laziness. Sabbath is also not a day off as most people may understand it.

There are four aspects of Sabbath outlined in this doctoral project to define this spiritual practice and dispel these misunderstandings. The first aspect is ceasing work to rest. Rest reminds humankind that they are not indispensable. People slave week after week believing their work defines who they are. However, rest reminds humankind that it is God that defines who they are. Rest points to the true need of every person, which is God.

The second aspect is recreation. Recreation allows play to stimulate creative pathways in the brain. Recreative activities are unique to each person. The purpose of recreation is to re-create and renew the body and mind.

The third aspect is worship. Worship could be prayer, singing, reading Scripture. There is a dedicated time for personal worship that invigorates the spiritual life. For a church leader, this is crucial as one needs to know God’s agenda before leading people. Worship is where a person finds direction, peace, and wholeness.

The fourth aspect is relationship. Sabbath continually reminds the person that people matter. People are not instruments. Friends and family relationships are important.
Resting to spend quality time with family is necessary to build strong marriages and healthy children.

These four aspects of Sabbath keeping are not hard to understand, however it is not necessarily easy to practice in real life. It takes focus, intention, and discipline. This is found to be true in the context of the pilot project at Cornerstone Chinese Alliance Church. While a Sabbath keeping Sunday School class has demonstrated some improvement, it remains a challenge to maintain regularity and consistency.

There are two thoughts that can be deduced. First, to change a person’s lifestyle will require ongoing support and accountability. A significant amount of time is needed to change unhealthy habits and balance working patterns. Therefore, a small group setting is the much better setting than that of Sunday School. Second, it takes effort to rest, as it is to work. That effort requires faith and trust in God to cease work and Sabbath.

Sabbath education, whether in a Sunday School or small group context, may not fix all the problems related to work imbalance. Though to the very least, it is an attempt to help the church begin the rediscovery of Sabbath. God knows humankind needs it. Perhaps even more than ever in the present age where the world is overly consumeristic, individualistic, and secularized. Everybody wants more productivity in less time.

In such times, Christians can find comfort in Christ’s words in Mk 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath is a blessing and gift from God to humankind. It is meant to be enjoyed, therefore one should not feel guilty for engaging in Sabbath practices. Work is important in giving each person purpose and
meaning. However, rest is also important. It is within this balanced rhythm of work and rest that humankind would find health and wholeness as God intended.
APPENDIX 1

COVENANT AGREEMENT

Class Covenant:

For the duration of this course, I, ________________________________ (Print Name) will strive to:

1. Be respectful and understanding of both facilitator and students.
2. Participate in discussion.
3. Keep personal sharing within the class and group confidential. If I do intend to share other’s stories, I will seek the person’s permission before doing so.
4. Do the homework questions (if there are any).

Further, I allow Rev. Joe Chan to use the survey(s) for his doctoral studies. The information collected will remain anonymous within his research paper.

Signature: ________________________________
APPENDIX 2

PRE- AND POST-CLASS SURVEY

Work and Sabbath Survey

1. Do you feel you have enough time in the day to do what you need to?
   Yes   No

2. Do you often feel guilty for resting?
   Yes   No

3. What are the factors that stop me from resting? (Circle all that apply)
   Too much work   I need to make money   I need to pass classes
   My boss        My family               I can’t sleep
   Too burdened   What others think of me Church work
   Worried        Other Factors:

4. Do you make a conscious effort to rest from your work each day, e.g. take breaks?
   Yes   No

5. Do you practice a regular Sabbath each week?
   Yes   No
   If the answer is ‘Yes’, which day(s) do you Sabbath?

6. On average, how many hours do you work each day?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10+
7. Do you enjoy your work/school?
    Yes  No

    Why? Or Why not?

8. Do you exercise on a regular basis?
    Yes  No

    If the answer is ‘Yes’, how many hours a week do you exercise?
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

9. Do you play sports?
    Yes  No

10. On average, how many hours do you play sports each week?
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10+

11. Are you content with the amount of money that you are making? (if you are working)
    Yes  No  N/A

12. Are you satisfied with the grades you have been receiving in school? (if you are in school)
    Yes  No  N/A

13. On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you presently with your life?
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

14. How many hours of sleep do you get each night on average?
    1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10+

15. How would you describe your relationship with your family members? (On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent)
16. How much time (hours) do you spend with your family each week on average?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

17. Do you spend time in the week to pray?

Yes  No

If the answer is ‘Yes’, how much time do you spend in prayer in one week?

__________________

18. At this moment, how would you rate your personal relationship with God? (On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. How healthy do you feel? (On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
# APPENDIX THREE

## SURVEY RESULTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Questions</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel you have enough time in the day to do what you need to?</td>
<td>Yes: 0</td>
<td>Yes: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 10</td>
<td>No: 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you often feel guilty for resting?</td>
<td>Yes: 7</td>
<td>Yes: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 3</td>
<td>No: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you make a conscious effort to rest from your work each day, e.g. take breaks?</td>
<td>Yes: 5</td>
<td>Yes: 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 5</td>
<td>No: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you practice a regular Sabbath each week?</td>
<td>Yes: 3</td>
<td>Yes: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 7</td>
<td>No: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the answer is ‘yes’, which day(s) do you Sabbath?</td>
<td>Sun: 2</td>
<td>Sun: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sat: 1</td>
<td>Wed: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sat: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Set Day: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On average, how many hours do you work each day?</td>
<td>Avg: 8.67</td>
<td>Avg: 6.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you enjoy your work/school?</td>
<td>Yes: 6</td>
<td>Yes: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 4</td>
<td>No: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you exercise on a regular basis?</td>
<td>Yes: 2</td>
<td>Yes: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 8</td>
<td>No: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the answer is ‘yes’, how many hours a week do you exercise?</td>
<td>Avg: 5 hrs</td>
<td>Avg: 3.75 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you play sports?</td>
<td>Yes: 3</td>
<td>Yes: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 7</td>
<td>No: 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On average, how many hours do you play sports each week?</td>
<td>Avg: 3.33</td>
<td>Avg: 1.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you content with the amount of money that you are making? (if you are working)</td>
<td>Yes: 2</td>
<td>Yes: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 4</td>
<td>No: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A: 4</td>
<td>N/A: 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you satisfied with the grades you have been receiving in school? (if you are in school)</td>
<td>Yes: 2</td>
<td>Yes: 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No: 2</td>
<td>No: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N/A: 6</td>
<td>N/A: 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you presently with your life?</td>
<td>Avg: 6.1</td>
<td>Avg: 7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours of sleep do you get each night on average?</td>
<td>Avg: 6.6 hrs</td>
<td>Avg: 6.8 hrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe your relationship with your family members? (On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent)</td>
<td>Avg: 8.0</td>
<td>Avg: 8.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How much time (hours) do you spend with your family each week on average?
Avg: 6.3 hrs  Avg: 6.75 hrs

Do you spend time in the week to pray?
Yes: 8  No: 2  Yes: 9  No: 1

If the answer is ‘yes’, how much time do you spend in prayer in one week?
Avg. 3.4 hrs  Blank  Avg: 2.8 hrs  Unsure  Not enough  Blank

At this moment, how would you rate your personal relationship with God? (On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent)
Avg: 5.4  Avg: 6.75

How healthy do you feel? (On a scale of 1-10, 1 being very poor, 10 being excellent)
Avg: 6.4  Avg: 7.6

Table Two. What are the factors that stop me from resting? (Circle all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Too much work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to make money</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I need to pass the course</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My boss</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My family</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t sleep</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too burdened</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What others think of me</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church work</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other factors</td>
<td>No Time</td>
<td>Games</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not sleeping well</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table Three. Further Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you enjoy your work/school? Why? Or why not?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While all respondents circled yes or no, some chose to leave this question blank in both the before and after survey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses (before):

1. Yes, because I engage in activities that I enjoy.
2. Yes, because I am learning.
3. Yes, because it brings purpose to my life.
4. No, because I do not have time to do the things I want.

Responses (after):

1. Yes, because I do what I love.
2. Yes, because there’s lots to learn.
3. Yes, but depends on the type of work.
4. Yes, because it is fun.
5. No, because it’s school.
APPENDIX 4

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How did you find the Sabbath keeping class?
2. What did you like about the class?
3. What did you feel could be improved?
4. How are you doing in maintaining a healthy rhythm and balance of work and rest?
5. Have you found time for rest? Why or why not?
6. Do you have time for recreation? Why or why not?
7. Has personal worship been a part of your lifestyle? Why or why not?
8. Do you feel you are spending enough time with family? Why or why not?
9. Has there been any challenges so far in implementing the Sabbath in your life?
10. Other thoughts or feedback? Anything else?
**Table Four: Interview Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>How did you find the Sabbath keeping class?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enlightening, learned a lot about Sabbath. Interesting to go into the origin Sabbath.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Refreshing and a lot of the points made was applicable, proven, lots of benefits and helpful. Easy to take it for granted.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>Good that it was a smaller class. Some pretty interesting people, a wide range of people. Everyone approaches Sabbath differently.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>Therapeutic, besides definitions, backgrounds, and the Scriptural references helped me to reflect and learn the true meaning of Sabbath.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 5</th>
<th>Going more in depth to explain what Sabbath is. We know about being rested, but we didn’t learn about it on a deeper way. Why God created and why we need it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 6</th>
<th>Intimate. Good discussion. Also, talked about related topics that I never thought before, e.g. play. I never associated play as Sabbath. I always thought Sabbath was more about rest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 7</th>
<th>Helpful. Bring out the true meaning of Sabbath that we are not aware of. Helps me rethink why we need Sabbath and need to trust God.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 8</th>
<th>I never looked at Sabbath in terms of looking towards God, I always thought it was just sleep and rest. Throughout this course, I learned that it’s about getting back to God.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 9</th>
<th>I thought it was interesting. I wanted to learn about Sabbath from a different perspective.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>It’s something I look forward in the week. I like to talk with the other students. It’s something I didn’t experience in other Sunday School classes. I felt that the topics were intuitive in keeping a healthy lifestyle.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Question 2: What did you like about the class?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>I liked how it was more in depth.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 2</th>
<th>Liked how it was a small class. Talk a bit closer. Kind of like a check up on one another, which helped us bond more. Got to know others on a more personal level.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 3</th>
<th>I liked the slides, it was easy to follow. Some slides a bit more difficult, but overall good.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 4</th>
<th>I liked the term ‘being’ introduced. This word ‘being’ gave me a lot of reflection.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 5</th>
<th>I liked the small class size that we can split into 3 or 4 and talk about experiences and applications. We normally don’t get that in Sunday School. I liked how it was more application based.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>The power points were concise, lots of real world examples. I liked how it was practical. I liked the accountability groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>I like how it was structured and related to daily life and going back to the Bible. Sabbath can be practiced day to day. Discussion was good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>I did enjoy the amount of sharing and how we spoke with other brothers and sisters about their Sabbath schedule and compare with each other. It’s brought insight and allowed me to figure out what’s too much and what’s too little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>The class was small and had a lot of good discussion. The questions were interesting and sparked thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>I got to hear people speak that I normally would not talk to. In a way, it was nice to hear directly what people had to say.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 3: What did you feel could be improved?**

<p>| Participant 1 | Maybe some video illustrations. |
| Participant 3 | Could have had a bigger room. Group discussion would have been easier. Have a weekly practical challenge. Force us to do it. Whether we do it is our problem. |
| Participant 4 | Some of the participants could not be present due to church duties. Accountability partner also very busy. Texting is not an effective way to keep accountable. Face to face, would be more effective for accountability. |
| Participant 5 | The size of the room. The laptop was hard to see. It was very cozy though. Facilitation and group discussion was difficult with the size of the room. Summary at the end of key points at the end of the class e.g. takeaway points. |
| Participant 6 | More time for discussion in smaller groups. Hearing about what others had to say is important. The topics are general enough that everyone had someone to say, but there was not enough time. Giving the power points ahead of time would have been nice. Bigger room and screen would be better. I just think overall well done. Perhaps exercises to follow up. |
| Participant 7 | I would like that the class could dig deeper into the Bible. This is not a usual topic, but it would be even better if we could dive into how God wants us to look at Sabbath. |
| Participant 8 | The interview could be a little earlier. Closer to the conclusion of the course. Maybe a week or two after the course is done. It was difficult to remember everything in the course after a few months. |
| Participant 9 | I thought it was pretty good. I have nothing to compare it to. After discussion, maybe have time to listen to other group’s opinion and hear what other groups had to say. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 10</th>
<th>I want something exciting to do, a task, a weekly challenge would be more engaging. Maybe being able to talk with someone one on one.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Question 4: How are you doing in maintaining a healthy rhythm and balance of work and rest?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant 1</th>
<th>Every day is rest for me.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>Not sure if I see change, but I do see the main points. I do fully want to set apart one day. I don’t want to burn out. Sometimes, my work is overly physically demanding and draining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Very good right now. It’s always been very good. Even before the class. Rest was always enough. Spiritually could have done better. Sometimes, I do feel very dry. That’s why I need the spiritual side of Sabbath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>I’m an introverted person, so I need a long time to reflect. I really treasure my personal time. At lunch time, I would intentionally put down my job to take a break. I don’t have a regular (entire) day to Sabbath, but I have specific hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>This month has been busier, but I think the balance has been good overall. Balance with ministry and nurturing. This last month has been rough due to additional things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Honestly, not very well. I’m one of those people that needs constant reminders. That’s why I need accountability. I devote a lot of time in everything that I do. I feel I’m spreading myself fairly thinly. My busyness has alerted me that I need to devote more time for God and rest. Part of the issue is boundaries and maintaining healthy boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>Trying to balance, but I do keep a quiet time with God no matter how busy. Usually in the morning. I treasure that time. Work is demanding. Even weekends I must tend to it at times. It’s an expectation for work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>I find it is a little bit tough. The weekends tend to be busier now. I enjoy resting by myself in isolation. When I’m with others, it does get tiring. Weekends tend to take up a lot of my time. Then the weekdays are work. The challenge is to rest with consistency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>In school, I try to have a good rest and work schedule. My school schedule really affects my Sabbath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>I have to admit that I don’t actively think that this day is my Sabbath. I do a pretty good job at getting both work and rest done. I feel satisfied with that and do those things at the right degree. I do feel I have a balance between those two, work and rest, currently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Question 5: Have you found time for rest? Why or why not?**

<p>| Participant 1 | I’m not working, so I feel very rested currently. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Personal Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Personally, for rest, I have a habit every Sunday after lunch to go home and sleep. Extended family know not to bother during that time. I can function with little to no sleep, but it does affect my work quality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes, because I need rest. If I need something, I'll have it. After high school when I involved myself in too many ministries. I found that I had added pressure, and I don’t have time to do what I like, e.g. spend time with family. It got easier as I said ‘no’ to more things. I understand boundaries better. I’m not the workaholic type. Sometimes, I bring work home but at some point, I would stop. I’m pretty good at stopping and starting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Most of the time, I can find time for rest. My kids are older, so I do not need to rush them to bed. I try to learn to let go. I think letting go is a very valuable thing. Before, I would stay up because I worry about them, but now I don’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Even in the midst of busyness, I still find time to study God’s Word. What comforts me is studying His Word. When I yearn for that spiritual rest, that is where I find my strength. I do have a disciplined sleep schedule. I do take care of myself physically. Spiritually, I’m thankful God had placed a thirst and desire a time to learn and study God’s Word. It takes discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I think it depends on how busy I am. Right now, I’m in the middle of exams. At the same time, when I have time, I find that I’m preoccupied about what I need to do. When I rest, it’s almost like a guilty type of feeling. I’m resting but at the same time, I could be doing ten other things. Though I do need to rest my thoughts and spend time with God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I don’t think I am fully rested. I might not feel tired, but I am not rested. I guess for me to be rested, I have to totally relaxed and be able to enjoy certain things. After the class ended, it was my busiest season, the first quarter of the year. I haven’t been fully rested. Physically I’m not tired, I got enough sleep, but my mind is not rested. I’m thinking about all kinds of deadlines and things in my mind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I found time, but I don’t know if it’s sufficient. Time will tell if I slowly burnout. Right now, I think I’m okay. I do have work from home and overtime hours and I can take a day off from time to time. I would like to have one full day to myself but I’m not getting the one full day. It is difficult to get that one day. If you think about it, it’s hard because of work, ministry, and relationships.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>I always do. As long as I’m not doing homework or a lot of thought, I find it restful. As long as I’m not thinking about a lot of things, I find that restful. For instance, rock climbing is very restful as I don’t have to think about it a lot.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I don’t know if I have that time, but if I need it, I will get it. If I can’t do anymore, I will take a break and rest. For instance, during exam week, I...</td>
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</table>
would take time to play music and rest. I’m fairly good at managing that time.

**Question 6: Do you have time for recreation? Why or why not?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I have so much time for recreation, e.g. Rocket League. It’s a competitive skill-based video game.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If I have time to myself, I would spend time with friends, but I also need time for myself. Recreation wise, I would like to catch up on whatever TV shows, hanging out, eating food and catching up with others. There’s not a lot I need to do, a feeling that I covered my bases. A bit of everything. I feel okay with the time that I’m able to carve out. It can be better, but it also depends on other people. I’m grateful when I can meet up with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yeah, because I plan for it. Eating sushi with friends. Going out with girlfriends. Sports, I should do more, but not so much. I really should exercise more. I recently bought some exercise equipment. Window shopping is an activity I enjoy by myself. Super simple recreational activities. Even picking color schemes is recreational to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Winter, I don’t have much recreation. Sometimes, it’s skiing, but recently, I’ve had some pains. Spring time, I like walking and going on trails. We all enjoy that as a family. We also do biking. Not so much sports. I do bike in the summer, at the park. Recreational activities are simple, but I enjoy it. I do have time, especially in the summer. I also play the piano as it is therapeutic. I like playing classical and movie music.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No, I used to go to gym after work every day. But now with Bible Study Fellowship and small group each week, I haven’t been able to go as much. For the last month, it threw off my schedule. I enjoy the gym and want to do it as well. Other times, for Saturdays, doing nothing is recreational. Watch TV. It’s enough and adequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I like going on the computer, watch Netflix/shows, spend time with friends. Simple things, doesn’t have to be extravagant like going out to a party. A distraction or pause from my work. Having to relax and not worry about expectations. Yeah, I think I have enough time for that, but sometimes it can be overwhelming. Watch a movie with one person, and then have dinner right after with another. The recreational activity can be stressful and must be managed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No, my life is very boring. I enjoy sometimes watching TV and not thinking about things. But I don’t even often get that. Even teaching Sunday School, it is kind of a burden. It does take quite a bit of time to prepare. Administrative meetings even at church adds up. I’m involved in the fellowship and it requires preparation. It completely fills the schedule. There’s not much time for leisure. I like to spend time with my kids and family, if I have time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>I enjoy my ministry work and find that recreational in a sense. E.g. softball or A/V. Sometimes, at night I may play a few video games. Occasionally, I do like to do other things like skiing. I like archery tag and things like that. At this moment, I think it’s sufficient. I’d like to find a balance as I don’t want it to become all play and no work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>I try to find time to have recreation if I’m not in school. If it’s work, I tend to just find recreation after work. I like to play some games or watch a few shows and unwind. For school, I always have to think about it, even after school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>Yes, I do have time for it. Spending time with friends and music regularly are mainly my recreational activities. I also get involved in softball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 7:</strong> Has personal worship been a part of your lifestyle? Why or why not?</td>
<td><strong>Participant 1</strong> I’m putting more effort in a regular devotional cycle. Doing 40 Days Alliance devotional material with my girlfriend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participant 2</strong> I don’t find myself constantly thinking in that mindset. Not that I don’t want to, it’s just being fully honest, when I have time to myself, I need to relax.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participant 3</strong> I’m a feeling person, it just comes out. When the Spirit comes, it just comes. It’s not regularly intentional. It’s not chaotic either. After a few days, I have the urge to worship. It’s a Spirit thing. I’m not going to want to do it myself. He has to change my heart, and He always does. I guess the past few weeks, it’s been kind of dry. My personal devo hasn’t been too consistent. I just need to pray for it and ask God to help me. When I’m too excited about other things, I just forget. I’m distracted. I need to find a balance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Participant 4</strong> When I’m driving, the breath prayer is also my personal worship. Mindfulness and conversations with God during that day is also my personal worship. I communicate with him regularly. I also enjoy playing piano and leading worship in the Chinese side, picking up the hymns and listening to the message, I would reflect and share with others. I do have a regular reflection.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participant 5</strong> Personal worship is rest.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participant 6</strong> When I think about worship, I think about singing. Worship can be reading the Bible and praying and appreciating God. At the same time, I try to incorporate it into my schedule. Sometimes, it works out but sometimes it doesn’t. I want to go deeper and explore. But I don’t feel I have enough time for that though. I was pretty good about it when I tried to do two weeks of Lent. I tried to Lent or fast from social media and it was very helpful and cleansing to devote my attention back to God. It was hard the first few days, but it was revitalizing and rejuvenating. Though afterwards, it’s so easy to go back to old ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>I think I do, it might not be very long, but I still carve at least half an hour each day to have personal worship. That part is ok, only from that perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>I think I can do more. For now, I’ve been doing some quick daily devotions. I think I can use more. But between work, ministry and spending time with girlfriend has been challenging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>I do pray before meals and have quiet time before I sleep. It’s mainly discipline that I struggle with. I get lazy and forget. That’s my problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>I’m also teaching high school Sunday School. I do have to read the Bible in that sense, but at first, it didn’t come across as worship. If it comes to personal time with God, it can be improved. It’s sort of non-existent currently. Though, I have that balance between work and recreation. I probably need to spend more time in my spiritual life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 8: Do you feel you are spending enough time with family? Why or why not?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>Too much. Sick of them. Would rather not spend so much time with them, other than mom. Also, because not working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>I feel like we do get along time wise. Even if we don’t physically see each other. But every Sat. when they’re back, we go for lunch. It’s very routine, but at same time, it’s a routine we like to do together. The act of keeping to a family routine. I feel relationally close to family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>Not enough as much as they want me to. They don’t say anything. As long as no one is upset, and I know what they’re up to, then it’s fine. Sometimes, I haven’t seen my family for 3 weeks and I have to intentionally schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>We spend less and less time as before. My children are growing up. They’re occupied with ministry and friends. I spend more one on one time with my husband. We do have family worship every Sunday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>I’m blessed to live with family every day, but spending time is basically dinner every night. Physically I’m there, but quality it’s not very good sometimes. I just eat and then go back to room. Even weekend, it’s hard to have dinner together because everyone is so busy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>Yeah, I do. I have dinner with my parents and sit at the table to talk. Small moments, I really cherish. I would like to have that more. I feel I am relationally close and comfortable sharing anything with them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>I don’t think I spend enough time with family. I would like to do more. Partly why I’m searching for a new job is because my job is overly demanding. My current company wants to make some changes that may mean me spending every night at the office. A couple of hours each day would be much better, but now, I don’t even have that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>I really don’t know. We never really spend a lot of time with family together. We always have dinner together, but not much more than that. We don’t really engage in any recreational activities together as a family.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Not sure how to answer that. Though I do feel relationally close to family.

When I get back home from school, I try to spend time with family. When in school, and out of town, it’s hard to connect with family. But in school I spend time in relationship with friends mainly. However, I do feel relationally close with family.

My relationship with family generally got better after attending university. Yeah, I do try to make more an effort to spend time with parents. I’ve gone out for breakfast with my mother. And I would try to see a Jays baseball game. It is very intentional. There are other things I would probably prefer doing, but I try to spend some time with family.

Question 9: Has there been any challenges so far in implementing the Sabbath in your life?

Participant 1

No, too much free time. It’s the opposite. Need more work. Including class, I work about 4 hours a week.

Participant 2

At the moment, not necessarily. Even with my job, I am able to request not working at certain times. Saturdays are mainly my Sabbath.

Participant 3

I have no consistency. I don’t have any plans. I need to make sure I do it myself.

Participant 4

Yes, different occasions and different life experiences. Sometimes, I am busy or depressed or addicted to social network which takes my focus off Sabbath. When I’m busy, instead of picking up my devotional piece, I’ll surf on Facebook and become distracted.

Participant 5

The challenge of it, is really understanding why I’m doing it and being intentional and doing what I want and what I feel like. Knowing and consciously practicing the Sabbath. Even the normal course of day to day, I wouldn’t consciously think about taking Sabbath. I still do devotions and rest each day. I have to consciously think about why I’m doing this and why God is giving it to me. Usually I don’t really think about it. I’m thinking about other things. It’s so different than Jewish people. We don’t have a dedicated structured day like Jewish people. Being focused is that challenge.

Participant 6

Accountability. It’s actually weird. Most people don’t appreciate people breathing down their necks asking, “Have you done this or that yet?” But I do appreciate it very much. I can implement Sabbath much better if someone consistently keeps me accountable. If I don’t have someone or something to remind me, it’s so easy to forget. Unless it’s a long-term change, e.g. if the class was over two semesters, it may become a regular habit. But since the course was short term, it didn’t have enough time to become a regular habit.

Participant 7

I try to understand and get closer to God. I try to use the limited amount of time to use it to emphasize getting closer to God. It’s either a life stage change or job change to do better in Sabbath keeping. The work
place in bigger companies are getting more and more demanding. Family finances is a concern as well in making changes as it does have an impact. I need to trust God in leading me towards a direction and that He will provide. Though, I would have to learn how to adjust my lifestyle.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>There has been some challenge to make it consistent and regular. Though, I plan to take a few days off each month.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Mainly time management. For instance, if I’m stuck with a homework question, I can sit there for hours and be stuck. Nowadays, I’ve learned to just leave it and go and ask my professor and come back to it later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>The biggest barrier is that I don’t put intentional thought into it. I do have balance, but I could also add a bit more sleep and spiritual component into it.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Question 10: Other thoughts or feedback? Anything else?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Consistency is important, and I need to establish a pattern and plan. Developing a plan is important. Also, need a job.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Not necessarily. I feel pretty content with my place in life. Busy that I’m not bored, but not so busy that I will collapse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Not really. One thing in the back of my mind, I always have a picture in the back of my mind where I would have a really good day to read and enjoy the Bible. More realistic...being worry free because God is in control. Be able to put down things and not worry about it because of God. You know you have to pick it back up eventually, but just not now. When my relationship with God is not strong, you want to put everything down and give up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Sabbath is something we need to learn. It’s not automatic. The term ‘being’ has to be learned. I believe there are better ways or different ways to have Sabbath. The purpose of Sabbath is to connect back to God. I want to have an urge to connect to God, but there are many distractors. TV, Internet, phone. In this modern world, there are too many distractions. Sometimes, our brains are overly wired to our work. To some extent, it’s not easy to practice Sabbath alone. Accountability is effective and more supportive if you have a group of people that shares the same value to pursue Sabbath.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Nothing particular that comes to mind right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>Sabbath is a hard thing. It’s very hard to put into practice in life unless it’s been a part of your life for a substantial part of your life. Unless it becomes a part of your life, a routine, without thinking, it requires conscious thought. It’s also hard because the world is competitive. People want an edge. There’s a scarce amount of resources and the superior people get it. There’s also distrust of God. God does provide, and there’s temptation to take matters in your own hands. We, as humans, want instant gratification, if it’s not instant, we think it doesn’t</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
work. Or we think that God is not looking out for us. It’s these thoughts that make Sabbath so hard. It takes discipline to practice.

**Participant 7**

I think Sabbath keeping could be a wider topic and could be taught more often. I think particularly in Chinese churches. Especially in the Chinese church, I think most Chinese are very dedicated, but this topic is seldom introduced or addressed, even in preaching. Some people hold 2-3 jobs and have congested lifestyles. It would be a good general topic for the Chinese congregation. They sometimes feel like they have no choice but to live up to a certain expectation. Out of all these expectations, how do you even find a quiet place? We need to explore this topic more, especially in the Chinese congregation. Sometimes, they are so overworked, they don’t even know that they are.

**Participant 8**

The older I get, I realize there are more responsibilities. I have to take extra intention to Sabbath. If work calls, you must be prepared to work. You do have to be very intentional, even if you can’t do weekly or biweekly, try monthly. I am not going to let work get in the way of rest. I think it’s reasonable to have at least a day in a month.

**Participant 9**

No.

**Participant 10**

The most important to me was the discussion about sleep. It really affects my whole being and productivity. I can get less play, but less sleep does affect me in a bad way. When my friends are sleep deprived, they seem to be a different person altogether. That subtopic on sleep was something that I really remember. For me, without enough sleep, I have a tough time concentrating and it makes learning difficult.


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