



RE:MEMBER | RE:SET | RE:PLY

A SPIRITUAL ROADMAP TO RESILIENCE

GOING BEYOND THE SERMON

October 3—24, 2021

Based around Barbara Brown Taylor's book, *An Altar in the World*, this sermon series will help attune us to the presence of God in everyday life. In our ordinary activities, can we trust that there is no way to see God apart from living real life in the real world? What is saving your life right now in the face of a pandemic, political division, cultural upheaval, and racial struggles? In a world where faith is often defined as a way of thinking, the Christian life calls us to daily living and daily practices that remind us that faith is a way of life.

October 3, Dr. John Stephens
"The Practice of Saying No: Sabbath"
Exodus 20:8-11

October 10, Dr. Matthew Russell
"The Practice of Feeling Pain: Breakthrough"
Job 6:1-10

October 17, Dr. Tod Bolsinger
"The Practice of Tempered Resilience"
Isaiah 40:3-5

October 24, Dr. Matthew Russell
"The Practice of Pronouncing Blessings: Benediction"
Deuteronomy 8:1-14

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Exodus 20:8-11

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

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

The same Hebrew word is used in verses 8 and 11. The first time it is translated holy and the second time consecrated. God made (consecrated) the seventh day as holy and directs us to do the same. The New Oxford Annotated Bible notes say that the sabbath is distinct from other days and is directed to God as creator. In Exodus 16:23-30, the Israelites experienced the reality of the sabbath. While gathering manna on the sixth day, Moses told them, “Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy sabbath to the Lord; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning. So they put it aside until morning, as Moses commanded them; and it did not become foul, and there were no worms in it.” He told them that if they went to gather manna on the sabbath they would not find any. Those who tried to gather “found none.” The Lord noticed. “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and instructions? See! The Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you food for two days; each of you stay where you are; do not leave your place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.”

The people were learning to obey God’s command *before* the commandment was given! We are still learning today! Let’s look at how the commandment developed over time.

Rest for the sake of others. Exodus 23:12 says, “Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest, so that your ox and your donkey may have relief, and your homeborn slave and the resident alien may be refreshed.

Rest as an outward sign of covenant with God. Exodus 32:16-17 states, “Therefore the Israelites shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Rest in busy seasons. When the commandments were reissued after the golden calf episode, the commandment was

extended to seasons of busyness. Exodus 34:21 says, "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even in plowing time and in harvest time you shall rest."

Rest as demonstrated by Jesus. Jesus parted with the strict sabbath rules that developed over time. He and his hungry disciples plucked grain and ate; Jesus healed on the sabbath and condoned saving animals and trusting God to provide. He summed up the sabbath commandment this way: "For the Son of Man is lord of the sabbath . . . it is lawful to do good on the sabbath." (See Matthew 12: 1-14, Mark 2:23-3:6, Luke 6:1-11 and Matthew 6:26-30)

A-Apply

Barbara Brown Taylor, in an *Altar in the World*, describes sabbath as the practice of saying no. We've reviewed both Old and New Testaments and seen the difficulties that both the Hebrews and early Christ followers had with understanding the need for not working as a way of honoring God. We know our own temptations to work day in and day out. Taylor proposes that "saying no is a more difficult spiritual practice than tithing, praying on a cold stone floor, or visiting a prisoner on death row." (p. 125) Here are some questions we can use to reflect on our own relationship with sabbath keeping.*

Are you someone who is easily seduced by saying "yes" to doing too much? Do you wear busy-ness as a badge of honor? What do you say "yes" to instead of Sabbath time, instead of God?

How good are you at saying no? What helps you say no? What hinders you from saying no? How has this affected your life?

Think back to how your habits developed. Did your family observe any Sabbath traditions when you were growing up? What were they? Was your experience with them positive or negative?

On page 138 Taylor proposes an exercise. "Make two lists on one piece of paper. On one side of the paper list all of the things you know give you life that you never take time to do. Then, on the other side, make a list of all the reasons why you think it is impossible for you to do those things."

P- Prayer

Lord of the Sabbath, I give myself to you for rest and for your care — of me, my family, and all who are dependent on me and serve me. I pray that as I lose myself in you, you find me praising you and you alone. Amen.

**Sources for the application questions are adapted from questions written by the Rev. Rebecca Edwards, Good Samaritan Episcopal Church, San Diego CA and from HarperOne Reading and Discussion Guide for An Altar in the World. For more reading and discussion guides like this one, visit www.smallgroupguides.com.*

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Job 6:1-10

Then Job answered:

- ²“O that my vexation were weighed,
and all my calamity laid in the balances!
- ³For then it would be heavier than the sand of the sea;
therefore my words have been rash.
- ⁴For the arrows of the Almighty are in me;
my spirit drinks their poison;
the terrors of God are arrayed against me.
- ⁵Does the wild ass bray over its grass,
or the ox low over its fodder?
- ⁶Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt,
or is there any flavor in the juice of mallows?
- ⁷My appetite refuses to touch them;
they are like food that is loathsome to me.
- ⁸“O that I might have my request,
and that God would grant my desire;
- ⁹that it would please God to crush me,
that he would let loose his hand and cut me off!
- ¹⁰This would be my consolation;
I would even exult in unrelenting pain;
for I have not denied the words of the Holy One.

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

The book of Job raises the question of the injustice of undeserved suffering. Job, a righteous man who is afflicted by God, apparently unjustly, is demanding restitution. This passage is in the first cycle of three dialogues between Job and the friends. His arguments against God are poetical and theological. The external description of suffering gives way to Job’s inner experience – he wishes to never have been born; failing that, he wishes to have died at birth; failing that, he wishes that suffering as he is, he could die when he is ready. (vv. 8-9) “If he could die now, before his suffering leads him into blasphemy, he could at least have the consolation of not having denied the words, the commandments, of the Holy One. Here Job begins to think of God as his enemy, armed with poisoned arrows and with terrors as his army.” (New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV, pp. 729, 731)

The book of Job with its prologue, dialogue between God and Satan, Job’s life experiences, his friends’ advice about his plight, and God’s final questions for Job give the reader much room for interpretation and reflection on the nature of God and humans, and on pain and suffering. The New Oxford Bible says, “The book of Job is perhaps the most sustained piece of theological writing in the Hebrew Bible, and it is unique in the Bible for its sympathetic portrayal of

differing theological points of view.” (p. 726) Our task is to read this portion of Scripture, think deeply about Job’s pain and our own, and respond to God honestly about our own circumstances as Job did.

A- Apply

“Pain makes theologians of us all,” writes Taylor. “If you have spent even one night in real physical pain, then you know what that can do to your faith in God, not to mention your faith in your own ability to manage your life.” (p. 157) Job’s questions to God included, “Why me?” Taylor continues, “Pain pushes people to the edge, causing them to ask fundamental questions such as “Why is this happening?” and “How can this be fixed?” Pain brings out the best in people along with the worst. Pain strips away all the illusions required to maintain the status quo. Pain begs for change, and when those in its grip find no release on earth, plenty of them look to heaven – including some whose formal belief systems preclude such wishful thinking.”

We try to avoid pain (physical) and suffering (mental). However, “if you have ever made a graph of your life – writing your birthday at the left side of a page and today’s date at the right, filling in the major events that have made you who you are – then you are likely to note that the spikes in your pain bear some relationship to the leaps in your growth.” Are you willing to try this exercise?

In your life, has physical or mental pain been more prevalent? What is the greatest physical pain you have encountered (in yourself or someone else)? _____

What is the greatest mental pain you have encountered (in yourself or someone else)? How did you handle those hurts? How did they change you? _____

When do you allow yourself to feel your pain fully and when do you use a coping or defense mechanism to lessen it? What is your most reliable defense? What do you think will happen if you do not use it against your pain? _____

P-Pray

God, make me willing to embrace pain, so that it can become an altar in my world – a place where I discover that a life can be as full of meaning as it is of hurt. Amen.

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Isaiah 40:3-5

A voice cries out:

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

Isaiah spoke words of hope to a people in exile. Now, in this portion of prophecy, the Lord’s plans to restore Zion and bring the people home from exile are being realized. The time is coming when the passage through the wilderness to the land of Israel will be made clear, smooth, and straight. God’s presence will be made known there, in the wilderness, for all to see. Again. As it was during the Exodus.

Restoration is a central theme in this second part of Isaiah (chapters 40-55). In the midst of their return from exile, the people hear the Word of God. The people are beleaguered, unbelieving, and resistant to God – that’s why they were taken into captivity. As they hear the words of God to them through Deutero-Isaiah, they hear them in light of their apostasy. And so must we. “The degree to which he (the modern reader) hears the Word of God addressed to Israel through these pages is therefore bound up with his degree of awareness of his own apostasy, and with his acceptance of the forgiving and renewing love of God that the (scriptures) reveal. Isaiah 40 – 55 “constitute revelation of the very mind of the living God.” (From the Introduction of *Servant Theology* by George A.F. Knight, pp. 1-5)

A-Apply

Tod Bolsinger, our guest preacher and author of *Tempered Resilience* writes: "To temper describes the process of heating, holding, hammering, cooling, and reheating that adds stress to raw iron until it becomes a glistening knife blade or chisel tip." When reflection and relationships are combined into a life of deliberate practice, leaders become both stronger and more flexible. As a result, these resilient leaders are able to offer greater wisdom and skill to the organizations they serve.

The people of Israel, in the experience of exile, had been tempered. As a result, they were not the same. Their homes, life practices, relationships with extended family, and with society had changed. They practiced their faith in new ways – at the direction and encouragement of God through the guidance of the prophets.

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Do you sense such a change in your life? If so, what is different for you?

What part of the tempering process – heating, holding, hammering, cooling, or reheating – describes your current state? How are you responding to the stress you are currently under?

What skill or wisdom have you gained as a result of undergoing pressure? Where can you see God's hand at work?

P-Pray

Jesus, you experienced the crucible of God's love for the world in your flesh, in your sacrifice for the world's sake. Give me a desire to be shaped and formed by God into your image. I ask in Your name. Amen.

BIBLE S.W.A.P.

S—Scripture: Deuteronomy 8:1-14

This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. ²Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. ³He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. ⁴The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. ⁵Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. ¹⁰You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

¹¹Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. ¹²When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Notes:

W-What Does it Mean and What Can I Obey?

This passage is a warning from Moses to the people of God that success in the land of Canaan can tempt them to forget the wilderness lesson of complete dependence on God. He reminds them that God deliberately humbled them “the long way.” He allowed them to experience hunger, so they would depend on God for food. Their clothes never wore out nor did their feet swell – these blessings came from God. God disciplined them with suffering, yet He loved them as a parent loves a child.

They have received God’s Word – the commandments and ordinances and statutes – and that Word is to be their daily bread. Moses tells the people that forgetting God’s laws and failing to observe and obey them is tantamount to forgetting the Lord. Following the law is an act of obedience and an act of self-care. Verse 16 says, “He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that our ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, *and in the end to do you good*. God’s goodness is at the heart of God’s provision.

Furthermore, this passage is a warning about the peril of prosperity. After their lean years, the Israelites settled in Canaan and flourished there. They ate their fill, built fine houses, and owned flocks that multiplied. Their wealth grew. And it is there, in plenty, that Moses urges them “do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God . . . if you do for-

get . . . and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish . . . because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.” (See vv. 11-20)

A-Apply

The writer of Deuteronomy reminds the Israelites of past blessings and promises more blessings to come. The purpose of all these pronouncements is so that the people will bless (worship and praise) God. (v. 10) We have opportunity to do the same for the people in our midst. Barbara Brown Taylor, in *An Altar in the World*, writes, “To pronounce a blessing on something is to see it from the divine perspective. To pronounce a blessing is to participate in God’s own initiative. To pronounce a blessing is to share god’s own audacity. This may be why blessing prayers make some people uncomfortable.” (p. 206) She goes on to tell stories from her experiences as a parish priest that confirm for her that church people need to hear a human voice pronouncing God’s blessing on us the same way we need food and water. “They could feel it when a blessing landed on them, like warm oil poured on their crowns of their heads.”

On what occasions in your life have you been formally blessed? How did you feel in the moment and what does that blessing mean to you now? _____

Are you comfortable saying blessings on things or people or would you rather excuse yourself from the task? Why? _____

Is there something or someone in your life you feel might need to be blessed—even if it’s something sad or makes you uncomfortable? What is it? What would you say to it or them if given the chance to bless it? _____

P- Prayer

Begin your prayer time each day this week by blessing God, in the Jewish tradition.

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, by whose word all things come into being.”

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has made the works of creation.”

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who feeds all living things.”

Share Going Beyond the Sermon with Others

Have you considered sharing your personal Bible study experiences with others? Going Beyond the Sermon notes and the Bible S.W.A.P. study method works well with a small group. Just send the notes to a few friends and arrange a time to get together in person or online to share your insights.

If you need suggestions for starting a group, contact Teresa Rossy,
trossy@chapelwood.org or (713) 354-4407.

We have other tools and resources on our web site at www.chapelwood.org/mynextstep.

JOIN US ON SUNDAY MORNINGS FOR WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP AND STUDY

Adult Sunday Morning Classes

9:45 a.m.

A Place for YOU Singles, 60s +, LC201 and Zoom

Candlelighters, 80s+, Fireside Room and Zoom

Discovery, 40s-60s, W203

Encouragers, 50s-70s, LC 214-215

Fellowship, 60s-80s, W101-102 and Zoom

Genesis, 50s+, East Rooms and Zoom

Good News, 60s-70s, Conference Room

New The Crossing, All Ages, Fellowship Hall

New Modern Family, Parents of All Ages, Courtyard Room

New Adult Sunday Group, Fountain Hallway and LC202 (forming now)

Pathfinders, 60s-70s, W104 and Zoom

Singles Journey, 50s +, W202 and Zoom

New Sunday Morning Roundtable, W201 (forming now)

Women's Perspective, Women of All Ages, W103 and Zoom

New Young Adults, 20s to early 30s, YB101

11:00 a.m.

Common Thread, 30s-50s, LC204 (meeting dates 10/24 & 11/14)

Faith & Life, 50s +, LC211-212

Scan the QR code for more information on the web



Fall Weekday Studies

Monday

Monday Morning in the Word: Book of Romans with Rev. Tammy Heinrich
10:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m., LC211-212 and Zoom

Women's Lunch study: The Cry of the Soul with Women's Ministry Director Nicole Nehring
12:15p.m.-1:30 p.m., LC201

Tuesday

Men's Prayer Breakfast and Golf, with Dr. Wick Stuckey
7:00 a.m.-8:00 a.m., Fellowship Hall, 2nd/4th Tuesdays
Faithful and Inclusive with Walt Agnew
7:00—8:15 p.m., Fireside Room (begins Oct. 12)

Wednesday

Old Testament Bible study of books of Joshua—Daniel with Rev. Andy Noel and Al Hoppe
6:30 p.m.-8:00 p.m., East Rooms and Zoom
Women's Evening study: Cry of the Soul with Women's Ministry Director Nicole Nehring
6:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m., LC201
Men's Wednesday Night study with Men's Ministry Director Chris Ferguson
7:30 p.m.- 8:10 p.m., Fireside Room and Zoom (begins Oct. 6)

Thursday

Men's Breakfast Study with Rev. Andy Noel
7:00 a.m.—8:15 a.m., Fellowship Hall and Zoom, ongoing
Joy of the Lord Women's Bible Study: Books of John with Amy Eggert and Small Group Leaders
9:30 a.m.—11:30 a.m., various rooms and Zoom
Pastors Bible Study with Rev. Josef Klam
10:00 a.m.- 11:30 a.m., Fireside Room and Zoom
An Altar in the World Book Study with Rev. Rachel Sciretti
10:00 a.m.—11:00 a.m. **Zoom only**
Second Touch Spiritual Formation Group
10:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m., W201 and Zoom

Friday

Hitchhiker's Guide to the Bible with Dr. Matt Russell
12:00 p.m.-1:00 p.m., **Zoom only**

*Going Beyond the Sermon is written by Teresa Rossy, Director of Adult Discipleship Ministries,
Chapelwood United Methodist Church in Houston, Texas.*

*Source material is quoted throughout. The sermons are streamed online and worship is in
person at 8:30, 9:45, and 11:15 a.m. in the Sanctuary of our Greenbay campus.*

Go to www.chapelwood.org for details.

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