

Good Sundays Make Better Mondays – Isaiah 58:13-14

Today we're continuing our series called *I Love Sundays*.

Just for fun, I made a list this week of things I love. It includes Mary, Rachel & Jake, Ava & Connor, of course! Also vacation, hunting & fishing, Sunday afternoon naps, and the NFL. Maybe the reason I love the NFL is because I get to use it as an excuse for a Sunday nap. Whenever there's a great play, the crowd noise wakes me up and I watch the instant replay.

Before we get into this series, I want to give you a chance to create your own list, so turn to a neighbor and in thirty seconds or less, tell them three things you love. Ready? Go!

If you worked at it awhile, I'll bet you all could come up with a list of a hundred things you love. But I'm not sure how many would think to include *I Love Sundays* on your list.

Our goal, over these five weeks, is to change that. And, if you attend church each week, I guarantee your life will be better, or your money back [☺].

Let's pray before we dive in together.

Father in heaven, you made us, and we're grateful. You designed us, and you know how we best work. We came this morning hoping that you would speak to us in life-changing ways. And that's our prayer right now. Lord, in these next few minutes, please speak to us and change us. We are listening. In Jesus's name, amen!

I want to propose to you today that *Sunday was meant to be the best day of your week*. During Jesus's day, the Jews had all sorts of laws about what you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath. One Sabbath day, Jesus was hanging out with His disciples, and they were debating which things applied to them and which things didn't. In a show-stopping statement, Jesus clarified God's purpose for the Sabbath once and for all when He said to them, **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath"** (Mark 2:27).

What Jesus was saying was, of all the days of the week, God knew we would need a day to break from everything else we were doing and refuel, refresh, and refocus. So, when God was arranging the rhythm of the world, He designated one day for refueling.

Study the history of Christianity and I think you'll see that whenever people have taken the time to set aside a day for rest and refocus with God, their lives have gone better. They've felt better about themselves, enjoyed their families more, and experienced the smile of God.

The problem is, in 2017, we live in a non-stop culture where we never have enough time because we never stop worrying about deadlines and never feel like we're making enough money to guarantee our happiness. Day in and day out we live with pressure. Pressure, pressure, pressure.

Do this for a minute. (It's going to seem weird, but do it anyway.) Put your teeth together and just go "Sssssssssssssss." On three . . . Sssssssssssss.

You know what you were just doing? We were all letting off pressure like you let off pressure from a beach ball or a tire. Try it again: Sssssssssssssss. Does that feel good?

I don't want you to relax so much this morning that you go to sleep, but I do want you to relax enough to lower your blood pressure, listen well, and leave here in a little while feeling a weight lifted off your shoulders.

Set the clock back in our country a hundred years, two hundred years, or three hundred years and there was a lot less pressure. Nobody worked on Sundays. Businesses were closed for the day. There were no kids' traveling all-star teams. People used Sunday for a rest day. Which seems very old-fashioned. But doesn't something about that old-fashioned lifestyle call to you?

In prior generations Americans got a lot less done on Sundays. But as a result, they got a lot more done on Mondays. After a day of rest, they attacked the week eagerly. Work was considered a noble thing.

Athletes have found they perform better by working hard and then resting, working hard and then resting, instead of working hard all the time. Our muscles were designed for stress, and then release. Our souls were, too.

People today say they're too busy to worship or read the Bible because they have to work more hours to get ahead. But the Bible says that if you do those things regularly, you'll *become* the sort of person who gets ahead.

The same is true with the Sabbath. We think we can get ahead by working more. But sometimes the best way to be productive is to rest and refuel for a while. That's the concept of the Sabbath, and God invented it. The way to make your Mondays better is to start with Sundays.

In the Bible, God prescribes fifty-two Sabbaths a year as part of our health-maintenance plan. That's seven and a half weeks of spiritual vacation! God did this because when He wired us, He constructed us to run best on a rhythm of engagement and withdrawal, or stress and then release. God made Sundays as release days. A Sunday rest day is part of our divinely designed nature. Do this once again: Sssssssssss! No pressure today, just release.

KEY VERSES: If you want to follow along, I want to share for us today Isaiah 58:13-14 on p. 786 in the pew Bibles. Listen as I read what God says to us today . . . **Read from Bible...**

Isn't that good? "If you call the Sabbath a delight..." then He says "I will make you to ride on the heights of the earth." God's secret for being on top is to call the Sabbath a delight! Which means that Sunday ought to be the best day of your week!

APPLICATION: How can you make that happen? What would it look like to make Sunday the best day of your week?

A. How to Make Sunday the Best Day of Your Week (Isaiah 58:13–14):

There are two steps you need to take to make Sundays great. The first is to make a conscious decision to . . .

1. Honor God's rhythm for your life (Exodus 20:8; Deuteronomy 5:12).

For Orthodox and conservative Jews, celebrating the Sabbath is the high point of their week. As a matter of fact, Sabbath celebration is so sacred to the Jewish people that the entire nation of Israel puts their elevators on automatic during the Sabbath. To avoid even the slightest amount of work, like pushing an elevator button, Israeli elevators are programmed to stop and open on every floor from the beginning of the Sabbath to its end. This might seem extreme to us because we live in a country where everyone can do whatever they want to. But imagine if you lived in a high-rise and every Sunday your elevator stopped on every floor whether you wanted it to or not? Board an elevator in Israel on the Sabbath, and every stop will remind you that there is a God who created the world and He wants you to release and enjoy Him. That would be a great reminder, wouldn't it?

Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath on the seventh day to remind themselves that on the seventh day God rested from His labor of creation (Genesis 2:2–3). Because the resurrection of Jesus happened on a Sunday, Christians adopted the first day of the week as our Sabbath. But the principle is the same: take a day to rest. Build it around God and family. Make the Sabbath a delight!

You all know what it means to look forward to something. You hear about a great movie that's coming out on Friday night, and you look forward to it all week. Or you look on the NFL schedule for the Viking-Packer game, and you think about it and talk about it with your friends for several days before the game happens. Then, if it was a great movie or a great game, you talk about it some more for the next few days.

What if, this afternoon and tomorrow morning, you talked with your family or friends about what you learned in church on Sunday? Or, what you did for fun on Sunday afternoon or evening? And what if this Friday you posted on your Facebook page, "Sunday's coming!" Or, "I can't wait for Sunday!" And you started thinking about what you might experience in church this weekend?

There's a phenomenon in psychology that says, *Act your way into a new way of thinking*. Counselors teach couples who have lost that lovin' feelin' to *act* like they're in love so that they will fall in love again. And it works. A husband who goes out and buys his wife flowers finds himself liking and loving his wife more, because he did something that was loving. A wife who takes special care to prepare a great dinner for her husband finds herself loving her husband more because she's putting effort into the relationship.

Isaiah 58:13 says we should "**call the Sabbath a delight.**" What if you don't feel like the Sabbath is a delight? If you will make a decision to *call* the Sabbath a delight, you will begin to *feel* like the Sabbath is a delight.

If step one in making Sunday the best day of your week is . . .

1. Honor God's rhythm for your life.

Step two takes it a little further. Step two is . . .

2. Prepare for Sunday as if it's the highlight of your week.

In Psalm 122:1, King David gets invited to go to church. His response is . . . **I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." (Psalm 122:1)** He was all fired up about it, because going to church was the high point of his week. How could that happen for you? So how will you prepare for next Sunday?

Let me give you some suggestions:

B. How to Change the Rhythm of Your Life:

1. Block out the next four Sundays.

It might be too much to expect to change your whole life in one sermon, so let's start with this. What if you blocked out the next four weeks on your calendar and said, "We aren't going anywhere on Sunday mornings except for church the next four weeks"? Schedule it in your smartphone like you'd schedule an appointment with your friend.

2. Figure out your advanced plan.

Sometime this afternoon, before the idea wears off, sit down with your family or those you come to church with and talk about the kind of preparation you want to put into arriving here with smiles next Sunday. Do you want to put your clothes out the night before? Or set the table and eat breakfast together? What time do you all want to get to bed the night before? And what time do you want to leave for church next Sunday morning? Then, to make sure you have fun, how do you want to whoop it up on Friday night?

3. Observe next Sunday.

To start looking forward to next Sunday, try posting “#Sunday’s coming!” on your Facebook page this Friday. Who knows, if enough of us do it, we might start a movement?!

Hal Seed, who wrote the book, *I Love Sundays*, closes chapter 4 with this:

I recently officiated the wedding of a couple named Chris and Sarah Evans. While planning the ceremony together, I asked them how they met. Sarah said, “During the first day of class my freshman year in college, all the students had to introduce themselves. When Chris introduced himself, I automatically said, ‘Wow! This guy is great and cute and something special.’ Class met once a week. So the next week, I dressed up a little bit more for class.”

She did that every week. Chris noticed. Now they’re living happily ever after. Sarah thought Chris was special, so she took special care on the days she went to class with him. Not a bad model to follow.

Everybody repeat after me [line by line]:

Sunday was meant to be the best day of my week.

I’m going to prepare for it as if it’s the highlight of my week.

See you next Sunday!

Let’s pray.

Father, thank you for creating us for rhythm and rest. We’ve had a great morning together. Help us to live the kind of lives you intended for us and to make the Sabbath a delight. In Jesus’s name we pray, amen.