

## Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on what you do for work. Has your work become an idol? Do you define your identity by your work? Do you measure your worth by your success at work? How can the Gospel and Sabbath speak to your answers?
2. How was your definition of Sabbath shaped by this message?
3. What is one thing you need to say “no” to so you can say “yes” to sabbath?

### **Prayer for Those Searching for Truth:**

*Lord Jesus, you claim to be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Grant that I might be undaunted by the cost of following you as I consider the reasons for doing so. If what you claim is true, please guide me, teach me, and open me to the reality of who you are. Give me an understanding of you that is coherent and convincing, and that leads to the life you promise.  
Amen.*

### **Prayer of Belief:**

*Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am weaker and more sinful than I ever dared admit, but through you I am more loved and accepted than I ever dared hope. I thank you for paying my debt on the cross, taking what I deserved in order to offer me complete forgiveness. Knowing that you have been raised from the dead, I turn from my sins and receive you as my Savior and Lord. Amen.*



**Nehemiah 13:15-22**  
**January 10, 2016**

## **The Requirement of Blessing**

After the blessing of a completed wall, Nehemiah introduces reforms to the life of the community. It seems like an odd time to reform. Why not just bask in the blessing? Nehemiah is familiar with this principle:

**Blessing requires reform or the blessing will become a curse.**

When good things happen, we have to manage the blessing well or that very thing will likely drag us down.

NOTES:

## The Nature of Work

The blessing for God's people was a brand new wall that came with lots of work. Sometimes work is seen as a necessary evil because we misunderstand that work is a result of the Fall. This is not the case! Work preceded the Fall. Work is not a result of the Fall, frustrated and toiled work is a result of the Fall.

On a foundational level, work is good thing.

- Work is ordering creation to produce something.
- Work is providing a service or producing a product that helps meet a need.
- Work is using our skills and efforts to benefit others.

The problem is that work can become an idol.

- Work can lead us to believe we are self-sufficient and don't need God ("Look what we did! We built this wall.")
- We can wrap up our sense of worth in our work ("I'm valuable because I built this wall.")
- We can define our identity according to our work ("I'm a wall-builder.")

In all these cases, the gift of valuable work has become an idol.

After the blessing of a job well done on the wall, Nehemiah knows he must put work in proper balance, thus he ensures the community is observing and honoring the Sabbath.

### NOTES:

## The Purpose of Sabbath

*"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."*  
-Mark 2:27 (NIV)

The rules that Nehemiah is enforcing in the Old Testament point us to the purpose of Sabbath that Jesus reveals in the New Testament.

The purpose of Sabbath is to keep work in proper balance in our lives.

Sabbath is a sign of trust that God is in control.

Sabbath isn't just about emptying yourself of work. Sabbath is about filling up with joy and delight.

In order to practice Sabbath in our lives we must realize that every "yes" is also a "no."

In 2016, discern if it is time to say "No" to some things so that you can say "Yes" to sabbath.

### NOTES:

*Prayer:*  
*Almighty God, who after the creation of the world rested from all your works and sanctified a day of rest for all your creatures: Grant that we, putting away all earthly anxieties, may be duly prepared for the service of your sanctuary, and that our rest here upon earth may be a preparation for the eternal rest promised to your people in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*  
(Source: Book of Common Prayer)