

Sabbath & Jubilee as Creation Care



Genesis 2: 1-3 [NRSV]

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. **2** And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. **3** So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Group Question:

As you read this passage from Genesis together, what stands out for you?

Leviticus 25:1-2 (NRSV)

25 The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: **2** Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the Lord.

Group Question:

This passage begins on Mount Sinai. What do we know about Mount Sinai?

Think about where the people of Israel were in their story, what had already happened, who would have heard this, what did they know about God and their relationship with God and each other?

Directions for the next part:

Divide into 5 groups - each taking one part of scripture and exploring the text and the question. If your group is too small, go through all the questions together.

Group 1: vs 3-7 **Who is the Sabbath for?**

3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; **4** but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. **5** You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. **6** You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath—you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; **7** for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food.

Group 2 vs 8-12 - **How does Sabbath/Jubilee provide care for humans?**

8 You shall count off seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years. **9** Then you shall have the trumpet sounded loud; on the tenth day of the seventh month—on the day of atonement—you shall have the trumpet sounded throughout all your land.

10 And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family.

11 That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you: you shall not sow, or reap the aftergrowth, or harvest the unpruned vines. **12** For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat only what the field itself produces.

Group 3 vs 13-17 How does land serve the ends of Jubilee?

13 In this year of jubilee you shall return, every one of you, to your property. **14** When you make a sale to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor, you shall not cheat one another. **15** When you buy from your neighbor, you shall pay only for the number of years since the jubilee; the seller shall charge you only for the remaining crop years. **16** If the years are more, you shall increase the price, and if the years are fewer, you shall diminish the price; for it is a certain number of harvests that are being sold to you. **17** You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God.

Group 4 vs 18-24 What purpose does God give for Land?

18 You shall observe my statutes and faithfully keep my ordinances, so that you may live on the land securely. **19** The land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live on it securely. **20** Should you ask, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, if we may not sow or gather in our crop?" **21** I will order my blessing for you in the sixth year, so that it will yield a crop for three years. **22** When you sow in the eighth year, you will be eating from the old crop; until the ninth year, when its produce comes in, you shall eat the old. **23** The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine; with me you are but aliens and tenants. **24** Throughout the land that you hold, you shall provide for the redemption of the land.

Group 5 vs 25-28 How does Jubilee serve family life?

25 If anyone of your kin falls into difficulty and sells a piece of property, then the next of kin shall come and redeem what the relative has sold. **26** If the person has no one to redeem it, but then prospers and finds sufficient means to do so, **27** the years since its sale shall be computed and the difference shall be refunded to the person to whom it was sold, and the property shall be returned. **28** But if there are not sufficient means to recover it, what was sold shall remain with the purchaser until the year of jubilee; in the jubilee it shall be released, and the property shall be returned.

In the large group

Each group takes a turn to share with everyone the passage they read and the question they reflected on.