



PASSIONFORTRUTH

WHERE NEW LIFE BEGINS

God Asked This Jewish Rabbi To Write A Book To Christians

Jim Staley with Rabbi Elie Mischel

Rabbi Elie Mischel's dialogue will be colored in green.

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The Shabbat Revolution is not only an amazing title, but it also has amazing content. We're going to be talking about that, as he is an Orthodox rabbi who wrote a book for Christians about the Sabbath. What century are we in? This is crazy. Welcome, Rabbi. Thanks so much. It was definitely not on my bingo card. This wasn't the plan to write this book, but God had plans for it. Well, before we dive into your book, I'd like for you to take a minute and let our audience get to know you. Tell us who you are, where you come from, why you're here, and what this book is all about. Sure.

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So I grew up in the Northeast—New York, New Jersey, Boston for a while—different places, but I grew up in an Orthodox Jewish family, a very traditional Jewish family, but not the average one. My parents kind of came to God later. They found God in college, and so they became newly observant and sort of had this outsider's perspective, a big-picture perspective. The way I got connected with the Christian community started actually very young. My dad started working on Wall Street in the early 1970s, and he felt very much out of place. At that point, it still felt like there was a lot of anti-Semitism there. When he had to leave early on Friday for Shabbat, he got the stink eye, and they docked his pay—all sorts of stuff like that. It was really difficult for him.

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There was one other guy in his office who also very much felt like an outsider. His name is Emery Dawson, and Emery is a black man. Back then, there was still plenty of racism on Wall Street, so Emery and my dad kind of bonded over being the outsiders. They soon realized that they had a lot more in common besides just being the Jew and the black guy. They realized, as a believing Jew and a serious, committed Christian, that they had a lot in common. They became good friends, and we became family friends. Every year on the Feast of Tabernacles, on Sukkot, during the Shabbat that would fall in the middle of the holiday, it became the custom for the Dawsons to come to our family's house because they loved Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. They loved the experience, and we would connect with them that way. It was built in every year, and that's how I got to know the Christian community.

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I remember when I was 20 years old in college, I got a call one day from Emery saying, "Hey, Eli, how would you feel about being a tour guide?" He wanted me to take 50 Baptists from his church—I guess it was Sunday after church—to our synagogue and have me take them around on a tour. We did it. It was a three-hour tour through the synagogue, and I discovered—I was only 20—but I realized how much we have in common. Also, I enjoyed it, I love this connection, and I felt really fired up by it and by what we shared in common. That's kind of how I got started. Here I am today. I'm very fortunate. I got to move to Israel with my family, living the dream. I live right outside of Bethlehem in a town called Efrat.

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It's the closest that Jews can get to Bethlehem, on one of those hills where David definitely was hanging out there with his sheep, for sure. No question. We have a lot of good breeze. A lot of breeze. David probably loved the breeze, so I get to live there now. Not only that, I get to spend my days working for Israel 365, which is the main Orthodox Jewish organization that works together with Christians around the world to strengthen Israel and to strengthen one another. Now I get to make my passion into my job, which is pretty awesome. I love it. Christians and Jews are destined to come together and hang out. We have to hang together. Like the old saying goes, if we don't hang together, we'll hang together, right? So we might as well get used to each other now and get over our differences. Look at what's really important moving forward on the prophetic timeline and try to accomplish something together.

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And so I know that Israel's number one advocate is Christians. We are the allies, right? No question. You're absolutely right. And although we both have people on both sides of the fence that we wish weren't on our sides of the fence—but we won't talk about those in this broadcast. But let's move into your book, [*The Shabbat Revolution*](#). Why did you write this? I'm so curious because you are an Orthodox rabbi who wrote a book for Christians about the Sabbath when Christians don't even keep the Sabbath. So this is going to be

interesting. Talk to me. And I wrote it in the middle of a war, an existential war. I live in Israel. We run into the bomb shelter all the time. So what am I writing about Shabbat for?

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So one year ago, last summer, I was traveling across the United States. I did a long trip—three straight weeks where I went from city to city. My intention in going to all these places was to talk about the war, to talk about Israel, what we're going through, and to try to strengthen this critical alliance between Jews and Christians. But everywhere I went, I wanted to talk about Israel, and the people that I was talking to wanted to talk about Shabbat. It was so interesting, and I was so shocked by it. And I began to realize that there are Christians all over this country. I was in Spokane, Washington, in Lubbock, Texas, and everywhere. I was in northern Colorado. Wherever I went, I found Christians who were fascinated by, almost obsessed with, the Shabbat. And this was news to me, and it was just fascinating to me. I found myself doing a mock Shabbat on late Friday afternoon.

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And what does the word *Shabbat* mean for those that don't even know what that means? *Shabbat*, Sabbath, it means to rest. God rested on the seventh day. So I found myself doing a mock Friday night meal on late Friday afternoon in Lubbock, Texas, for over 100 Christians. And it was just astounding to see. And they were hanging on every word. And I realized, I've got to do something to reach people and to give them what they're asking for. And so I sat down this year to do something that I did not plan to do, which is to write a book on Shabbat. And I wrote it in a way that they asked for, frankly, which was, first and foremost, a practical guide. They wanted to know, how do I do Shabbat? That was just first and foremost. That's what they wanted to know.

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So I went through it. What does a Friday night look like? How do we prepare for Shabbat? What happens on Shabbat day? All of these different pieces to it, and laid it out practically. And then the second half of the book is kind of getting into the deeper issues and explaining why we do all of what we do as Jews. So I will point out, though, and just to say from the beginning, I wrote this book for Christians, but not to say to Christians that you must do what I do, that you must be like Jews. You don't have to be. But I wrote it this way because this is what my Christian friends asked for. They wanted to know. They're like, "Don't water it down. Tell us what you do, and then we could take it from there." Right. We'll do what we want to do. But they didn't want me to self-censor. Yeah. They wanted me to lay it out as we do it. Yeah, yeah. No, I love that.

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You know, I was actually at Rabbi's house not too long ago, a couple of months ago. I had the privilege of celebrating Shabbat with you, *Erev Shabbat*, and your family, your beautiful family. And it was astounding. It was amazing. Like, I felt like I was right at home, to be honest. I mean, there's kids everywhere. You

know, it was somebody's birthday on top of that, if I recall. And just the little traditions that you do were so rich and so life-giving. So for me, a tradition is a tradition that is worth keeping if it brings life. Like, if it brings life, if it's just for tradition's sake, okay, whatever. But if it's a tradition that brings life, it's worth doing. It's worth celebrating. And when I was at your house, I saw life. And so this book inspired me as I was reading it. There were some amazing quotes that we're going to talk about. I have several questions about it.

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But the book is really designed, the way I see it, as a smorgasbord. It's almost like a buffet. This is everything that we do—or maybe even things you don't do—but everything that you can do. And then Christians can go, "Hey, I really like that prayer. I'm going to add that prayer." Or they can pick this or choose this. I mean, none of it is in the Bible. Like, right. I mean, God doesn't say, "Pray this prayer over the candles." Right. But like, some of it's so rich and symbolic that people can gather from that. So one of the things I loved about this is it really does kind of go through the details of what the potential of everything that you could do. And if you did everything, you would probably never eat. And if you did, it would be all frozen by the time you're done. But there's some richness in there that would bring life.

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Okay. So as we walk through your book, take me through the elements of what Shabbat is. When does it actually begin? If it—are there certain compartments that say, like, "Okay, Friday night dinner is a compartment of part of Shabbat"? Like, what are the different components of Shabbat, and what does it look like from a very high level? So to understand Shabbat and really all of the festivals, you have to understand something fundamental about the Jewish day and the biblical day, right? Which is, it begins in the evening and it ends in the next evening, right? It doesn't start at 12 a.m. in the middle of the night. And no, that's not it at all. Right. It begins at night. And how do we know that? At sundown? Well, it says it in the Bible, *Vayehi erev, vayehi boker, yom echad*—"And it was evening, and it was morning, the first day," right? And it was evening and it was day, the first day, meaning it's explicit from the very beginning of the Bible that that's how the days are done, right? Begins at night and it ends, you know, the next day. And so in general, that's a very biblical way of looking at the world.

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Very optimistic. Things start darkly, right? And they get brighter, right? We go from darkness to light. And that, you know, that is—that's a hundred percent the biblical optimistic way of seeing the world. And I'm specifically saying biblical, not Jewish, because it's for Christians as well, right? It's biblical. This is what, you know, just like as Shabbat—on the one hand, Jews have a unique relationship with the Shabbat, but on the other hand, Shabbat belongs to everyone. Right. How do I do that? Because on the one hand, we see that Shabbat comes way before the people of Israel. It's built into creation, right? At,

you know, you have the animals, and then Adam and Eve are created on the sixth day, and then there's Shabbat. There are no Jews yet. I don't know. Christians yet. There's no nothing, right? It's just at the very beginning of humanity, right? God creates Shabbat. And so therefore, it's clear that it is something that is for everyone.

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Now, at the same time, later on, when God takes the people of Israel out of Egypt and then gives, you know, gives over the Torah at Sinai, right? So then God gave, you know, a very specific way of keeping Shabbat to the people of Israel. And so we have that particular connection and keeping all those rules and all those laws with Shabbat. But that doesn't take away from the initial giving, universal giving of Shabbat, which is for all of humanity. And that's where I see the distinction. And I like what you said about this smorgasbord, right? Which is that, yes, the people of Israel keep Shabbat a very particular way, the way God gave us, but it doesn't—God didn't demand that particular way of everyone. On the other hand, to not have Shabbat—I don't know. I don't know how people live without it. I'll be honest. I think it's just like impossible to live in this world without having Shabbat.

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Well, what's fascinating is science actually has proven this now. They even did studies on Seventh-day Adventists and found out that Seventh-day Adventists across the board—like, this is science, peer-reviewed articles—they live 10 years longer than their other Christian peers. And they attribute it because of the Sabbath, because they're resting. And science has proven that the human body is not—it's not built for 7/365. Like, it's not built for that. It's built for six. And so if the scientists would have read Genesis, they would know this already without having to do any experiments—that God said, "Work for six days and then rest on the seventh day." Why? Not because he's trying to keep us from having fun. It's because He built us for only six days. And of course, it's also prophetic because He wants to spend time with us. But let me ask you a question before we get into the contents of your book. Like, why do you think Christians around the world are wanting to learn more about this? Like, we've been doing Sunday church for 1700 years since Constantine kind of created this Sunday thing. Why now?

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So you can probably speak to this better than I can, but Sunday used to be much more serious, right? It used to be much more of a rest, right? The blue laws in many parts of America, right? Back in the day, we grew up with these where you couldn't go shopping on Sunday to the mall, which for Jews, it was kind of rough because we can't go on Saturday. So we couldn't go on Sunday either, but I always appreciated it, saying like, "Okay, you know, they take it seriously." But unfortunately, for most—you know, maybe you can speak to this—for many Christians, you know, Sunday they go to church, but then it kind of turns into just a regular day. It could be any other day of the week, and go to

the mall and so on and so forth. And so the day has lost its true Sabbath-like qualities. So on the one hand, that's been collapsing for a long time already, right? If you would go back 150 years, you know, to the 1800s in America, it was like a very serious day, Sunday. And on the other hand, our world has gotten more and more insane, right? The speed of life, and particularly the technology, which on the one hand is awesome, but on the other hand, these phones, right? They're a curse just as much as they're a blessing. They're a thief that steals everything. You know, the amount of time that we spend on them without realizing—I mean, even the in-between moments, you're walking, as you're walking into the bathroom or anywhere, it's like—it used to be that maybe, you know, your mind was free and you'd have thoughts. There's no time for thought anymore. Maybe we still get two minutes in the shower. Or even relationships. Exactly. I mean, how often do you find, even as a really good dad and a great husband, right, where you're sitting at your meal, you know, and your hand like slips into your pocket, right? We don't want to talk about this, right? Because you feel, you know, it's just—even if it's not buzzing, even if it's not vibrating, but you're never free. I mean, it's unbelievable.

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So, you know, all of us are going through this—Jews, Christians, everybody who lives in the modern world. But if you are a traditional Jew, right, comes Friday, you know, late afternoon, we're about to light the candles just before sunset, the phone gets put away, and that's it. You don't get back to that for 25 hours until after nightfall on Saturday night. And it's unbelievable how freeing it is. It's just incredible. Like, I'm just—I don't have that temptation in my pocket. I think most of us after about three hours might start shaking—withdrawals, like seizures, you know, some sort of side effect for not having this. Which is probably why you should not try to do a full-on Shabbat for 25 hours the first time. You have to, but it's almost like—it's really an addiction. Technology addictions are just like any other. And you don't break free from—you know, if you need to get off of a coffee addiction, you can't just go cold turkey, right? You got to go step by step. So it's the same thing here. Even Charlie Kirk is doing this now. Like, he literally has come out publicly and said that he is taking off Friday night to Saturday night sunset as the Shabbat, as the Sabbath. He recognizes—the guy's intellectual, academic—and he recognizes that the Sabbath is Friday night to Saturday night, and he puts away his phone. And he said, "Look, if you're trying to get ahold of me, sorry." So now you can understand why they say about the Jews. There's a famous saying that the more the Jews kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews. And you know, it's really true. I mean, why are the Jews still here? It makes no sense, right? We—until we got back to Israel only a hundred years ago or so, right—for close to 2000 years, we're scattered all over the world, right, in majority-dominant cultures. How did the Jews remain connected to one another and independent and keep their own culture within a culture? The answer is Shabbat. Yeah. Because Shabbat is not just a day, right? Shabbat sets the tone for your entire life because it sets the tone for the

whole week. Yeah. Right. And I don't—it's the culmination of the week, but it's also the beginning of the next week. Right. So you, you know, it's the day that you're yearning for all week long. You're preparing, right? The sages talked about how they would find—if you'd find an amazing piece of meat in the store, you know, you'd set it aside for Shabbat, you know, everything was done with Shabbat in mind. And then the spiritual energy that you got from Shabbat is what carried you through for the week ahead.

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And in our time, with families all over the place and everybody's running all the time, right? So many places to be and so many activities and all of that—to have a day where everybody's got to shut down, it's unbelievable. I mean, like we play—I don't know what you guys do at your house, but we play board games, right? Like old-fashioned board games, and it's amazing. Yeah. Yeah. The amount of family time. I know when our family first discovered the Sabbath 23 years ago now, it was a paradigm shift. I mean, first the shift was learning the academic historical part that it was changed. Like all the early Christians kept the Sabbath on the seventh day. Like no one in their right mind thought that it wasn't on the seventh day because it says it's on the seventh day. Like when it says, "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy," and it's on the seventh day—like, it's really hard to get that messed up because there's only one out of seven chances that you're going to get it right. Right. It says something. But when you find out that it was actually changed by the Roman, early Roman church from Saturday to Sunday—because Sunday was Sun's day, it was the day of sun god worship. It was Sun's day. And that was when all the early Romans were used to celebrating their Shabbat. Their Sabbath was on that day. And to make it easier for the Romans to convert to Christianity—aka, from Constantine and the early bishops—they just said, "Hey, we're going to transfer all the rites from the biblical Sabbath over to Sunday." And they thought that that would be a good thing, and it would allow people to easier convert to Christianity and so on and so forth. What they didn't know is that it's illegal to compromise because they didn't read the front of the book, right? Like, you can't compromise. You can't add to or take away from the Scriptures. And that's a really, really big deal.

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As a matter of fact, one of the things that I learned—I thought was fascinating—is that the early Christians, when it says they met on the first day of the week, the first day of the week starts when? Saturday night. Yeah. So they were going to synagogue service in the afternoon, then they were going to someone's house that night. And there's a passage in the New Testament that says that this guy named Eutychus falls out of the window at midnight on the first day of the week. Now, if you're a Christian and you say midnight on the first day of the week, you're immediately thinking Sunday. But if you're Jewish, there's only one day—that one moment—where midnight could be on the first day of the week. And it's Saturday night because there's no such thing as

midnight on a Sunday night and still be called the first day of the week. It's interesting what you say about not being able to change it, right? Even more so than the festivals, right? Shabbat has really nothing to do with man in the sense that God determined when Shabbat is. It happens regardless of what mankind does. Now, the festivals, right? They're dependent upon the calendar, and the calendar—you have human hands that are involved, right? And determining, does the new month start today or does it start tomorrow? And then we determine—we can have an impact upon when the festivals fall out. Right. But Shabbat—that's the one day that there's absolutely no conversation, right? God determined it. It's prior to humanity, to having any say in any role. Yeah.

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So now that we know that the Sabbath really is on the seventh day, that God really meant what he said and that he didn't change it, I believe at the end of the day, Christians are hungry. The Sunday is the first day of the week. It's not—our souls are starving for what I call the portal of the realms. It's the portal into God's kingdom. A blessing is through the Sabbath. It is a blessing. So Christians are coming into this because they're doing it. And then it's like they're seeing immediate results. Like, "Oh my gosh, all my family's together. We're having dinner together for the first time in like maybe ever." Right. And then they—the relationships are deepening. They're seeing the value. So even beyond theology, they're seeing the science. That's why I called it a revolution—*Shabbat Revolution*—because it really does create a revolution in your life. And I see this with the Jews also. There are many, many Jews who know very little about being Jewish. But when you introduce Shabbat into their lives, it is a revolution. It changes everything. All of a sudden, they get to know their family again. Maybe they never knew them to begin with, right? They never spent that time—forced that the time we were forced to be together. God doesn't allow us to scatter, right? You've got to be together, and you've got to work. And therefore, you've got to work through whatever challenges that are underlying everything in the family. There's always tensions in a family, but the healthy thing is to be together and to work it through. Yeah. And Shabbat is what forces that to happen. And it's unbelievable—the connections. I mean, I see it with your kids, how your daughters are, you know, best friends with each other. I see the same thing in my family. And that comes from Shabbat. It does. It doesn't come from anything else. I'm a hundred percent convinced because I've been on both sides of the fence. You've been on only one side of the fence. You've only seen that, right? I have the ability to see the contrast of 20 years, 25 years on one side of the fence and then 25 years on the other side of the fence. And I'm like, this side of the fence makes more sense. And the results—like, the results speak for themselves. You can take the theology. It doesn't matter. You judge it by the fruit, right? So in our home, like kids are not going out, you know, to a skating rink. They're not going to spend tonight at somebody's house. You know, we're not going to a movie. Like nobody's going out. We are staying home together and eating a meal together. We're honoring God. We have this

beautiful symbolism and tradition, which we're going to talk about, uh, either in this broadcast or a separate broadcast. And then we're worshipping God after that. And then we're playing games and we're hanging out. And then the next day, we have family church together because it's still Shabbat, and we're waking up late and having leftover, you know, French toast with the challah bread. And like, there is just this family connection. And I think families are being torn apart today. And I think largely it's in part because the enemy stole the Shabbat. He knew this was the glue that would hold everything together. Yeah. Yeah.

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And everywhere I go, I meet people who are struggling with their children. I imagine that you have the same experience, but maybe it's—you know, I show up at places for a couple of days and I'm leaving. So people maybe feel more comfortable sharing this with me because, you know, I'm here today, I'm gone tomorrow. So they'll sometimes open up their heart that way. But I'm hearing such painful, painful stories of parents and children and the separation and they don't understand each other. And, you know, their children going in a different path. And I just—you know, Shabbat is the answer. And that I think is what the world is desperately, desperately missing. And it's at the root of so many of America's problems. You know, but I think Shabbat in itself, if it's kept in a legalistic way, can actually hurt. I've watched families grow up with Shabbat, and it was so strict that it took the life out of the family. Have you ever seen that? Like, the legalism choke out the spirit and the whole purpose behind something. And actually, the object that was supposed to be good ends up not being good. I've seen it a handful of times, but mostly not. Meaning I know a few—I have one friend in particular whose father I think was actually OCD, you know. And you put OCD and Jewish law together—that's like exactly what you're talking about. But that's not what biblical law is meant to be. And the laws of Shabbat, I think, are an amazing example of this.

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So I'll give to me the parable that works so clearly: I'm thirsty, right? We're all thirsty for God, right? Whether we realize it or not, we have this thirst for meaning. And that's why we have so many young people in America who are, you know, doing pro-Palestine and pro-Hamas insanity just because they're looking for meaning and they're not finding it anywhere. So we all have this thirst. But if you want—if you want water to drink, you can't just have water. Somebody gave me water. It'll spill through my fingers. I need a cup. Yeah. I need a cup to hold that water. And the cup, everybody, is the law. Now, the law—you do have traditional biblical law and how the Jews understand that and how we keep it. But frankly, it's really any kind of law, any kind of regulation that creates an atmosphere to hold the water—meaning to hold the spirituality. Now, obviously, one without the other doesn't work. If you just have this yearning for God—so you have a beautiful Friday night Shabbat meal, and then everybody goes to a nightclub or to a movie, right? The whole thing dissipates, right? That's not enough. That's water without a cup. On the other hand, if you just

have a cup and you just follow all the laws, but you have no godliness in it, that's an empty cup, and you're left thirsty at the end, right? So you need both, right? And frankly, I'll be honest, you know, most of the time I see that it works. It's only in—I've only seen in a few, in a handful of broken cases where things were taken in the wrong way, right? Where it became too legalistic or, you know, you'll find people who really want Shabbat and, you know, but they don't want any of the rules, you know, and that also doesn't work. Yeah. You know, so, but in general, you know, to have some sort—you need some sort of a cup. A structure, right? A structure. Now I think the most important one—speaking for everybody, for Jews and for Christians—is technology, right? If you can shut down in our 21st-century world—shut down your phones, shut down the computer, shut down your TV, shut those things—all of those things down that distract us from God and from one another—that should be your first rule, right? Just do that alone. And then give yourself a Shabbat with your family. It's game-changing.

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Did you know that they recently did a test with brainwave activity by taking electronic devices away for 72 hours, and the human brain began to repair itself and became 10% smarter within 72 hours? There's that much damage that electronic devices are doing. And AI—no AI. Yeah. Well, yeah. Got to think for yourself. For sure. Okay. So the Sabbath itself, the Shabbat itself—somebody wants to keep it. It starts on Friday night. And what do they do on Friday? Like what happens? What's the big thing? So it doesn't really—so of course it technically starts on Friday night, but Shabbat requires preparation. Okay. Anything real in the world requires preparation, and Shabbat is no exception. And so Friday is the day of preparation. It's true in the Bible, right? On Friday, when the manna fell from heaven, right? This is before we even got to Sinai, right after we leave Egypt. So we get the whole story with the manna, right? And they have to gather twice as much on Friday because it's not going to fall on Shabbat. And so we already learned from there the beginning of preparing—you've got to prepare for Shabbat. Now I don't think anybody has to stress out and have the perfect—certainly for your beginning, just starting with Shabbat, you don't need to have the perfect Friday night meal and bake all your own bread and make everything, you know, it's all wonderful. And that's great. You can do that in the future. But if you're just starting Shabbat, some measure of preparation—physical, right? You want to have a nice meal together, right? The table is everything, right? That dining room table is so important for a family to sit around the table, to look at each other, put the phones away. But you have to set the table. Set the table nicely. It doesn't—again, it doesn't have to be expensive or difficult, but you know, get that apart, get it apart, get the—get this, get everybody feeling like this feeling of anticipation for something holy, right? It's sort of like a vacation. A lot of the fun of the vacation is the getting ready for the vacation and the anticipation. Right. And that's how, you know, to value the vacation when you're there because you're tired from working, right? In

America, the best analogy might be Thanksgiving, right? Like you're looking forward to Thanksgiving. The table is set differently than any other night. And most of the time, like we use our fine china—it's set apart for this moment. Now, look, growing up, having six daughters, sometimes it was cheeseburgers and paper plates and a hot dog, you know, like you just can't do it every time. But we really, really tried to set it apart, you know, and make it beautiful. Exactly. So that requires a little bit of preparation. But then as we're getting, you know, towards sunset, you know, we traditionally light candles, right, which has all sorts of very deep spiritual meaning to it, you know, bringing God's light to the world. But it's also on a very, very practical level. It's like a moment—that is the moment where we say goodbye to the week and we say hello to Shabbat. My wife is about to light the candles. You know, everybody—like candles are about to be lit. Everybody puts their phones down. They turn off the whatever lights they need to turn off. Everything goes off, right? The house all of a sudden goes from being very busy and intense to being quiet. Right. And then my wife, you know, lights the candles, welcomes Shabbat, and has all these beautiful prayers, you know, for her children, you know, that Jewish women traditionally do at this very holy moment of entering the holy day of Shabbat. And it's like a whole new world, right? You've just entered Shabbat, and it's just—everything changes in a heartbeat. Yeah. And then, you know, we go to synagogue or whatever. You can pray in your living room, wherever it is that you do on Friday night, and then everybody comes back together for this Friday night meal. And it is just—it is the moment I wait for all week. I'll be honest. The summertime is the hardest for me because I have kids working in this summer camp and that camp, and they go places and like we're apart, you know? And it's like, it hurts me every Friday, right? Like, you know, sometimes it's nice to get a break from your kids during the week, but like on Friday night, like when I'm there without my children, right, I want to be with them. And it's like, it's hard for me, you know? I know they're keeping Shabbat elsewhere, you know, and that's okay. They'll be fine. Yeah. But I feel the hurt, you know, in a way that a parent feels.

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You know, what's beautiful about that? It's because you've been doing Shabbat with your family for so long. The intimacy between you guys is deep. Like it's the same way in my family. Like my kids cannot imagine not being here on Friday night. Now my kids are teenagers, all of them. Now, what was the last family you ever heard of that the teenagers want to be home with their parents on a Friday night? Like they must not be living. They must not be breathing, but they don't want to be anywhere else. And so like we all—because the relationship was deepened for 20 years, we have been deepening this relationship on a Friday night, and they would never want to miss it because of the intimacy and the symbolism and the honoring of God. It all happens. There's something special. And I think that's why in [Leviticus 23](#), where it gives the list of the festivals, it's the first one. It's the first one mentioned as a *moedim*, as a holy appointment of God. It's almost like a rehearsal for like a wedding. Yeah, no, it's

amazing. And I—just to talk very practically—look, our kids are all different, right? And some of our kids, you know, they gravitate to each other. They're like natural best friends. But then you have kids who are, you know, if you just take the natural way, the world, they don't have that much to do with each other because they don't share the same interests. And then they grow up and they go in their own direction, and they see each other on Thanksgiving, and they, you know, and it's not all that close, and it's a little bit sad. Right. So how do you stop that? Right. Meaning they're not naturally going to be best friends, but because of Shabbat, right, I see this with my own children, you know, they're all different, and some of them naturally gravitate more to each other than others. But because of Shabbat, there's been this family connection between the siblings that has been forged that overcomes their differences. And they, like, they can't—they all feel empty when someone else is missing on Shabbat because that's their time, you know, and that's—it's an amazing thing as a parent to see. And one of the most gratifying things to see when your children actually enjoy spending time with each other, even if like they forget me, you know, just like, I just want you guys to get to not just get along, but to love being with each other, right? That's due to Shabbat. And like the—just the number of inside family jokes and the things they laugh about—I can't even begin to explain it to someone else, right? It's just because of Shabbat.

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You know, one of the things that our family did for many years, and we still do every once in a while, is to deepen that family bond—is each person would pray for the person on their left. And then sometimes we reverse it and pray for the person on the right. So they never knew who they're going to sit next to. They're going to have to pray for it, right? Cause they might've just gotten a fight that afternoon with their sister, but now they have to pray, and they have to pray deeply. And it was really amazing because it creates this—first of all, it kills the animosity because Shabbat is like the reboot for the week, right? Have you experienced that? Like it's a perfect way to—it's a reset. Like this is the moment I forgive. This is the moment I let go any animosity, arguments that I have with siblings, spouse, or spouses. Yeah. And this is the moment I have to pray for my family. Now, me as a dad, I pray for all of my children by name and my wife and bless them. Okay. For the rest of the week. And that's something that dads don't really do, but this is an opportunity to do that. So Sabbath—the Sabbath rest and the Sabbath meal is the opportunity to hit that reset button and then reconnect. That's what it's been in our family. The blessing of the children on Friday night, you know, especially as they get older and you can have tension, which is natural—they're getting older, and they have minds of their own, and they don't always agree with you. But when you have that moment where, you know, I like—and it's physical also—like my hands are, you know, on their heads, right, and I give them a blessing. The rest of the week they're around their neck, but on Shabbat it's on their head. You know, and I—and like, and I—so we were—we embrace, and I have my hands on their head, and I give

them the priestly blessing and then add my own, right, on top of that. And like you said, I think the word you said is perfect. It's the reset, you know, it's the reset moment. And then of course there's always a hug, no matter how they may have felt during the week, whatever the tension was, and you know, we're back together, and it's absolutely astounding.

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And each family, you know, I love—I love your idea that you just said that, you know, they'd have to turn to the left or the right and pray over their sibling, you know. Like each family can create their own tradition here. Like in our family, we do this sometimes where everybody's got to go around and say something from the week that they are thankful for. Yeah. We've done—right. It's so easy to be negative. Right. And because the world hits us, and it hits our children too. We forget how stressful it can be to be a kid because they don't have the self-confidence maybe that we have, you know. It's so hard, and to help them, you know—it's these are the moments that are completely—that it shifts the way that they think about the world. And this whole disconnect between generations—this is where it is bridged, right? Because they learn in a very gentle way, but they learn by the way the conversations that we have and the way that we see the world—they learn to see the world that way too, every single week. Yeah. And because sometimes what they're hearing from others outside of the home does not jive with what we believe. Yeah. So if we don't have Shabbat, right, then they can get sucked into that.

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So one of the things that I got from your book that I thought was a really cool concept is—I'm going to paraphrase because I didn't put the quote down—but it said, the Lord asked Moses to create a sanctuary for Him. And you said the Shabbat table is like the altar. Can you elaborate on that? Because I thought that was such beautiful imagery. God says, "Moses, make a sanctuary." And then you connected it to Shabbat is the sanctuary. Yes. So there's a phrase—there's a verse in the Bible: *V'asu li mikdash v'shachanti b'tocham*, right? Where God says, you know, "Make for me a sanctuary." It should say then, "And I will dwell within it," but rather it says, *v'shachanti b'tocham*—"I will dwell within them," meaning each and every one of them. And this notion that every home is like the temple, right? Especially without the temple, right? It was the home that has kept us going all these thousands of years. You know, that is a very powerful one, and it's one which plays out in ritual as well. Right. We have the custom to dip the challah bread into salt before we eat it. Talk about that. I read that in your book. And why do we do that? That's right. Because all of the sacrifices have to have salt. Has to be, right. And so this is now our sacrifice, right? This is our altar. The table is the altar, the challah is the sacrifice, right? And this imagery—it completely changes the way that we think about the home, right? The home is not just, you know, a place where I come to after church or where I come to take off my pants and sit in shorts and relax, right? It is those things—the place where I feel comfortable and can relax—but

it's also this sanctified and holy place. And then when you go even further and you invite guests into your home for Shabbat, right, which is a critical part of the Shabbat experience—which is that, yes, on the one hand it's family, but on the other hand, it's opening our doors the way Abraham had his tent open for people to come, you know—the way you can give life to people on Shabbat is absolutely astounding. And that this imagery of the altar, right? That this is like a temple, right? It changes the entire way that you see what you're doing here. And it's not just being friendly and having somebody over—no, this itself is as holy and as important as what the high priest was doing in the temple.

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You know, I've never had anybody over for Shabbat. I don't think—like we've invited so many people and families that have never done anything like this. And every one of them walks away and says, "This was not what I expected. This was the most beautiful experience I have ever been a part of in a religious, you know, thing"—unless they've been to a Seder, because it's kind of similar, to be honest. And they just—the most recent one said, you know, "I just—I feel the presence of God in this. Like, I was not expecting this." I didn't want to ask what he was expecting because I may not have liked his answer, but when he walked away with tears in his eyes and hitting an expectation he didn't even know his soul was really yearning for, which is this ancient, raw, real connection with the tabernacle of Moses on a day that God said, "I'm making before you sin." Before you sin. And the reason why I'm doing this before you sin is so that someday you'll think back and go, "If we would have never sinned, this is what we would be doing. We would be resting on this day for eternity." And that's how I know the Shabbat is forever. Not just because of that—of course, that the prophets talk about when the Messiah comes back, we're to be keeping the Sabbath again—but it's always been eternal because it's not about even just the physical rest, because he could have made us to work forever, right? We have perfect bodies, but he wants connection. He wants communion. And this is the day. It's important to realize when we talk about rest, we're not talking about a day that's just completely passive of stopping. Rest is almost like an active verb here, right? It's like—I would think of it, you know, Winston Churchill had an amazing way of explaining this, right? Talk about somebody who accomplished a lot in their life—a little bit—but he also needed rest. And he would say that he would go—well, how would he rest? He was such a doer. He would go from running the country and saving the free world to painting, right? So painting is not classically relaxing. It's not like he's sitting on the sofa doing nothing, right? Taking off his socks, right. But he said that my brain and my everything about me needed to do something different. Needed to work in a different way. And I would view Shabbat that way. It's not a lazy day, right? Though, of course, physical rest and rejuvenation is important, but that's not really primarily what it's about—just to get some physical rest, right? It's about creating space for your mind and for your soul to work in a different way. And that, you know, to look at it that way, because you know, what we get out of Shabbat, you know,

with our families, right, it could be more than the other six days of the week combined. I know what that's like when you're running and busy and doing, trying to accomplish a lot in the world. There's something very powerful about that, but it's also about the Bible study and, you know, and our ability just simply to reflect. Reflecting with a phone in your pocket is very different than reflecting without a phone in your pocket. A walk with your wife, your husband, right, with a phone in your pocket—yeah. And also with, you know, work waiting in an hour from now is very different than a walk on Shabbat where there's nowhere you have to be, right, without a phone in your pocket. The presence that you have. Yeah. Right.

0:43:25

Can we talk about presence for just a minute? Because there's two things that really dawned on me when you're talking. One, distraction—like six days a week, life is so distracting. Everything is distracting. Phones are the highest level of distraction because they're like an electronic leash around our neck that constantly you're pulling on us. Right. And then this idea of presence, like, what is that? Because we're missing this. Like we're missing this in relationships. Everything is done over electronics. We don't even have to be in the same room with anybody anymore. Like talk about presence and the impact of that. Like I'm—I wouldn't call myself a psychologist or people talk about, you know, the Buddhists—everybody talking about mindfulness, but I know it when I see it, you know what I mean? And I see the way that my children interact with me differently or my wife differently on Shabbat than during the week, because I think they know during the week in the back of their minds, right, that I'm maybe itching to be somewhere else or have something else that I've got to get to, or that my thoughts are a little bit somewhere, you know, there's not in some other place, you know. But on Shabbat, right, they know—and it's because it's built in as part of our habit now—but their whole lives, right, they know that the rules are different this day. I have dad in a different way. Now they'll talk to me differently, right? During the week, like they talk to their mother, but like, "Hey guys, I'm here." You know, but I think they know. And I emit without realizing it—I emit this vibe of intensity. I'm like such an intense—I'm so intense and productive. Yeah. That's like—which has its downsides. Right. And one of the downsides is during the week, I think my kids sense that for me. They sense that—not approachable. They'll come over. They'll give me a like, "Hey dad, give me a hug," and then they'll like move on. But like on Shabbat, all of a sudden they're willing to talk to me. Right. And this is not them. This is them reacting to me because I'm only available. I imagine if I didn't have Shabbat, I'd be—I mean, what would I be with my children? I'd just be like this guy—physically be there. Right. I'd be an American, right. I'd just be that guy, you know, in the house, but like, they walk around, you know?

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What I love about that is what I kind of see in my mind's eye is a child. Every child has this yearning inside of them. Maybe it's subconscious, but they desire

to be with dad. They desire to be with mom. They desire to have this deep, intimate connection relationship where there's presence. Like I remember very distinctly one of my earliest memories of being alive was my dad sitting on the couch, and I was laying against his chest, and I fell asleep on his chest because I could hear his heartbeat. And I feel like in some amazing way, that's very prophetic for us today, because when we come into Shabbat, it's like we're crawling up on the lap of Papa God, you know, Yahweh, and we can hear His heartbeat. You know, we feel His heartbeat just a little bit closer. And then dads are like that where we—and kids know that. Like you would actually laugh at this, but like, I mean, in a very literal way on Shabbat, like we spend time on the couch, you know, and like they lay on me. Yeah. It's like, and not only that, they actually like for fun, they lay on each other. They do. They stack themselves, and everybody like—it's almost like there's this, right? Like there's this yearning for like this physical touch, you know, within the family in a very beautiful and holy way, which only gets, you know, they only get to scratch that itch on Shabbat. And so I—I know you're talking in a much deeper level, but I even see it physically. No, it's very true. You know, like you could go a whole week without really touching, you know, but then on Shabbat you do, and it's a very beautiful thing. And you know, I find myself trying on Shabbat with each one of my kids to have a sometime—even just one-on-one, you know, and like walking with them someplace, because we don't drive on Shabbat, which makes it even more restricted, but also free, right? Like they all have to be in the neighborhood, you know, so they're going to see a friend. I'll walk them there. And we have that time. And as they all know that when I'm with them one-on-one, they're definitely my favorite child. Yeah. Yeah. Whoever's with me at that moment is my favorite child. That's it. For sure.

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You know, as we get ready to close out this broadcast, what we're going to do in part two, you guys, is we're going to go through the actual parts of the *Erev Shabbat* dinner, the Friday night dinner. And we're going to go through the symbolism of what each of the elements mean, both to him on the Jewish side, and then how a Christian would celebrate Shabbat and the different symbolism. And maybe some of it's similar. We'll find out. And I think it'll really, really bless you. I know in our house, it's been revolutionary. It's absolutely transformed our family. So if your family needs more connection, the Sabbath is the answer. Like without a doubt, the Sabbath is the answer. It's all—from the Christian perspective, it's all about Christ. You'll see it. It's about creation. It's about the story, the biblical storyline from Genesis to Revelation. And it's about the people of God. It's about Israel. It's about you. It's about your family. It's about everything you've ever wanted. Honestly, like my kids say, it's everything I ever wanted. Sabbath is that. And there's a reason why my kids and his kids—between us, how many you have? You have four kids. So between us, we have 10, and they all absolutely can't wait for Friday night. Now that is not—that's a mathematical impossibility with teenagers today. So there must be

something to the Shabbat for teenagers to want to do this. If it's done right. Teenagers are yearning for the same things that we're yearning for. They may not be able to say it the way that we can—they can't express it—but they're yearning for that connection. And they also feel like slaves to technology. And to give them that opportunity to be free. I see it all the time. Like at camps, you know, like at first they, like, they don't want to give away the phone, but then when you take it, they're like, "Oh, thank you. Thanks for taking it away from me." And, you know, thank you for creating this opportunity. So our children—I can guarantee that most of the time, your children, you know, if you give them this and give them this opportunity, they will be delighted.

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Yeah. And there's one word that has really stuck out to me, and I want you to write it in the comments, and that's the word *space*. I want you to write right now—if this little podcast resonates with you, this message—I want you to write, "I need space." And then under that, I want you to write, "I need the Shabbat," because the Shabbat is waiting for you. It's the blessing that you didn't even know you were missing. And I say all the time, you know, over the last 20 years of being in ministry, I say, sometimes the greatest curse is the blessing that you don't even know. Think about that. If that's true, is it possible that our families have been cursed because we've not even known the blessing that we've—it's been right there waiting for us. Like a child that you've aborted that you don't even know. Can you imagine aborting one of your children? Like, because you have a relationship and you know them, the blessing is amazing. But what if you didn't know—you wouldn't even know that you've been cursed. So I am so grateful for this conversation, guys. I want you to check this out. You can click the link in the description here on this video. It's called [*The Shabbat Revolution*](#). It's even recommended by Eric Stakelbach and yours truly. So we recommend this book. This is an amazing book. You will really enjoy it. It has all the prayers in here. It has all kinds of ideas. You can use them, not use them. Gives you the history. I think you'll really, really enjoy it. So go check it out, buy it today. I think it'll bless you and your family. In the meantime, if you want to watch the next part of this, we're going to be talking about the symbolism of each of those items that are found on Shabbat—from the actual covering of the challah bread to the challah bread itself, to the wine, the wine glass, the candles, the lighting, the blessings, all of it coming up next right now. In the meantime, I'm Jim Staley with [*Passion for Truth Ministries*](#). Thanks for watching. We'll see you in the next video.

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