

Discussion Questions for *Mudhouse Sabbath*

Lesson 1: Judaism and Christianity

1. Lauren Winner talks about the Jewish practices of her youth as being formative for her Christian faith. What events in your childhood laid the foundation for your faith?
2. Winner notes “Jews and Christians worship the same God. There is no reason Christians shouldn’t want to learn from Jewish tradition.” Do you agree or disagree? Discuss.
3. After listening to the *Coffee and Discussion* segment, what are some of the Jewish practices of Jesus that you would like to explore? Why?
4. The Jewishness of Jesus is described as a deep wellspring of our own tradition. As you think of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover, reading the Torah at synagogue, praying the Psalms, or other Jewish practice, how can these practices be helpful to you now? Discuss.
5. One emphasis of this segment is the importance of learning from the Jewish Community about being in relationship with the God of Israel. In what way does this concept intrigue, challenge, or raise troublesome issues for you?

Lesson 2: Sabbath Keeping

1. Lauren Winner describes what she did to keep a “robust Sabbath.” How does your Sabbath differ from your weekend or the rest of the workweek?
2. If the Jewish Sabbath is characterized by both joyful practices that surround worship, meals, and relaxation as well as avoiding work, how would you describe your practice? What help, if any, can the Jewish model provide?
3. In describing why work is prohibited, Winner notes that, “If you stop changing creation for one day per week, you have the opportunity to remember that you are not the Creator, you are just a creature.” What is the distinction here and why is it important?
4. In the *Coffee and Discussion* section, it is noted that keeping the Sabbath is not just a time of rejuvenation, it is a way to reorient ourselves in a relational way to God. How can this distinction be helpful to you?
5. As she talks about the fruits of keeping the Sabbath, Winner notes that the Sabbath should be an opportunity to dwell with God in a way that is different from how we dwell with him during the week. What is one thing you can do to allow the Sabbath to nurture your relationship with God? How can it help you see God throughout the week and recognize him in your neighbors?

Lesson 3: Hospitality/Eating Food

1. How do you react to people seeing your house or seeing who you really are? Do you feel differently about hospitality now than when you grew up? Five years ago? Describe the differences if any.
2. The author notes that a person is born Jewish. In contrast, a Christian shows hospitality and is thereby practicing an evangelism that invites people to know him or her and the Christ within. Are you comfortable with extending yourself so that others might see Christ in you? Explain.
3. Do you find it more challenging to receive the hospitality of others or more challenging to show it to others? How might you make one decision to move in both directions?
4. On a scale of one to ten, rate yourself. Are you aware and intentional about what you eat [1] or do you eat without tasting, thinking, or thankfulness? [10] Reflect on why you rated yourself as you did.
5. Discuss instances in the Bible that show that food matters to God. How do you respond to the assertion that how we gather food reflects our obedience and relation to God.
6. Discuss how you prepare yourself for the Lord's Supper and define its importance. Is there anything you might do to change your approach or deepen your awareness of its importance?

Lesson 4: Jewish and Christian Prayer

1. As the author notes, prayer is a conversation between two people, and one of them is God. Describe your prayer life and the place that liturgy and spontaneous prayer of the heart plays.
2. How did Jesus model Jewish prayer with both the Psalms and spontaneous prayer? Which type of prayer seems more useful to you? Explain.
3. In *Coffee and Discussion*, it is noted that our prayers can be a contrast between our feelings and the truths of God that we need to acknowledge. How have you experienced this struggle between both types of prayer?
4. As the author notes, prayer is a space where God can speak to us. It moves beyond just an exercise where we hear our own thoughts. How is this definition helpful to you?
5. In the concluding section, the author describes how prayer is a conversation that God is already having with the Trinity. It is a loving family conversation that is ongoing. We enter into the stream of that conversation. How does this definition of prayer challenge your definition of prayer?

Lesson 5: Fasting

1. Fasting is abstaining from food and that slows us down. Describe your experience with fasting. How is this initial definition helpful?
2. Discuss some of the fruits of fasting. They include:
 - Fasting makes us live in our body and not in our intellects or heads.
 - We become acquainted with being tired, hungry, and we slow our pace of life down.
 - We are reminded that food is a privilege. We experience in some way what it is to be poor.
 - It pushes us to remember our neighbor who is poor.
3. Take time to look up in the Scriptures why the Jewish people fasted. What events compelled them to fast?
4. How do you respond to the thought that, “just by being North American, we exploit people. Fasting is a response to my engagement with these overarching social sins.”
5. If fasting is one way to connect with the Jewishness of Jesus, then it is more than just a Christian practice. Reflect on how fasting might connect you more deeply to God.

Lesson 6: Grief—Mourning Well

1. In the opening of this lesson, the author asserts that our culture tries to evade or deny the reality of death. What evidence of this do you see around you and in your own attitudes?
2. The Jewish people have a prescribed way of mourning in units of a week, a month, and a year. If indeed, grieving well is the one area that the church has the most to learn from Judaism, how can Jewish practices of walking through grief be helpful to you and your congregation?
3. How can your community be more supportive over time to someone who is grieving?
4. What does the “Mourners Kaddish” and its emphasis on the greatness of God tell us about how we can grieve well even as we go through our own personal laments and sorrows?
5. What can we learn from instances in the Scriptures in which Jesus mourned? What can we learn from the way in which his first followers mourned for him before his resurrection?

Lesson 7: Doorposts

1. The Jewish people often affix a mezuzah to their doorframe to denote sacred space within. How does this practice speak to both those who dwell within as well as passers by?

2. The author discusses her encountering the sign, “Keep safe the people within this space behind the door.” How would you feel about having this sign or something similar affixed to your front door or some other visible space?

3. In the *Coffee and Discussion* section, one participant noted it is often more acceptable to wear a designer label of clothing than to wear a cross or other outward symbol of faith. Discuss this issue.

4. How do you react to seeing a cross on someone else? How do you feel about wearing a cross? Does it embarrass you or are you comfortable with it? Explain.

5. Reflect on the authors opening assertion that “engaging Jewish practices can help us overcome the gaps that exist between Jesus and ourselves.” How has this study helped you close certain gaps in your life? How can these practices help you when you feel distant from Jesus?