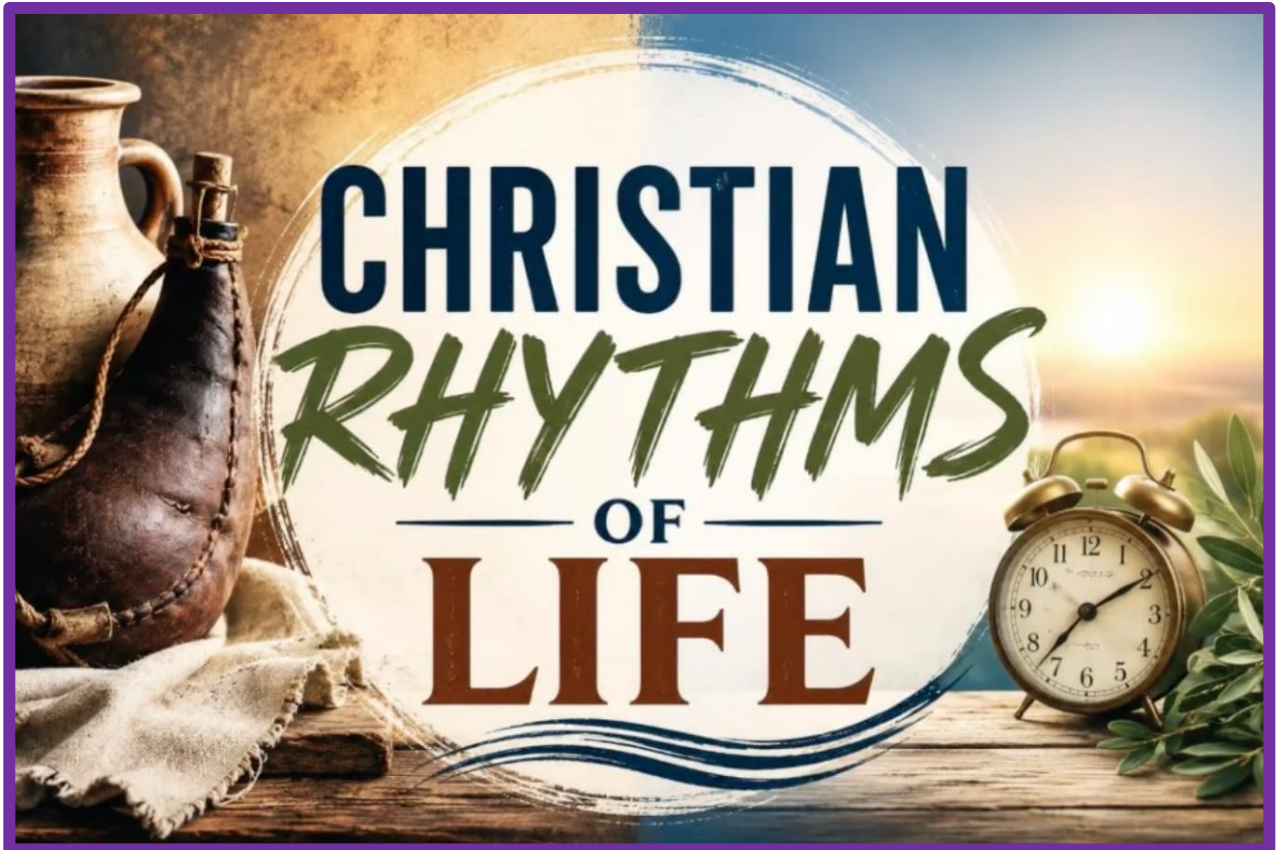


24 May 2026

## Christian Rhythms of Life

**Lesson Text:** Mark 2:18-22

**Supporting Text:** Jeremiah 31:12-13; John 2:1-11



**Key Text:** *“<sup>27</sup> And He said unto them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.<sup>28</sup> Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”—(Mark 2:27-28 NIV)*

### Lesson Aims

**After participating in this lesson, we will be able to:**

1. Summarize the significance of the Sabbath for a first-century audience.
2. Explain the diversity of Christian practices for fasting and Sabbath-keeping considering the ministry of Jesus.
3. Plan to balance fasting and feasting, working and resting.

## Introduction

### Challenging Cherished Customs

Every culture has customs that are widely practiced and deeply respected. In the United States, for instance, many people enjoy flying the flag and watching fireworks displays on the Fourth of July. At Thanksgiving dinner, people anticipate eating dishes like turkey and mashed potatoes. A sudden shift in traditional expectations comes as a shock. For example, suggesting a quiet evening indoors for Independence Day feels strange. Likewise, anyone invited to a Thanksgiving meal might feel confused if they receive only rice and beans. As with all traditions, the details matter. Jesus challenged people to rethink old customs considering the new things God was doing. Some people interpreted his teachings as contentious or controversial. Our text today highlights two specific traditions: fasting and the Sabbath.

## Lesson Text

### Mark 2:18-28

<sup>18</sup> And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast; and they came and said unto Him, “Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?”

<sup>19</sup> **And Jesus said unto them, “Can the attendants of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? If they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast.**

<sup>20</sup> But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.

<sup>21</sup> **“No man also sews a piece of new cloth on an old garment, else the new piece that filled it up tears away from the old, and the rent is made worse.**

<sup>22</sup> And no man puts new wine into old wineskins, else the new wine doth burst the skins, and the wine is spilled and the skins will be marred. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.”

<sup>23</sup> **And it came to pass that He went through the cornfields on the Sabbath day; and His disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn.**

<sup>24</sup> And the Pharisees said unto Him, “Behold, why do they do on the Sabbath day that which is not lawful?”

<sup>25</sup> **And He said unto them, “Have ye never read what David did when he was in need and hungered, he and they that were with him?”**

<sup>26</sup> How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat except for the priests, and gave it also to those who were with him?”

<sup>27</sup> **And He said unto them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**

<sup>28</sup> Therefore the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.”

## Fasting

Fasting in Scripture was more than going without food. It was a spiritual practice connected to repentance, worship, humility, grief, and seeking God’s guidance. In the Old Testament, the only required fast was on the Day of Atonement, when Israel confessed sin and the high priest made atonement for the nation (Leviticus 16:29–31; 23:26–32). People also fasted during times of sorrow, crisis, repentance, and spiritual preparation. Moses fasted while receiving the Law, soldiers fasted before battle, and the nation fasted during mourning and covenant renewal. The New Testament continues this pattern. Anna worshiped with prayer and fasting, Jesus fasted for forty days before beginning His ministry, and the early church used fasting for worship, discernment, and appointing leaders. Overall, fasting expressed humility, dependence on God, repentance, and a desire to draw closer to Him rather than simply performing a religious ritual.

## Sabbath

The Sabbath was meant to be a gift of freedom, trust, and restoration—not merely a religious restriction. Key themes include:

- **Freedom after slavery:** After Israel’s deliverance from Egypt, the Sabbath taught people they were no longer slaves driven endlessly by labor. In Deuteronomy 5:15, Sabbath rest became connected to remembering liberation from oppression.
- **Trust in God’s provision:** By stopping work one day each week, Israel demonstrated faith that God—not constant human striving—sustained them. The Sabbath challenged anxiety, self-reliance, and the pursuit of achievement.
- **Creation pattern:** The command reflected God’s own rhythm after creation in Exodus 20:8–11. Rest was built into creation itself and was considered holy.
- **Shift from relationship to legalism:** Over time, religious leaders attempted to define exactly what counted as “work.” The Mishnah’s 39 categories of prohibited labor reflected an effort to protect the commandment, but the deeper spiritual purpose was often lost.
- **Heart versus ritual:** The commentary compares Sabbath observance to fasting. Both practices began as meaningful acts of devotion but eventually risked becoming external performances disconnected from humility, mercy, and love for God.

This background helps explain the tension in passages like Matthew 12:1–8 and Luke 6:1–5. Jesus challenged interpretations of the Sabbath that emphasized rule enforcement over human need and compassion. He redirected attention back to the original intent of God’s command: restoration, mercy, and dependence on God rather than burdensome legalism. A central takeaway from this context could be summarized this way: The Sabbath was created to restore people, remind them of God’s care, and cultivate trust—not to burden them with fear and rigid legalism.

## **I. Question of Fasting (Mark 2:18–22)**

This passage appears within a series of conflicts between Jesus and Jewish religious traditions (Mark 1:21–3:6). These accounts reveal the changes brought by the arrival of God’s kingdom (Mark 1:15). Because Jesus and John the Baptist were contemporaries with similar ministries, people naturally compared them. Both called Israel to repentance, gathered disciples, and preached faithfulness to God (Matthew 3:1–2; Mark 1:9–11, 15). Yet differences in their practices—especially fasting—raised questions. The Pharisees were known for strict religious observance, and they repeatedly challenged Jesus. Earlier, they objected to His authority to forgive sins and His association with tax collectors and sinners (Mark 2:1–17). Now the controversy shifts to fasting, further increasing the tension between Jesus and established religious tradition.

## **II. Question of Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28)**

In Mark 2:23–28, the Pharisees accuse Jesus’ disciples of breaking the Sabbath because they picked grain to eat while walking through a field. Though the Law allowed hungry people to do this, the Pharisees considered it “work” on the Sabbath.

Jesus responds by reminding them of David eating consecrated bread in 1 Samuel 21 when he and his men were hungry. His point is that human need and mercy matter more than rigid rule-keeping.

Jesus then says: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Meaning: God created the Sabbath to bless, restore, and help people—not to burden them with oppressive religious rules. Finally, Jesus declares: “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” By calling himself the “Son of Man,” Jesus connects himself to the figure in Daniel 7 who receives authority from God. Jesus is claiming authority to define the true meaning of God’s law.

The core message:

- The Pharisees focused on ritual and tradition.
- Jesus focused on mercy, human need, and God’s purpose.
- Jesus asserts that he has divine authority over the Sabbath itself.

### **Conclusion**

Christians around the globe hold differing viewpoints on the practices of fasting and Sabbath-keeping. Their practices reflect tradition, doctrinal convictions, and/or personal choice. Today’s lesson gives a reason for this variety: Jesus, unlike the Pharisees, did not present set rules about fasting or the Sabbath. Instead, he pointed to their intent and his authority and presence. He taught new ways of living in God’s kingdom, focusing on freedom and well-being rather than strict adherence to rules and regulations (compare Colossians 2:16). Jesus calls us to center our spiritual practices on him as the source of life. God designed humans to follow cycles of work, rest, feasting, and fasting. Jesus, as our Lord, invites us to trust him on this. His way offers rest

from burdens, not additional weight (Matthew 11:28–30; 1 John 5:3). Life with Jesus presents opportunities for both celebration and mourning, with Scripture guiding us in what is appropriate at any given time (Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 7:11). If our spiritual disciplines strengthen our dependence on Jesus, then they are beneficial, regardless of the specifics (Romans 14:22; 1 Corinthians 8:8). Ultimately, the goal is not to find the perfect formula for any rhythm of life but to thrive in our relationship with Jesus. May he be the heartbeat, center, origin, and director of all we do.

### **Take Aways**

### **Closing Prayer**



### **Daily Bible Readings**

**Monday:** Psalm 95-Let us sing to the Lord

**Tuesday:** Psalm 122-Gladness in the house of the Lord


**Wednesday:** Romans 12:1-8-Member of the body of Christ

**Thursday:** Nehemiah 8;9-12- A holy day of rejoicing

**Friday:** Matthew 18:15-20-Restoring Healthy Relationships

**Saturday:** Acts 4:32-37-Fellowship through common property

# BLACK HISTORY



“  
We are a strong-willed and stubborn people, and since we have survived the Middle Passage and slavery, the Civil War, and Jim Crow, we will survive what is happening in this country. We will keep rising, we will keep going forward, and we will continue to be the hope and the dream of our ancestors.  
*Karsonya Nese Whitehead, Asaltu President*”

## Liberia



**Liberia**, officially the **Republic of Liberia**, is a country on the [West African](#) coast. It is bordered by [Sierra Leone](#) to its northwest, [Guinea](#) to its north, [Ivory Coast](#) to its east, and the [Atlantic Ocean](#) to its south and southwest. It has a population of around 5.5 million and covers an area of 43,000 square miles (111,369 km<sup>2</sup>). The official language is [English](#), though [over 20 indigenous languages](#) are spoken, reflecting the country's ethnic and cultural diversity. The capital and largest city is [Monrovia](#).

**Liberia** began in the early 19th century as a project of the [American Colonization Society](#) (ACS), which fomented the emigration of [Black Americans](#) from the [United States](#) to [Africa](#). Between 1822 and the outbreak of the [American Civil War](#) in 1861, more than 15,000 freed and free-born [African Americans](#), along with 3,198 [Afro-Caribbeans](#), relocated to Liberia. Gradually developing an [Americo-Liberian](#) identity, the settlers carried their culture and tradition with them while colonizing the indigenous population. Led by the Americo-Liberians, Liberia declared independence on July 26, 1847, which the U.S. did not [recognize](#) until February 5, 1862. Sierra Leone

### Key facts

- **Capital:** Monrovia
- **Official language:** English
- **Currency:** Liberian dollar
- **Founded:** 1847
- **Known for:** Being Africa's first modern republic and for its historical connection to formerly enslaved African Americans who emigrated there in the 1800s.

*The name “Liberia” comes from the Latin word liber, meaning “free.”*

### Historical significance

Liberia was established with support from the American Colonization Society as a settlement for freed Black Americans. Its capital, Monrovia, was named after U.S. President James Monroe.

### Culture

Liberia has rich musical, linguistic, and tribal traditions, with many ethnic groups including the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, and Kru peoples. Christianity and Islam are both widely practiced alongside traditional beliefs.

Following the [2017 Liberian general election](#), former professional [football](#) striker [George Weah](#), considered one of the greatest African players of all time,<sup>[83][84]</sup> was sworn in as president on January 22, 2018, becoming the fourth youngest serving president in Africa.<sup>[85]</sup> The inauguration marked Liberia's first fully democratic transition in 74 years.<sup>[86]</sup> Weah cited fighting corruption, reforming the economy, combating illiteracy, and improving living conditions as the main targets of his presidency.<sup>[86]</sup> Opposition leader [Joseph Boakai](#) defeated Weah in the tightly contested [2023 presidential election](#).<sup>[87]</sup> On January 22, 2024, Boakai was sworn in as Liberia's new president

### **Association for the Study of African American Life and History**

The mission of the ASALH® is to promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community. Established on September 9, 1915, by Dr. Carter G. Woodson, we are the Founders of Black History Month and carry forth the work of our founder, the Father of Black History. We continue his legacy of speaking a fundamental truth to the world—that Africans and peoples of African descent are makers of history and co-workers in what W. E. B. Du Bois called, “The Kingdom of Culture.” ASALH is in short, the nexus between the Ivory Tower and the global public.



*The Negro Historical Association with Carter Woodson (with bow tie) seated next to Mary Church Terrell (in white) in front row, center, of this portrait (1925). Source: Courtesy of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University Archives, Howard University, Washington DC*

We are in the final stages of organizing the Northern Virginia Branch. If you have any questions, please contact: *Deac Joe Boutte, Bro Harvey Woodson, or Rev Gillis M. Taylor.*

**Come Join The ASALH NOVA Branch!!**