



SESSION 5

LIVING FOR THE WEEKEND

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” Let’s be honest. This is one of the Commandments we don’t really feel that guilty about breaking. If you steal, kill, or commit adultery, you usually feel guilty. But you’ve probably never gone to see a counselor over your failure to keep the Sabbath. You probably don’t trace any of the root problems in your life to breaking this Commandment.

But the breaking the Fourth Commandment is responsible for stress in your life because it relates to the things we do. (God has said that the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord.) And a lot of the stress in your life comes from work, whether it be school, work associated with extra-curricular activities, etc.

But in the Fourth Commandment, God established the Sabbath as a way for His people to refocus on their relationship with Him, rest from their labors, and remember His work in creation and redemption.

The Fourth Commandment Was Intended For Us...



To Refocus

The word *remember* can be substituted with the word *observe*. We are not simply to remember that God gave a Sabbath day of rest, we are actually to observe a Sabbath day of rest. We are to keep this day “holy,” or set apart, because that’s what God did with it at the conclusion of the creation week.

Human beings have short-term memory; we tend to drift. And when we’re consumed all week with all of our responsibilities, we often forget why we’re here and what’s really important. We need to stop and refocus on the God who made us and takes care of us. For this reason, we need the weekly Sabbath to refocus our hearts on Christ.

► What are some specific ways you have turned to the things you do to define and sustain you? Do you see Sabbath-keeping as an inconvenience or a source of freedom? Explain.

Deuteronomy 5:12

Be careful to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy as the LORD your God has commanded you.

► What are some ways people define their worth? What are the benefits of taking a day each week to rest and reflect on God's goodness and our identity in Him?

More than Sleep

Did you know the Sabbath day, the day of rest, is not Sunday? Shocking, I know. It is Saturday, or more specifically, from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.

So the Sabbath originally meant resting on a Saturday? As a 10-year-old boy, I'd have said that's crazy. Saturday was a day to wake up early and watch Saturday morning cartoons, to play with my brothers and toys, to ride bikes, to work on chores around the house, etc. No, not much resting on Saturday.

Sunday, though, was definitely a day of rest for me. My dad would have trouble waking me up for church (recuperating from all the play and work on Saturday). I would take the opportunity to lay down on the pew and nap during the pastor's message. And after lunch, I'd settle in my dad's reclining chair and watch animal shows on TV...and fall asleep once again. Clearly I had this Commandment locked down early on in life—aside from the day, of course. Or did I? Is there more to this Commandment than just sleep?

Well, to “remember” or “observe” the Sabbath day must at least involve sleep. Not much more can happen from Friday sundown to Saturday sunrise when you don't have electricity. But sleep alone can't make a day of the week “holy,” or set apart for God...nor can work, or the lack thereof. To keep the Sabbath day holy requires an attitude of the heart that is focused on turning from distractions and obeying God, even if that act of obedience is a call to rest just as He rested from all His work.



To Rest

Because working is the primary instrument God uses to meet our physical needs, we quickly start trusting our work, rather than God, to take care of us in the future. For this reason, God made the Israelites take one day a week off and do nothing. That was a difficult thing to do, especially in that day. In ancient Israel, survival was often a day-to-day challenge.

Even today, many of us feel like if we stopped doing those things we do for even one day, much less one out of every seven days, we would seriously fall behind in our work or flunk out of school.

Rest For All

They say death is the “great equalizer,” meaning it puts everyone on the same level because everyone has to face it sooner or later. I now think rest is something of the same. We all need and desire rest from our work at some point, and this shows one aspect of our equality across the human race—the need for rest is built in to who we are as human beings.

Think about it this way (and heads up, this might challenge some of your misconceptions): As students in school, you have work to do. You have schoolwork during the day, homework in the evenings, projects over the weekend, and likely a summer reading list. Don’t you look forward to no-homework evenings? no-project weekends? fall, spring, and summer break? the various holidays and their no-school benefits? You desire rest. You need rest.

But teachers have a lot of work to do, too. Really. Days are spent teaching; most evenings and weekends are spent creating lessons plans and/or grading work; and summers involve training and preparation for the upcoming school year. Even on breaks, they can have in-service or conference days. Teachers desire and need rest just as you do. It is only on some very special days that both students and teachers receive the equalizing blessing of rest from work.

Rest is a universal need, but only a rest “to the LORD your God” can satisfy that need. And this is an equalizing message that both students and teachers, indeed all, must hear and observe.

Deuteronomy 5:13-14

You are to labor six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. You must not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, your ox or donkey, any of your livestock, or the foreigner who lives within your gates, so that your male and female slaves may rest as you do.

► Do you find it difficult to unplug from everyday work? Why or why not? What does that say about your view of those things? What does our need for sleep tell us about our dependence on God?

God says, “On the seventh day, do nothing. Not because you can afford it, but because I want you to have a space where you have to trust Me—a space where I can fight for you (Ex. 14:14); a space where I can multiply your efforts and provide miraculously for you.” When you honor the Sabbath day, God multiplies your work on the other six days.

► A yawn indicates someone is physically tired and in need of rest. What could indicate that someone is spiritually weary and in need of spiritual rest?



To Remember

Remember. Because of the Sabbath, the Israelites were to remember the fact that everything comes from God, it's all going back to Him, and it all exists ultimately for His purposes and glory. The Sabbath helps us take our eyes off of us and place them on the God who made us.

In addition, Moses expanded the purpose of the Sabbath from remembering creation to remembering redemption. The Israelites were to take one day a week and remind themselves that God had loved them, had compassion on them, and had called them out of Egypt for His purposes. The Sabbath, then, helps us remember the work of God on our behalf—the work of redemption.

Deuteronomy 5:15

Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. That is why the LORD your God has commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

► **What are the dangers in a legalistic keeping of the Sabbath? How would you communicate the truth that Jesus has fulfilled the Sabbath law?**

God Paid It

Ever had your way paid for you? Maybe it was something as simple as a milk shake or a fast-food meal that someone purchased for you. Perhaps someone contributed toward you participating in a school or church function. It could have been a time when you went on a summer vacation with a friend and his or her family. If you have experienced an occasion of someone paying your way, you will likely remember it for many years to come, if not for the rest of your life.

Generous giving has a way of impacting the person on the receiving end. The freedom to enjoy some gift or experience given to you should make you thankful for the person who gave it. These realities are even more significant when paying your own way is impossible. If someone buys you a meal after you haven't eaten in two days, it's as if you've been given your life on a plate. Gratitude probably doesn't begin to describe the emotional response in such a situation.

In Deuteronomy 5:15, God reminded the Israelites to keep the Sabbath for a specific reason—to remind them that their freedom and status as God's people was the work of God alone. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and God stepped up and “paid” their way out of it.

This painted a picture of the day Christ would pay the way for helpless sinners to walk out of their bondage to sin and death. With nailed hands and outstretched arms, He died in our place so that we might walk free and enjoy His abundant life.

If you don't trust Christ, observing the Sabbath makes no sense. On “the Sabbath,” you are supposed to remember your relationship with God—to delight and rest in it. But if don't know for sure you are at peace with God, what is there to delight in? What is there to rest in?

Christianity begins not with anything you do for God, like coming to church, but by receiving and resting in what God has done for you. And when you rest in Him, you will desire to invite others to share in the true rest that is found in Jesus Christ.

► **What are some practical ways to observe the principle of the Sabbath? How does the gospel free us from the crushing weight of assuming it is “all on us”?**

GOD'S STORY, YOUR STORY

As this session indicated, it is the tendency of most people to find their identity in personal talents and abilities rather than finding their identity in Christ. Whether it be in schoolwork, a talent, a relationship, or social status, we often fall to the subtle temptation of finding our identity on a horizontal level with the things around us. By observing this Command, we refocus on Christ and examine ourselves, lest we have any false gods within our lives. This protects us from forming our identity around things other than God Himself, knowing that we were created by Him in His image.

How can the call to refocus protect us from finding our identity in things that are temporary?

It goes without saying that life can be busy. Even if there are plenty of opportunities in your schedule to rest, refocus, and remember, those moments are probably filled with social media, television, and the Internet. Of course, that is not to say that observing the Sabbath means avoiding any of these things. However, it does mean that by focusing on the meaning and importance of the points in this session, it will sometimes require of us to prioritize things better in our own lives. Doing so will not only lead to a life that glorifies and honors God in this way, but will also result in our very own good and joy.

How might observing the principle of the Sabbath open doors for sharing about Jesus, the fulfillment of the Sabbath?