

# *Rejoice In God's Sabbath!*

*You need to know HOW to keep the Sabbath as God intended!*

*Here are the ANSWERS to vital questions about the Sabbath that many of our readers have asked.*

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YOU MAY be missing out on some of the greatest blessings of life through *ignorance!*

In this chaotic, hell-bent age in which we live, man needs a right understanding of the laws of *peace* and *joy* that Almighty God has set in motion. Many lack the enthusiasm – the zest for life – that would make their lives really full and complete. “Every day is the same old thing!” you hear so many say.

But God has given us one blessing which doesn't make every day alike, which – when rightly used – will make our lives more *joyful* and *abundant* and give us a *zest* for life we otherwise lack. This is the Sabbath day.

Once one fully understands and appreciates the *blessings* and *opportunities* afforded by this day, he/she will literally REJOICE in keeping it. Far too many people look on the Sabbath as a day when they “can't” do this or that.

But IF you really *want* to draw closer to God and do His will, you can begin to look on the Sabbath as the day when you CAN take time for needed prayer, study, meditation, spiritual fellowship, and rest. When viewed in this light the Sabbath is a *tremendous* BLESSING!

## **Sabbath Made to Serve Man**

Christ said, “**The sabbath was made for *man* and not man for the sabbath**” (Mark 2:27). He didn't say it was made only for the Jew, but for MAN – for *all mankind* in other words. And it was made *for* him a blessing.

*Keep* this principle in mind. It was made for *you*, to help *you*, to enable *you* to live a happier and more godly life.

God's true Sabbath is one of the greatest blessings that has ever been bestowed upon mankind. It *signifies* that the Creator is our God, [that He loves us – 1 John 4:19] and that we are His children.

Our Creator knew that we would need a period of rest every seventh day, and this is one of many opportunities the Sabbath affords. Each of us tends to become overly absorbed in our daily cares during the week, but God foresaw this, and set aside the Sabbath as a time when we can completely forget our routine work and *get close to God* in *study, meditation, prayer and fellowship* (Heb. 10:25).

The wonderful part of it all is that we can keep this period of rest and spiritual revival with complete confidence that God will *bless* and *prosper* us because we have done this! If we would quit working every few days and take a needed rest, we might naturally expect to get behind in our finances and material pursuits. *But* God has said just the opposite! So, if we keep His seventh day Holy, we can rest assured that it will be *gain* instead of loss, even looking at it materially.

Do you realize what this amounts to? God is *giving us a paid vacation* every seventh day!

Human reasoning might not grasp this right at first. But God has *promised* this, and the *experiences* of thousands of people have shown that God meant what he said. You may not be prospered *immediately* if you begin keeping God's commandments – which includes the Fourth Commandment – faithfully as He has commanded. But in His way and time, God will begin to bless and prosper you in ways that you may never have expected.

In Isaiah 58:13-14, God inspired Isaiah to write that *if* we kept the sabbath and delighted in it, we would remember Him and He would cause us to have life in abundance, spiritually and materially. Notice that we are not to *seek our own pleasure* on the Sabbath. *Yet*, we are to *delight* in it. This means that we should not be seeking earthly amusements or pleasures that we might usually pursue on the other days of the week. We will be HAPPY because we are able to rest, to worship God with peace of mind, and because we have a special time to do good.

This same passage says we are *not* to “*speak our own words*” on the Sabbath. What does that mean? It shows that we should not spend the Sabbath in idle or meaningless talk, but should be reading, discussing, and thinking about God's way of life as revealed in God's Word. Then we will be drinking in the ideas of God instead of mere human notions. What a privilege it is to have a whole day in which we can read and discuss the *way of life* that is revealed to us in the Bible!

In order that we may have our minds free from last-minute duties on the Sabbath, God has instructed that we begin preparing for it the day before. Exodus 16:22-25 shows that we should normally do any baking or time-consuming cooking before the Sabbath. Long hours of cooking and stewing can take away from God's day.

So it is best to “spruce up” and do any heavy cooking on Friday, the preparation day. Then at sunset Friday evening, when the Sabbath begins, you will have put most physical cares aside and will be able to enter the Sabbath in a spirit of rejoicing and worship toward God.

## **Duties on Sabbath**

Our time should never “drag” on God’s Sabbath! Some people experience this when they first begin to keep the Sabbath, but it certainly isn’t the way God intended. When we understand it properly, the Sabbath will be filled with *interest* and *joy*.

The true Sabbath is *not* a *negative* thing!

Christ set us an example of how to keep it. In Mark 2:23 to 3:5, Jesus showed that it was all right to procure food on the Sabbath *if* it is necessary. He told the Pharisees that He was Lord of the Sabbath – not Sunday! Then Christ healed an infirmed man on the Sabbath and showed that it is lawful to *do good* on that day.

What *kind* of *good* should we do on the Sabbath day?

God commanded in Exodus 20:10, that we should *not work* on the Sabbath. [This pertains to the work that we do in earning a living]. So the kind of good that we do on that day is not the kind of hard physical labor which we might do on other days. “Doing good” is not to be used as an EXCUSE for performing those material duties, however helpful to others, which can just as well be done some other day. There is one exception to this prohibition. That is in the case of an “ox” in the ditch” (Luke 14:5). This refers to a *genuine emergency*, not some material duty one has “put off” until the Sabbath.

The principal example of doing good on the Sabbath that Christ gave us was that of healing the sick or infirm *that came to Him* (Matt. 12:9-13). He did NOT go abroad seeking them. Also, we find that He was constantly meeting with others and teaching them God’s ways on this day.

We can all use the Sabbath as a time to comfort and minister to those who are sick and infirm on this day. But this does not mean that we should burden ourselves with purely material services; Jesus did not when he helped the sick according to their faith. Remember what he told Martha: “Thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:41, 42). We should especially try to help those who are interested in the true teachings of the Bible, because in this way we can minister to them both spiritually and physically (Gal. 6:10).

## **A Wonderful Opportunity**

STUDY the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15)! This should usually be your first duty on the Sabbath. *Then* you will be *ready* to answer the questions of those who may be asking for help (1 Pet. 3:15).

Many dedicated brethren desperately NEED to spend *much more time* in earnest, prayerful Bible study. And most *want* to do it but often say that they “just can’t find the time.”

Well, learn to MAKE and set ASIDE the time on the Sabbath. In this day there is a wonderful opportunity to study *intensively*, to *pray* and not feel “rushed” or that you ought to be doing something else. USE this opportunity! BE THANKFUL for it!

The Sabbath is the day when one *can* and SHOULD read the Bible, study the biblical material presented on the Bible Fund website (thebiblefund.org) and review the material that has been presented previously. On this day you can discuss points of truth and Christian living with others of like mind, brethren or fellow students of the Word of God, in a spirit of mutual respect and awe for God’s Holy Word, perhaps even have a family Bible Study with your children (if you have children, of course).

Yes, the Sabbath is the day on which you CAN do all these things that most of you *want* and *need* to do anyway – but *simply can’t find enough time for during the week!*

Remember that the principal command is to *rest* from our *usual* routine on the Sabbath, and to *worship* God and remember Him as Creator. The Bible reveals that “doing good” on the Sabbath is serving others in a way that shows the *power of God* in our lives. Christ didn’t *labor* for several hours to heal the sick on the Sabbath. Instead, He invoked the very power of the Creator to release others from the bonds of sickness. So we should NOT spend most of the Sabbath caring for the physical needs of other people. By drawing closer to God on this day, we will then be able to help others in a LASTING way through the power of God’s Spirit.

“Sewing for charity” and other physical services may be worthy at the proper time, but such routine labor should *not* fill up God’s Sabbath day.

Physical things will “perish with the using.” So use the Sabbath primarily to learn *God’s ways* and make them a part of your *character* – and help others to do the same. The Spirit of God in you will last *forever!*

*Rejoice* in the Sabbath as a wonderful OPPORTUNITY for the physical *rest*, and for the *study*, *prayer*, and spiritual *fellowship* you need!

### **A Commanded Assembly**

In Luke 4:16, we find that Christ customarily met with others on the Sabbath and read from God’s Word. And Hebrews 4:9 tells us, “There is a Sabbath-Rest, then, reserved still for the People of God” (*Moffatt*). Lev. 23:1-3 tells us that the Sabbath is to be a *holy convocation* for God’s people. A convocation is a *commanded assembly*. God commands you to convoke or meet with other *true* believers *whenever this is possible* on the Sabbath. [In today’s world, circumstances are such that many true believers are separated by large distances; yet, our loving Creator has provided various technological tools (telephone, Internet, video) that make it possible to maintain close contact with faithful believers on God’s Sabbath].

Of course, this does *not* mean that we are to meet on that day or any other day with those who are blinded to God's truth and refuse to keep *all* His commandments. Paul commanded Christians in 2 Cor. 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: *for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?*"

Christian fellowship should be with other people *ONLY* through God and His spirit. God gives the Holy Spirit to them that *obey* Him (Acts 5:32). So, remember that we *cannot* have true spiritual fellowship through Satan, or his ministers, or his churches who refuse to obey God's commandments.

Christ told His followers, "Ye are the *light* of the world" (Matt. 5:14). How much the world needs people who will fearlessly show it the way out of this spiritual darkness!

*But* can we be a "light" to other people while continuing in the same man-made doctrines and practices they do?

NO we can't! We must live by God's Word to show forth the true light that will eventually turn people from darkness. We must be *DIFFERENT* from other people by obeying God – by having his *SIGN*. Most people won't like us for doing this. Christ said in John 3:19. "And this is the condemnation, that *light* is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Men were so *steeped* in their own customs, then as now, that the true light of the Gospel offended them.

So we can see that real Christianity is not the way to be popular with men! But doesn't this show what an important "light" our keeping of the Sabbath can be to others? It is a *SIGN* that sets one apart from those following the broad way that leads to destruction.

### **Your Special Problems?**

It is easy to use the latitude and privileges of the Sabbath as a means to *abuse* it. We must *not* be overly strict or self-righteous like the Pharisees. On the other hand, we humans are usually inclined to "stretch" the freedom God gives us and begin doing our own work or pleasure on the Sabbath.

Taking a walk on the Sabbath is fine so long as it doesn't turn into a wearisome "hike." Some people ask about the mention of "a sabbath day's journey" in Acts 1:12. There is no special command *anywhere* in the Bible limiting travel on the Sabbath. This "sabbath day's journey" was a custom of the Pharisaical Jews and is not a biblical command. However, you certainly shouldn't walk or drive so far on the Sabbath as to tire yourself unduly or to interfere with your worship of God.

After reading or studying for some time, a leisurely walk is very refreshing and beneficial. Also, a lengthy drive is sometimes necessary to enable us to meet with other true worshippers on the

Sabbath. Within reason, this is not wrong. It serves to strengthen us spiritually and therefore glorifies God.

Here is another problem. Should you kindle a fire on the Sabbath day?

The command in Exodus 35:3 was inserted in connection with instructions regarding work on the tabernacle. It was chiefly intended to forbid the kindling of a fire to melt metals or sharpen tools. However, it certainly can refer to unnecessary work done in preparing food which could be prepared on the day before.

So it would *not* be breaking the spirit of the law to light a fire for heat in wintery weather or to warm up a previously prepared food. [Editor's note. Again, in today's 21<sup>st</sup> century society, it is perfectly appropriate to, occasionally, frequent a restaurant or other eating establishment as a special treat and thereby, also eliminate the labor normally involved in preparing and serving a meal or meals. As for those employees who are involved in serving us, they would be working whether or not we solicit their service. We are not responsible for their decision to work on the Sabbath – which they are not aware of].

Feeding and watering stock is necessary on the Sabbath and permissible (Luke 13:15). *But* if you are raising so many cattle or chickens that your "chores" add up to three or four hours' hard work, then it would be best to cut down on the number of your livestock or else change occupations. Our age of "specialization," when a few farmers become virtual slaves to provide food for thousands of city dwellers, is *not* God's way.

No man should be "tied down" to his occupation as so many are today.

WE should not try to justify breaking the Sabbath by saying that "my occupation requires it"! Remember that this worldly, competitive system is called "Babylon" in the Bible, and we are commanded to "come out of her" (Rev. 18:1-4).

### **How to Instruct Children**

God inspired Solomon to write "train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). This command would certainly apply to teaching our children to keep the Sabbath. However, we should remember that even sweet little children are by no means converted. They lack the understanding and willpower to keep God's law as an adult.

*But* they should be taught to rest from their routine work or play on the Sabbath as much as possible. They should be instructed in a kindly and straight forward manner that the seventh day is holy to their Heavenly Father, and that they can show their love for Him by refraining from their usual hardy play on that day and by thinking and learning about God instead.

Our children should be taught these things gradually and only as their age makes it possible for them to understand. If trained properly from infancy, a ten or twelve-year-old child should have enough respect for God's Sabbath that he does not spend his time reading "funny books" or watching TV on that day.

Love and chastening must go hand in hand in this training. But a child so trained in God's ways will have a priceless advantage in his knowledge of life and its real meaning in relation to the Creator. [Ed. note: A powerful admonition is found in Ecclesiastes 12:1. "Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the days draw near, when you say, 'I have no pleasure in them.'" – New King James Version].

### **It is HOLY Time**

In Exodus 20:8, we find the original command. "Remember the sabbath day to *keep it* HOLY." Never forget that God has made the seventh day *holy time*! You and I are commanded to *keep it* that way.

We have already found in God's Word that we are not to do our own work, pleasure, think our own thoughts, or speak our own words on God's Sabbath day. To keep the Sabbath day *holy*:

You can't spend a lot of time in casual, pointless visiting or "empty talk or chatter," or even pursuing romantic interests.

You can't wait until after sunset on Friday evening to begin your cleaning up and preparing for the Sabbath, unless, of course, a *genuine* emergency has interfered.

We could go on, but we should get the point and grasp the principle involved.

Let's NOT "kid" ourselves!

When God said to put the Sabbath day to HOLY use, He meant *exactly* what He said. But we should learn to be so happily employed in doing the good things prescribed for that day, that we will not be inclined to violate the prohibitions anyway.

So let's keep the Sabbath in a POSITIVE way! Use the Sabbath as a day to rest from worldly labor, to get closer to God in *prayer* and *study*. Take time to *do good* to others, to care for the sick, to visit the afflicted. Assemble with other *true believers* on the Sabbath if and when possible. Then we will truly be a "light" to those around us.

The Sabbath SEPARATES true Christians from this world's churches with their pagan holidays and "day of the sun." And it gives the true children of the Living God an opportunity for *rest, study, prayer, and worship* – for DIRECT and SUSTAINED contact with their Creator which they would otherwise not enjoy.

SO KEEP HOLY the day God *made* holy! REJOICE in the *blessings* and *opportunities* that the Sabbath affords us and remember that it is an identifying SIGN of *direct relationship* between us and our Creator.

[Ed. In this day and age, now the 21<sup>st</sup> century, various factors affect how we approach and keep God's Sabbath day holy. Today's fast-paced life – especially in large cities – presents special challenges for God's people, individuals who are being led by God's Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14). For example, there are emergencies that may occur where people dwell in large apartment buildings, and someone may require immediate attention; when this happens on the Sabbath it is certainly appropriate for a Christian to lend assistance as one is able. Also, a number of modern appliances make it simple and easy to prepare food on the Sabbath and does not constitute “breaking the Sabbath” – unless doing so becomes a major cooking project.

An appropriate form of relaxation on the Sabbath is occasionally watching a historical or nature documentary on television; so is taking a leisurely stroll in a park or nearby mountain trail. The principal thing is that God desires that, on His Sabbath, we REST from the hustle and bustle of the day to day activity and decompress our minds from the stresses that afflict so many in today's fast paced society (see Daniel 12:4). The Sabbath is a day to take time for the most important matters of life – the purpose for human life and drawing close to our Creator and His life-preserving instructions as revealed in the Holy Bible. These instructions include the promise of making our lives full and satisfying (Deut. 30:15-16; John 10:10).]