

Day of Delight

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Come Experience the Joy of the Sabbath

The Sabbath is God's gift to mankind and He asks us to keep it holy, but what does this mean? How are we to observe the Sabbath? What is appropriate or not appropriate to do on the Sabbath? How can we experience the blessings that God intended for us to receive on this day? In this study we will look at Biblical principles for Sabbath-keeping that will help us to answer these questions.



Remember to Keep it Holy

Exodus 20:8 – (Read the text)

God says we are to “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” The word *holy* means “to be set apart as sacred, consecrated, dedicated, hallowed.” The Sabbath then is set apart from the other days of the week. It is holy and sacred. For this reason, the Sabbath cannot be treated as a common day. It is to be observed in a way that is different from the way we observe the other days of the week.

Let us look at a story that shows that God is particular about how His Sabbath day is to be observed.

Exodus 16:15-30 – (Read the text)

Six days of the week the people were to collect only enough manna to eat for that day. Any extra would spoil. However, on Friday God told them to collect a double portion because God would not send them manna on the Sabbath. In this passage we learn that:

- God was very particular about which day was the Sabbath. It was the day when no manna fell and Friday's manna was miraculously preserved. No one could choose another day to be the Sabbath or say it was impossible to know which day the Sabbath was (v. 26)
- God did not want His people to work for their food on the Sabbath. (v. 29)
- Those who did go to work to collect their food on the Sabbath were breaking God's Moral Law.
- God performed a miracle every Sabbath for those who had obeyed Him by preserving the manna from spoiling. Through this weekly miracle their physical needs were met. (v. 24)

The Sabbath-keeping principles outlined in Exodus 16 still apply today, for the Sabbath was given to all mankind – not just the Jewish nation.

Sabbath Preparation

In the Exodus 16 story, the people were to prepare to keep the Sabbath holy. What were the people to do prior to the Sabbath?

[Exodus 16:23 – \(Read the text\)](#)

In preparing their food ahead of time, the people would have more time to spend with God on the Sabbath because they wouldn't have to collect their food and do a lot of cooking and baking. Their time and attention could be on worshipping God.

[Mark 15:42 – \(Read the text\)](#)

In Scripture, Friday, the day before the Sabbath, is called Preparation Day. God's people were to "remember the Sabbath to keep it holy" by adjusting all their plans and business in reference to the coming Sabbath. Sabbath preparation is to be like that of preparing for the arrival of a very special guest. We should look forward to the Sabbath with great anticipation.

How can we prepare for the Sabbath?

- During the week, the family should plan how they can make the next Sabbath special by having a special meal, planning a trip into nature, or doing some act of service like Jesus did for another. This will help all, especially the children, look forward to Sabbath.
- Everything needed for the Sabbath – buying of groceries, cleaning the house and car, filling the car with petrol, doing laundry, ironing clothes, polishing shoes, etc. – should be completed before the Sabbath hours.
- The Sabbath meal should be prepared ahead of time so that it only needs to be heated and set out on Sabbath.
- Sabbath preparations should be completed before sunset on Friday so the family can be ready to welcome the Sabbath with family worship, and the calm of the Sabbath can begin to fill the home as the sun sets.

When does the Sabbath and every other day of the week begin?

[Genesis 1:5, 8 – \(Read the text\)](#)

When God created the days of the week, each day was marked by "evening and the morning." In other words, the day began in the evening. Mark 1:42 says that evening begins "when the sun had set." Like the other days of the week, the seventh-day Sabbath begins at sunset. As the sun sets Friday evening, we are to welcome the Sabbath and bid it farewell Saturday evening at sunset.

The reason God asks us to prepare for the Sabbath is because it is to be a day of rest from secular activities. Let's look at what the commandment says:

Sabbath Rest

[Exodus 34:21 – \(Read the text\)](#)

God says that six days are ours and can be spent supporting ourselves financially, but the seventh day belongs to the Lord. It is His day – not ours – and on it He asks us to set aside our work. We should rest from our regular employment, schooling, house and yard work, farming, etc. We rest on the Sabbath just as He rested on the Sabbath following the six days of Creation (Genesis 2:2). God also does not want us to make our animals or others work for us on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10). This means we will avoid eating at restaurants, having hotel maids clean our rooms, etc.

[Nehemiah 13:15-19 – \(Read the text\)](#)

In Nehemiah's day, God's people were careless in their Sabbath-keeping and were profaning the Sabbath by doing business on it. The Sabbath is not to be a day for buying and selling merchandise or conducting business transactions.

Why does God ask us to cease our work on the Sabbath day?

[Exodus 23:12 – \(Read the text\)](#)

God knows that our entire beings need a weekly day of rest. The Sabbath both rejuvenates and refreshes us.

[Matthew 11:28, 29 – \(Read the text\)](#)

Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, offers us personal refreshment for the soul – emotional, mental, and spiritual. Mark 2:27 says the “Sabbath was made for man” – that means to rebuild humanity. The Sabbath is to be a day free from the stresses we normally face, allowing us extra time for Bible study, reading spiritual books, listening to Christian music, or spiritual journaling. God longs to refresh our soul on the Sabbath.

How should we respond to God's invitation to Sabbath rest?

[Hebrews 4:9-11 – \(Read the text\)](#)

The word “rest” in verse 9 is *sabbatismos* or a Sabbath rest. We should do all we can to enter into the Sabbath rest that God wants to provide for us. We can't afford to be disobedient and miss out on the blessing God has waiting for us!

What promise does God give to those who will abstain from their work upon the Sabbath?

[Philippians 4:19 – \(Read the text\)](#)

By not working, we acknowledge that the Lord is our God and that we trust Him to take care of our needs. Just as He worked a miracle every Sabbath to preserve the manna so His people could eat, so He will provide for our needs if we obey Him. We can rest knowing that He will pull from His rich treasure house anything we need.

Sabbath-Keeping Principles

We know we are not to work on the Sabbath, but what can we do on this day? Let's look at some principles for Sabbath-keeping.

Principle 1 – On Sabbath we should gather with other Sabbath-keepers to worship God.

Leviticus 23:3 – (Read the text)

The seventh day is to be a day for holy convocation. A convocation is a public meeting or gathering for worship.

If there is a Sabbath-keeping church in the area, we should attend it just as Jesus would on the Sabbath. We should look forward to this time to corporately pray, study the Bible, sing, and hear the Word of God preached. This time should not be neglected. (See Hebrews 10:25).

Principle 2 – The Sabbath is to be a day for relieving human suffering and bringing healing and restoration to others.

Luke 4:31-39 – (Read the text)

On this Sabbath while at the synagogue, Jesus freed a man from demonic spirits. When He got home, He healed Peter's sick mother-in-law. This is just two of the seven miracles of physical and spiritual healing the Gospels record Jesus performing on the Sabbath. (The others are found in Luke 6:6-10; 13:11-16; 14:1-5; John 5:9; 9:14.)

Visiting the elderly, caring for the sick, feeding the homeless, praying for the oppressed, encouraging the despondent, studying the Bible with others, singing to the chronically ill who cannot make it to church, attending spiritual retreats, reconnecting with family or friends to heal tensions that may have developed – all of these are appropriate activities on the Sabbath. Each demonstrates the principle of restoring others to wholeness.

Principle 3 – The Sabbath is to be a day for nurturing family relationships.

Leviticus 19:3 – (Read the text)

The Sabbath and the family have always been connected. Just after making the first family, God gave them the Sabbath.

This can be done by having a special Sabbath dinner, family worship, and just visiting and sharing with each other. Use the Sabbath as an opportunity to pull the family together.

Principle 4 – The Sabbath is for fellowship with Christian friends.

Luke 14:1 – (Read the text)

On this Sabbath Jesus accepted a dinner invitation to the home of a religious leader.

Spending time with other believers on the Sabbath should not be limited to just the church service. Seek to spend time together in conversation, eating, Bible study, nature, and service to others.

Principle 5 – The Sabbath is to be a day to celebrate God’s goodness and to praise Him.

Psalm 92 – (Read the text)

The heading to this chapter is a Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day. It is a beautiful chapter praising God for His faithfulness and love.

This can be done through singing of hymns and spiritual songs (v. 1), playing musical instruments (v. 3), and the sharing of testimonies of God’s faithfulness in our lives (v. 2). You might want to have a “blessing book” in which your family records on the Sabbath how God has blessed them during the previous week. Take time to thank God for these blessings and share them with others.

Principle 6 – The Sabbath is for enjoying and meditating on the beautiful world God has created.

Psalm 111:2-4 – (Read the text)

The beautiful Creation that God has made is to be remembered and studied by His servants.

Taking walks or hikes in nature, looking for object lessons in nature that teach spiritual truths, and watching music nature videos are all ways you can meditate on God’s goodness in His created works. Being in nature on the Sabbath can be very relaxing.

Principle 7 – The Sabbath is to be a day to serve others in love and to witness for God.

Matthew 12:11, 12 – (Read the text)

While we are not do “our work” upon the Sabbath, we are not prevented from doing God’s work upon the Sabbath. What is God’s work? To preach, to teach, to minister to needs, to save from ruin, to heal, to bless. Activities Jesus would do on the Sabbath are ones we can feel comfortable doing as well.

What should we remember when doing any activity on Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13, 14 – (Read the text)

In keeping the Sabbath we must always remember that this is God’s day and not ours. It is not about our favorite conversation topics or our pleasures and activities. It is about finding delight in what pleases God and honoring Him in all we do and say on that day. When we do this, God promises to greatly bless us.

Your Decision

Are you willing to follow God’s principles for Sabbath-keeping? What things might you need to change to make God’s Sabbath more of a day of delight? Would you like to experience the blessing of fellowship with other Sabbath-keepers on the Sabbath by attending a Sabbath service this coming week?