

Making Sabbath Special

The Lord knows how desperately we need this important time-especially in such a complicated age. In love, He has given us a weekly reminder of His sovereign power in our lives. Each week we receive one more opportunity to rededicate our lives to Him, one more opportunity to draw closer to Him, one more opportunity to glorify Him. The Lord intended the Sabbath to be a time of celebration, but it is also a time to let God renew our hearts and our minds. It's time to set our priorities straight for the coming week.

Things that Affect the Rest and Joy of the Sabbath

Some things that can affect experiencing the rest and joy that come from the Sabbath could include:

- Lack of Bible study during the week (the benefit is proportionate to the effort given during the week)
- Lack of prayer throughout the week
- Conflict with others that hasn't been resolved
- Pre-occupation with secular activities
- Exhaustion

Sabbath preparation needs to start on Sunday. If you are planning for it all week, it will be a lot easier to be ready when the sun goes down. Get the whole family involved with planning. Depending on the ages of the kids, or if you have no kids, it's important to have a plan. Try to incorporate something that each one thinks would be a blessing to them. Have each member describe their ideas of a perfect Sabbath, and make a list of the food, activities, and places they mention. (Children may need some direction in applying Sabbath keeping principles.) Have each member take a turn choosing a favorite activity and food for a Sabbath. Then have all of the family work together to create that member's special Sabbath. Give each family member the opportunity to have a turn as the weeks go by.

Be careful to plan secular activities so as not to compete with spiritual activities. For example, it's counterproductive to plan a big event on Saturday night and expect to enjoy the Sabbath hours to the full.

Remember that it's important to have balance on the Sabbath. Don't have so many church commitments that you don't have time to spend as a family. In this day and age, when both parents often work, Sabbath is the only day that the whole family can spend together. It's also good to invite people over sometimes to celebrate the day with you. This is where your plan for the afternoon will be helpful, so that the kids aren't left to their own devices while the adults sit and talk.

Create a sample plan below of how you would like to spend the next 4 Sabbath afternoons:

Have the Sabbath minister to all of the five senses.

1. Have the house **smell** like Sabbath: it should smell clean, prepare yummy food, scented candles, etc.
2. Have the house **sound** like Sabbath: play beautiful, sacred music
3. Have the house **look** like Sabbath: fresh flowers, Sabbath bedspreads, special crockery & cutlery, etc.
4. Have the Sabbath **feel** good: backrubs for the kids as you tuck them into bed, exchange foot rubs with your spouse, etc.
5. Have the Sabbath **taste** good: make or buy special foods that your family loves, the simpler the better.

Your Ideas:

List some things you would like to change so that you can fully experience the Sabbath joy and rest:

Resources:

1. *"Of All the Week the Best": Activities for a Joyful Sabbath Afternoon* by Janet Everet.
2. *"52 Sabbath Activities for Teen Groups"* by Don Pate
3. *"100 Creative Activities for Sabbath"* by Karen Holford
4. *"52 Things to do on Sabbath"* by Glen Robinson
5. *"From Sundown to Sundown, How to Keep the Sabbath... and Enjoy it!"* by May-Allen Colon
6. *'Oh No, it's Sabbath Again, and I'm Not Ready'* by Yara Cerna Young

There are lots of books written on the Sabbath, but these are some that have been a blessing to us.

Here are a few of the things that we enjoyed doing as a family while the kids were still at home.

Friday Nights:

1. Use a white board and markers and have someone draw a picture of a song they are thinking of. When someone guesses it, let everyone sing that song. The person who guessed it gets has to draw the next song.
2. Word search scramble: You can take the memory verse for the week or any other group of words that have special meaning, and plug them into a computer word search program, it will make a cross word puzzle or word search for you out of those words.
3. Bible hangman
4. Sing songs that begin with every letter of the alphabet
5. For a little older children, let them tell their Sabbath School lesson or a Bible story using felts.
6. List all of the elements you want to have for worship, on separate pieces of paper (song service, special music, story, prayer etc.) and let each person draw one. They are then responsible for that part of the worship. They can get someone else to help them, or do it for them, but they are in charge of that part.
7. Everyone draws a picture of a word or name in the Bible and holds up their paper when done. Everyone else should try to guess what the word or name is.
8. One of the favorite activities was to have Mom read to everyone. ☺

Make sure that the books, games, puzzles and toys used on Sabbath are only for that day, and they will be a lot more special to your children.

Your Ideas:

Here are a few ideas that we have done on Sabbath afternoons that we all enjoyed as a family:

1. Paper bag skits: Put a variety of miscellaneous objects in a paper bag (candle, key ring, etc.) and divide your family into small groups. Each group has to come up with a Bible story or lesson linked to that object. The rest of the groups have to guess what it is. The group that guesses it goes next.
2. Treasure hunts: One that I have used is a nature scavenger hunt. Divide your group into small teams and let them look for Bible texts that have a 'nature' word in them (e.g., flower, stone, weed, etc.). When everyone is done, the group should go on a hike to find the objects they read about in the Bible. Give them a paper bag to collect as many of these as possible. When the hike is over, each team can share an object lesson for the items collected – which is a good activity for sundown worship time.
3. Visit elderly or disabled people in their homes or at a nursing home. Kids can help bake special treats, make cards, etc. during the week to take to them. This is a great idea to do with several families. Bring along a guitar, if someone plays one, and sing & pray with the people as you go from room to room.
4. Go door to door in your neighborhood giving out tracts, have prayer walks, do surveys, or ask people for prayer requests that you can pray for.
5. Nature displays: Using items from nature, (rocks, twigs, sand etc.) construct a Bible scene and then have everyone guess what it is. Parents can help younger children.
6. Read stories, or have a series of books that you read. Our family loved to spread out a blanket and have me read to them.
7. Go out in nature for a short hike. Nature has a way of drawing one closer to God.

There is so much that could be shared on this subject, but you can come up with your own ideas to make Sabbath special. Make God's Day a priority, ask Him to show you how He wants it kept and how you can best honor and glorify Him through your Sabbath observance. It can be the best day of the week, if you want it to be.

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