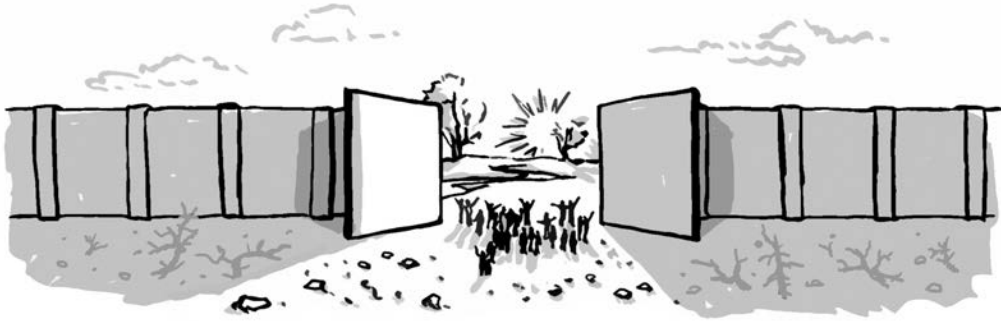


Sabbath: A Day of Freedom



SABBATH—JULY 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 16:16–18; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Exodus 20:8–11; Matthew 12:9–13; Leviticus 25:1–7.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Jesus said to the Pharisees [Jewish religious group], ‘The Sabbath day was made to help people. People were not made to be ruled by the Sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27, ERV).



The Sabbath shows us that God wants us to be close to Him and to each other.

GOD MADE THE SABBATH. It was the last thing God made when He made the earth in one week. Then God rested on the Sabbath day. When God rested on the Sabbath, He made rest an important part of our lives. The Sabbath shows us that God wants us to be close to Him and to each other. So, we should not be surprised to see that God includes the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments. God made the Sabbath an important part of His plan for the Hebrew people.

What do we think about the most when we think about the Sabbath? How we should keep it, right? We talk about the things we should and should not do. Yes, the Sabbath rules are important. But we also need to understand why the Sabbath is an important part of God's plan for His people. The Sabbath shows us God's grace. Grace is God's loving-favor or His mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin.

Jesus said that He made the 7th-day Sabbath for everyone. When we truly keep the Sabbath holy, we will be changed. The Sabbath will change us every day of the week. Then we will be a blessing to everyone around us. As Jesus showed us, the Sabbath can be a blessing to all people.

PLENTY OF MANNA (Exodus 16:16–18)

God wanted to lift up His people after He freed them from slavery. He showed them a new and better way of life. He gave them laws for their new land. God gave His people a special gift to help teach them about this new way of life. This gift was named manna. It was a special food that appeared each morning on the ground near the Israelite's camp. This manna miracle happened for 40 years!

Read Exodus 16:16–18. Do you see in these verses that God provided enough manna for each person? What do these verses teach us about why we need to trust God to take care of us? What other lessons do these verses teach us?

In 2 Corinthians 8:10–15, Paul talks about the manna story. He uses this story to show us how Christians should give gifts to other people. Look at what Paul says in verse 14 to the Christians in the church at Corinth. “At this time you have plenty. What you have can help others [other people] who are in need. Then later, when they have plenty, they can help you when you are in need. Then all [everything] will be equal [fair]” (2 Corinthians 8:14, ICB).

The lesson here for God's people, and for us, is clear. God provided enough food for His people and for everything He made. So, we should take only what we need. Then we should share the leftovers we have with other people. God's people also will learn to trust God to give them what they need the next day. When people do not have very much, they feel afraid. They worry each day about not having enough to eat tomorrow. But God used the manna as a word picture. It showed His people to trust God and not to worry about tomorrow. God wanted His people to trust Him about everything. He wanted His people to be generous and to give to other people.

But this miracle has another wonderful part. Every Friday, double manna fell on the ground. God told His people to collect the extra manna. He gave them the extra manna for the Sabbath. The extra manna shows God's loving favor to His people. This miracle also shows God's people that He will give them everything they need. This miracle teaches God's people to trust Him. They do not need to worry about what they will eat tomorrow. Now they can enjoy their rest more fully on the Sabbath.



Every Friday, double manna fell on the ground.

TWO REASONS TO HONOR THE SABBATH (Deuteronomy 5:12–15)

Read Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15. Both sets of verses talk about the fourth commandment. How do these verses help us understand the Sabbath better?

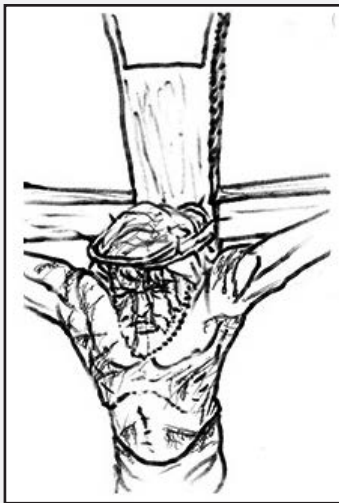
God wants to be close to His people. That is why He asks us to remember the Sabbath day. It will help bring us close to God again. The Sabbath teaches us that God made us and saves us. We find these two Bible truths in the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:8–11 and in Deuteronomy 5:12–15.

The Hebrew people needed to remember that God made them. The Sabbath was an important way to teach them that truth. But the Hebrew people lived in Egypt for a very long time. In Egypt, there were many false gods. So, the people forgot about God. Then God gave His people a special gift to help them understand who He is. As we learned yesterday, God gave His people extra manna every Friday. This miracle was a strong example of God's power. It also showed His people that the Sabbath is very special.

The fourth commandment in Deuteronomy 5 tells us that God saved His people from the Egyptians and from slavery. God wanted His people to tell this story again and again. Every Sabbath helped them to remember that God freed them. Yes, God freed His people from the Egyptians. But He freed them from sin too.

So, we can see that God gave His people two reasons for worshiping Him on the Sabbath. (1) He made them. (2) He saved them. That is why God says, “ ‘ ‘I also gave them my Sabbaths. They were to be a sign [something special] between us. Then they [my people] would know that I am the Lord. I make them holy” ’ ’ (Ezekiel 20:12, ICB). As we learned, God's truth about the Sabbath was for everyone, not just the Israelites. God wanted to help His people make a new way of life. Then He wanted them to invite everyone else on the earth to come share in this new way of life too. He wanted His people to be kind to strangers. He wanted His people to share the blessings He gave them with everyone else.

“ ‘That is why the LORD your God commands you to always make the Sabbath a special day’ ” (Deuteronomy 5:15, ERV). The Sabbath helps us to remember that God made us and saves us. The Sabbath helps us to grow closer to God and to the people around us. God is kind to us. So, we need to be kind to everyone too.



The Sabbath helps us remember that God made us and saves us.

A DAY THAT SHOWS US WE ARE ALL WORTH THE SAME IN GOD'S EYES (Exodus 20:8–11)

Look again at the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. Do you see something in both chapters that makes the fourth commandment different from all the other commandments? The fourth commandment is the longest commandment. Some of the other commandments are written in only three or four words. (In the Hebrew language, these commandments are written in only two words at most!) Why is the fourth commandment so long? Because it explains why we must keep the Sabbath holy. It shows us how to keep it holy too. It also tells us to remember the God we worship.

Read Exodus 20:8–11. What do these verses say about the servants, strangers, and also the animals? What important truths do these rules teach us?

Do you see that the Sabbath talks about how God wants us to remember the people around us? The Sabbath command is special. It separates God's people and makes them special too. It makes them different from all other people on the earth. The Sabbath asks us to think first about the members in our communities that people think are not very important. They are the people who need rest the most. Who does the Bible include in this group? The slaves and foreigners who live in our country. It also includes work animals.

God wants everyone to enjoy the Sabbath day. The Sabbath truth teaches us that we are all equal, or the same, in God's eyes. God gave workers the Sabbath. He also gave it to slaves. The Sabbath reminds slaves that God made them and saves them too. God invites the slaves to celebrate this truth on the Sabbath. " 'Even your animals and the foreigners living in your cities must not work' " on the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10, ERV).

God asked the Israelites to think about things in new and surprising ways. They were slaves in Egypt. Now they lived in their own new land. God did not want them to become the same as the Egyptians. That is why God gave His people very clear laws for their new land. He also gave them (and us) the Sabbath. The Sabbath helps us remember in a powerful way that every human is equal in God's eyes. No one is better than anyone else.



The Sabbath asks us to think first about the members in our communities that nobody thinks are very important. That includes slaves, strangers, and work animals.

A DAY OF HEALING (Matthew 12:9–13)

God wanted the Sabbath to be a day of rest for everyone, not only for the Jews. By the time Jesus came to this earth, the Jewish religious leaders had a different idea about the Sabbath. Those leaders believed that the Sabbath was not a day of freedom. They did not believe that the Sabbath showed that everyone was equal in God's eyes. No, the religious leaders taught that the Sabbath was a day of strict rules. So, Jesus showed the Jews that the leaders' teachings were false.

How exactly did Jesus do that? He healed people on the Sabbath. He wanted to show something important about the Sabbath to the Jews. Often, when Jesus healed people on the Sabbath, He talked about why He did it. Many times, the Jewish religious leaders used Jesus' words as a reason to kill Jesus.

Read Matthew 12:9–13; Mark 1:21–26; Mark 3:1–6; and John 9:1–16. These verses tell us stories about people that Jesus healed on the Sabbath. What important lesson do these stories teach us about the Sabbath?

Jesus taught that the Sabbath is important. That is why we need to keep the Sabbath special. We must spend this time with God. Then we will grow closer to God. Our time with Him will make our families and our communities strong. The Sabbath should not be only about us. It is not a time to be selfish. Jesus said, “ ‘It is right to do good on the Sabbath day’ ” (Matthew 12:12, ERV).

Many church members already do take care of other people. But many of us feel that we should do more. We know God cares about people who are hurting. So, we should care too. That is why the Sabbath is a good time to think about more ways to help other people. God already commands us not to work on this day. So, He gives us this special time to take care of other people. “The fourth commandment teaches us that God wants us to rest on the 7th day and worship Him. He commands us to stop doing business on this day. But God commands us to help other people. Our kind acts and works of love honor God's holy day.”—Ellen G. White, *Welfare [the help we give to people in need] Ministry [work done for God]*, page 77, adapted.



“Our kind acts and works of love honor God's holy day.”

What do you do to help other people on the Sabbath?

SABBATH REST FOR THE LAND (Leviticus 25:1–7)

As we learned already, the Sabbath was an important part of Israel's new way of life. The Sabbath was not only a day at the end of every week. But the Sabbath also included a special rest each 7th year. Then every 50 years, there was a very special time of rest. This time of rest every 50 years is named the Year of Jubilee.

Read the teachings in Leviticus 25:1–7. What is so special about these teachings? In what ways can you make these rules a part of your life and your work?

During the Sabbath year, God's people did not farm the land. They let the land "rest." Many people today recognize this practice as a wise thing to do in farming.

The 7th year also was important for slaves (read Exodus 21:1–11). Many Israelites owed a lot of money. They became slaves to pay back the money they owed. But in the 7th year, God commanded His people to free these slaves. What about the rest of the money the slaves owed? God said these freed slaves did not need to pay the rest of the money back at the end of the 7th year (read Deuteronomy 15:1–11).

Remember the manna? We learned that God gave His people extra manna on Friday for the 7th-day Sabbath. Then God's people did not need to collect manna on the 7th day. In the same way, God told His people not to plant crops during the 7th year. God promised to give His people extra food in the 6th year to help them live during the 7th year. Israel showed their trust in God by not planting crops in the 7th year. God asked His people to be kind to the slaves in the 7th year too. So, God commanded His people to free the slaves in the 7th year. He also told His people not to force the freed slaves to pay back the money they owed. God wanted His people to do these kind acts to show that they trusted in God's power. He wanted them to trust Him to give them everything they needed. He ordered Israel not to force poor people to be their slaves until they paid back the money they owed.

The way we keep the Sabbath should change how we live our lives the other six days of the week. Put God's kingdom first. God knows what you need. " 'Then he will give you all these other things you need' " (Matthew 6:33, ERV).



God commanded His people to free the slaves in the 7th year.



We work together with God's angels when we help suffering people on the Sabbath.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “From the Red Sea to Sinai,” pages 295–297, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “The Sabbath,” pages 281–289; in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Jesus said that when we help other people on the Sabbath, we do not break the law. It is good to help people on the Sabbath. We work together with God’s angels when we help suffering people on the Sabbath. God’s angels fly back and forth from heaven and earth all the time. They come to help people in need. . . .

“Humans also have a special work to do on the Sabbath. We must take care of things that need our attention. We must care for the sick. We must take care of the needs of the poor. God will judge us guilty if we do not help suffering people on the Sabbath. . . . God made His holy rest day for humans. Our kind acts and works of mercy on the Sabbath show that we keep the Sabbath holy. God does not want anyone or anything He made to suffer an hour’s pain on the Sabbath or on any other day. So, we must do whatever we can on the Sabbath to help other people and animals. We must help end their suffering.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 206, 207, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How has your experience with the Sabbath made your trust in God grow deeper? Have you had an experience in life where God gave you what you needed because you trusted in Him? If so, share your story with the class. What did your experience teach you?
- ② We read about the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15. What do you like best about the Sabbath?
- ③ What are some ways that your class can share the blessings of the Sabbath with your community?
- ④ What are some of the ways that the Sabbath changed your life? Are there other parts of your life that the Sabbath needs to change some more? If yes, what parts of your life need changing?