

Sabbath: Knowing and Showing God's Love



SABBATH—DECEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1; Genesis 2; Exodus 16:14–29; Isaiah 58:1–14; Matthew 12:1–13; Acts 13:14–45.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Jesus said to the Pharisees [Jewish religious leaders], ‘The Sabbath day was made to help people. People were not made to be ruled [controlled] by the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord of every day, even [also] the Sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27, 28, ERV).

JODIE was the only Seventh-day Adventist at her college. She chose not to go to some school parties because they were on the Sabbath. Jodie's choice not to go made her beliefs about the Sabbath known to everyone.

One day, one of her friends, Gayle, told Jodie that her husband was going to be out of town for six weeks. “Do you want to spend the next six Friday nights with me?” Gayle asked. Gayle thought Jodie did “nothing” on those nights anyway, so why not have Jodie spend the time with Gayle?

For the next four Friday nights Jodie and Gayle ate together and shared their Christian experience. The fifth weekend, Gayle told Jodie that she had been downtown shopping earlier that day. “I looked at my watch and said to myself, ‘Oh, good. Sabbath is very soon!’ All of a sudden I saw that over the last four Friday nights, I had a new Christian experience. I learned more about God. My faith grew deeper too. All because of the Sabbath.”

It is an interesting story. It shows how we can think about the Sabbath. It is not just a day of rest. It also is a way of teaching people more about God and His love.



“Oh, good. Sabbath is very soon!”

**TIME TO BE FILLED WITH SURPRISE AND WONDER
(Genesis 1; Genesis 2)**

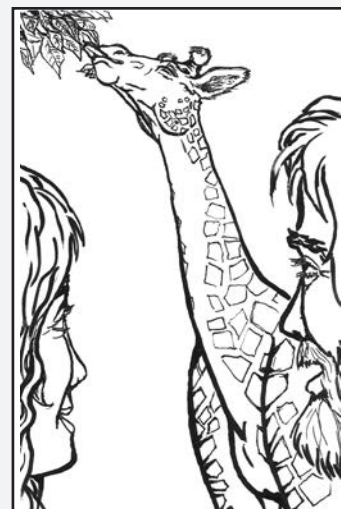
Have you ever wondered why God chose to give us two stories in Genesis about how He made the earth? Genesis 1 tells us about how God made the earth in six days. The chapter ends with God making man and woman on day 6. Genesis 2 looks at the same story but spends more time talking about what happened on day 6. Adam is the center of the picture now. Chapter 2 shows us that God made everything for the man and the woman: the Garden, the rivers, and the animals.

The story about how God made the earth is too wonderful for just one chapter. We need two. First, we need a chapter that tells us about the powerful God who is an artist who loves beauty. Then we need a chapter that shows us a God who makes a human family to love and care for each other and everything that God made.

Read Genesis 1 and 2. Then think about how the first Sabbath (Genesis 2:1–3) helps us to remember the first story about how God made the earth in Genesis chapter 1. The first Sabbath also helps us to remember the second story about how God made the earth in Genesis chapter 2. Genesis says that God blessed the Sabbath and made it holy. What does that mean?

Make a picture of this in your mind: You are Adam or Eve on that first Sabbath. It is your first day alive! It is your first day with your husband or wife. It is your first day with God. This is a day for learning many things! You start to learn about the God who made all the beauty around you. You are filled with wonder as you see an elephant and then a frog. You smile as you see the giraffes or buffalo playing and having fun. You are silent as you look at the many colors and shapes around you and listen to the beautiful music of the birds. You feel happiness as you taste, smell, and enjoy the different fruits and flowers in the Garden. Most of all, you start to learn about love and caring for people. You learn this from and for your God. Then you show it to the rest of the ones He made.

The first Sabbath was not a boring day of doing nothing for Adam and Eve. God made the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a time for the first man and woman to think about the One who made them and everything He made. It was a time for humans to be filled with surprise and wonder.



You smile as you see a giraffe playing and having fun.

TIME FOR LEARNING AGAIN (Exodus 16:14–29)



God gives the Israelites the miracle of manna.

When God asks Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, it is clear that God's people need to learn who God is again. God wants the Israelites to worship Him. He promises them a wonderful future. The Sabbath is an important learning experience for God's people. The Sabbath helps them to discover what they have forgotten. The Sabbath also shows other countries around Israel that Israel has a special connection with God. The experience of the manna shows God's way of educating the Israelites.

In Exodus 16:14–29, what lessons do the Israelites need to learn?

God gave the Israelites the miracle of manna. God gave them just enough food for each day. What if God gave His people more than they needed each day? Then they might forget that God took care of their needs. So, every day God did a miracle for the people. They saw God's care. On the Sabbath, things were different. God wanted to show His people that the Sabbath was special. So, He did two miracles, not just one. God gave His people double food on Friday. Then God blessed the food so that it did not spoil overnight. That left the Sabbath free so that Israelites did not have to collect any manna. They had time to think about the God who made them free from sin and the Egyptians. They had more time to think about what it means to be God's people.

The Israelites ate this manna for 40 years (Exodus 16:35). God also told Moses to keep a pot of manna to help the Israelites remember how God fed them in the desert (Exodus 16:32, 33). It also helped them to remember their beautiful experience of the Sabbath day. There also are other times when God shows Israel that the Sabbath is special.

The Sabbath is part of God's plan to help the Israelites learn about God again. This day also helps them to understand how to be God's holy and chosen people. God asks His people to obey and keep the Sabbath holy for a special reason. Spending time with God each Sabbath will help bring people close to God. The Sabbath will give them a deeper understanding about God's love too.

Someone tells you that the Sabbath is "boring." How can you help him see it as a time to learn about God?

TIME FOR PUTTING THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS FIRST (Isaiah 58:1–14)

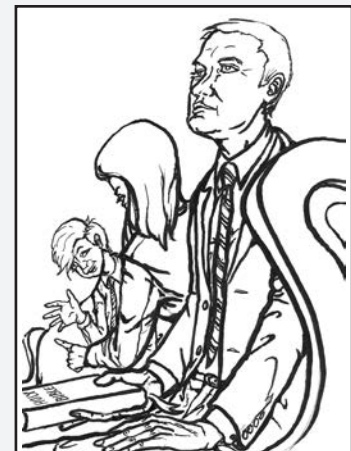
Israel had many ups and downs in their experience with God. The way they kept the Sabbath showed what was in their hearts. When Israel did not respect the Sabbath, they showed God that He was not important in their lives (Jeremiah 17:19–27). When Israel honored the Sabbath, they showed that their lives were right with God.

Read Isaiah 58:1–14. What is God saying to His people in these verses that is important for us today?

The Israelites act as if they follow God. They worship Him. They fast, or eat no food, for a short time for religious reasons. But the way they live their lives shows that they are only pretending to be God’s followers. There is no real wish in their hearts to obey the law of God. Isaiah continues in chapter 58 to show what God expects from His people.

There is more. Read Isaiah 58:13, 14, ERV. Why does God talk about the Sabbath at the end of this chapter? Isaiah warns Israel: you need to “stop doing things to please yourself on that special day” (ERV). These verses tell us we must not pretend to worship God on the Sabbath. We must not be thinking our own thoughts and living a life that does not honor God. The Sabbath must be a joyful day and holy. The rest of Isaiah 58 shows that the Sabbath is about the joy we feel in learning about God and His plan for us. Then we must let God live in us. We must show His love to other people. So, we must do more than worship God by doing the right things. We must let God change our hearts. With new hearts, we can keep the Sabbath holy. Learning must change our lives. Sabbath is time for learning and living the Bible truths that matter the most.

Does the Sabbath fill you with joy? If not, what can you do to change that? Have you learned to “honor” the Sabbath? Talk with your class about what it means to honor the Sabbath.



Sabbath must be a joyful and holy day.

TIME FOR BALANCE (Matthew 12:1–13)

Jesus respected and honored the law of God (Matthew 5:17, 18). But Jesus did not always agree with the religious leaders about the law. The leaders often argued with Jesus about how to keep the Sabbath. The leaders of the synagogues, or local places of worship in Israel, educated the Jews about the law on the Sabbath. The leaders read the Torah on the Sabbath. The Torah was the first five books in the Old Testament. The religious leaders knew the dos and do nots of the law. But Jesus taught that Sabbath keeping went much deeper than the things that a person can and cannot do on the Sabbath.

Read Matthew 12:1–13 and Luke 13:10–17. What do these verses show that Jesus taught the people in His time and teaches us today?

Jesus healed on the Sabbath. His miracles started the Jews talking about many important spiritual questions. What was sin? What is the reason for the Sabbath? Was Jesus equal with the Father? How much power did Jesus have?

Jesus' feelings about the Sabbath are shown in the memory verse for this week: "Then Jesus said to the Pharisees [Jewish religious leaders], 'The Sabbath day was made to help people. People were not made to be ruled [controlled] by the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord of every day, even the Sabbath' " (Mark 2:27, 28, ERV). Jesus wanted to show that the Sabbath should not be a heavy load. God "made" the Sabbath to be a time for people to learn about God. One way we learn about God on the Sabbath is by spending time in nature.

Jesus asks questions to get His followers, the Jewish leaders, and the crowds to think more deeply about the Bible, faith, and God. It is easy for us to think only about rules and laws and forget about God. Rules are meant to help us know better the God we serve. This knowledge leads to our obedience to God and trust in Jesus' gift of mercy to us.

What is the Sabbath day to you? Is it a day of rules? "Do not do this" and "do not do that"? Or is the Sabbath a time to really rest in the Lord and know Him better? If it is a day of rules, how can you get the blessing from the Sabbath that God wants you to have?



One way we learn about God on the Sabbath is by spending time in nature.

A TIME FOR COMMUNITY (Acts 13:14–45)

Jesus showed His followers that worshiping in the synagogue on Sabbath is important. A synagogue is the place Jewish people pray and worship God. After Jesus woke up from the dead, His followers continued to worship in the synagogue on Sabbath. The synagogue became one of the most important places for Jesus' followers to talk about Jesus' resurrection, or waking up from the dead. The Sabbath gave Jesus' followers the perfect time to come together and learn. Jesus was the Hebrew Messiah, or the Chosen One. The Messiah was shown in the Old Testament. The Old Testament was read in the synagogue each Sabbath. What better place did the believers have for sharing Jesus than in the synagogue? (Read Acts 13:16, 26.)

Look at these verses: Acts 13:14–45; Acts 16:13, 14; Acts 17:1–5; and Acts 18:4. What can we learn from these verses about how Jesus' followers shared the truth in public places?

Paul and the other followers of Jesus in these verses share their personal story about Jesus. Paul talks about Israel's history, starting with "our fathers" (Acts 13:17) in Egypt. Then Paul talks about Israel's history from the time they start living in the Promised Land to the time of the judges. Paul also talks about the kings including David. From there, Paul talks about Jesus.

Paul and the other leaders and teachers showed how the Bible supported their personal experience and understanding about God. These men shared information. Then they argued about it and talked about it. So, they shared their personal experience, shared the Bible, preached, and taught. This was a very powerful combination. As the Bible verses show, some of the religious leaders were jealous of Jesus' followers and their power.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a strong history of sharing Jesus in the same way Paul and Jesus' other followers did. We share our personal experience about Jesus. We teach, preach, and share Bible truth. This happens in Sabbath School, during the sermon, and in other Sabbath meetings. This is all part of our church's education plan. Our worship of God is a time for learning more about Him. This is an important part of our Sabbath life.



Our worship of God is a time for learning more about Him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Sabbath,” pages 281–289, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“God gave His people many things to separate them from the people around them. The Sabbath showed this separation more than anything else. God wanted the Jews to keep the Sabbath holy to show everyone that they worshiped God. The Sabbath showed that the Jews did not worship false gods. The Sabbath showed the Jews’ connection with God too. But to keep the Sabbath holy, men must be holy. By faith they must accept Jesus’ gift of mercy and His holy life. God told Israel: ‘Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy’ (Exodus 20:8, KJV). The Lord also told Israel, ‘You are to be my holy people’ (Exodus 22:31, ICB). Living a holy life is the only way that the Jews can keep the Sabbath holy. Then they will show that they are the worshipers of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 283, adapted.

“Then the Sabbath is a sign of Jesus’ power to make us holy. . . . God gives the Sabbath to everyone who becomes a part of God’s people, Israel. We become part of God’s people by faith in Jesus Christ.”—Pages 288, 289, adapted.



By faith, we must accept Jesus’ gift of mercy and His holy life. Then we can keep the Sabbath holy.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Often Seventh-day Adventists spend a lot of time worrying about what they can do and cannot do on the Sabbath. Come up with a set of questions that help Sabbath keepers to think about the ideas we studied this week. (Remember, these ideas talk about the Sabbath as a time for education.) Here is an example of a question: “What do I do on the Sabbath that helps me to learn more about God’s love?”
- ② Think some more about the quotations from Ellen G. White in today’s study. These quotations show that Sabbath keeping is not just about rules. So, what does it mean to “become part of God’s people by faith in Jesus Christ”? What does it mean to be made “holy”? What does this have to do with the Sabbath?
- ③ In what ways can you make your Sabbath experience better? Think about three things you want to learn by keeping the Sabbath holy in the next 12 months.

ESCAPE FROM FATHER IN PARIS

I was born into a non-Christian family in Algeria. But I do not live the same way as other people live who are from my old religion. My parents left me with my grandmother and moved to France when I was three. After I turn 18, my father takes me to Paris to help his new wife take care of his children.

My time with them is awful. Father is a mean man. He forces me to clean up the house and take care of the children. He also forces me to have sex with him. When I refuse, he beats me. After several years, I try to kill myself.

Father forbids me to leave the house except to take the children to school. One day as I walk the children to school, I meet a young man. He lives next door to me. The young man feels very sorry for me. He sees the bruises on my face. Then he gives me a piece of paper with his mother's phone number on it. But I do not call her for help.

I spend a lot of time looking out the window of my father's house. I want to be free. The young man sees me and tells his mother. "Do you see the girl who is always looking out the window? She will be my wife."

At the time, I do not know that he says this to her. But I know in my heart that the young man wants to marry me. I do not let myself think about a future with him. I cannot marry someone who believes in a different religion.

My life becomes so bad. I cannot stop crying. Father comes into my room every night. I do not want to live anymore. One night, I look out the window at the dark sky and pour out my heart to God. I am sure that a God lives in the sky. I remember Grandmother telling me about a God. "I will marry that young man," I tell myself. "I will have a house and children."

The next day, Father beats me again. Then he leaves the house. His wife says mean things to me. Then she leaves the house too. The children go to school. I call the young man.

"I want to go with you," I say.

"I will come get you in an hour," he says.

I pack all my stuff. Then I get into his car. I learn that the young man's name is Juleen. He is a Seventh-day Adventist from the West Indies. His mother, Simone, sends me to live for a while with another Adventist family in Paris. Father will not find me there. This family also is from Algeria, the same as me.

That is how I meet Jesus. Today Juleen and I have our own home and children. We worship every Sabbath in church. My father finally finds me. Crying, he asks me for forgiveness. I forgive him. Then my father dies. The rest of my family turns against me because I am a Christian. The church is my new family now.

INSIDE
Story
by MALIKA LEOCADIE



I look out the window at the dark sky and pour out my heart to God. I am sure that God lives in the sky.

