

SABBATH PREPARATION



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Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture
is from the *King James Version*.

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“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

— Exodus 20:8-11

PREFACE

As the sun sets on a Friday evening, true believers begin the observance of God’s weekly Sabbath. The seventh day of every week is set aside and ordained by the Creator both as a day that is to be remembered and a day that is to be kept holy.

The seventh-day Sabbath is at least acknowledged around the world by all sects of Christians, Muslims, and pagans alike. While many today believe it is a Jewish tradition, it was established well before the Jews—or the Israelites, for that matter—even existed. It was instituted at the conclusion of all God’s works in the Genesis creation so that mankind could honor and worship the Creator.

To ensure that mankind remembers the seventh-day Sabbath, a commandment for its observance was included in the Law of God. Even among pagans and unbelievers alike, there is at least a cursory knowledge throughout the world of the fourth of the Bible’s Ten Commandments.

What is interesting are the origins of the Sabbath. Genesis describes the complete reconstruction of the earth. Day one was the creation of light; day two was the firmament; day three was lands, seas, and vegetation; day four was the sun, moon, and stars;

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day five was fish and birds; and day six was land animals, insects, and man. Afterwards, God rested on the seventh day. In doing so, He established a pattern for mankind to follow wherein there are six days to work and attend to our physical needs and wants—but the seventh day was different. It is a day to put aside that which pertains to our corporeal ways and spend time with God. He created all things, but His great desire is to have a personal relationship with each one of us.

God established the seventh-day Sabbath as a time He reserves for mankind. Can you imagine the Creator of the entire universe inviting us to spend a day with Him, each and every week? What wondrous love He has for us. The Sabbath is like a bouquet of roses that a suitor wants to give to his sweetheart. He knocks on her door and waits for it to be opened so that he can give her a gift of his heartfelt love. Sadly, only a few will open the door—most ignore the knock.

But for those who truly value the Sabbath, they continuously seek ways to show God their appreciation and love. While the Sabbath occurs every week, its frequency should not diminish that special day. Instead, preparing for every Sabbath enhances it all the more. This is especially the case if we consider that transitioning from six days of focusing on physical matters to one with God on a spiritual level is not simply throwing a switch. It takes time and effort to ready ourselves for that knock at the door from God when the Sabbath begins.

To that end, the following is a guide to preparing for the Sabbath. It is not a list of rules—dos and don'ts. Consider it a way of thinking whereby one moves away from a physical mindset to a spiritual one directed toward God, His kingdom, and His future family. Preparing for the Sabbath should be viewed from two perspectives: our spiritual connection with God the Father and Jesus Christ and serving our brethren.

CHAPTER 1

Sabbath Rest—Ceasing From Labors

It is commonly known that the Sabbath is a day of rest, as is plain from the meaning of the word. While physical rest is important for healthy bodies and alert minds, sleep is not the focus. Notice this:

EXODUS 20:8-11 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. **In it you shall do no work**; you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 11 For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

As a day of rest, the prohibition is against performing work. In simple terms, keeping the Sabbath is redirecting our thoughts toward Him and away from ourselves. When it comes to rest, it is a day to withdraw from the work and labor that provides for our physical wants and needs and spend time with God. This was also Paul’s perspective:

HEBREWS 4:9-10 There remains therefore a [Sabbath-keeping] for the people of God. 10 For **he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works** as God *did* from His.

Sabbath rest is something that is established by ceasing from work as opposed to doing nothing or sleeping. There is no question that physical rest is necessary, important, and even rejuvenating after a hard week; but, what is gained if most of the Sabbath is spent idly doing nothing or in unconscious sleep? Any relationship requires time spent together and that means one must be engaged mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

Achieving rest on the Sabbath by refraining from customary work and labor is a simple act but cannot, in and of itself, fulfill the intent of **keeping** the Sabbath. Avoiding work alone is not

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sufficient for a relationship with God or His children. We can see that there is more to it than just avoiding work in the words of Isaiah:

ISAIAH 58:13-14 “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, And **call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, 14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;** And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Delighting in the Sabbath is much more than just stopping our work and labors. It necessitates the mental and spiritual preparation to different thoughts and desires. Scripture points to preparation as an important part of keeping it¹:

MARK 15:42 Now when evening had come, because **it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath,**

While this particular Sabbath was the holy day called the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread², similar preparations are necessary for all Sabbaths, whether the seventh day of the week or a holy day. One scripture that is specific to the weekly Sabbath can be found in God’s direction for gathering the manna on the sixth day:

EXODUS 16:23 Then he said to them, “This *is what* the LORD has said: ‘**Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath** to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today*, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.’ “

The ancient Israelites prepared for the Sabbath by gathering extra manna on the sixth day. They did this so they did not spend the Sabbath collecting food. Clearly, it is difficult to properly keep the

¹ Also Luke 23:54; John 19:31.

² Leviticus 23:6-7.

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Sabbath holy if we are distracted by worldly occupations. As physical beings, we are easily distracted from the spiritual. Engaging with God, who is spirit, requires us to consciously disengage from our natural state in order to focus on the spiritual.

Sabbath Preparation Questions

The two most important questions to ask as one prepares for the Sabbath are:

- 1) What can be done before the Sabbath to be SPIRITUALLY-MINDED toward God and His children?
- 2) What can be done before the Sabbath to MAXIMIZE THE TIME with God and His children?

The first reminds us to eliminate as many distractions as possible so we can have our hearts and minds centered on God. Preparing ourselves shifts us away from distractions of the *past*.

The second considers the Sabbath time that lies *ahead*. It contemplates how we will keep the Sabbath, both in our personal relationship with God as well as with our brethren.

CHAPTER 2

Prayer

Preparing spiritually for the Sabbath begins with **prayer**. Whether alone or with family or among brethren, establishing the beginning of the Sabbath with prayer as the sun is setting puts our minds upon God. It helps set our minds upon the spiritual and above the physical. The Sabbath is a time for prayers and thanksgiving.

SABBATH PREPARATION: BEGIN the Sabbath with **prayer**.

Personal prayer is obvious, but prayers should also include one's family (when appropriate). Sometimes it is fitting to pray with our brethren³. All of God's children have needs and the Sabbath is a special time for all manner of prayers. Prayer is powerful. Jesus prayed constantly⁴ and so should we⁵.

Plan the Sabbath

Preparing spiritually for the Sabbath should also establish goals for the day. In a large sense, this means planning to use the time, whether for prayer, overcoming, study, doing good works, listening to a sermon, fasting, and combinations of these. Entering into the Sabbath without any idea of how the day will be spent means it could be largely wasted.

SABBATH PREPARATION: PREPARE ahead of time to spend the Sabbath appropriately. This includes the evening of the Sabbath (Friday night) as well as the daytime portion.

³ Acts 1:14; 12:12; Romans 15:30.

⁴ Matthew 14:23; 26:36, 39, 42, 44; Mark 1:35; 6:46; Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; Hebrews 5:7; and many more.

⁵ Luke 18:1; 21:36; Ephesians 6:18; et al.

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Avoid falling into a pattern where the entire day is limited to listening to a single sermon—there is so much more to the Sabbath than a one- or two-hour sermon. Do you have specific spiritual needs that need to be addressed? Do not neglect your own personal salvational needs nor rely upon a general sermon to address critically important areas of spiritual growth. Directed, personal study can help, especially on the Sabbath as we draw closer to God.

We can also rejoice on the Sabbath. Singing hymns, whether alone or with others, lifts our hearts up. Are you thankful? Do you need comforting? Is your heart grieving? Think about hymns for the Sabbath that reflect your spiritual situation.

Read from a list of favorite psalms or create your own to praise and honor God. Have you ever considered writing your own Psalms? David does not hold the copyright to them. While many are prophetic, they also simply reflected his heart and mind toward God.

While it may come as a surprise, fasting is quite appropriate on the Sabbath, as the Bible confirms. Fasting always requires preparation whether it is during the week or on a Sabbath. Those who fasted on the Sabbath include Jesus Christ⁶ (40 days included at least five Sabbaths), Moses (40 days, three times)⁷, and Daniel (three weeks included at least two Sabbaths)⁸.

WE Must Keep the Sabbath Holy

God made the Sabbath HOLY time; that is, He set it apart from all other days for a special purpose. The fourth commandment says, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.”⁹ Did you notice that *we must* keep it holy? GOD MAKES THE SABBATH HOLY

⁶ Matthew 4:2.

⁷ Exodus 24:18 (fast #1); Deuteronomy 9:18 (fast #2); Exodus 34:28 (fast #3).

⁸ Daniel 10:2-3.

⁹ Exodus 20:8.

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BUT ONLY WE CAN KEEP IT HOLY. We must consciously decide that this time is special and prepare for it so that we can direct our minds toward God. While God's presence alone makes something holy, we cannot have a holy Sabbath unless we guard against those things that distract us and take away from the holiness of God.

SABBATH PREPARATION: WE are responsible for **keeping** the Sabbath holy. This means preparing for it so that worldly or physical distractions are kept to a minimum and our spiritual time with God is the priority.

Prepare to Be Taught

In discussing how God intends us to keep the Sabbath, the ministry of Jesus Christ becomes important. During His life, Jesus Christ always kept the Sabbath. What He did on that day is revealing:

MARK 1:21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He [*Jesus Christ*] entered the synagogue and **taught**.

How did Jesus Christ teach the people?

LUKE 4:16 So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue **on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read [the scriptures]**.

An important work of Jesus Christ on the Sabbath was teaching the people from God's Word—what we call the Bible today. In fact, Jesus came to this earth to FULFILL the law¹⁰. The Greek word for *fulfill* means to bring about a complete understanding and He did this by teaching and explaining God's Word. He certainly accomplished this on the Sabbath because His teachings were so powerful and insightful that it astonished those that heard Him¹¹.

¹⁰ Matthew 5:17.

¹¹ Mark 6:2.

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SABBATH PREPARATION: PREPARE to be **taught** by God on the Sabbath.

For us, preparing for the Sabbath should anticipate being taught by God. Whether through our own studies or a sermon, prepare to learn from God. No pupil gains much by going to a classroom without thinking about, and preparing for, the upcoming lesson. Being mentally ready as a student is important, especially if the preceding week was filled with distractions.

Examine Past Works

In the Genesis creation account, God's work over the six days culminated in the establishment of the seventh-day Sabbath when He rested from His labors. Interestingly, God did something at the end of the sixth day that is sometimes overlooked as related to the beginning of the Sabbath:

GENESIS 1:31-2:4 Then **God saw everything that He had made**, and indeed *it was* very good. So **the evening and the morning were the sixth day**. 1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. 4 This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,

After six days of work, God created the Sabbath day by resting from, or stopping, His work. What is remarkable is what God did just prior to the Sabbath—He EXAMINED all that He had done the previous six days. In other words, God evaluated His own works. Likewise, the Sabbath-keeper should prepare for the Sabbath by evaluating his or her own past works. While God saw that everything He had done was “exceedingly good,” people can rarely say that about their own works. Each of us usually has a mix

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of good and not-so-good accomplishments because we all fall short of God's glory¹². For Sabbath-keepers, examining our works is important for continued spiritual growth and obedience and love toward God—and keeping the Sabbath. Successes can be encouraging and failures can be something to improve upon. Examining both, from God's perspective, helps us to have a deeper connection with Him.

SABBATH PREPARATION: EXAMINE past **works**.

Works are a reflection of the depth of our agape love and our relationship with God.

When we examine our past works, as God did after the Genesis creation, they should be viewed from the perspective of edifying others in agape love. This applies to works within the Body of Christ as well as those among our families, friends, coworkers, etc. Did our words edify others or bring them down? Did our works help or hinder others? Simply put, when we examine ourselves, the litmus test is whether or not our works glorified and pleased God and were done with a humble and loving heart.

As we examine ourselves in preparation for the Sabbath, it is equally important to note the good works along with those that fall short of pleasing God. In doing so, we will be encouraged by God's work of grace in us¹³ as well as recognizing our weaknesses from the failures so that we can overcome them. Both can be discussed with God in prayer and reviewed according to Scripture on the Sabbath. Give thanks for the good works and ask for help in time of need¹⁴ for the failures.

Self-examination is crucial and should be a continual part of our lives. If we only do this prior to the Passover, we are missing the point of both the Passover and the Sabbath.

¹² Romans 3:23.

¹³ 1 Corinthians 12:6; Ephesians 2:10.

¹⁴ Hebrews 4:16.

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Plan to Do Good Works

Another work of Jesus on the Sabbath was healings. One example was the man with a withered hand:

MATTHEW 12:9-13 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—that they might accuse Him. 11 Then He said to them, “What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift *it* out? 12 “Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” 13 Then He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched *it* out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

While not everyone has the gift of healings¹⁵, notice what Jesus called them:

MATTHEW 12:12 “... Therefore **it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**”

Jesus Christ said healings on the Sabbath were “good” works and even “lawful”; that is, they are not only honorable and decent but permitted on the Sabbath by the Law. Good works are important, especially on the Sabbath when we usually have more opportunities to serve one another. But we cannot do good works if we do not seek the opportunities and prepare ahead of time.

SABBATH PREPARATION: Doing GOOD WORKS on the Sabbath requires **preparation**. The Sabbath is usually a time we have more opportunities to serve the Body of Christ. Prepare for the Sabbath by seeking opportunities to do good works.

But what are *good works*? To answer this, it is important to understand our relationship with God. Paul said, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**” (Romans

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28, 30.

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8:16). As children of God, the goal is for us to grow in truth and love where our Father is the primary influence. He desires us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Peter 3:18). We do this through prayer, fasting, study of God’s Word, and doing GOOD WORKS. The Sabbath is an especially appropriate time to focus on these things. Our works, therefore, are those things that God desires from His children and are pleasing to Him.

For this reason, God has given His children a *commandment* to do good works. As His children, we have a common parentage and purpose in this life through our relationship with God. As a result, we are all part of, and have a responsibility to, the Body of Christ¹⁶. Notice the ordinance given to each of God’s children:

EPHESIANS 4:15-16 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together **by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.**

Each child of God has a responsibility to edify, or build up, the other members of the Body of Christ in agape love. These ARE good works.

DEFINITION: GOOD WORKS **edify** the Body of Christ **in agape love.**

God sacrificed His Son for the whole world¹⁷ and those works we do for the people of the world also glorify God¹⁸. Therefore, our good works should not to be limited to the Body of Christ, especially during the week. On the other hand, the Sabbath is a time to focus on believers because they are the priority¹⁹. Seeking

¹⁶ Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12; 12:27.

¹⁷ John 3:16.

¹⁸ Matthew 5:16; 1 Peter 2:12.

¹⁹ Galatians 6:10.

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opportunities to do good works for believers is an important preparation for keeping the Sabbath.

SABBATH PREPARATION: Prepare to do GOOD WORKS for other believers on the Sabbath as we have the opportunity (*pray* for these as well). They fulfill the ordinance for each of child of God to edify the Body of Christ in agape love.

The prohibition against work (Hebrew *mlakah*) on the weekly Sabbath and Atonement and servile work (Hebrew *abodah mlakah*) on the other holy days could be described as “usual and customary” work—things we commonly do to provide for our physical needs or wants. Good works, on the other hand, fall under that commandment in Ephesians 4:16 to edify the Body of Christ in agape love whereby we seek opportunities to provide for the physical and spiritual needs of others. They are not the same as servile work or labor for wages.

The Sabbath is absolutely an appropriate time for good works of agape love toward believers. Spending time with them, visiting those who are alone, sharing a meal, calling upon those who are isolated, encouraging those who are suffering or grieving, praying with one another, fasting for ourselves or one another, etc. are all good works. Sending Sabbath cards or letters are especially appreciated and encouraging. Personally written notes are much more meaningful than email and can be part of Sabbath preparations.

Good works are especially fitting on Sabbath evenings (Friday night) for those who are isolated and feeling alone. Brethren have diverse burdens to bear and preparation for the Sabbath should consider the needs of all God’s children. This is the fulfillment of God’s law of agape love. It is the way of God’s true children.

Scripture is replete with encouragements and admonishments to do good works. Here are a few of the many encouraging scriptures:

MATTHEW 25:37-40 “Then the [just] will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and **feed You**, or thirsty

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and give You drink? 38 'When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 'Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'

ROMANS 12:5-10 so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith; 7 or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 *Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

GALATIANS 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

HEBREWS 6:10 For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

PHILIPPIANS 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

ROMANS 12:13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

HEBREWS 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

JAMES 2:14-16 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, *what does it profit*?

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.

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JAMES 1:27 Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to **visit orphans and widows in their trouble**, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

1 JOHN 3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and **sees his brother in need**, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?

Paul said, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Even though the Sabbath is not Paul’s focus, we should apply his words all the more to that day to draw closer to God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Eliminate Distractions

God is always ready to spend every minute of the Sabbath with us. How much of the day we have with Him depends upon how many unnecessary distractions come upon us because we failed to prepare. This goes beyond not doing any work on the Sabbath.

In searching out how to prepare for the Sabbath, some have searched out the examples of the Jews. While they have eliminated many things pertaining to work, is their Sabbath day free from distractions? In general, the Jews spend a lot of time focused on what they *cannot do* rather than on what they *can be* doing. Although some of their efforts to prepare for the Sabbath are good, all of the “thou shalt not” rules can be distractions. Eliminating the need to push a button in the elevator in no way enhances the Sabbath. It just means that those on the top floor of the building waste a lot more time inside the elevator.

People can also be distracted by traditions and rote ceremonies. How does reciting the same, repetitive prayers and reading the Scriptures without seeking a deeper understanding draw us closer to God? How do we engage God in a very personal way for our needs if prayers are just grandiose words spoken by an entire congregation of people and we never offer up our personal

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thoughts to God? Proper worship and praise of God by groups of worshippers is never to be criticized, but the Sabbath is not just a ritual experience. The seventh day of the week is meant to be a very personal day because God is not only the Most High but also **our Father**.

SABBATH PREPARATION: ELIMINATE things that will **distract** us from spiritual time with God, Jesus Christ, and the believers.

Obviously, shopping for food, filling up the car with gasoline, taking out the trash, being in a noisy environment or one with raucous music, taking phone calls from work, etc. are all unnecessary distractions that should be done before the Sabbath.

So, how should we prepare against some of the realities of life? Begin by ensuring your workplace knows you observe the Sabbath and holy days as time apart from work. If you need food, shop beforehand or ask someone to help you get it. Find an appropriate place to spend the day. This is especially important with an unbelieving family or when traveling, whether for work or vacation. Plan for the needs of young children and prepare God-centered substitutes for older children so they are a part of the Sabbath. Electronic entertainment devices are huge distractions.

And do not be pharisaical. Turning on the stove, flipping a light switch, or starting a car engine are less “work” than is required to get dressed in the morning. Taking a bath or shower usually means turning a handle rather than heating up a kettle of water over a fire to fill a tub. The days of slaughtering an animal and cutting wood for a fire to cook a meal are almost unheard of today. Few, today, can claim they need to saddle up a horse to go into town.

Many inappropriate distractions for the Sabbath pertain to jobs that provide income, going to the store, digital social media, electronic games, and dealing with unbelievers (especially if they are family).

This modern age has also brought about additional distractions. For instance, shopping online is not necessarily work in a real sense, but it is surely a distraction from the Sabbath.

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Sabbath Conversations

One major distraction that should be avoided for the Sabbath arise in conversations. How much time is spent on the Sabbath talking about jobs, politics, sports, hunting, cars, new clothes, plumbing problems, remodeling the house, or landscaping the yard?

Worst of all is when believers spread hearsay or pass along gossip (which can be spiritual murder²⁰). Offenses can make the Sabbath an uncomfortable time, so try to resolve them as much as possible beforehand. It might be that fasting before the Sabbath will help and facilitate reconciliation²¹.

Having something appropriate to say to others is just as important as avoiding certain topics on the Sabbath. Study the Bible to be able to contribute to conversations. Paul told Timothy, “**Study to shew thyself approved** unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15). The word *show* means to prove or demonstrate. Who are we showing? God already knows what we know, so we are to grow in God’s Word and be able to provide an answer to others²².

A deep and comprehensive knowledge of the Bible is not required to participate in Sabbath conversations. Simply asking a question about a scripture or retelling one of the stories in the Bible with a personal view can be wonderfully engaging. Be prepared to share God’s Word with others on the Sabbath when the opportunity arises. Those who do not gather with a fellowship group can call and talk to brethren in similar circumstances. Be wise as well. Speculative topics may need to be avoided among larger groups or with those who are “unskilled”²³ in the Word of God.

²⁰ Proverbs 18:6-8; 21; Luke 6:45; 2 Corinthians 12:20-21; Ephesians 4:22-32; 1 Timothy 5:12-13; et al.

²¹ Refer to the booklet at www.cbcb.org titled “*OFFENSES—Ordinances of God*” for dealing with offenses.

²² 1 Peter 3:15.

²³ Hebrews 5:12-14.

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SABBATH PREPARATION: PREPARE to have **spiritual discussions** on the Sabbath. Steer away from secular topics and also carefully consider your words on the Sabbath—both what should and should not be said.

James had a lot to say about our words, most of it not pleasant²⁴. Remember, we are judged by every word that we speak²⁵. However, it is equally important that we speak all things in agape love²⁶ and are “be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15).

²⁴ James 1:26; 3:5-6, 8.

²⁵ Matthew 12:36.

²⁶ Ephesians 4:15.

CHAPTER 3

Conclusion

God sets aside each Sabbath because He desires to spend this day with His children. The extent to which He is involved is dependent upon how much we prepare to spend the day with Him and our brethren. He has given us valuable examples of preparing for the Sabbath but we must be zealous to do them.

The most obvious preparation is to cease from all work. This was the main command to the ancient Israelites who were under a physical covenant with God, not a spiritual one. Beyond work stoppage, there were also required animal sacrifices.

Under the spiritual covenant, animal sacrifices have been replaced by the spiritual sacrifices of good works of agape love, service, and faith²⁷. To properly keep the Sabbath requires thought and preparation in several key areas:

- Begin the Sabbath with prayer—and make time during the day for prayer.
- Plan to use the Sabbath time in a meaningful way.
- Remember that God made the Sabbath holy, but we must keep it that way.
- Prepare to be taught by God.
- Examine past works so we can use the Sabbath for spiritual growth.
- Plan to do good works for the believers. Seek ways to edify the Body of Christ in agape love.
- Eliminate distractions before the Sabbath.
- Share God's Word with believers when possible. Avoid contentious conversations.

²⁷ Ephesians 4:15-16; Philippians 2:17.

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When it comes to understanding what is permissible or not on the Sabbath, simple questions can help you determine the answers:

- 1) Is it servile work or wage labors? Or, is it usual and customary work that is unnecessary on the Sabbath? If either is true, avoid it.
- 2) Is it significant time spent apart from God and His children? If so, avoid it.
- 3) Is it a distraction or unnecessary on the Sabbath? If so, avoid it. Sabbath activities that are **unacceptable** (emergencies notwithstanding) include:
 - Cooking that requires a lot of effort or preparation. For example, making bread is quite involved whereas pulling a slice of bread out of a bag is not. Preparing a banquet is a considerable burden compared to making a sandwich.
 - Parties (ordinations, blessing of children, funerals and memorials, etc., are *not* parties),
 - Tending a garden (aside from picking that which you will immediately eat²⁸).
 - Working on/around the house,
 - Non-emergency repairs,
 - Washing clothes,
 - Filling up the car with gasoline.
 - Shopping,
 - Doing financial transactions and bills,
 - Allowing hired help to work on the Sabbath,
- 4) Is it appropriate for the Sabbath? (Suitable activities that some avoid can be pharisaical. The Jews have an onerous list of prohibited activities. Do not fall victim to their traditions, many of which were condemned by Jesus

²⁸ Matthew 12:1-8; et al.

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Christ²⁹.) Sabbath activities that are **appropriate** (even if they contradict Jewish prohibitions, some of which have been added here just for the humor), include:

- Flipping a light switch,
 - Turning on the stove,
 - Using the microwave,
 - Fixing simple meals,
 - Adjusting the thermostat,
 - Using an elevator,
 - Tearing toilet paper or paper towels (yes, some Jews forbid this and the next one),
 - Finding matching socks in a drawer,
 - Brushing teeth,
 - Taking a shower or bath,
 - Taking a nap,
 - Watching the news (in moderation),
 - Starting or driving a car,
 - Exchanging emails with brethren,
 - Making or answering a phone call,
 - Writing (again, prohibited by some Jews),
 - Taking medications,
 - Going to the hospital emergency room.
- 5) Sabbath activities that are driven by personal needs or circumstances usually require some thought and godly wisdom. The following are some examples that do not have clear-cut answers:
- Eating at a restaurant. Situations certainly arise that prevent eating at home—such as loss of power,

²⁹ Matthew 23; et al.

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traveling, etc. Considerations for avoiding it include a raucous atmosphere, blaring sports TVs, crowds, or long waiting lines.

- Being around unconverted family. An unbelieving family is sanctified by the believer³⁰; however, it is important for the believer to keep the Sabbath and also have the support and fellowship of other brethren whenever possible. In some situations, family members can be hostile toward God and the believer. If there are children, they should be nurtured toward God; but, again, an unbelieving spouse can make this difficult. Unconverted family members can make for very challenging circumstances that can be warning signs of worse issues that need to be addressed.
- Spending time with unbelieving neighbors, friends, etc. is generally not a good idea unless they have a sincere respect for God, the believer, *and* they desire to learn about God's truth. In most cases, it is probably best to spend time with them outside of the Sabbath.
- Answering the door bell. Salesmen, peddlers, people conducting surveys, evangelizing Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, children on Halloween, etc., should be avoided.
- Spending time with children. Parents absolutely need to spend time with their children, especially on the Sabbath. Time with them should include activities that set the Sabbath apart from the other week days. However, parents should also expect the unexpected. Children are occasionally extremely needy, as is the case with infants or a sick child. Anticipate disruptions on the Sabbath from time to time because it will happen to every parent.

³⁰ 1 Corinthians 7:14.

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6) Is it something we SHOULD be doing? Sabbath activities that are **absolutely appropriate** include:

- Going for a walk,
- Sharing a meal with believers.
- Visiting a believer in the hospital,
- Writing letters or cards to brethren,
- Meditating on God's Word,
- Talking with believers,
- Praying alone or with believers,
- Studying alone or with believers,
- Keeping the Sabbath alone or with believers,
- Writing a psalm,
- Singing hymns,
- PRAYING!
- STUDYING!
- FASTING! (As necessary.)
- EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST WITH WORKS OF AGAPE LOVE!

The above lists are far from complete. They are only intended to prompt the reader to think about, and prepare for, the Sabbath rather than be an inventory of mandates or directives for keeping the Sabbath. Jesus Christ said, "**The Sabbath was made for man**, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is time that God sets apart (makes holy) to be with His children. What Jesus is saying is that God made the Sabbath a time for people to seek Him; not the other way around. God is always there for us on the Sabbath but how we make time for God is heavily influenced by how we prepare for it. Fewer distractions mean more time with God. Do we prepare to spend each Sabbath with our Father and Jesus Christ? Do we seek ways to edify the Body of Christ on the Sabbath in agape love? If so, it will be a blessing beyond expectations!

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