

Sunday is the Son's Day

Exodus 20:8-11

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In 1611, every minister in Virginia was required to read, *"The Articles, Laws and Orders"* to his congregation every Sunday, reminding them failure to attend church twice each Lord's Day was punishable in the first instance by the loss of a day's food. A second offense resulted in a whipping and a third led to six months of rowing in the colony's galleys.

One seafaring man named Captain Kemble, who returned home to Boston on a Sunday after three years at sea, profaned the Sabbath *"by lewd and unseemly behavior."* His crime was publicly kissing his wife on Sunday, a transgression which earned him several hours of public humiliation in the stocks.

In the 1600s, a man in Scotland was arrested for smiling on Sunday. Jonathan Edwards resolved never to tell a funny story in his sermons. The first train to run on Sunday was met in Glasgow by an enraged group of clergymen who told the passengers they had just purchased a ticket to Hell.

Erwin Lutzer tells of a pastor during the time of the Puritans who lived in an area with a lot of ice and snow. One Sunday, he decided it would be faster to skate to church. After the service, the deacons called an emergency meeting to decide whether it was right for a pastor to skate to church on a Sunday. After several hours, they told him, *"Yes, you can skate to church on Sundays, just as long as you don't enjoy it."*

The fourth commandment, more than the others, is either dismissed as an outdated rule, or followed with legalistic fervor and not much smiling. We need to lean in and listen because this commandment deals with 1/7, or 14% of our time.

Last weekend, Commandment #3 clobbered us as we were challenged to watch our lives and our lips, so we don't take God's name in vain. *We were urged to see God as weighty, so we don't take His name lightly.*

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 tells us these commands are to be *inscribed* on our hearts so we can *impress* them upon our children. As a way to get these commandments into our heads and hearts, we're encouraging everyone to take a bookmark and work at memorizing these short phrases. If you're ready to recite them from

memory, please stand with me. By the end of the series, I'm hoping everyone will be able to stand and quote them.

1. One God
2. No idols
3. Revere His Name
4. Remember to Rest
5. Honor Parents
6. No murder
7. No adultery
8. No stealing
9. No lying
- 10.No coveting

If the third commandment charges us to honor God with our words, the fourth calls us to honor God with our time. Let's give our undivided attention now to Exodus 20:8-11: ***“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”***

Let's begin with some observations:

- 1. This is the first positive command.** The only other command that's not stated negatively is the fifth one: ***“Honor your father and mother.”***
- 2. This is the final vertical command.** The first four have to do with our relationship with God; the next six deal with our relationships with others.
- 3. This is the longest of the 10 Commandments.** According to my count, this command has 98 words. The final five commandments, *altogether*, take up just 53 words. God has almost twice as much to say about remembering the Sabbath day *than He does about murder, theft, adultery, lying, or coveting combined.*
- 4. This commandment is mentioned in the Old Testament more than any other.** With over 100 references, this shows how important it is to God.
- 5. This commandment is difficult to interpret and the most controversial.** More has been written and debated about this commandment than perhaps any other one. I heard of one Baptist fellowship which split into three separate groups because they had differences of opinion about how to interpret and apply it. I'll

probably say something you'll disagree with. I'm OK with that as long as we don't split over it.

6. This is the only one of the 10 Commandments not quoted in the New Testament.

7. This command meant a lot to the Israelites. Think of how this would have felt to people who just spent the last 400 years working as slaves with no days off!

Here's where we're headed. We'll begin with the *purposes* of this command. Then, we'll draw out some *principles* from how Jesus dealt with this command. We'll follow this with some *parameters* and end with some *practical* ways to apply it today.

Here's our main idea: *Set apart one day in seven to stop what you are doing to remember the Lord as Creator and Redeemer as you look forward to the eternal rest only Christ provides.*

The Purposes of the Commandment

1. Remember to rest. This is stated clearly in verse 8: ***“Remember the Sabbath day...”*** The word ***“remember”*** means, *“to recall, to mark, to set aside.”* In the Hebrew, ***“remembering”*** is not just recalling something; it implies a change of behavior, so our lives line up with what we've been reminded of. We're to ponder and then put it into practice. In this sense, to remember is *“to embrace and own for ourselves.”* The word ***“remember”*** is used over 200 times in the Bible, because we have a tendency to forget and neglect.

Deuteronomy 5 is a restatement of the Commandments for a new generation. We read in verse 12: ***“Observe the Sabbath Day...”*** The word ***“Sabbath”*** or ***“Shabbat,”*** while observed on Saturday, does not mean seventh or Saturday as commonly thought. ***“Sabbath”*** is defined as, *“A cessation from labor; a day to desist from exertion.”* Ligon Duncan calls it the *“the stop-working day.”* The word ***“rest”*** means, *“to settle down and be quiet.”*

Have you noticed how many times people answer the question, *“How are you?”* with this phrase, *“I'm busy”* or *“I'm crazy busy”* or *“Our family is going in a hundred different directions.”* It's as if we need to validate our lives by letting people know how busy we are.

I'm reminded of the song sung by Archibald on Veggie Tales: *“I'm busy, busy, dreadfully busy; you've no idea what I have to do; busy, busy, shockingly busy;*

much, much too busy for you.” When people tell me why they haven’t been gathering for worship, the number one reason I hear is, *“We’ve just been so busy.”* Let me be quick to say, I recognize Covid concerns have made things more complicated and I’m glad a number of you are connecting on Cozi or via Livestream.

God wants us to rest so we can be refreshed. Sabbath is designed to be a gift, not a grind. This is fleshed out a few chapters later. Listen to Exodus 23:12: ***“Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.”***

Interestingly, according to Exodus 31:17, God found refreshment when He rested: ***“...on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.”*** God didn’t need to rest because He was tired because Isaiah 40:28 says, ***“He neither faints nor is weary.”*** He rested not because He was exhausted but to enjoy what He created. After all, at the end of creation He exclaimed in Genesis 1:31: ***“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good.”***

2. Remember God’s rhythm. Whatever else we think about this commandment, we can all agree a good God set up regular rhythms of work and rest, of labor followed by leisure. Look at verse 9: ***“Six days you shall labor and do all your work”*** and verse 10: ***“But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work...”***

The phrase ***“shall labor”*** carries the idea of *“must.”* ***“Labor”*** refers to the general things we do, in and outside the home, to keep things going. ***“Work”*** is what we do for our livelihood. We’re exhorted to exert ourselves in labor, service, and work for six-sevenths of our time, which is actually very generous of God.

Kevin DeYoung writes, *“Every time and everywhere we cycle through Sunday-Monday-Tuesday-Wednesday-Thursday-Friday-Saturday, we are embodying the Sabbath principles introduced into the world by God Himself.”*

God established the pattern of working and resting when He provided His people with manna to eat. They were to collect twice as much on the sixth day so they would not work on the seventh. Exodus 16:23: ***“...tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.”***

While some of us struggle with overwork, it seems others are losing their work ethic. With millions of jobs available, there are relatively few applicants. This week, Daniel Henninger, writing for The Wall Street Journal, offered this insight: *“I believe the pandemic accelerated a transition evident for years away from the basic concept of daily work and toward an emerging idea that life is less about work and more about play. Life as a nonstop game.”*

According to recent statistics revealed by The Wall Street Journal, there are currently 8 million fewer Americans working than before the advent of COVID-19. Employers are lamenting that people are not flocking to take these jobs because they’re tired of not working. Rather, the evidence is that millions upon millions of Americans have decided they like *not* working.

Albert Mohler made this observation on *The Briefing* this week: *“The Sabbath command only makes sense if the normal mode of human activity is work rather than rest.”*

God calls us to be a people who are productive by doing an honest week’s work: 2 Thessalonians 3:10: ***“For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: ‘If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.’”*** We are commissioned and commanded to work.

According to Genesis 2:15, labor has always been part of God’s plan for us, even before the fall. As much as you might not care for your job, work itself is not part of the curse. He has placed each of us on purpose to be involved in His purposes.

While the Israelites were to work for six days, one day of rest was compulsory and comprehensive, and it was for everyone in the household: ***“...or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.”*** Parents are to run point on this, making sure sons and daughters know six days are for work and one day is to be dedicated to worship.

3. Remember to revere. The purpose of remembering the Sabbath is to ***“keep it holy.”*** This is an emphatic imperative. The root means to *“separate, to set apart.”* It’s also translated as, *“to elevate.”* God set the Sabbath apart for a high and holy purpose. One commentator offers this translation: *“Remember the stop-working day by observing its sacredness.”* Jen Wilken writes, *“But true Sabbath rest is set apart as holy: it is intended for worship as much as for well-being.”*

According to Leviticus 23:3, God's people are to congregate one day a week to consecrate themselves: ***“Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation.”*** Just as our checkbooks reveal our values, so do our calendars. We schedule activities because they are important to us. Let's make sure our calendars reflect time for weekly corporate worship.

Our model for revering on one special day is God Himself according to verse 11: ***“For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”***

BTW, this is clear evidence against evolution as the word **“day”** in Hebrew refers to a 24-hour period. God worked His creative wonders in six literal days, and He rested for one 24-hour day. The word **“blessed”** means, *“to bow and show favor.”* From the very beginning, God shined His special favor on the Sabbath day. He calls His people to do the same.

4. Remember God's redemption. While the Exodus passage connects this command to creation, some 40 years later, after restating the fourth commandment, Moses linked it to redemption in Deuteronomy 5:15: ***“You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”***

For the sake of our own souls, it's good to set aside a day to focus on how God has redeemed us from the slavery of sin. If you don't have this weekly reminder, you'll forget all God has done for you and you'll end up taking His grace for granted. *If you unplug, you'll unravel and become ungrateful.*

5. Remember to rely. When the Israelites kept the Sabbath, it was a way to rely on God to provide for their needs. God set up the Sabbath and He promised to take care of His people as evidenced by how He provided double the manna the day before the Sabbath in Exodus 16:29-30: ***“See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.”***

To take one day to rest was a trust test. God showed them they didn't have to frantically work seven days a week to provide for their own needs. I like how Jen Wilken puts it: *“Sabbath is the deliberate cessation of any activity that might*

reinforce my belief in my own self-sufficiency. In contrast to cultural ideas of rest marked by self-care, Sabbath rest is marked by self-denial...it reminds us that we are not God.”

Exodus 31:12-13 shows the Sabbath was a sign to the Israelites they belonged to God and He would take care of them: **“And the Lord said to Moses, ‘You are to speak to the people of Israel, and say ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.’”** Just as the rainbow was a sign of promise to Noah, and circumcision was the sign to Abraham, so the Sabbath was a sign to Moses that God would take care of His people if they learned to trust Him.

By way of summary, here are the five purposes of the fourth commandment.

- Remember to rest
- Remember God’s rhythm
- Remember to revere
- Remember God’s redemption
- Remember to rely

Set apart one day in seven to stop what you are doing to remember the Lord as Creator and Redeemer as you look forward to the eternal rest only Christ provides.

The Principles of the Commandment

Now, let’s draw out some principles from how Jesus viewed the Sabbath. I’m grateful to Ray Fowler for his insights.

1. Jesus gathered for public worship one day a week. We see this in Luke 4:16: **“And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as was His custom, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and He stood up to read.”** It was customary for Christ to regularly gather for weekly worship. If this was a priority to Jesus, it should be a priority to us.

2. Jesus healed on the Sabbath. A case could be made Jesus intentionally healed people on the Sabbath because He did so on six occasions, riling up the religious leaders each time. Serving as religious traffic cops, the Pharisees enjoyed writing tickets about Sabbath-breaking. Jesus showed that doing good and doing works of

mercy were to be celebrated on the Sabbath. Listen to Matthew 12:12: ***“So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”***

3. Jesus proclaimed Himself as Lord of the Sabbath. At that time, Jewish leaders followed 39 Sabbath clarifications, with each having multiple subdivisions, for a total of more than 1500 prohibitions. For instance, you couldn't kill a flea which landed on your arm because you would be guilty of hunting on the Sabbath. If a man's ox fell into the ditch, he could pull it out but if a man fell in, he had to stay there. You could dip your radish in salt but if you left it there too long you were pickling it, and thus working.

One time, Jesus and His disciples were walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath and the disciples picked the heads of grain and began to eat. The Pharisees quickly condemned them. Jesus pointed to the example of David and his companions who ate consecrated bread when they were hungry. Then He told the Pharisees in Matthew 12:6-8: ***“I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”***

Jesus is Sovereign over the Sabbath. He owns it and frees us to do acts of mercy for mankind as we live on mission for His glory.

4. Jesus taught the Sabbath was for our benefit. In Mark 2:27, Jesus said: ***“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath..”*** The Sabbath was never intended to be a burden but rather a blessing. The Sabbath was given to people out of the grace of God. This day of rest was to be a time of refreshment not a day of restriction, a delight, not a duty. Unfortunately, because the religious leaders had added a bunch of laws, rules, and regulations to it, it had become burdensome.

Let's ask the obvious question. If Jesus kept all the commandments, why did He not follow the Sabbath regulations? My answer is He did follow the Sabbath commandment, but He purposely showed the emptiness of man-made rules and regulations.

The Parameters of the Commandment

Now, let's look at some parameters by wading into some controversial waters by addressing the question, *“When should we worship?”* There are three main views.

1. Saturday Sabbath View. This view, held by Seventh Day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists, holds that gathered worship should take place on the Sabbath, which is Saturday.

2. Sunday Sabbath View. Those who follow this perspective believe Sunday has replaced the Sabbath, so its rules and regulations should still be followed. This perspective was promoted by the Puritans and is spelled out in the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

3. Weekend Worship View. In this understanding, the celebration of our salvation culminates in a weekend worship service. This gathering can take place any day of the week. Acts 2:46 states: ***“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes...”***

Since there is no stipulated day of worship in the New Testament, the early church voluntarily set aside Sunday as the Son’s Day. The shift begins in the Gospels and picks up steam in the practice of the early church. Theologian B.B. Warfield put it like this: *“Christ took the Sabbath into the grave with Him and brought the Lord’s Day out of the grave with Him on the Resurrection.”*

Here are three passages which show believers gathered on Sundays.

- Acts 20:7: ***“On the first day of the week, when we gathered together to break bread...”***
- 1 Corinthians 16:2: ***“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.”***
- Revelation 1:10: ***“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...”***

In the Book of Galatians, Paul was concerned about Jewish believers who started out strong but were going back to following the Law and all its demands. Paul asked some penetrating questions in Galatians 4:9: ***“But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?”*** He answered these questions in verses 10-11: ***“You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.”*** Christians are under no obligation to go back to calendar feast days or the observance of Saturday Sabbath because we have been freed from the Mosaic law.

In Romans 14:5-6, Paul is a bit softer in his approach as he establishes the principle of liberty. While some Christ followers from a Jewish background had a hard time letting go of the Sabbath, others worshipped on Sunday. Paul basically tells everyone to take a chill pill and gives us freedom to worship on any day of the week: ***“One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor to the Lord...”*** We have the best of both worlds at Edgewood because you can choose to gather on Saturday or on Sunday.

Practicing the Commandment

Here’s my take on how to take the fourth commandment: *Let’s preserve the Sabbath principle by setting aside Sunday, or another day, as the Son’s Day.* The principle behind Sabbath remains the same: *Set apart one day in seven to stop what you are doing to remember the Lord as Creator and Redeemer as you look forward to the eternal rest only Christ provides.*

One pastor captured it this way: *“For one day, it moves us from life as a ‘human doing’ to life as a ‘human being.’”* We give God one day in seven because seven out of seven belong to Him! For the Christian, every day is Sunday.

In 1890, the town of Evanston, Illinois passed a law forbidding the sale of ice cream sodas on Sunday. One creative businessman got around this by selling ice cream with chocolate sauce instead of mixing it with soda water. This new dessert became so popular people began asking for a *“Sunday.”* When some objected to a dessert being named after the Lord’s Day, they changed the spelling to *“Sundae.”* The next time you slurp down a Sundae, remember this came about as a result of some people who wanted to respect the Lord’s Day and others who were looking for a loophole.

As a way to help us enjoy our liberty without becoming legalistic or looking for loopholes, let’s go back to the five purposes and personalize them by considering these questions.

- Do you have one day a week in which you unplug in order to *rest*?
- What one decision will you make to get your calendar back in *rhythm*?
- What disciplines will you implement in order to *revere* God on one specific day?
- Who can you share your *redemption* story with this week?

- What one activity will you stop doing and what's one thing you'll start doing to demonstrate you're ready to *rely* on the Lord?

In preparation for this sermon, I listened to a sermon by Alistair Begg. I really appreciated his title: "*Holy Day or Holiday?*" Here are some additional action steps to help us make at least one day a week a holy day, not just a holiday.

1. **As you seek to tithe the financial treasures God has entrusted to you, begin tithing the time God has given you.** If the average work week is 40 hours, what would it look like to give 10%, or four hours, to serving Christ and His kingdom?
2. **Prepare for worship before you arrive.** Most of us think weekend worship prepares us to handle the rest of the week. I wonder what would happen if we treated the other six days as preparation for weekend worship?
3. **Discipline yourself to gather weekly with God's people.** Pick a preferred service and if something happens one particular week, work at worshipping on another day and time. If you're not able to gather in person, engage online. Hebrews 10:25: "*Not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*"
4. **Deliberately slow the pace in your family.** Some of us are so overscheduled there's no time for rest, refreshment, or rejoicing together.
5. **Spend time with your neighbors on your day of rest.** Visit a discouraged friend. Invite someone over.
6. **Repent and receive the salvation rest Jesus offers.** Sabbath is all about rest. Instead of being busy and working to be accepted by God, it's time to believe and rest in your acceptance. The promise of a temporary Sabbath rest is a picture of the eternal rest only Christ provides. Once you repent, believe and receive Him, you will find the only rest that will satisfy your soul.

Someone said it like this: "*Before Christ, we worked all week and then rested on Saturday. They worked to earn their rest. Now that Christ has risen from the dead, we rest on the first day of the week because the work of salvation has been accomplished for us.*"

Hebrews 4:9-11: "*So then, there remains a Sabbath–rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.*"

There are only two ways to get to heaven.

- **You can try to work your way in, which will never work.**
- **Or you get in by the work of another.** We must rest from all efforts to be saved by our own works because in Christ we find a total rest.

Ultimately, we keep the Fourth Commandment by resting in the finished work of Christ. Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 11:28-29: ***“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”***

Yes, we’re busy and tired and going in a hundred different directions. It’s time to cease striving and stop trying to measure up to God’s standards by entering the Son’s Sabbath rest now...it may even help you smile.

If you’re ready to repent and receive the salvation rest Jesus freely offers you, please pray this prayer with me: *“Jesus, thank You for fully keeping the commands because I haven’t and can’t keep them. I have not been resting or revering You. In fact, I’m restless and my sins are consuming me. I confess I am a sinner and I’m ready to repent of my sins. I believe You paid the price for my sins by dying on the cross and You showed Your power by rising from the dead on the third day. I now receive You as my Savior, my Mediator, and my Lord. Come into my life and give me rest. Lead me to follow You faithfully from now on. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”*