

**God's Answer to Hurry, Scurry, & Worry**  
 The Fourth Commandment  
 Exodus 20:8-11

In the 1960s, expert testimony was given to a Senate subcommittee about time management. Their concern was what would we do with all our free time in the future. With all the advances in technology, it was believed that in twenty or thirty years we would have an overabundance of free time. Experts suggested we would have to drastically cut back on how many hours we worked, and how many weeks we worked each year. We would retire decades earlier. Now let me ask, how many of you are struggling with what to do with all your free time?

If anything, the opposite is true. Certainly we have all sorts of time-saving gadgets and gizmos, but all they do is allow us to squeeze even more in our jam-packed schedules. American life is filled with hurry, scurry and worry. We are always on the go. We have places to be, people to see, things to do, and not enough time to do it in. Our agendas crammed, calendars crowded, and nerves frazzled.

This is a ruthless way to live, but many of us feel constantly driven to excel, driven to accomplish, driven to perform. We live on a treadmill set 2 notches higher than what we can keep pace with. Drivenness doesn't let up. It knows no end.

This can be a real struggle for men. So much of our identity is tied up in our work. Many of us were raised with this clear message – you are what you accomplish. If we're not working harder, working more, working later, we feel less than. This can be a real struggle for women. You've been told you can be superwoman. You can have a successful career, be a great mom, and a smoking hot wife. You should be able to do it all and do it perfectly. The clock turns way too fast to do it all. We forget that we are human beings; not human doings.

We lie to ourselves. We pretend there is an end in sight. "If I could do just a little more. If I could just get up to date and back on schedule. Just a little more, and I'm sure to get the promotion. When the kids all get out of diapers. When they're all in school. When they're all graduated. When they're all out of the house." But it never ends. That slowdown is like a mirage of water on a hot summer highway, it never gets any closer.

What if I told you the answer to this treadmill of hurry, scurry and worry is more than 4,000 years old? In the fourth commandment there is a timeless principle, as old as creation itself, that acts like a reset button for our crammed calendars, commanding clocks, and our taskmaster to-do lists. Here's what we read in Exodus 20:8-10.

**(2 Slides)** *"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.*

What God is saying here is, “Don't let time be your God, I AM your God.” Entrust your time to the one who is over time, who created time, who knows the past and the future, for whom a day is like a 1,000 years, and a 1,000 years is like a day. Take time to be with the one who will one day say “time's up” on time, and the flow of history will come to a just conclusion at the foot of His throne. Take a break from tiresome and wearisome earthly labors and enjoy a time of rest in the love of your Heavenly Father and enjoy his many good gifts.

To remind the children of Israel of this priority he gave them what is called the *Sabbath*. *The Hebrew Shabbat comes from a word meaning to stop, cease what you are doing, take a break, and Sabbath carried the promise of rest.*

So, when God says, “Stop. Rest.” Just what is it are we resting from. Vs. 9 uses two different words, “*labor*” and “*work*.” This refers to the work that we do, and the physical effects that work has on it. It makes us tired. It makes us weary. You know what that's like. Your muscles feel like jelly, your back is sore, and your head aches. Your emotional battery is completely drained. One more whiny kid. One more clueless co-worker and you're going to lose it. Your brain cannot process one more thing. When this happens day after day, week after week, year after year, you have little to give your family, and to God

For this reason, God tells Israel to “*remember the Sabbath*.” “*Remember*” means more than just a casual acknowledgment, or a note scribbled on the calendar. To remember something required action. To remember was to do something about it. The Sabbath was never to be an empty ritual, but a time of rest, renewal, and rejuvenation.

*The 4th commandment is unique in three ways. First, it, along with the 5th commandment, are the only commandments stated in the positive.* All the other commandments are “*You shall not*.” This one is “*You shall*.” The emphasis is not on the “not working,” but the remembering part. Remember to stop. Remember to rest. Remember me.

*Second, this commandment is the longest of the ten.* Many see this as the least important, in fact, it is probably the most ignored commandment by Christians, but in the sheer number of words God uses, we can see that He thought it was very important – more than 30% of the text.

Maybe the reason we tend to overlook the importance of this commandment is the third thing that makes it unique. *It is also the only commandment that is not restated in some way in the NT.* All of the other commandments are in some way restated in the New Covenant. But this one is not. In Romans 14, Paul says whether you think one day is more special than the others, or you think all days are equally the same, do so to the Lord, and give others the freedom to do the same. So, what are we as New Covenant followers of Jesus supposed to do with Sabbath?

### **I. SABBATH IN THE N.T.**

God in His sovereign wisdom chose not to have NT believers keep the Sabbath as a formal

observance. Nowhere in the NT are we instructed to observe a specific day as a Sabbath. The N.T. talks about a spiritual Sabbath awaiting us in Heaven, a time of eternal rest and refreshing from our wearisome time on earth. Heb. 4:9 says, *“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.”* It's talking about eternity.

The Church has always celebrated the first day of the week. From the earliest days of the church in the book of Acts, followers of Christ came together for fellowship, prayer, the Lord's Supper, and the teaching of the Word on the first day of the week.

We see this in Ac 20:7 where it says, *“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.”* Paul would write to the Corinthian church about a special offering, *“On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.”* He says that because that was the day they came together for worship. By the time the apostle John writes Revelation, the first day of the week was known among the churches simply as the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10).

The early Christians picked the first day for good reason – the resurrection of Jesus happened on the first day. The day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was first poured out and the church began was on a Sunday.

But nowhere in the Bible are we told that Sunday is the NT Sabbath. Nowhere are we told that the one replaced the other. We are certainly called to meet together, to worship, to pray, to teach and learn, to take communion, but never are we told that Sunday was to be observed as a formal Sabbath. In fact, it would have been impossible for those early Christians.

The vast majority of them were slaves or servants, who would have been required to work on Sunday. That is why they assembled either early in the morning or late in the night. You may remember Eutychus, who fell out of a window during a late night church assembly.

## II. SABBATH AND CREATION

Unfortunately, many Christians stop here in their consideration of the Sabbath, but if we do that we miss the heart of the Commandment and miss a tremendous grace of God. When we peel back the legal requirements of the 4th commandment, we find a timeless principle that is as relevant today as it has ever been. This timeless truth is that we need regular and consistent periods of rest and refreshing. This isn't based the OT Law. It is rooted in creation itself.

This commandment points back to creation. Verse 11 says, *“For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath and made it holy.”*

God created the principle of Sabbath long before the Law. He wove it into creation itself. There are the cycles of seasons – periods of blossom and growth followed by a time of dormancy.

There is day and night. Creatures, by instinct, know when to hunt and breed, and when to sleep and hibernate. Such circadian and biorhythms are built into all of nature.

God modeled this himself when He rested after creation. Why did God rest? Was it because he was tired? Was the Almighty pooped? Certainly not! He is all-powerful. His strength is infinite. He created the universe with the mere mention of His word.

God didn't rest for His own sake, but for ours. He was setting a pattern for creation. He was modeling an example for us to follow. The seven day cycles we follow are not something we made up, but they are built in to creation itself. A part of this design is that we need regular times for rest and renewal. Jesus practiced this. The gospels tell us he would often withdraw to a lonely place. He needed renewal.

Outside of the Bible, science has shown we are healthier, happier, and more productive when we truly rest from our work one day a week. However, when we continue without a break, we pay a steep price physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

### **III. FOUR BENEFITS OF SABBATH**

So, the NT doesn't assign a specific day or a specific time that we are required to observe, but God still invites to times of rest and renewal. He gives us the freedom to choose when and where and how, but still he calls us to observe times of refreshing. I want to give you four benefits to practicing Sabbath in your life. This answers the "Why?" question.

#### **A. Guard Against Materialism**

Number one – guard against materialism. There is always a temptation to get just a little more. We'll find ourselves working long hours, sacrificing faith and family, just to live in a bigger house, to drive a nicer car, to have just a little more. If I just put in a few more hours today we can afford to get that car, go on that vacation, add on that room. We work a little more so that we can add to our collection of earthly trinkets.

We are to work for our needs, in fact, the Bible says that we are to work hard. The Bible teaches a strong work ethic. Work can be and should be a holy thing. But never is our work to become an idol, or serve another idol. When work becomes an idol or serves an idol, that's when we become workaholic. Work no longer serves us. We serve it. Our self-worth and identity no longer come from God, but are rooted in our work, our achievement, in our income.

We must always be busy. We work over breakfast, we work over lunch, and often over supper. We have work phones that are always on us and always on so that our work can find us wherever we are. We work 60 and 70 hours. We work two and three jobs. The motto, "anytime, anywhere" becomes "everytime, everywhere."

Our work should further God's purpose in our lives and bring Him glory, not serve the false gods of wealth and possessions. Regular Sabbath rest keeps these idols toppled and guards our

hearts against materialism.

### **B. Enjoy God's Creation**

Secondly, Sabbath gives us time to enjoy God's creation. It's a chance to enjoy this life filled with the good gifts of God. This might be a new concept for you, but a part of Sabbath is a healthy theology of play. Think about what play is – its doing something simply because he brings you joy and delight. German Theologian Jurgen Moltmann asks a very interesting question, "Why did God create the universe if he is a free and all sufficient being?"

A part of the answer comes from Proverbs. Creation was God at play. It brought God joy and delight to create the world and make us. Proverbs 8 is a poem which personifies wisdom, and it talks about how wisdom was born "*at the very beginning when the world came to be (23).*" Wisdom was at God's side when he made the world. Listen to what Proverbs 8:30-31 say.

*Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.*

It sounds like a child at play. God even included the angels in his joyous sandbox of creation, Job 38:7 says this about creation, "*The morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy.*"

We are creatures uniquely made in the image of God, and Sabbath gives us the opportunity to join with our Creator in delighting in the beauty, wonder, the extravagance, the glory of His creation. The fact that God rested tells us that we don't always have to be doing something useful, and God invites us to play with him. Whether it's a day on the water, a hike in the woods, a spirited game with your friends, or taking a ride through the countryside – sometimes the holiest thing you can do is delight in the life God has given.

### **C. Enjoy God**

Thirdly, Sabbath creates time for us to enjoy God. The Sabbath, though it may be a day of relaxation and play, is more than a day off. It gives us time to enjoy God. Ex. 31:13 says that one purpose of the Sabbath was "*so that you may know I am the LORD.*" Lev. 23:3 called it a day of "*sacred assembly.*" Is. 58:13-14 encourages the Israelites to delight in the Sabbath so they will find their joy in the Lord. It's obvious from these passages that one of God's purposes in the Sabbath was spiritual refreshing.

### **D. Trust God**

A final why of the Sabbath is that it teaches us to trust God. When we hurry, scurry, and worry through life at a workaholic pace we are betraying a lack of trust in God. We are saying I don't think God can carry me through. I have to do it all myself. But when we take regular Sabbath from our earthly work, we declare in faith that God is in control, God can provide for my needs according to His riches in glory.

Sabbath is a reset button every week that allows us to get on His schedule. Sabbath enables us to trust God with our time, just as giving and offerings enable us to trust him with our money.

#### **IV. How to Create Sabbath**

Before we wrap this up, let me give you three steps for creating Sabbath in your life. I'm calling these three steps, but don't be misled. It's a journey, and it can be a difficult journey. This is a journey I'm still on. I'm still learning. I'm still discovering, and I still don't get this right.

If you're a workaholic, practicing Sabbath can be terrifying, because doing nothing makes us feel vulnerable. Overworking hides our feelings of inadequacy not just from others, but from ourselves. We feel like we have to be good enough, but Sabbath helps us see that God is enough. Take a step. Begin your journey, and keep going.

##### **A. Free Your Time**

First, free your time. Make space for your Sabbath. Your schedule, deadlines and to-do lists will never stop themselves and give you the time you need. You have to stop.

Pick a day, any day, and it doesn't have to be midnight to midnight. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the day began at 6 in the evening. Maybe that works for you. If you absolutely believe that you cannot do a 24 hour period, start with half a day. Start somewhere. Block off that section of time.

Embrace your limits. Discard the illusion that you are indispensable to the running of the world. Recognize that we will never finish all our goals and projects, and that God is still on the throne, and He has things well in hand.

Free your time, and let those who need to know that that time is not available to them. Don't do this rudely. This doesn't mean you block out your wife or your family. Maybe this is something you do with them. You share Sabbath together. Number 1 – free your time.

##### **B. Find Your Delights**

Number two, find your delights. God delighted in creation. He called it "very good." So, make a list of the people and activities that bring you delight. Then, in that time you have freed for Sabbath, spend time with those people and in those activities, and say no to everything else.

This is where we avoid the legalism of the Pharisees, who made extensive lists of what counted as work and what didn't, then they spent the rest of their time trying to figure out loopholes around their lists. This isn't about "It's Sabbath, you can't drive to the store." "It's Sabbath, you can't mow the lawn." If those things bring you delight, do them. If they don't, then don't do them.

For one person, mowing the lawn is a relaxing, enjoyable activity. For another, they dread it, it's just one more thing that has to be done every week.

Do the things that recharge your batteries. Avoid everything that drains them. The world will not end because you put one of those things off one day. You need this. God wants you to have this. What's on your list? Taking a hike, curling up with a good book, hitting the links, taking the boat to your favorite fishing hole, sharing a cup of coffee with a certain friend, spending some time in the shop and making something with your hands? Delight in those things. Thank God for those things. Celebrate those things. Find your delights.

### **C. Focus Your Thoughts**

Thirdly, focus your thoughts. This is my way of saying spend some time contemplating and meditating on God. Sabbath is more than a day off. Worship, prayer, and scripture are indispensable parts of any good Sabbath. For this reason, it makes sense for many Christ-followers to include Sunday morning as a part of their Sabbath. I was talking to one guy who practices Sabbath from noon on Saturday to noon on Sunday. Whatever chores he has to do, he gets done either Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon. But Saturday afternoons and evenings are focused on delight, and Sunday mornings are focused on God.

We are just scratching the surface of a very important issue, but we are out of time. But let me wrap it up by saying this. Sabbath is a core habit of spiritual formation. It is an essential spiritual discipline. We all know things like reading the Bible, prayer, and worship are important. So is this.

We are not saved by reading the Bible. We are not saved by prayer. We are not saved by worship, nor are we saved by practicing Sabbath delight. We are saved by Christ alone, but if we aren't doing these things, we won't be a close to Jesus. We won't be growing in Jesus. We won't be enjoying Jesus like we should. A Sabbath lifestyle is a celebration that God's rest can free us from the cacophony of our own busyness.

Peter Scazzero writes in *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*,

On Sabbath, we practice eternity in time. We look forward to that day at the end of our earthly lives when we will perfectly stop, rest, delight, and contemplate the glory of God.