

Rest



SABBATH—MAY 16

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:2, 3; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Isaiah 58:12–14; Ezekiel 20:12; Hebrews 4:9–11.

MEMORY VERSE: “Then Jesus said to them, ‘The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath day. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day’ ” (Mark 2:27, 28, NlrV).

THE SABBATH WOULD BE THE BEST MEDICINE for people living at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is the medicine badly needed by millions of people who suffer from stress, heart problems, and burnout. The Sabbath offers escape from the never-ending pressures of modern life. It gives us an opportunity (chance) to recharge our empty batteries and to focus on what is really important in life. The Sabbath tells us that there is a time to close the door of our home and our mind to the business of the world outside and to come into the presence of God, who made us and who knows what we need.

“If there is any command that modern people need, it is the Sabbath. We are very busy trying to create meaning in our own life. In so doing, we forget that God is the only One who can give meaning to our lives. We show our ‘resting’ in Him by resting on His day.”—Adapted from Jon L. Dybdahl, *Exodus*, The Abundant Life Bible Amplifier (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1994), page 186.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Why is the Sabbath so important for us? Why did God set up the Sabbath? What is holy time? Who or what makes the Sabbath holy? How can we make Sabbath keeping a delightful and meaningful experience?

SUNDAY—MAY 17**GOD'S GIFT FOR BUSY PEOPLE
(Genesis 2:2, 3)**

Two basic things for all people start from the first week of earth's history: marriage and the Sabbath. They are an important part of God's plan for human happiness. No wonder that both things have, throughout history, been so much under attack from Satan. God knew what people would need so He created time with a perfect cycle of six "normal" days plus one special day: the Sabbath. And ever since, those who have respected God's weekly time-honored plan have been blessed by it.

According to Genesis 2:2, 3, why did God Himself rest on the seventh day after the creation of the world?

According to Ezekiel 20:12, 20, how does the prophet (special messenger) Ezekiel refer to the Sabbath? How does that tell us we should honor it?

"After resting upon the seventh day, God made the Sabbath holy and set it apart as a day of rest for man. Following the example of God, men, women, and children were to rest upon this holy day. During that time, humankind should look upon the heavens and the earth and wonder upon God's great work of creation. Humankind also should see the evi-

dences [proof] of God's wisdom and goodness. Then man's heart might be filled with love and respect for his Maker.

"God saw that a Sabbath was very important for man, even in the Garden of Eden. Man needed to lay aside his own work and interests for one day of the seven. In this way, he might more fully wonder at the works of God and think about His power and goodness. Man needed a Sabbath to remind him more clearly of God and to awaken his thoughtful spirit because all that he had and enjoyed came from the goodness and kindness of the Creator."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 47, 48.



Adam and Eve rested on the seventh day from all their work.

What is your experience with the Sabbath? Do you enjoy it? Do you appreciate God more from thinking about the wonders of His creation? If not, what changes could you make that could help you have

a more fulfilling Sabbath experience?

MONDAY—MAY 18

HOLY TIME (Isaiah 58:13)

The word *holy* appears in the Bible in different settings. People are sometimes called holy. In the same way, things or time periods are called holy once in a while. The basic meaning is “to set aside for a special use.” Priests were *holy* people because they were chosen for service in the sanctuary.¹ They handled *holy* vessels, which were only used for special purposes. In the same way, *holy* days are marked by God for a special purpose. Once they have been chosen as *holy*, they are no longer available for common use. This is because they have been chosen for a higher purpose. The activities on such *holy* days must follow God’s purpose for the Sabbath.

We must “remember” to keep the Sabbath holy. According to Genesis 2:3 and Isaiah 58:13, do we or does God make the day holy? What difference does that make?

“The Sabbath is a powerful witness to the rulership of God. Only God can create. And only He can make something holy. This is why Adventists do not agree with the change from Sabbath to Sunday as the Christian day of rest and worship. Without a clear command from God, such a change is really

an insult to Him.”—Adapted from Richard Rice, *The Reign of God* (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Andrews University Press, 1997), page 403.

How does Exodus 31:12, 13 show that the weekly holy seventh-day Sabbath influences (affects) those who choose to obey the command to keep the Sabbath according to God’s chosen day of holy time?

Keeping the Sabbath joins together our mind and body and soul. When our Sabbath keeping is only a matter of following a list of rules, we have missed the true meaning of the Sabbath. But, at the same time, our Sabbath keeping is seen by others. It tells other people that we are separate and different. It is a sign of our trust in our Creator and Savior.

God wants His people to be “holy.” He wants people who have knowingly separated themselves from the things of this world. How should keeping the Sabbath help you understand that you need to “separate” yourself from the world? How should the Sabbath each week remind you that we are supposed to be a holy people, a people separate from worldly things?

TUESDAY—MAY 19

EXPERIENCING THE JOY OF THE SABBATH (Deuteronomy 5:12–15)

1. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times where the high priests offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

When we talk about the Sabbath commandment, we usually point to the verse found in Exodus 20. There the commandment is based on the creation of the world. Every Sabbath we are reminded that God is our Creator and that we are His created people. But in the book of Deuteronomy, we discover an additional part. The weekly Sabbath also honors Israel's freedom from Egyptian slavery. Through this, we celebrate freedom from every kind of slavery.

Read Deuteronomy 5:12–15 carefully and compare it with Exodus 20:8–11. What do they add to each other? How do they support each other? Are there still other things we should “remember” in our Sabbath keeping? If so, what might they be?

The Sabbath is a sign of both Creation and of freedom. It points us to the salvation² we have in Jesus. He re-creates us now (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15) and offers the hope of an eternity (forever; without end) in the new heavens and the new earth (2 Peter 3:13). The Jews have seen the Sabbath as a symbol (word-picture) of a world of the future. This means the new heavens and the new earth. It is a weekly foretaste of what we will have for eternity and should serve as a special reminder of what we have been given in Jesus.

On a more down-to-earth level, Sabbath helps free us from the slavery

of the clock and the calendar. Many are slaves to computers and mobile phones. For many people, it has become difficult to separate work time from leisure time. It seems that modern life requires that we can always be reached and always must be ready to go to work. The Sabbath is the perfect medicine for this disease. This kind of disease threatens every form of true rest, both physical and spiritual.

“Setting aside a holy Sabbath means that we can stop our work for one day in every seven. The exciting thing about this practice is that it changes our attitudes [thoughts and feelings] for the rest of the week. It frees us up to worry less about how much we do on the other days. Furthermore, when we end that useless chasing after the wind, we can truly rest and learn to delight in new ways.”—Adapted from Marva J. Dawn, *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), page 19.



The Sabbath frees us from the slavery of the clock, the calendar, the mobile phone, and the computer.

2. salvation—God's plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life.

WEDNESDAY—MAY 20**SHOWING SABBATH REST TO THE WORLD (Isaiah 58:12–14)**

What principles can we take away from Isaiah 58:12–14 about Sabbath keeping? How will that help us better experience the blessings God has for us if we remember the Sabbath properly?

It is an unfortunate situation. Many Adventists do not truly enjoy God's Sabbath. Some remember with great frustration the ways in which the Sabbath was kept in their parents' homes. Even in Adventist schools, Sabbath keeping can leave much to be desired. Rules and regulations are supposed to ensure that the Sabbath is kept "holy." Some of these rules are based on Bible principles (rules). But many principles have more to do with tradition³ and culture⁴ than with the Lord's command.

The Sabbath never must be a day connected only with rules. If we are looking for an example to follow, we must let ourselves be inspired (led) by the example of Jesus.

Read carefully Mark 2:23–3:6; Luke 4:16; and Luke 6:1–11 to discover how Jesus kept the seventh-day Sabbath "holy."

"Heaven's work never stops. And we should never rest from doing

good. The Sabbath is not planned to be a period of doing nothing. The law does not permit worldly work on the rest day of the Lord. The work that earns a living must stop. No labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day. But God stopped His labor of creating and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it. In the same way, man is to leave the work of his daily life and devote those holy hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds. The work of Christ in healing the sick was in perfect agreement with the law. It honored the Sabbath."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 207.

Imagine what the perfect Sabbath would be like. How would you keep it? What would be available to you that you could not have during the workweek? Bring your description to class on Sabbath.



Heaven's work never stops. And we should never rest from doing good on the Sabbath.

3. tradition—custom or rules created by people.

4. culture—the way people live, dress, think, eat, and get along with one another.

THURSDAY—MAY 21**THE SIGN OF REST
(Hebrews 4:9–11)**

People often blame us as Sabbath keepers for trying to work our way to heaven by keeping the Sabbath. We hear that all the time. How should we answer?

Read again the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8–11. What does it tell us to do? It tells us to rest—our sons, our daughters, our servants, our animals, and even the strangers among us. It is all about rest.

Now, a simple question: how has that one commandment which commands rest been turned into an example of salvation by works? The only commandment that is all about rest has become, for many people, an example for salvation by works.

What is wrong with this picture?

Truly, the Sabbath is not an example of works. Instead, the Sabbath is the Bible's eternal (forever; without end) symbol (word-picture) of the rest that God's people have always had in Him.

What message does Hebrews 4:9–11 give to us about the Sabbath?

From the pre-Fall world of Adam's and Eve's Eden to the modern world today, the Sabbath is a real-time example of the rest that Christ offers to all. In Matthew 11:28–30, Jesus calls us to rest in Him. He will give us rest.

And that rest is shown in His Sabbath day. Anyone can say that he or she is resting in Christ. Anyone can say that he or she is saved by grace.⁵ But the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath is a real example of that rest. It is a living parable (story) of what it means to be covered by His grace. Our weekly rest from our worldly works stands as an example of our rest in the finished work of Jesus for us.

Obedying this commandment is our way of saying, "We are sure of our salvation in Jesus. We strongly believe in what Christ has done for us. So we announce to the world that we can rest from any of our works because we know what Christ has done for us through His death and resurrection [return to life]."

The Sabbath is a very real example of the rest that we have in Jesus and what He has done for us. We can show that rest in a real way, a way that those who do not keep the Sabbath cannot.



The Sabbath is a sign of rest.

5. grace—God's gift of forgiveness and mercy that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

FRIDAY—MAY 22

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read the comments made by Ellen G. White on the giving of the Ten Commandment law in *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 303–310, and on the story about Jesus’ Sabbath keeping together with His disciples (followers) in *The Desire of Ages*, pages 281–289.

A rich example for additional information is: Walter F. Specht, “The Sabbath in the New Testament,” in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, edited by Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 1982), pages 92–113.

Read this example: “In Mark’s Gospel⁶ (chapter 2:27), Jesus then spoke of the purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was not a goal in itself. . . . It was designed to be a blessing to man. It was a day of physical rest but also a day for spiritual activities. The Pharisees⁷ treated the day as if man were created to serve the Sabbath. But it was really the Sabbath meeting the needs of man. R. Shim’on ben Menasya about A.D. 180 made almost the same statement [as the statement made by Jesus]: ‘The Sabbath is given over to you but you are not surrendered [in bondage; enslaved] to the Sabbath.’”—Page 96, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ In class, discuss your descriptions of what a perfect Sabbath would be like. What can you do to come as close as possible to that ideal?
- ❷ Earlier in the week, we discussed how some of the rules we use for the Sabbath are rooted more in tradition than in the Word of God. As a class, discuss what these human-made rules might be. How can we know the difference between tradition and what the Bible says?
- ❸ Think more about the idea discussed in Thursday’s study. How can we better show the world that the special rest that we enjoy in Jesus through the Sabbath shows how Christ’s grace works in our lives? What things might we have done that give others the wrong ideas?

SUMMARY: The Sabbath is God’s gift to us. It is the perfect medicine for today’s restlessness and stress. It is a very special weekly amount of time that God has made “holy” for us. The day can be a source of body and soul rest and a time of great joy if it is used in the right way. The perfect example of true Sabbath keeping is Jesus, who pointed to Himself very clearly as the Lord of the Sabbath.

6. Gospel—one of the first four books of the New Testament that tells the story of Jesus’ life and teachings.

7. Pharisees—a religious group of Jesus’ day who believed a person must keep God’s laws to be saved.