

Sabbath Keeping

God has called us to keep the Sabbath, but He never intended for the Sabbath to be a burden, but created the Sabbath to be a blessing. In fact, in Genesis 2:1-3, the Bible says that God performed three acts on the seventh day of the week: He rested on the day, He blessed the day, and He sanctified the day. It is actually a time where we have the opportunity to rest from our labor and commune with God. It's time where we can set aside the mundane things of this life and spend time with family and with God. Some have called the Sabbath a sanctuary in time because the Sanctuary was built that God may dwell amongst us.

Below are some scriptural principles of the Sabbath.

1. The Sabbath is a time of rest. **Exodus 20:8-11** Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: ¹⁰ But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: ¹¹ For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
2. We should avoid business deals and commerce. **Nehemiah 13:15-17** ¹⁵ In those days saw I in Judah *some* treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all *manner of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified *against them* in the day wherein they sold victuals. ¹⁶ There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. ¹⁷ Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing *is* this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?
3. God should be the center of our thoughts, conversation and activity on the Sabbath. **Isaiah 58:13 - 14** ¹³ If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: ¹⁴ Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

4. The above passage informs us that the Sabbath should be a delight.
5. The Sabbath should not be a burden. **Mark 2:27-28** ²⁷ And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: ²⁸ Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.
6. The Sabbath is a time for God's people to come together in fellowship. **Leviticus 23:1-3** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are* my feasts. ³ Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: *it is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.
(Note: Convocation literally means a calling together. This term denotes community and fellowship. The fact that it is a holy convocation speaks to the idea that mundane activities should not take place when the calling together occurs.)
7. Good acts can be done on the Sabbath. **Matthew 12:10-12** ¹⁰ And, behold, there was a man which had *his* hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. ¹¹ And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift *it* out? ¹² How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

Based on the above principles, here are some practical activities that may enhance your Sabbath experience with the Lord.

- A. Open the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a special weekly occasion with God that should be welcomed. Opening the Sabbath welcomes the occasion in your home. This is a time where we reflect on how God has blessed through the week. If you have a family, it is a good time for testimonies. It is also a time to invite the presence of God in your home during this special time. Reading a scripture also helps us focus on the idea of worshipping God.

- B. Rest. God calls us to rest. There are some who take the extreme position and sleep away most of the Sabbath every Sabbath, and justify it by declaring it is rest. However, the two words used for rest in Genesis 2 and Exodus 20 simply mean to cease from your work or regular activities. God was created the first six days and on the seventh day, He stopped. To rest also means to settle down. This aspect of rest emphasizes the relational side of the Sabbath. God wants us to settle down in Him, and dwell in Him for 24 hours.
- C. Fellowship. Spend time with friends and family with the Lord being the center of the conversation and activity. There's nothing like getting with people who serve the Lord and being encouraged by one another (See Heb. 10:25).
- D. Bible Study. After Sabbath dinner, there is nothing better than opening the word with a group of people and being blessed by the Word of God.
- E. Enjoy nature. The Bible is not the only source of the revelation of God. He reveals Himself through His creation as well. We come to understand the creativity of God as we view His diverse creation. We also see the magnificence of God and how grand He truly is in light of His creative acts. Also remember that the Sabbath celebrates God as the Creator. What better way to do that than to get out into nature. Go on nature hikes or take a walk on the beach.
- F. Acts of Kindness. Jesus performed many miracles of healing on the Sabbath. He also says that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Therefore, activities like feeding the homeless, visiting convalescent homes or the sick and shut-in, or conducting Bible studies in the prison or group home is a great way to spend your Sabbath.