

Connect 360: Celebrating the Lord's Day

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- *Lesson 5 in the BaptistWay Press Connect 360 unit "Pillars" focuses on Exodus 20:8-11.*

If only we had a day off from work to relax, rest, rejuvenate and a day to spend time with the one that we love more than any other, life would be so grand. If on that day, there were no emails to respond to, no laundry or cooking to be done or dishes to wash. There might even be time for a nap. Our culture has spent so much time playing on Saturday that when Sunday rolls around, there are so many chores that have been left undone that Sunday has become a catch-up day for work around the house.

In America, weekends—including Sundays—are so filled with activities, sports, shopping, to do-lists and work that people are even more worn out on Monday morning than when they left work on Friday. This is why God gave the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy." God modeled this when after six days of creating, he rested on the seventh day.

Today, we face two extreme violations of this commandment. One is to neglect the Sabbath. It becomes another day of work or recreation filled with activity and busyness. Many believers do not work on Sunday but certainly play on Sunday. Sunday is often a day for recreation or work around the house or ballgames for children. When our schedules allow, we attend church, but otherwise the day fills with other priorities.

The other violation occurs much less frequently when religious leaders, be they clergy or lay, enforce strict regulations on the Sabbath. In Jesus' day,

even though God created the Sabbath for rest and worship, the religious leaders turned it into a burden. They developed 39 classifications of work to avoid on the Sabbath, and they saved their most stern rebukes of Jesus' actions such as healing on the Sabbath. For many, keeping the rules were more important than experiencing the joy of God's Son healing someone. God created us for fellowship with him and others. However, too often we settle for rituals and rules.

God has created us for fellowship with him and others. We should seek his face daily. However, the fourth commandment reminds us that we also need to dedicate one day of the week to rest and to worship God. When we violate this commandment, we bear the penalty of our disobedience in our bodies, as well as broken relationships with God and others.

God's command for us to rest is more than an attempt on his part to make us feel better physically. Worship is as essential to the observance of the Sabbath as is rest. As we worship, we remember the cross, the empty tomb, the resurrection and the completed work of Christ. We pray, offer praise, and receive restoration. It is on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, that we can and must shut out business, personal goals and animosities as we focus on the Lord to energize our spirits and restore our souls.

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