

How to Keep the Sabbath

Here are some basic principles which will answer many of the questions you have been asking. Unless you know the PURPOSE of the Sabbath, you can't understand HOW to keep it.

by Rod Meredith

YOU ARE "missing out" on a lot of the good things in life. There is a reason!

Life lacks the real meaning and purpose it should have. "Every day is the same old thing!" you hear so many people say.

But God didn't intend it that way!

He has given us a specific blessing, which, when REALLY understood, appreciated, and rightly used, will give us the zest for life that we otherwise lack. This blessing is God's Sabbath Day.

You need a new insight into this command. Here is an article that will better enable you to receive the rich blessing intended.

Recent issues of the "Good News" and the "Plain Truth" contained articles on "The Sign of a Christian" and "Has Time Been Lost?" These articles proved that the true Sabbath was to be a *sign* between God and His children forever, and that the true *seventh* day has never been "mixed-up" or "lost."

Made for Man

Christ said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). He didn't say it was made for the Jew, but for MAN—for *all mankind* in other words. And it was made for him as a blessing.

Keep this principle in mind. It was made for *you*, to help *you*, to enable *you* to live a happier and more godly life.

God's true sabbath is one of the greatest blessings that has ever been bestowed upon mankind. It *signifies* that the Creator is our God and we are His children.

Our Creator knew that we would need a period of rest every seventh day, and this is one of many opportunities the sabbath affords. Each of us tends to become overly absorbed in our daily cares during the week, but God foresaw this, and set aside the sabbath as a time when we can completely forget our routine work and *get closer to God* in study, meditation, and prayer.

The wonderful part of it all is that we can keep this period of rest and spiritual revival with complete confidence that God will *bless* and *prosper* us because we have done this! If we would quit working every few days and take a needed rest, we might naturally

expect to get behind in our finances and material pursuits. But God has said just the opposite! So if we keep His Holy Day, we can rest assured that it will be *gain* instead of loss, even looking at it materially.

Do you realize what this amounts to? God is *giving* us a *paid vacation* every seventh day!

Human reasoning might not grasp this right at first. But God has *promised* this, and the *experiences* of hundreds of people have shown that God meant what he said. You may not be prospered *immediately* if you begin keeping God's commandments and paying your tithe faithfully as He has commanded. But in His way and time, God will begin to bless and prosper you in ways that you may never have expected.

In Isaiah 58:13-14, God inspired Isaiah to write that *if* we kept the sabbath and delighted in it, we would remember Him and He would cause us to have life in abundance, spiritually and materially. Notice that we are not to *seek our own pleasure* on the sabbath. *Yet*, we are to *delight* in it. This means that we should be *so busy* doing good to others, and getting closer to God in prayer and study, that we will not even desire to seek any earthly amusements. We will be **HAPPY** because we are able to rest, to worship God with peace of mind, and because we have a special time to do good.

This same passage says we are *not* to *speak our own words* on the sabbath. What does this mean? It shows that we should not spend the sabbath in idle talk, but should be reading, discussing and meditating upon God's word. Then we will be drinking in the ideas of God instead of mere human notions. What a privilege it is to have a whole day in which we can read and discuss the *way of life* that is revealed to us in the Bible.

In order that we may have our minds free from last minute duties on the sabbath, God has commanded that we prepare for it the day before. Exodus 16:22-25 shows that we should do any baking or time consuming boiling before the sabbath. Long hours of cooking and stewing should *never* clutter up God's day.

So do all your "sprucing up" and any heavy cooking on Friday, the prepara-

tion day. Then at sunset Friday evening, when the sabbath begins, you will have put all worldly cares aside and will be able to enter the sabbath in a spirit of rejoicing and worship toward God.

Duties on Sabbath

Your time should never "drag" on God's sabbath! Some people experience this when they first begin to keep the sabbath, but it certainly isn't the way God intended. When we understand it properly, the sabbath will be filled with *interest* and *joy*.

The true sabbath is *not* a *negative* thing!

Christ set us an example of how to keep it. In Mark 2:23 to 3:5, Jesus showed that it was all right to procure food on the sabbath *if* it is necessary. He told the Pharisees that He was Lord of the sabbath—not Sunday! Then Christ healed an infirm man on the sabbath, and showed that it is lawful to *do good* on that day.

What *kind* of *good* should we do on the sabbath day?

God commanded in Exodus 20:10, that we should *not work* on the sabbath. So the kind of good that we do on that day is not the kind of hard physical labor which we might do on other days. "Doing good" is not to be used as an **EXCUSE** for performing those material duties, however helpful to others, which can just as well be done some other day. There is one exception to this prohibition. That is in the case of an "ox in the ditch" (Luke 14:5). This refers to a *genuine emergency*, not some material duty you "put off" until the sabbath.

The principal example of doing good on the sabbath that Christ gave us was that of healing the sick or infirm *that came to Him*. (Matt. 12:9-13). He did not go abroad seeking them. Also, we find that He was constantly meeting with others and teaching them God's ways on this day. We can all use the sabbath as a time to comfort and minister to those who are sick and infirm on this day. But this does not mean that we should burden ourselves with purely material services. Jesus didn't when he helped the sick according to their faith. Remember what he told Martha: "Thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and

Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41,42). We should especially try to help those who are interested in the true teachings of the Bible, because in this way we can minister to them both spiritually and physically.

As we shall find later, we are to meet with other true worshippers on the sabbath. But if this is impossible, we may well use the sabbath as an opportunity to meet with others who we know are really interested in the truth, to explain the Bible to them in their own homes. We are *not* to attempt to force God's truth on people at any time. But we are always to be ready and willing to explain the Bible to anyone who is sincerely seeking God. Some of our brethren in Texas use a portion of the sabbath for this purpose and have helped a great many people in their community to come to a better knowledge of God.

STUDY the word of God (II Tim. 2:15)! This should usually be your first duty on the sabbath. *Then* you will be ready to answer the questions of those you are trying to help (I Peter 3:15).

Remember that the principal command is to *rest* from our usual routine on the sabbath, and to *worship* God and remember him as Creator. The Bible reveals that "doing good" on the sabbath is serving others in a way that shows the *power of God* in our lives. Christ didn't *labor* for several hours to heal the sick on the sabbath. Instead, He invoked the very power of the Creator to release others from the bonds of sickness. So we should *not* spend most of the sabbath caring for the physical needs of other people. By drawing closer to God on this day, we will then be able to help others in a LASTING way thru the power of God's Spirit.

"Sewing for charity" and other physical services may be worthy at the proper time, but such routine labor should not fill up God's sabbath day.

Physical things will "perish with the using." So use the sabbath primarily to learn *God's ways* and make them a part of your *character*—and help others to do the same. The Spirit of God in you will last *forever!*

Commanded Assembly

In Luke 4:16, we find that Christ customarily met with others on the sabbath and read from God's word. Lev. 23:1-3 tells us that the sabbath is to be a *holy convocation* for God's people. A convocation is a *commanded assembly*. God commands you to convoke or meet with other true believers *whenever this is possible* on the sabbath.

However, this does *not* mean that you are to meet on that day or any other day

with those who are blinded to God's truth and refuse to keep *all* His commandments. Paul commanded Christians in II Cor. 6:14, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: *for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness?*"

Christian fellowship should be with other people *ONLY* thru God and his Spirit. God gives the Holy Spirit to them that *obey* Him (Acts 5:32). So remember that you *cannot* have true fellowship thru Satan, or his ministers, or his churches who refuse to obey God's commandments.

When it was impossible to meet with others in a church on the sabbath day, the apostle Paul and his helpers "went out of the city by a river side, where *prayer* was wont to be made." (Acts 16:13). This is an admirable example for many of us, because getting closer to the natural handiwork of the Creator brings one closer to God. The hand of God is seen in everything good and beautiful. Notice that instead of going to the river to fish, as so many do on the "day of the Sun," Paul went to a river to help others seek God in prayer.

A Light to the World

Christ told his followers, "Ye are the *light* of the world" Matt. 5:14. How much the world needs people who will fearlessly show it the way out of this spiritual darkness!

But can you be a "light" to other people while continuing in the same man-made doctrines and practices they do?

NO you can't! You must live by God's word to show forth the true light that will eventually turn people from darkness. You must be *DIFFERENT* from other people by obeying God—by having his *SIGN*. Most people won't like you for doing this. Christ said in John 3:19, "And this is the condemnation, that *light* is come into the world, and *men loved darkness* rather than light, because their deeds were evil." Men were so *steeped* in their own customs, then as now, that the true light of the gospel offended them.

So you can see that real Christianity is not the way to be popular with men!

But doesn't this show what an important "light" your keeping of the sabbath can be to others? It is a *SIGN* that sets you apart from those following the broad way that leads to destruction.

Special Problems

It is easy to use the latitude and privileges of the sabbath as a means to *abuse* it. You should *not* be overly strict or self-righteous like the Pharisees. On the other hand, humans are usually inclined

to "stretch" the freedom God gives us and begin doing our own work or pleasure on the sabbath.

Taking a walk on the sabbath is fine so long as it doesn't turn into a "hike." Some people ask about the mention of "a sabbath day's journey" in Acts 1:12. There is no special command *anywhere* in the Bible limiting travel on the sabbath. This "sabbath day's journey" was a custom of the Jews and is not a biblical command. However, you certainly shouldn't walk or drive so far on the sabbath as to tire yourself unduly or to interfere with your worship of God.

After sitting in church or studying for some time, a leisurely walk is very refreshing and beneficial. Also, a lengthy drive is sometimes necessary to enable you to meet with other true worshippers on the sabbath. Within reason, this is not wrong. It serves to strengthen you spiritually and therefore glorifies God.

Here is another problem?

Should you kindle a fire on the Sabbath Day?

The command in Exodus 35:3 was inserted in connection with instructions regarding work on the tabernacle. It was chiefly intended to forbid the kindling of a fire to melt metals or sharpen tools. However, it certainly can refer to unnecessary work done in preparing food which could be prepared on the day before.

So it would *not* be breaking the spirit of the law to light a fire for heat in wintry weather or to warm up previously prepared food.

Feeding and watering stock is necessary on the sabbath and permissible (Luke 13:15). *But* if you are raising so many cattle or chickens that your "chores" add up to three or four hours' hard work, then you had better cut down on the number of your livestock or else change occupations. Our age of "specialization," when a few farmers become virtual slaves to provide food for hundreds of city dwellers, is *not* God's way.

No man should be "tied down" to his occupation as so many are today.

DON'T try to justify breaking the sabbath by saying that "your occupation requires it"! Remember that this worldly, competitive system is called "Babylon" in the Bible and you are commanded to "come out of her" (Rev. 18:1-4).

Instruct Children

God inspired Solomon to write "train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Pro. 22:6). This command would certainly apply to teaching your child to keep the sabbath. However, you should remember that even sweet little children are by no means converted. They are

basically selfish, and usually lack the understanding and will power to keep God's law as an adult.

But they should be taught to rest from their routine work or play on the sabbath as much as possible. They should be instructed in a kindly and straightforward manner that the seventh day is holy to their Heavenly Father, and that they can show their love for Him by refraining from their usual play on that day and thinking and learning about God.

Your children should be taught these things gradually and only as their age makes it possible for them to understand. If trained properly from infancy, a ten or twelve year old child should have enough respect for God's sabbath that he does not spend his time reading "funny books" or listening to radio serials on that day.

Love and chastening must go hand in hand in this training. But a child so trained in God's ways would have a priceless advantage in his knowledge of life and its real meaning in relation to the Creator.

Holy Time

In Exodus 20:8, we find the original command, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it HOLY." Never forget that God has made the seventh day *holy time!* You and I are commanded to *keep* it that way.

I have already shown you in God's word that we are not to do our own work, pleasure, think our own thoughts, or speak our own words on God's Sabbath Day.

To keep the sabbath day *holy*:

You can't spend a lot of time in worldly visiting or "shooting the breeze," or even "courting your girl."

You can't be running down town for a cup of coffee or an ice-cream soda. That kind of procuring food is *entirely UNNECESSARY*.

You can't spend several hours listening to worthless radio programs or reading the "funnies."

You can't wait until after sunset on Friday evening to begin your cleaning up and preparing for the sabbath, unless, of course, a *genuine* emergency has interfered.

I could go on, but I think you should get the point and grasp the principle involved.

Let's NOT "kid" ourselves!

When God said to put the sabbath day to a HOLY use, He meant *exactly* what He said. But we should learn to be so happily employed in doing the good things prescribed for that day, that we will have no time or inclination to violate the prohibitions anyway.

So let's keep the sabbath in a *positive* way! Use the sabbath as a day to rest from worldly labor, to get closer to God in *prayer* and *study*. Take time to do *good* to others, to care for the sick, to visit the afflicted. Assemble with other *true believers* on the sabbath if this is possible. Then you will truly be a "light" to those around you.

The sabbath separates true Christians from this world's churches with their pagan holidays and "day of the sun." So KEEP holy the days God made holy! Rejoice in the blessings and opportunities that the sabbath affords, and remember that it is a SIGN between you and the true God.

Government Authority

Continued from page 6

fearing the power of God who gave this authority to rulers.

When you do good, you "may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper, and I will NOT fear what *man* shall do unto me.' " (Hebrews 13:6)

Is the Payment of Taxes Necessary?

Now comes an often misunderstood part of this vital message. Should you pay taxes if you are a Christian? If so, why?

Paul said that Christians MUST PAY TAXES, CUSTOM DUTIES AND TRIBUTE to those in authority. Why? "For they are God's ministers," His servants, "attending continually upon this very thing." It is their job, their work to regulate society and to punish crime. They are worthy of their hire.

Because of covetousness, especially when income tax or land tax bills appear, some seize upon the words of Jesus in Matthew 17:24-27 as an excuse for failure to pay taxes. Notice what Jesus really said: Christians, being free and heirs of the Kingdom of God, should not be required to pay tribute to a *foreign* government, "notwithstanding, lest we should offend them . . . give unto them" the tax.

Yes, Christ commands you, just as Paul did, to pay taxes, and they should not be paid grudgingly either. It is the right of leaders to receive remuneration for their duty. But what if officials are not performing their duty properly or are squandering tax money for private ambition? Are you to pay taxes?

Certainly. As long as any person is in office, you are to honor that office by submitting to it. It is so easy to forget that human beings are not the judges of one another, but God is the Judge. Officials are not responsible to the people, but to God. Your responsibility ceases

once you have honestly paid the tax or the duty. It is the official's responsibility to see that he properly administers the money.

Although this is the day of exorbitantly high taxation, you should never fear that God will fail to provide the amount necessary to conform to state laws. Jesus provided Peter with the extra tribute money beyond the normal increase. (Matthew 17:24-27)

Prayer for Officials

In the days of the Roman Empire, when Jesus was training his disciples, it was the custom of the government to *compel people to carry mail* and goods belonging to the Empire. Jesus referred to this forced practice when he said, "Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." (Matthew 5:41)

Notice that Jesus taught submission, not resistance.

Today the government does not compel its citizens to bear this responsibility. How thankful have you been for this fact, as well as for all the other benefits that have accrued in the fields of communications, transportation and public safety? It is so easy to forget and to neglect Paul's admonition that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and *giving of thanks*, be made for all men: for kings, and FOR ALL THAT ARE IN AUTHORITY; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." (1 Timothy 2:1-3)

Now do you see that the Father has established earthly governments to *keep order* until His Kingdom should come? It is your commanded duty to submit to them, patiently, excusing the obvious faults inherent in human leadership. It is your privilege as a Christian not to be burdened with the heavy responsibilities of this complex world, but rather to recognize that all human history is a record of the tragedy of human self-direction contrasted with obedience to God.

The Scripture is given to make known to us the fact that *all authority belongs to the God Family*. We are not to take it upon ourselves to mix with this world's faltering society, but rather to call others *out of* the error of human self-rule. By growing in patience and understanding, we shall be born into the family of God and have His powers and abilities and character which will enable us to rule the world in righteousness. (Dan. 2:44; Rev. 3:21; Rom. 8:19) What are you doing about your eternal calling and selection? Are you making it sure by obeying every word of God?