Section: Commands (Law)

Lesson 40: Wednesday, October 11, 2023

Q48. Why does God give the fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy?

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**TEACHING NOTES**

**Greeting:**

Well good evening! My name is Justin Ader and I have the privilege of being a member of the teaching team here at Disciples Church along with being the Youth Director. If we have not met personally, I look forward to meeting you. I am thankful to be here with all of you tonight as we study our next question and answer in the Word of Truth Catechism.

Tonight we are still in Part 5 of the Word of Truth Catechism: Commands (Law). We have been working our way through the Universal Moral Law also known as the Ten Commandments, with commandment number 4 being our focus for tonight. Question 48 asks, Why does God give the fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy? Let’s pray and ask God to illuminate His truths to us as we seek to understand and know Him.

Pray with me.

**Introduction:**

When I was younger in my faith about 9 years ago, I remember learning about the Ten Commandments. In fact, it was the first full sermon series that I ever sat through. I remember being excited to learn the Ten Commandments as I was new in my faith and desired to know what God required of me. What I find interesting today as I look back is that I don’t remember much about the Sabbath sermon, but I remember most of the others like: You shall not murder, you shall not steal, and so on. I was blessed four years ago to sit under Matt Kirstine’s teaching on the very question that we are studying tonight. Back then Matt asked a question for us to consider before we dove in. I am going to pose that same question tonight. Do you see the 4th commandment—to remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy—to be just as true and as important as the other commandments? Or do you, in your mind and life, see some commandments as more weighty or more important than others? Does the first commandment, have no other gods…or the sixth commandment, do not commit adultery, seem really important to you, but others, like the 4th commandment on the Sabbath, as less important? This struck me when he asked because I realized that I was that guy. What I learned is that none of God’s commandments should be ignored. They all carry the same weight and they all should be obeyed. Consider this for yourself tonight as we dive into the Sabbath in great detail. The Sabbath is an interesting topic to learn because there has been a lot of misunderstanding throughout history on what the Sabbath is. It has not been cut and dry. We even see in Scripture where the Sabbath has had different man-made traditions attached to it that strayed away from its purpose, as we will see tonight. Our current modern day is no exception. Fallen mankind has come up with various ideas of what Sabbath is and how it is to be observed, giving extra-biblical and straight up unbiblical requirements. So, my hope is that this lesson will be simple enough for you to remember and that I give you enough application points for you to put this into practice moving forward biblically as you seek to grow in holiness. With that, let’s consider the fourth commandment in greater detail by starting with the question and answer.

**Q48. Why does God give the fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy?**

So we will worship and rest in God and remember the finished work of Jesus.

1. **What does the word Sabbath mean?**

I want to start by looking at what the word Sabbath means. I think it is always important to know the definitions of words as we seek to grow and understand. Let me also quickly encourage us by saying that we don’t have to pretend to know these. It is not helpful to ourselves and others to pretend that we know big words or theological terms. We can make it a good practice to jot words down that we don’t know and find the definition or ask someone.

Alright, back to the word sabbath. A very oversimplified definition of sabbath is rest. I assume that we all know what the word rest means, and that is what Sabbath means—rest. This oversimplified definition doesn’t give us the clarity that we need though as Christians in order to rightly understand Sabbath and live it out. So we need to dive deeper. We need to see the Sabbath through a biblical lens. I want to focus our time on studying what the Sabbath is and at the end I will give us all some practical notes to write down on what the Sabbath is not, and how to live it out as followers of Jesus Christ. Now that we know what the word Sabbath means, let’s look at it from the biblical lens. What is Sabbath?

1. **What is Sabbath?**

Here is the easiest way to summarize Sabbath: The purpose of the moral law of Sabbath in this creation is to provide for us a special day of worship to God, physical and mental rest and refreshment, and other God glorifying activities. Again, there are three main purposes for Sabbath: 1) Special day of worship to God. 2) Physical and mental rest and refreshment. 3) God glorifying activities. These are what Sabbath is for. John Calvin said, “The Sabbath reminds us that we are not slaves to work, but free to worship and find our rest in God.” Now that we know what Sabbath is, we must ask the question, why Sabbath?

1. **Why Sabbath?**

God has given us Sabbath and we need it. It really is a wonderful command from God—that we observe the Sabbath. God gave it to us so that we would worship and rest in Him and so that we’d reflect on the finished work of Jesus Christ. God designed us to rest in Him, and for all believers that Sabbath rest will be an everlasting rest. So again, why do we need Sabbath? Why do we need rest? When I think about these questions as a believer I can answer them biblically, but I can think back to a time when I wasn’t a believer and I can remember what my sinful tendencies were. For me, it was chasing money to buy nice things because I thought that I could buy my happiness and my family’s happiness. So I worked a lot of overtime and was on call every other week. When God saved me, He changed my desires, and by His grace I gave all of that up so that I could focus more on Him and what He wanted me to do. To be clear, I am not saying that if you work overtime or are on call that you are in sin. But if your motivation to do these things is to be somebody within your occupation or to chase worldly treasures while neglecting what God has called you to do, then you would be in sin. We know that the fall of mankind took place thousands of years ago, and since then mankind has had sinful tendencies to be somebody of importance. To find their identity in their work, in their look, and everything else rather than in Christ. So they chase temporary things to try and accomplish this. There is no rest in doing this. Why? Because they are always having to keep up their status, their look, their paper chasing in order to maintain that temporary lifestyle. I see it all around me. It is sad because God intended for us to work and have a day of rest in Him. On Sabbath we rest in Christ from our labors and it helps us to cut ties with our sinful tendencies to chase after nonsense. This is why we need Sabbath. Jonathan Edwards said, “On the Sabbath, we cease from our labors and turn our hearts and minds toward the worship of God, who is our true rest.” Next, we need to see that Sabbath is a part of the moral law and is communicated in the Ten Commandments.

1. **Sabbath in the Moral Law**

At the beginning of this Midweek year, in August, Matt Kirstine started us off by looking at the Law in the question, “What is law, biblically?” If you were there for that lesson then you will see the full value of the Sabbath being part of the moral law. If you were or weren’t there, pay close attention regardless. In that lesson, Matt explained that the Ten Commandments are a summary and expression of the Universal Moral Law. And that’s why we can look back now—in our day—to the moral elements of the Ten Commandments and see God’s revealed will for us—in our time in the New Covenant. It was cool to hear my kids at the dinner table one night shortly after this lesson from Matt as they were quizzing each other on the difference between the Universal Moral Law and Positive Law. One of things said was that the moral law is eternal and unchanging, while positive law on the other hand changes because positive laws are for a particular people, or a particular time and are not eternal and unchanging. God does not add and/or subtract things from the moral law. Since God is unchanging, the Universal Moral Law always exists and never changes. The same moral requirements thousands of years ago are the same for today and beyond. This is important to remember. So where do we find the fourth commandment in the Ten Commandments? We find it in:

Exodus 20:8-11 8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

In this passage we see the moral requirement is to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. That is the command. Everything after it is supplementary data. If you don’t remember from Matt’s law lesson, he said: “The Supplementary Data can help enforce and inform the Universal Moral Law, but is not necessarily part of the Universal Moral Law itself.” So again, Sabbath is a part of the moral law and it is communicated in the Ten Commandments. Therefore, it remains today, since Universal Moral Law does not change. Next, we need to know that Sabbath is a creation ordinance. In creation, God established and modeled the Sabbath ordinance for mankind.

1. **In Creation, God established and modeled the Sabbath**

Before we move forward, I want to define a term for us. I know that a lot of us know what a creation ordinance is, but I am not going to assume that everyone does or has memorized it. A creation ordinance refers to the principles or commands that God established at the time of creation and before the fall. These ordinances are considered to be a part of God’s natural order and are for all of mankind to follow, not just Christians. There are many creation ordinances, but there are two very popular ones that are usually mentioned more than others. They are marriage and work. Marriage was established by God at creation as the unique covenantal bond between one man and one woman. Marriage is not just for Christians, but for all mankind. But, this does not mean that all people are commanded to be married. God has given the gift of singleness for some as well. But those who are gifted with marriage must be married according to God’s design at creation. Mankind doesn’t get to decide what marriage is. Work, another creation ordinance, was established by God. We see in Genesis that the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. We are to perform God-honoring labor. Knowing that work is a creation ordinance established by God should cause us to do our work for His glory.

Another creation ordinance, and our focus tonight, is the creation ordinance of Sabbath. In creation, God established the Sabbath ordinance for mankind. The two important things that we need to remember about creation ordinances is that they apply to all people and they are to continue for this creation. That means that creation ordinances don’t change. How do we know this? Well, we can learn from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when He taught on marriage in the gospel accounts. In Matthew 19, Jesus teaches that marriage is between one man and one woman. Where does He get this standard from? The creation account.

Matthew 19:4-5 4 He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, ​‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

In this passage Jesus is referencing and quoting the creation account. What Jesus shows us here is that it is God who determines what marriage is. He has created it and implemented it. Mankind and the culture do not get to change the definition of marriage, or implement new varieties of marriage. Marriage, how God designed it when He created it, is how it is to be honored and defined. It is what it is and it must be honored with how God has designed it because it is a creation ordinance and that does not change in this creation. Do you see how Jesus used God’s authoritative creation design from Genesis to define marriage and not give in to mankind’s desire or man made traditions?

Not only did Jesus show us the importance of creation design, but the Apostle Paul did as well. For example, Paul appeals to the creation order when He asserts the distinct roles that men and women have in the church and home, such as in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2:13-15. He roots his arguments in creation; man was created first, then the woman from man. The point that is being made here is that a creation ordinance is endless while we live in this creation, making it relevant for today. Again, another important clarity that we need to understand is that creation ordinances are for everyone, not just Christians. This means that anyone who desires to get married, whether they are Christian or not, is to seek marriage in accordance with God’s design. So we as Christians don’t get to say, “Well I guess those two men can get married because they aren’t Christians. To each his own.” Marriage is a creation ordinance over all of mankind. This also means that work isn’t just for Christians. All of mankind is to work in some form or another. This means that Sabbath is not just for Christians. Sabbath is a creation ordinance that is to be kept by all of mankind in accordance with God's design.

Now that we have creation ordinances under our belt, let’s look to God’s word to show us that He indeed instituted and modeled the Sabbath ordinance for mankind. There are three key passages of Scripture that show us this and the addresses are in your handout notes if you want to follow along in your Bibles or look them up later as well. The first passage to consider is:

Genesis 2:1-3 1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

God created in 6 days and rested on the 7th, thus concluding a week. Have you ever thought about where the week comes from? Now, all things come from God as He has placed everything in order for a purpose. In that order, according to various pieces of evidence and observations, we see that days come from the earth’s rotation on its axis. Months are more or less gauged to the moon cycle. The year is a result of the earth’s revolution around the sun. Many of us have learned these things. But why do we have weeks? I haven’t found anything explained by science in regard to weeks. I have read that some scientists refer to different religions as to why there are weeks in the calendar. Interesting. Well, to simply put it: We have weeks because God made it that way for a purpose just like everything else. God did it to teach us. The passage we just read says that God rested on the 7th day. Does an omnipotent, immutable God need rest? Absolutely not. God does not get tired or weary. God does not sleep. He does not take a timeout from being the Sovereign Ruler over creation. He does not take a nap from being the almighty Sustainer of creation. So then, what is this passage relaying to us? Well, by resting, God was declaring that this work of creation was complete, and He established a one day in seven day Sabbath model for us. Hear that again: He established a one day in seven day Sabbath model for us. Next, the passage says that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. The words blessed and holy here mean that God consecrated or set apart the seventh day and essentially called it very good. God set apart the seventh day from the other 6 days of creation as a sacred day. So, in establishing a one day in seven day Sabbath model for us God is blessing the day we take for Sabbath, He is making our Sabbath day a source of good, a source of blessing. This is for all of mankind, and ultimately for His glory. God is setting the example that the moral law of Sabbath is to be honored in this way in this creation—one day in seven days. Let’s look at the second passage.

Exodus 20:8-11 8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep 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, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

In this passage we see the fourth commandment laid out in the Old Covenant. We saw Sabbath in the creation account, now we are seeing it again in the Ten Commandments. The example that God through Moses gives us for keeping the Sabbath is the creation ordinance found in Genesis. In the fourth commandment, God grounds the obligation to keep the Sabbath to His own one in seven example in the creation account. God’s model of resting the seventh day was intended to be imitated by mankind, who are made in His image. This is part of the responsibility of being an image bearer of God. There are a couple of things I want to point out in this passage before moving on. The first thing is the word ‘remember’ in the beginning of the passage. This word doesn’t simply mean to just mentally remember the Sabbath as if you just have to remind yourself of that reality that God rested on the seventh day of creation. No, this word means to remember the Sabbath day institution and practice it yourself. To remember the Sabbath day is to acknowledge the Sabbath principle in creation and practice it yourself. That is the command. After the command, we are told what we are to do to practice it: Six days you shall labor and do all your work, on the 7th day you rest. Why? Because this is what God instituted as a creation ordinance when He created. God blessed this 7th day and made it holy, so you are to acknowledge it and honor it as such. The second thing to point out is that we see Moses use past tense words when he says blessed and made. When these Ten Commandments were being given a long time after creation, Moses didn’t say that these are new things. Instead, Moses tells us that this was done at creation and that is why this commandment is being given. Because the 7th day was blessed and made holy by God. Let’s look at the last passage that shows Sabbath as a creation ordinance.

Mark 2:27 [This is Jesus speaking] And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Once again, we have the past tense term ‘made.’ Clearly Jesus is referring back to the creation account since we’ve already seen that God blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy in the creation account. So, Jesus affirms what we have seen in Exodus and Genesis. The expression of the moral law of Sabbath was instituted in creation. It is a creation ordinance and it was instituted for mankind to obey and be blessed by. It was not for a certain time or a certain people. It is for all of mankind in all of time. The next point in our lesson on the fourth commandment, which is a very important point, is that Sabbath was upheld by Jesus.

1. **Sabbath Upheld by Jesus**

If you have spent any amount of time in the gospel accounts, you may have noticed the many discussions and disagreements that arose with Jesus and the Pharisees over the topic of Sabbath. Sometimes people misunderstand what was happening in those encounters so it is good that we take a look at those to clear up any confusion. Now, this past summer in Youth Ministry we finished a 104 lesson journey through the gospel of John that took over two years to teach. In some of those lessons that we wrote, we talked a lot about the interactions between the Pharisees and Jesus over various things. One of those was in John 5. In that historical event, Jesus heals a man who had been disabled for 38 years on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees discover this, they persecute Jesus for performing work on the Sabbath. This leads to a confrontation between Jesus and the Pharisees, where Jesus teaches about His equality with God and authority over the Sabbath as God the Son. The Pharisees were out to get Jesus. Their desire was to catch Jesus in some act or teaching that put Him in disobedience to God’s law, their extra-biblical law, or the law of the land. More than once they tried to claim that Jesus was wrong or disobedient regarding the Sabbath. Another example of this is found in:

Mark 2:23-3:6 23 One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees were saying to him, “Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” 25 And he said to them, “Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: 26 how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?” 27 And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28 So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” ​1 Again he entered the synagogue, and a man was there with a withered hand. 2 And they watched Jesus, to see whether he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse him. 3 And he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come here.” 4 And he said to them, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?” But they were silent. 5 And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. 6 The Pharisees went out and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him.

In this account we see His disciples picking grain to eat as they walk through a field and we see Jesus heal someone in need. The Pharisees accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. What we must understand is that neither Jesus nor His disciples were violating God’s command of the Sabbath in these things. Therefore, Jesus was not committing or excusing violations to God’s Sabbath law. The problem for the Pharisees had to do with the extra-biblical and unbiblical additional traditions they added, like things that prevented someone from picking and eating grain as they walked through a field or the healing of someone in need on the Sabbath. So, Jesus uses this Pharisee opposition to rebuke and teach. In this, Jesus wasn’t changing moral Sabbath requirements. It would be wrong to think that Jesus was loosening or changing God’s design of Sabbath. What He was teaching was what true Sabbath observance looked like, and He condemned their additional requirements—their extra-biblical man-made law. Jesus is God, and His teaching is truth. Remember His words in verses 27 and 28: Jesus said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.” In this, Jesus is declaring His divinity and His Lordship as He upholds the moral Sabbath command. He helps inform how Sabbath was to be honored, and He corrects those who were adding additional requirements to it. “The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.”

Without maybe knowing it, we actually learn a lot from Jesus in the gospel accounts on how we are to honor the Sabbath. In our passage that we just read we saw that Jesus referred to David eating the bread of the Presence in the house of God. In this, Jesus teaches us that acts of necessity are permitted on the Sabbath. A good question to ask when things come up on the Sabbath in regard to necessity is, “Can this wait? Or is it a necessity? Does it need to be done on this day?” An example may be in regard to food which is a necessity.

Another thing Jesus teaches us in Matthew 12 is that religious devotion, priestly work and worship are permitted on Sabbath. He gives the example of the Old Covenant priests. This means that those who serve to provide for the exercise of corporate worship are not in sin for “working” or ministering on the Sabbath. These are known as permissible acts of piety which are God-honoring acts of religious devotion, priestly work, and worship.

Another thing Jesus teaches us is that acts of mercy are permissible on the Sabbath. We see Jesus do acts of mercy when He heals others on the Sabbath. This means that if there is a real need among your friends or maybe even your co-workers to be a blessing to them, it is God-honoring to do that. Helping someone in their time of real need like someone needing a meal because they are sick, or assisting the elderly with something. Don’t decline that opportunity because it is your Sabbath. At the same time, be wise about it. These teachings from Jesus are very beneficial to us, and may seem like common sense, but as we saw with the Pharisees people can add extra and unbiblical requirements to the Sabbath that were not given by God. In these clarities from Jesus, we can see that He upheld the moral law of Sabbath. Next, we need to know that there is an already, not yet reality to Sabbath.

1. **Already, Not Yet**

In this first creation, all of mankind gets the command and blessing of Sabbath. This is part of the “already” reality of Sabbath. But, there is a “not yet” reality that is to come for Christians which is the saint’s everlasting rest with Jesus Christ. So let’s break these two realities down for the Christian. First, the “already” reality of Sabbath. As Christians, we get an “already” aspect of Sabbath blessing, in that we get to truly enjoy and worship God because of the work of Christ. Look at:

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV1984) For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Brothers and sisters, we already get to experience fellowship with God, and we already get to enjoy being united with Jesus by grace alone through faith alone, and not on the basis of our works. R.C. Sproul said, “The Sabbath is a day of blessing, given for our spiritual and physical rest, a foretaste of our eternal rest in God.”

This brings us to the second reality of Sabbath that Scripture speaks to which is the “not yet” reality. I don’t need to remind us that we are still in this broken creation, we know that each day. We are not yet on the new earth, and we are not yet in the everlasting rest that God has planned for His people. We are not yet in glory with God, but we as Christians long for and look forward to that day! That will be the ultimate Sabbath experience when it comes.

Hebrews 4:9-11a 9 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, 10 for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. 11 Let us therefore strive to enter that rest.

Over the summer I had the privilege of preaching Psalm 84. One of my points in that sermon was the saint’s everlasting rest with which I referenced a book by puritan Richard Baxter with that title. The point I made was that of the “already” and “not yet” realities of Sabbath. The saint’s everlasting rest is in Christ now, and when we enter into glory with our King. As we go about our days that God gives us here on earth—our temporary dwelling place—we look onward and upward to be with Christ in our eternal home which is everlasting. That is the “already” and “not yet” realities of Sabbath. Before we move on to applying Sabbath to our lives, let me remind us that Sabbath is a part of the unchanging, eternal Universal Moral Law. Sabbath was not abolished after the Old Covenant, and it will not be abolished in the new creation. It is everlasting, meaning it is eternal, and while we may struggle in this fallen creation to observe Sabbath, we will be empowered by God to keep and enjoy Sabbath perfectly in the new creation. We look forward to the saint’s everlasting rest with God. One last thing before we jump into the application of Sabbath. I told you that I would tell us what Sabbath is not. So let’s look at that before we look at how we are to observe it.

1. **What Sabbath is Not**

First, Sabbath is not simply a day off from responsibilities for us to act like the lord of our own lives with no regard for God’s design for Sabbath. Sabbath is supposed to be a blessing to you, but it is not ultimately about you. So we don’t treat Sabbath like a day to be lazy or self-centered.

Second, Sabbath is not a day of unpleasant burdens from God. Sabbath is a blessing, not a bad thing. A.W. Pink said, “In observing the Sabbath, we honor God’s command to remember and rest, acknowledging His sovereignty over all our days.” It should not be an unpleasant day, but a joyful day where we rest in God and His promises. Let’s now move to application. How do we apply Sabbath to our own lives? How do we live out this unchanging command? This is where the disagreements come in. Some don’t practice the Sabbath at all, and then, some do practice but add extra-biblical or unbiblical ideas or practices to it. There are three practical points about Sabbath in this creation for us to know. These are in your hand out notes. The first practical point about Sabbath:

**1)** **God has particularly appointed that one day in seven be a Sabbath to be kept holy unto Him.** This means that our Sabbath day is to be set apart as distinct from the other days and should have a special focus by us on God. Now, we know that we as Christians are to live all of life for the glory of God, and worship Him every second of our days. But Sabbath, in this creation, is designed to give us a break from the normal work and pace of life to be even more focused on worshiping and enjoying God. So how do we do this? Charles Hodge said, “The Sabbath is a sacred time set apart to commune with God, a day when we experience the joy of His presence.” How many times do we neglect our time with God throughout our week because of the busyness of work and other things calling for our attention? A lot, right? On the Sabbath, we get to put all of that busyness away to really tune in to the Lord. We can honor the Sabbath to be kept holy unto God by spending additional time in the Bible, spending additional time in prayer, spending additional time in study of sound doctrine from trusted Bible teachers, spending additional time singing songs of praise, spending additional time in fellowship with other Christians, and spending additional time in service to others as ministries of mercy to them. We practice these things when we gather corporately as the saints to sing, to hear the preaching of the Word, to fellowship with one another in the quad, and practice the “one anothers” that Scripture mentions. At the same time, just coming to church on Sunday isn’t to be the extent of it. The Sabbath is a day given for these things, not just a few hours. To honor the Sabbath we should spend our day enjoying God and being focused on Him like no other day of the week. The second practical point about Sabbath:

**2) God has particularly appointed that one day in seven be a Sabbath to be rested upon by each person for their own benefit.** This means that God also made Sabbath for mankind—for us. Like I have said, God gave it to us for rest. A day to stop our labors and to slow our minds down. It is a great gift from God. I don’t know what everyone here does for work, but I do know that work takes a physical toll on our bodies and a mental toll on our minds. Some of you may operate a jackhammer all day at work and it is physically hard. Some of you may be involved in writing work orders or projects on the computer all day and it is mentally draining. Some of you may teach your kids all day and it's exhausting both physically and mentally. God blesses you with a day of rest from these things. What is important to take note of though is that in our rest on Sabbath, we don’t get to be zombies on the couch and check out. But we get to rest from our other six days of work. In addition to rest, another thing we get to enjoy is God’s gifts to us. It is ok to enjoy watching a football game if we like that, or some other hobby. But, what we cannot do is make our Sabbath all about those things. For example, to rightly honor the Sabbath, I shouldn’t go to church at 9 am, go home at 10:30, sit on the couch and vedge out on football until 8 pm when Sunday Night Football is over. Now, if you want to take your son to the park and throw the ball around on your Sabbath for a little bit, that wouldn’t be violating the Sabbath. What you have to keep in mind is this: Don’t let those types of things that we like to enjoy own our entire day, own our hearts and minds. We are to honor God’s design for Sabbath. To test whether or not you are honoring Sabbath, ask yourself. Where is my heart and mind on this day? Is it on God and the enjoyment of His blessings? Or am I still in work mode and focused on how I am going to accomplish the pursuits that are part of my work week? I am by no means perfect at honoring the Sabbath and am still growing in this. But, let me share with you some of the things I do on the Sabbath when I am honoring it rightly to give as an example. We start our day off here at church worshiping corporately with the saints at 9 AM as a family with the exception of my 2 year old who goes to class. After service we fellowship with others for about 20 minutes to pray, encourage, and check in with others. At 11 AM my wife and I serve in the Youth Ministry while the kids go to class. Afterwards, we fellowship some more in the quad or meet with students for encouragement. We leave the church around 1 PM. When we get home we usually have lunch and my wife and I talk about the sermon that we just sat under that morning. We may also talk about other things pertaining to God or how we are leading the students. During football season, I enjoy watching portions of an afternoon game. Sometimes, I go to a brother's house and we spend a couple of hours encouraging one another. In the evening I enjoy playing an hour of softball with brothers here at Disciples Church and try to be a witness for Christ among the other teams we play. Sometimes my wife and I at the end of the night relax and enjoy a show or we listen to a podcast together on various Christian topics. This is just an example for you to consider in how you are looking at practicing the Sabbath. Each of us have our own way of doing things and there is some liberty in what we enjoy or do. But the main thing is making it about God and resting in Him throughout that day. Enjoy God’s gifts in this creation, especially on Sabbath, but be sure to have all the elements of true Sabbath thrive by not letting the day be primarily about you. The third practical point of Sabbath:

**3) God has designed that Sabbath function in additional ways differently under various covenants.** In regard to this point, Matt taught us 4 years ago that in the Old Covenant, for example, the Sabbath was used in additional ways. Such as, to display the need for the Messiah who was to come. One of these ways was told in Deuteronomy 5, that the Sabbath served to remind the people about their deliverance from Egypt, which was a foreshadowing of the Messiah to come. In the New Covenant, we can gather from Hebrews 4 that the Sabbath serves to remind us of the better deliverance God has now accomplished in the finished work of Jesus the Messiah. This deliverance is in the finished work of Christ for the redemption of the elect….it is our salvation from sin and judgment unto eternal life with Christ. In addition to this, there are other additional functions of “Sabbath” realties found in Scripture. Unfortunately, I don’t have time to show you all the ways this works. But I’ll briefly explain what this means. Again, remembering back to what we learned in Matt’s Biblical Law/Commands lesson, there is often positive law and/or supplementary data added to moral law that applies for a particular time and reason. And this is certainly the case with the Sabbath reality in Scripture. In addition to the moral command, (the one day in seven in this creation), there were other positive law “Sabbaths” that were observed in the Old Covenant. For example, you may know about the Sabbath year, as some call it, that was instructed by God in the Old Covenant. We must be careful to differentiate the unchanging moral command of Sabbath, from these changing Positive Law and/or supplementary things, like a Sabbath year. The changing Positive Law and/or supplementary Sabbath things we see in the Old Covenant are abolished by the New Covenant. This is important to know, and is especially relevant because there are false teachers these days making a lot of money getting people worked up about Sabbath years and pretending to know some false Bible code that helps them supposedly predict future things. Properly understanding the Bible informs us that the Sabbath years and such are not a part of the unchanging moral Sabbath command and were Old Covenant realities that don’t apply today in the New Covenant. So, as people living in the New Covenant, it is helpful to understand this.

**Conclusion:**

Now, to close out our lesson tonight on Sabbath, I want to give you what I hope will be helpful tips on how you practice and prepare for Sabbath.

So what do we here at Disciples Church believe about what day to set for Sabbath? Our elders have taught from a position of not wanting to err on the side of being overly prescriptive about a particular day of the week. There has been much debate about this throughout church history with many different texts of scripture pointed to, to support differing opinions. Our position has been to affirm the clear principle of one day in seven being set aside to observe Sabbath rest that is protected and treated as holy unto the Lord.

What that means is you must joyfully honor the Sabbath one day in seven to be obeying this command. Since we are also commanded not to neglect the regular gathering of the church, and since the church gathers on Sunday, it is appropriate that Sunday is the day that most will observe the Sabbath. As leaders and teachers in this local church, we suggest and hope you can make this happen on Sunday, as that is a fitting day for Sabbath realities like Bible study, singing and fellowship of the saints among other Sabbath realities. But, our main desire for you is that you truly Sabbath one day in seven, and you do it the way God requires, whether that day is on Sunday or some other day.

Some jobs such as firemen, nurses, doctors, and other types of emergency workers are required to work on Sundays because emergencies don’t stop taking place on Sundays (or any day of the week). These types of work would fall into a certain type of exemption due to the fact that they all fit into the category of acts of mercy. But even in those cases, if a nurse decided that she was going to take voluntary overtime work on the sabbath, simply because there was an opportunity to make extra money that week and not because there was a genuine need for her to work that day, that would be a violation of the Sabbath. The issue there would be the heart behind it. I use this as an example not to be prescriptive but to try to help you see how we should think about what it means to honor the Sabbath. It is good to do good on the Sabbath, but that good needs to be done in joyful obedience to our Lord, not in a veiled attempt to gain an advantage for ourselves. Honoring the Sabbath as holy means protecting it from being defiled. We are to offer it to the Lord as a willing sacrifice of our efforts to get ahead and to acknowledge His goodness as our creator and sustainer.

A sabbath day should be a blessing to you for what God has for you in your life in the New Covenant. Remember, Sabbath is to provide us a special day of worship to God, physical and mental rest and refreshment, and other God glorifying activities. So think about this for you and your family and talk it out in group time tonight. What changes might you need to make to rightly honor Sabbath? Maybe you don’t practice Sabbath because of work or something calling for your attention. I used to work for a company that had me on a terrible schedule where I worked 13 days straight. I wouldn’t be able to honor the Sabbath with that schedule so real changes would have to be made. Maybe you do have a Sabbath day, but you don’t practice it the way God designed and so some minor changes have to be made. Whatever the case, let’s all strive to honor God in keeping the 4th commandment how He designed for it to be observed. Lastly, how can we prepare for our Sabbath? First we need to plan our week around our Sabbath. We must know what day our Sabbath is so putting it in the calendar is helpful. Next, we need to prepare for this day by not letting the rest of the week roll over into our Sabbath. This means we should take care of any of our normal things prior to this day by making sure it is all done the night before. Let me give you an example from my family. My wife and kids have responsibilities and chores that they do throughout the week. One of the most practical ways they do this well in our home is preparing the house for that day by making sure dishes are done, trash is taken out, and sometimes even meals can be prepared the night before. That way they can rest from their normal duties and focus on God and resting in Him. Also, we need to prepare our hearts and minds for the Sabbath. That could mean we take care of any unsettled business from the 6 days prior so that we can avoid any distractions. We need to protect our Sabbath and rightly honor the Sabbath command.

It is a day of celebrating the goodness of God, a day of remembering and celebrating what Jesus has done for us; the work of His life, His sacrificial death, and His resurrection. It is a day to fix our eyes on the everlasting rest to come. It is a day of gladness and joy, not a day of pride and bitterness. It’s a day for acts of necessity, piety, and mercy, not a day for self-centeredness or for extra-biblical and unbiblical things. It is a wonderful gift from God and I pray that we see it as that with how we honor God’ design for Sabbath. If you need help on your personal situation with regard to Sabbath, please don’t hesitate to get time with the elders or your group leaders so that we all strive to do this well.

Church, may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let’s Pray.