

How to Keep the Sabbath Holy

1) The Sabbath is a special day to focus on Jesus Christ our Maker: According to the New Testament, "the world" was "made" by Jesus Christ (see John 1:1-3, 14, 10; Col. 1:16). Jesus is "the Lord" who made the world in six days, and "rested on the seventh day." Ex. 20:11. *Thus the Sabbath is a special day to focus on the Jesus Christ as the Creator and Sustainer of all life.* It is a day to come apart from the normal stresses and cares of everyday living, to be refreshed and blessed by the great Creator who loves and died for us.

2) "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work" (Exodus 20:8-10): This is the fourth commandment. We are to work at our normal jobs during the six working days, but from sundown Friday night until sundown Saturday night, we should "not do any work." Late Friday afternoon, after Jesus died, "the Sabbath drew on." Luke 23:54. When the sun went down, Christ's followers "rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Luke 23:56. Secular business should be laid aside. Shopping, laundry, homework, and housecleaning should be done during the six working days. The Bible also calls buying and selling on the Sabbath an "evil thing." Nehemiah 13:15-22. The Lord says, "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath [from trampling on it], from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken." Isaiah

58:13, 14. The Pharisees made the Sabbath a burden, but Jesus wants us to "call the Sabbath a delight," and to "delight" ourselves in Him. Sabbath-keeping is something we "grow into" as Jesus teaches us how to "keep it holy."

3) Friday is "the preparation day" (Luke 23:54): The "preparation day" is a good day for dusting, ironing and housecleaning. When the sun sets our minds should be free from care to focus on Jesus. In the wilderness, the Lord instructed Israel to "bake what you bake" on the day before the Sabbath. Exodus 16:23-29. Paul specifically said the history of Israel in the wilderness is "an example" for us "upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. 10:6, 11. If a special meal is planned for the Sabbath, it would be good to do as much of the cooking as possible on Friday.

4) Jesus was in "the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke 4:16): Jesus worshiped with God's people every Sabbath. Luke 4:16, 31, 32. So should we. We should not "forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is." Hebrews 10:25. In "the new earth ... from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh *come to worship* before me, says the Lord." Isaiah 66:22, 23. We all need the blessing of "fellowship" with other believers who love Jesus and keep His commandments. Ex. 20:6; John 14:15; 1 John 1:7.

5) Jesus said, "it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days" (Matthew 12:12): Jesus healed and helped people on the Sabbath (see Mark 1:21?27; Matthew 12:10?13; Luke 13:10?17), and His deeds of mercy were fully "lawful" on the Sabbath, that is, they were in harmony with true Sabbath-keeping. The Sabbath is a good day to visit the sick, help someone in need, etc. Thus we can follow the example of Jesus.

6) "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth ... and rested on the seventh day. Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Ex. 20:11): The Sabbath is a wonderful day to enjoy the beautiful things of nature. Take the children for a walk in the park. Relax under a tree. Read the Bible by a stream or lake. Enjoy special fellowship with the One who said, "Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them." Ezek. 20:12. The Sabbath reveals the glorious truth that the One who created our entire world in six days, and rested on the seventh, is also able to re-create our hearts back into His own image. See Gen. 1:26; Ps. 51:10; Eph. 4:21-24.

7) What if I work on the Sabbath?: Kindly approach your employer and say, "My conscience tells me that I can no longer work on the Sabbath day. How can we work around this?" Tens of thousands have done this. Most employers will accommodate firm religious convictions. Even if you lose your job (which isn't likely, but it does happen), God will help you find another one. Study Daniel 3 and you will see that God blessed the three Hebrews who refused to break the second commandment. At the end of Daniel 3, they were promoted. If you stand up for Jesus and His fourth commandment, He will stand up for you. If you are the only member in your family who wants to keep the Sabbath, don't push it on them. Jesus will guide and help you step by step if you look to Him for direction and strength. See Ps. 29:11.

"Blessed are those who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city ... the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you." Rev. 22:14, 21 (KJV)