

The Fourth Commandment

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BIG SANDY, Texas—We as believers are thankful that we are saved by grace. In fact, we should reflect our appreciation by giving much thought and attention into recognizing God's expectations for us.

We can reflect back to the time in the Old Testament when the children of Israel were brought out of the land of Egypt—the house of bondage (Exodus 20:1-2)—and remember that God gave them instructions about how to live (verses 3-17).

Let's spend some time considering the Fourth Commandment.

Exodus 20:8-11—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

Remember the Sabbath day

In Exodus 20:11 and Exodus 31:17, we read that the Sabbath day is a weekly reminder about the creation as explained in Genesis 2:2-3.

When we read that God rested on the seventh day, none of us thinks that God had to rest because He was tired. Therefore, why did He rest? He rested to emphasize a lesson for us.

In Deuteronomy 5:15, we read another lesson to learn by observing the Sabbath. God instructed His people to remember how they were delivered from the bondage of Egypt.

In our modern world, we can use the Sabbath day to remember how God delivered us from the bondage of sin.

Keep it holy

In Genesis 2:3, we read that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

It is common for people to ask: What activities are acceptable for a believer to do on the Sabbath day?

An important verse to consider in determining Sabbath behavior is found in Isaiah 58:13.

Isaiah 58:13—"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, [you] shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words."

A believer is to avoid his own pleasure, his own ways and his own words. And yet a believer is encouraged to consider the Sabbath a delight.

Is God asking a believer to be a stoic? Is God expecting a believer to enjoy being a stoic?

The Moffatt translation of the Bible uses the English word *business* instead of *pleasure*. So, while believers often avoid doing their professional business on the Sabbath, they do not avoid all pleasurable activities.

Each believer gives account to God about how he observes the Sabbath (Romans 14:12). Each believer must make his decisions based upon personal faith (Romans 14:22-23).

Christ's example

There are many examples of Jesus doing good things on the Sabbath. Here are a few examples—Luke 6:1-5; Luke 6:6-10; Luke 13:11-17; Luke 14:1-6; John 5:2-18 and John 9:1-7,14.

Because Christ did kind gestures on the Sabbath, the religious leaders accused Him of breaking the Sabbath (John 5:18) and of not keeping the Sabbath (John 9:16).

The religious leaders were wrong and Jesus was right. He demonstrated a sterling example to mankind about honorable behavior on the Sabbath.

Mercy or sacrifice?

Here's an extremely important lesson about the Sabbath.

Matthew 9:13—"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Someone could ask: What does the subject of mercy and sacrifice have to do with the Sabbath?

When Jesus defended the actions of His disciples to the Pharisees (Matthew 12:1-6), He referred back to the subject of mercy and sacrifice.

Matthew 12:7—"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless."