

“Our Sunday’s Best”

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Dr. Ritch Boerckel

Scriptural Foundation: Exodus 20:8-11, ESV

The context of this study is at Mount Sinai and it is God delivering these ten words, these ten instructions, these Ten Commandments to the people as they are about to begin a new Nation. This is the Fourth Commandment, written in stone.

The Ten Commandments

⁸“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰but 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. ¹¹For 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.”

Do you find it difficult to cut away time in your day to simply read God’s Word in quiet contemplation, to speak with the Lord in unhurried prayer, to worship God without feeling the need to look at your watch and see if you must stop and get on with the busyness of the day? When was the last time you had an opportunity to spend even a single hour, an uninterrupted hour, in the presence of God in unbroken communion?

To quote theologian Jim Croce, “There never seems to be enough time to do the things you want to do once you find them.”¹ For the Christian, we know the joy of communing with God and we say, “Yes, I know what that is like, but I have such a hard time cutting out moments, minutes, even an hour in my morning to do the thing I really want to do. I do desire to spend this time with God, but I am not doing it.”

Such is the dilemma of the Christian in the United States. I often find myself often saying, “I just wish God would give me one more hour in the day. If He gave me one more hour in the day I would use it for His glory. Better yet, if He would give to me one more day in the week!” Imagine that! Imagine God would actually grant that request. Suppose He gave to us an extra day in the week to be used for the soul purpose of loving Him, growing in the faith, strengthening one another in the Lord, of enjoying His creation and giving to Him praise, reflecting upon His greatness and power and goodness. How awesome that would be, one whole day to focus upon God being our Center in the foundation of our life; one whole day to simply read Scripture and to read theological books and devotional books which would excite our soul with regards to God. Suppose we had one whole day to spend talking with our children about the goodness and grace of God, instructing them in the faith, and encouraging them in their lives. Suppose we had one whole day to fellowship with Christian friends and to encourage one another. Suppose we had one whole day during which we could feel absolute freedom to neglect that “Things To Do” list, to not think about what is going to happen at work on Monday and not to be concerned with all the chores that need to be done around the house, the lawn needing to be mowed, the garage that needs to be cleaned, no e-mails to be answered. Suppose we could set aside all that technology and all those responsibilities and just exhale and simply soak in the Lord and the goodness of His revelation to us.

Do you believe your life would improve? Do you believe the church would be strengthened if God gave each of us one whole day each week simply to feed our soul, sweeten the relationship with other believers, and commune with Him?

If this sounds like a dream come true, I have some really good news for you: God has given us that day. God has given to us that day and He has given to us the freedom to take away time from all the other things that occupy our thoughts and energies and worries and anxieties and frustrations, and to set them aside, take a deep breath, and spend the entire day in deliberate communion and contemplation upon Him.

¹ Jim Croce. “Time In A Bottle.” © EMI Music Publishing, 1970.

God wrapped that kind of day for us from the very beginning of time. When He gave the Ten Commandments to His people Israel, He was giving commandments to a people whom He had redeemed from bondage in slavery in Egypt. They were about to become a new Nation and the Lord gave this word of instruction to them, “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days I have given to you to labor and do all your work, but in the seventh day I have given to you an extra day, 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, your female servant, not even your livestock or the sojourner who is within your gates. In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, God blessed this Sabbath day and He made it holy.”

God begins His list of Ten Commandments by saying this about Himself,

^{20:2}“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

He is speaking to a people with whom He is in an intimate, personal relationship. God wants His people to know the Commandments He gives to us come from a God who has our good in mind, “I have already shown to you I have your best in view. I took you out of your natural state, slavery, and placed you in a position of freedom. I did not do that so you can become a slave all over again. I have done that so you can live free, joyful lives in Me.”

These Commandments were given to a people who had already been redeemed. These Commandments were not given to tell a people as to how they “could” be redeemed and that is important. Some people believe, “God gave us the Ten Commandments that if we live according to them then we could be saved, accepted, and justified by God and we would have eternal life.” No, God had given these Commandments to a people whom He had already rescued, whom He had already placed salvation into their experience.

These Commandments were not given to redeem a people, but they were given to a redeemed people to reveal how we might live in joy before our God. Yet, today, regarding this Fourth Commandment, we have largely forgotten the command that begins, “Remember...”. Our failure to remember, I believe, is one cause of the spiritual drift and apathy that corrupts the heart of the modern Christian. We forget the Sabbath was given as a gift to man to energize our walk with God and our worship of God.

My goal in this study is not to make all of us feel guilty. I speak to my own soul in recognition of my need to remember, to listen afresh, to this ancient Word and to better use this day God has given me to strengthen my walk and my worship. I need it for personal revival. I believe that.

The principle we will learn in this study is: When we decide to neglect the significance of the day God has given to us to help us strengthen our faith and our joy in Him, we open our heart to the danger of lukewarm living.

We will consider the biblical significance of the Sabbath. There was a day, not too long ago, in the United States I would not have to convince the church that keeping the Sabbath as holy and separate unto the Lord was a significant means of grace to help us to love God. Just a few decades ago, the commitment to free one’s self from the routine of business and other work was honored by most people in our community. Stores, gas stations, and grocery marts were all closed on Sunday. One could hardly find a place to go to that was opened on a Sunday. My parents and grandparents thus spent their Sundays at church, with family, with friends, walking in fellowship with God, enjoying God’s creation, and talking about God’s Truth.

I remember as a young boy, if I had the responsibility to cut the grass on the weekend, I needed to do that Friday night or Saturday. I was not going to be able to do that on Sunday. That was simply not acceptable.

What has changed that has made Sunday merely another day out of seven? It used to be, and I encourage the young people to talk with your grandparents and ask them, “What were Sundays like when you were a little boy or girl?”, you would get an entirely different picture from what you experience in the same country and community today. So, what has changed?

I do not believe we can explain this phenomenon by arguing our culture has become more concerned about how we might love God. I do not believe that is a possible explanation.

When I lived in Iowa in my early twenties, I had the privilege of befriending a retired farmer. His name was “Stauffer” and Stauffer loved to talk about his experiences on the farm. I remember him talking about Sundays and telling me how disappointed he was at the recent trend of planting and harvesting on Sundays. When Stauffer began as a farmer, and through his adult farming years, it was accepted one did not plant and harvest on Sunday. That was a day set aside for the Lord. He felt the same pressures other farmers did and do today, but he chose to steadfastly remember the Sabbath. He had a saying he would often repeat, “What you gain on Sunday you will lose on Monday.”

I am not sure Stauffer was entirely right about that. I believe it is possible to do something on Sunday where there is some practical, pragmatic, worldly benefit on Monday. But, I believe Stauffer is right in principle, that the loss of experience by giving up this one day devoted and set aside for enjoying God is not necessarily measured by Monday’s scale. That loss may not be realized until years have passed and our life is almost over and we look back and realize what we have given up.

I have been around quite a number of older farmers and almost always their faces are creased with character, either a character that betrays their flesh or a character that displays the fruit of God’s Spirit. I can tell you, I do not know of a man more reflective of a godly calm, a godly confidence, a godly happiness, a godly joy, a godly peace, or a godly, loving kindness than Stauffer’s face did. I must believe one of the influences God used was his practice of setting aside a day to just simply think about the Lord, to read Scripture, to talk with other believers, and to enjoy God on this day.

Some of you may already be upset at me, thinking, “Isn’t this legalism? Are we not free from rigid Sabbath rules?” That is the great cry of the day! These are important questions and I hope to answer them, however, I am concerned this question about legalism, as it is often asked, is not asked out of a sincere desire to do whatever God wants us to do, willing to count whatever cost God would have us to make in order to please Him and rejoice in Him, but it is often asked from a hard, unrepentant, resistant heart, a heart that desires to live life according to one’s own thinking.

Indeed, it is possible to become legalistic regarding the Sabbath. I know that and I believe generations of the past, perhaps, have failed in that area, but our freedom in Christ is to help us to deepen our commitment to God, not weaken it. Surely, as we stop here, I hope, at the end of this study, if nothing else at least you will have this thought, “Surely, this Command means something significant and profound to my practical, weekly life, and to me today.”

The principle we learn is: Our freedom in Christ lashes our time, energy, and resources more firmly to Christ. It does not loosen them from their moorings to drift with the dominant culture around us. I know responsible, reasonable Christians differ on the exact interpretations of the Sabbath and I am going to give you one of those interpretations. But, surely we can agree all of our time is God’s and discipleship will cost us profoundly and deeply in our practice.

We remember, when Jesus called His Disciples, He said, in Matthew 16,

²⁴ “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”

When Jesus bids a man to come follow Him, He bids him to come and die, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer would write. We must not make the argument that keeping the Sabbath is simply too hard, too inconvenient, or too costly. Usually we do not make that argument out loud, but it is often the subtle underflow of our heart in thinking about this Fourth Commandment.

There are four ideas to the biblical significance of the Sabbath. **The first biblical significance of the Sabbath is in the reference to Creation.** When God gives this Commandment in Exodus 20, He connects not to Israel becoming a Nation. It is not unique to Israel, but He connects it to Creation. He begins the Commandment this way, “Remember the Sabbath...” In other words, He is telling them, “Before I speak to you on this mountain, there was a principle in play I want you to remember.” This is before Israel becomes a Nation and it is not a part of the rules for this specific nation for a short amount of time.

Then He connects this very specifically to Creation,

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.”

What is this all about? In order to discover this, we must go to the Book of Genesis, Chapter 1. Let me share the summary of each day.

⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁸ And God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

^{31b} And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

As an aside, why do we have a “week” at all? Why do we measure our calendars in weeks? Have you ever considered that? What secular explanation is there for a calendar to be organized according to weeks? There is none! There is no secular explanation I know of. It all comes back to Genesis 1 when God made the earth in one week and that is why we have weeks to this day. It is rooted in Creation.

Notice what happens in Genesis. In six days, we notice there is evening and there is morning and at the end of the day we are ready for a new day. But, we read in Genesis 2,

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.

If the pattern is followed we would expect to say, “So there was evening and morning, the seventh day,” but we do not find that. We find Verse 3. There is no beginning or conclusion of the seventh day. Why is that? I believe it is because it is God’s intention for the seventh day to never have an end. The idyllic life was a life resting in God, a Sabbath rest. Where one works, a Sabbath rest does not mean a cessation of work, but it means a cessation of the work we do day-by-day effected by thorns in the ground. God’s intention was that this sweet Garden experience of walking with God in the cool of the day, enjoying God, and having meaningful work without thorns, anxieties, difficulties, and frustrations. That was God’s original design. This first Sabbath would be a day that would perpetuate everyday into eternity.

But, as we read on in Genesis it did not perpetuate into eternity. Why is that? Chapter 3 tells us Adam and Eve chose to listen to another voice outside of God. How dangerous it is to listen to a voice other than the voice of God in order to find direction in life.

God had clearly spoken and God has clearly spoken to us. The Apostle Peter will say, “We have a more sure word.” They listened to Satan instead of God. They listened to another voice that sounded good and made good sense and sounded wise. They did that which was disobedient to God and the Sabbath day ended.

Instead of walking with God in the cool of the day, as they did every other day and as the Sabbath day continued, the Sabbath ended. They did not want to walk with God. Their relationship with God was broken. Instead, they covered themselves with fig leaves and they hid. God asked them, “Where are you and why are you hiding?”²

In giving a curse upon mankind, in Genesis 3, God said to Adam, describing what life outside of the Sabbath was going to be like,

² Genesis 3:1-9

¹⁷ “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

When we read that section, we ought to ask ourselves, “Do I ever have any problems, frustrations, or difficulties in my own workplace? Where did that come from?” It came from God and it came from man deciding he had a better plan than God did.

I believe one element to God’s answer, to find joy in the midst of a world of thorns, relates back to Exodus 20:8, “Remember the Sabbath...” In other words, “Okay, you have messed up the Sabbath, but My plan is to restore the Sabbath and, in faith, begin to enjoy just a little bit of My plan, of My goodness, of My intention for you, before sin entered the world. You can enjoy some of My intention now and by enjoying that now you are actually looking forward to a future day when I will bring the Sabbath and establish it again as an eternal experience of My people.”

The Sabbath rest is not about a specific day, but it is about a kind of communion. God promises the continual Sabbath rest will one day be experienced. Hebrews 4 is discussing a rest believers have now and one they experience, but it is also a kind of rest, a Sabbath rest, we will one day experience,

⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. ⁹ So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (*yet future*), ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest (*past tense*) has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹ Let us therefore strive to enter that rest...

Should we believe that Sabbath rest was going to be finally be restored when the people entered the Promised Land with Joshua and took over the land? The answer is, “No,” because if that were the case, God would not have spoken about a future day, which He did speak of a future day. This passage is speaking of this rest as already being experienced by us as the children of God, and yet it is some yet in the future to be consummated and enjoyed.

How are we experiencing rest? Jesus Christ fulfilled every requirement of the Law for us. We do not have to strive to do the works of the Law in order to gain acceptance in God’s sight. That is the Gospel,

^{Ephesians 2:8} For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

^{Romans 8:1} There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

We rest from those works for we are in Christ and we are at rest with peace with God through Jesus. But, not yet! We must strive to enter into that rest and we must strive to see and savor the God in whom, one day, we will stand in His presence. Right now we are still standing and living in a world of thorns and thistles.

Redemption in Jesus has been fully accomplished but it has not been fully realized or consummated. One day a continual Sabbath will be restored. I believe Revelation 22 speaks about that day,

¹ Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ² through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. ³ No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. ⁴ They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵ And night will be no more.

Remember, there was day, there was morning and there was evening, the First Day. When we came to the Seventh Day there is no evening because there is continual Sabbath rest. God says at the end of time we will enjoy a continual Sabbath rest with God.

How significant is this day? God says, “One day out of seven, here on earth, right now in the midst of the thorns and the thistles, set it aside so you can enjoy this slice of My Heaven, of My Kingdom, of My joy right now, right where you are in the midst of this world’s darkness and sin. But, set it aside also so your anticipation, your expectation, your joy in that future day will grow and grow and grow, that you will be ready for Heaven.” Is that not awesome? What a great gift God has given to us.

The second biblical significance of the Sabbath is The Mosaic Law. We saw it before, as well, in Exodus. When God gave manna to feed the people, what did He say to them, in Exodus 16? Before He gives the Law, the principle of the Sabbath was already established. He said, “For six days you will gather manna. On the sixth day, however, gather twice as much and it will remain fresh for the Sabbath day and you will be able to eat it on the Sabbath. But, if you leave over manna on any of the other days, it will become wormy.” That is exactly what happened. God produces a miracle in order to confirm a creation pattern in the lives of His own people.

How serious is God in our keeping of the Sabbath? Exodus reveals it is a capital offence if one breaks it,

¹² And the LORD said to Moses, ¹³“You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you. ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵ Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. ¹⁷ It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.””

How serious is God about the Sabbath and how significant is this in the heart and mind of God? Let us jump forward from the time of the Exodus, around 1,400 BC, eight hundred years to Jeremiah’s day in 600 BC. God is judging Judah for their idolatry and disobedience. He is judging them through the nation of Babylon. God has allowed Babylon to conquer them and take them into exile. Jeremiah tells us this exile will last seventy years. Why would God judge the people of Israel for seventy years. 2 Chronicles 36 tells us,

¹⁷ Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand... ²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

What does that mean? God is telling us why this was going to be seventy years. For the past four hundred and ninety years, beginning around the time of Eli, the Nation who had been given a very specific Sabbath rule in Exodus, was told, “Every seven years you are to not plant and not reap a harvest.” There was six years of planting and harvest and then there was the Sabbath year. For the past four hundred and ninety years, the people of Israel ignored that, from the time of Eli to the time of Jeremiah. But, God said, “For four hundred and ninety years you have disobeyed this Sabbath principle and you have decided you knew better than I did. Here is My judgment upon you, for seventy Sabbath years you neglected to receive from me, as a gift from my hand, you will be in exile and you will be underneath My hand of judgment.” Do we believe this principle is important to God?

When we get to Nehemiah, the people return to the land and they are excited about what is happening. Nehemiah 13 tells us, as the people built this wall,

¹⁵ In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food... ¹⁷ Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, “What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? ¹⁸ Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”

Imagine Nehemiah saying, “No! Did we not learn what we were suppose to learn for the past seventy years? We just got into the Promised Land to be restored. God has just favored us by bringing us back to the land.”

The third biblical significance of the Sabbath is Jesus’ teaching? Did Jesus not do away with the Sabbath? Not at all. Jesus fulfills Old Testament Law; He does not abolish it. Jesus would not undo what is so forceful in God’s revelation to His people through the Old Testament.

The New Testament is not a replacement of the Old Testament, but it is a continuation of the Old Testament. It is a progression of the story. What was prescribed by the Law in the Old Testament is extended to the heart in the New Covenant and to change our hearts to the Lord.

Jesus did challenge the Pharisee’s misuse of the Sabbath day, but He did not do away with it. Regarding the Sabbath, Jesus says, in Mark 2,

²⁷ “*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.* ²⁸ *So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath.*”

This day is not meant to be a burden for man to carry, but it is meant to be a joy for man to experience.

The fourth biblical significance of the Sabbath is the early church. The early church continues to practice in keeping this one day a week for the worship of God. However, they change it to Sunday in honor of the resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle Paul writes, in 1 Corinthians 16,

¹ “Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do.
² On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper...”

This offering is encouraged in order to give it to the poor. In Acts 20, we read,

⁷ On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them (the believers in Troas)...

John writes, in Revelation 1,

¹⁰ I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day...

Even as late as John writes, in 90 AD, we find he is still observing the Sabbath, on the Lord’s Day, as he is all by himself in exile.

But, someone may protest, “What about Romans 14 and what does it mean?”

⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

There are two thoughts about this verse. I do not believe it is dealing with the Sabbath so much as it is dealing with extra holidays, extra sabbaths created by men. Regardless, he does not say all days are secular, but all days are to be holy and fused with this idea of holding our life as sacred before God.

There are abuses of the Sabbath. **The first abuse was** the Pharisee’s abuse and that was **to bury the Sabbath under a mountain of rules**, manmade rules which made no sense whatsoever. The Pharisees took the one Law, the Fourth Commandment, and turned it into 1,500 manmade rules, many of which were absolutely ridiculous. For instance, women were forbidden to gaze into a mirror because if they did they might see a gray hair and they might be tempted to pluck it.

Again, in decades past, there were believers who turned the Sabbath upside down on its head. Sunday, I believe, is a day of godly commitments. It is not a day of manmade rules. Godly commitments are those commitments of our heart

which help us to connect to God. Manmade rules are rules by which we judge, externally, ourselves and others to see if we live up to someone's standard.

The second abuse of the Sabbath is a neglect of the Sabbath altogether. I believe, by and large, this is the biggest problem and I would ask and encourage each of us to think of our own life and see whether or not this abuse of the Sabbath touches our life: neglecting to make full use of the gift God has given to us, that this day, Sunday, becomes no different than Saturday, another day of the weekend.

The Command God gives to us, I believe, concretely calls us to allow Jesus to be Lord over all of our time. He is the Lord of the Sabbath. He is control over everything. Our flesh likes to believe our time is ours, so we say to the Lord, for instance, and this is very subtle in our conversations with God in our heart attitude, "Okay, Lord, I am going to give to you one-half hour every morning to listen to Your Word and to pray." We feel rather good about ourselves for giving that half-hour. Sometimes we may say, "I guess I must go do this because the Lord would have me to do this." But, all this does is to reflect a heart that is completely failing in recognizing our whole life is God's. God is the One giving each of us time. We are not the ones giving God time. It is the sinfulness of our selfishness to believe we are giving God time when He is the God of eternity.

There are practical helps for proper use. First, **thoughtful preparation is wise.** Whenever we intend to accomplish important, we take time to plan, to strategize, to make full use of it.

Recently, we decided to take everything out of our basement and redo some things in a space to make it cleaner and healthier. Before we began, I got together with Kimberly and Jackson, my team. I knew, particularly with Jackson, if I did not share the plan I knew what was going to happen. My children tend to "drift" and their focus becomes a bit fuzzy. So I shared the big picture, what the expectations were, and the idea to do one job at a time, "We needed to talk about this and strategize about this because we needed to have this finished by a certain time. In order to make full use of our time, this is what we needed to do together and this is how we are going to go about it."

But, we come to Sunday, such a special day, and we have no preparation or planning. Is it not wise to say, "Let's take time out and let's talk about and think about how we can take full advantage of this day if it is so important."

Secondly, **public worship is central.** It is not a day of private isolation, but it is a day of connection to God's people. In the Old Testament in the New Testament, the pattern was for God's people to come together.

Third, **family instruction is opportune.** Father's, do not provoke your children in anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.³ Some fathers will protest, "But, I do not have time! You must understand my schedule. It is so busy. Here is what they do immediately after school. For my day, I get home late." What if you had just one day, every week, to say, "Kids, we are just going to focus on talking together about what is happening in our lives and what is happening with God's Word."

Fourth, **conscious negation is essential.** In other words, we must decide and this is where it is hard. It is not the bad things we are cutting out, necessarily, but it is often the good things. We read in Isaiah 58,

¹³ "If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; ¹⁴ then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth..."

Isaiah is juxtapositioning two things: first, our own pleasure with our delight in God. How can that be? Our flesh takes pleasure in that which is not God, yet he is saying, "Keep the Sabbath so these delights in God will rise and begin to overcome these pleasures. But, as long as you feed your own pleasures, you will never, ever delight in God." I believe that is why many of us have such a difficulty, on Sunday's, of keeping this day holy. Honestly, we do not delight in God and we are not willing to say, "God, I want to repent of this and I want to turn away, this day, from my own pleasures and focus on You so I can grow in my delight in You."

³ Ephesians 6:4

The potential of the Sabbath for revival: Understand, the Sabbath day is not a day of drudgery but it is a day of true delight and the potential of the Sabbath for revival is dark. It is my belief if God, in His grace, does not send a revival, the church will continue her downward descent into darkness so she will be wholly unable to represent the Lord and give a Gospel message to a world enslaved to sin and dying because of it.

You may say, “But, what if I do not want to change my Sundays? I like the way my Sundays go. I do not want to change my Sundays.” Is that something you are struggling with? First, thanks for being honest, but, second, I would urge you to ask yourself the question, “Why?” Seek your soul on this. My concern is we do not delight in God enough to think of this as an exciting opportunity.

Let me give to you a couple of events I will juxtapose for you to help to give you gain an understanding of this. Sometimes my family would say, “We are going over to our friend’s house and you need to come with us. We want you to come with us.” I did not know these folks and they did not have people my age. They would talk about stuff I was not interested in, but as a dutiful son, trying to be polite, I was miserable inside, wishing I could be anywhere except there. But, I went.

Put that next to a day I call Kimberly and we are just beginning this relationship. I think she is awesome, and she says, “Yes” to a picnic in the park. I am driving to her house and I am so jazzed up with joy because I get to spend a day with this person. What is the difference? I am spending time with people. In this person I find incredible delight and in the other I do not and that makes all the difference.

So, when we think about Sunday, we think, “Am I willing and wanting to change my Sunday?” If we honestly say, “I do not want to change my Sunday,” we need to acknowledge this is where we are and we do not want to be there. I believe a healthy soul delights in God and this is where we want to get, but the issue is in our heart. This is not with the Law, but it is a heart issue. This is what Jesus says, He is our Savior, in Matthew 11,

²⁸ “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

I call you, if you have never trusted in Jesus, to come to Him. If you have trusted in Jesus, but your spiritual life is faltering, come to Him. He is a sufficient Savior if we simply come.