

GUIDELINES TO TRUE SABBATH OBSERVANCE

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With this leaflet we are sending forth a call to the whole church to renew its commitment to Christ in the observance of His holy day. While much has been said about the need of revival in the church, not much emphasis has been given to reformation, and there are many areas of our experience in which true reformation needs to be seen. This is especially true of our observance of the Sabbath, and it is our hope that as every family in the church prayerfully reads this leaflet, so full of inspired counsel, a new reformation shall take place. Let us all study this inspired counsel together, and pray together toward this end. Let us encourage one another to “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

“If you cease to tread the Sabbath underfoot, and keep my holy day free from your own affairs, if you call the Sabbath a day of joy and the Lord’s holy day a day to be honored, if you honor it by not plying your trade, nor seeking your own interests or attending your own affairs, then you shall find your joy in the Lord.” - Isaiah 58:13, 14 (N.E.B.)

TO WHOM WAS THE SABBATH DAY GIVEN AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

It was given to Adam and Eve at creation.

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” Genesis 2:2, 3.

It was made a command to remember.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all thy work; But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Exodus 20:3-11.

It was given to “man,” not to any particular group.

“And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath:” Mark 2:27.

It was to be a sign between God and His people.

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify

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you. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.” Exodus 31:13, 17.

It was to be a sign of sanctification.

“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. And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God. Ezekiel 20:12, 20.

“He (Christ-John 1:1-14; Colossians 1:13-16; Hebrews 1:1, 2; Genesis 2:1-3) made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier.” - The Desire of Ages; page 288.

“God saw that a Sabbath was essential for man, even in Paradise. He needed to lay aside his own interests and pursuits for one day of the seven, that he might more fully contemplate the works of God, and meditate upon His power and goodness. He needed a Sabbath to remind him more vividly of God, and to awaken gratitude because all that he enjoyed and possessed came from the beneficent hand of the Creator.” - Patriarchs and Prophets; page 48.

“The Lord draws very nigh to His people on the day that He has blessed and sanctified.”- Testimonies to Ministers, page 137.

“He (God) gives it to man as a day in which he may rest from labor, and devote himself to worship and the improvement of his spiritual condition.”- Testimonies; volume 4, page 249.

“Following the example of the Creator, man was to rest upon this sacred day, that as he should look upon the heavens and the earth, he might reflect upon God’s great work of creation; and that as he should behold the evidences of God’s wisdom and goodness, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, page 47.

“Its observance was to be an act of grateful acknowledgment, on the part of all who should dwell upon the earth, that God was their Creator and their rightful sovereign; that they were the work of His hands, and the subjects of His authority. Thus the institution was wholly commemorative, and given to all mankind. There was nothing in it shadowy, or of restricted application to any people. “-Ibid., page 48.

Finally, in the new earth, every race and nation will keep the Sabbath (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

IF THE TRUE SABBATH HAD ALWAYS BEEN REMEMBERED AND KEPT HOLY, WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD HAVE BEEN THE RESULT?

“. . . so long as the fact that He (God) is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship Him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God.” - The Great Controversy, page 438.

WHY IS THE SABBATH THE TEST OF LOVE AND LOYALTY TO THE TRUE GOD?

“The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty; for it is the point of truth especially contradicted. The keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God’s law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator.” - Ibid, page 605.

“Sabbath a Test of Loyalty. Every man has been placed on trial, as were Adam and Eve in Eden. As the tree of knowledge was placed in the midst of the garden of Eden, so the Sabbath command is placed in the

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midst of the Ten Commandments. In regard to the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the restriction was made, 'Ye shall not eat of it. . . . lest ye die' (Genesis 3:3). Of the Sabbath, God said, Ye shall not defile it, but keep it holy. . . . As the tree of knowledge was the test of Adam's obedience, so the fourth command is the test that God has given to prove the loyalty of all His people. The experience of Adam is to be a warning to us so long as time shall last. It warns us not to receive any assurance from the mouth of men or of angels that will detract one jot or tittle from the sacred law of Jehovah (Review and Herald, August 30, 1898)." - Bible Commentary, volume 1, page 1106.

"The Sabbath is the great question which is to decide the destiny of souls."- Testimonies to Ministers, page 472.

"It means eternal salvation to keep the Sabbath holy unto the Lord."- Testimonies, volume 6, page 356.

All heaven is watching to see who is keeping the Sabbath (2 Testimonies, page 704).

Special light and health are promised to those who keep the Sabbath (2 Testimonies, page 705).

When we love God we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). They are within our hearts (Psalm 40:8). The Sabbath was given for our eternal good (Deuteronomy 6:24; 10:13).

Note the happy promises given to those who endeavor to truly hallow His Sabbath.

1. "Then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord" - true and abiding happiness.
2. "I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth" - spiritual prosperity.
3. "I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father" - an eternal home in the new earth. Read Isaiah 58:13, 14.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE ATTITUDE OF THE FAMILY AS THE SABBATH APPROACHES?

"Before the setting of the sun let the members of the family assemble to read God's word, to sing and pray."- Testimonies, volume 6, page 356.

"At family worship let the children take a part. Let all bring their Bibles and each read a verse or two. Then let some familiar hymn be sung, followed by prayer. . . . In a simple petition tell the Lord your needs and express gratitude for His mercies. Thus you invite Jesus as a welcome guest into your home and heart. . . .

"The Sabbath school and the meeting for worship occupy only a part of the Sabbath. The portion remaining to the family may be made the most sacred and precious season of all the Sabbath hours. Much of this time parents should spend with their children. . . . In pleasant weather let parents walk with their children in the fields and groves. . . . Tell them of the way of salvation. . . . Present before the children Jesus, as a child obedient to His parents, as a youth faithful and industrious, helping to support the family. . . . From time to time read with them the interesting stories in Bible history. Question as to what they have learned in the Sabbath school, and study with them the next Sabbath's lesson."- Testimonies, volume 6, pages 357-359.

The Sabbath is to be used for study of the parables of Jesus in an outdoor setting.

"On the holy rest day, above all other days, we should study the messages that God has written for us in nature. We should study the Savior's parables where He spoke them, in the fields and groves, under the open sky, among the grass and flowers. As we come close to the heart of nature, Christ makes His presence real to us, and speaks to our hearts of His peace and love." - Christ's Object Lessons, page 26.

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HOW SHOULD WE MARK THE CLOSE OF THE SABBATH?

We dishonor God when we wish the sun to go down so that we can resume business or pleasure (Amos 8:5).

“As the sun goes down, let the voice . . . of praise mark the close of the sacred hours and invite God’s presence through the cares of the week of labor.

“Thus parents can make the Sabbath, as it should be, the most joyful day of the week. They can lead their children to regard it as a delight, the day of days, the holy of the Lord, honorable.” - Testimonies; volume 6, page 359.

WHAT PLANS SHOULD BE MADE TO KEEP THE SABBATH FROM BEING A DAY OF USELESS INACTIVITY?

“The Sabbath is not to be a day of useless idleness. Both in the home and in the church a spirit of service is to be manifested. He who gave us six days for our temporal work has blessed and sanctified the seventh day and set it apart for Himself. On this day He will in a special manner bless all who consecrate themselves to His service.” - Ibid., pages 361, 362.

“None should feel at liberty to spend sanctified time in an unprofitable manner. It is displeasing to God for Sabbath keepers to sleep during much of the Sabbath. They dishonor their Creator in so doing, and, by their example, say that the six days are too precious for them to spend in resting. They must make money, although it be by robbing themselves of needed sleep, which they make up by sleeping away holy time.”- Ibid., volume 2, page 704.

“The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity. The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful on that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.” - The Desire of Ages, page 207.

“Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath.” - Matthew 12:12.

“Jesus stated to them that the work of relieving the afflicted was in harmony with the Sabbath law. It was in harmony with the work of God’s angels, who are ever descending and ascending between heaven and earth to minister to suffering humanity.” - The Desire of Ages, page 206.

“Nature must continue her unvarying course. God could not for a moment stay His hand, or man would faint and die. And man also has a work to perform on this day. The necessities of life must be attended to, the sick must be cared for, the wants of the needy must be supplied. He will not be held guiltless who neglects to relieve suffering on the Sabbath. God’s holy rest day was made for man, and acts of mercy are in perfect harmony with its intent. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour’s pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day.”-Ibid., page 207.

WHAT CHANGES MUST TAKE PLACE IF THE PROMISED SABBATH REFORM IS TO TAKE PLACE IN THE LAST DAYS?

Ellen White refers to the prophecy of Isaiah 56:6 in The Great Controversy, page 451, where the statement is made: “The work of Sabbath reform to be accomplished in the last days is foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah.” Read verses 1-7.

“Far more sacredness is attached to the Sabbath than is given it by many professed Sabbath keepers. The Lord has been greatly dishonored by those who have not kept the Sabbath according to the commandment,

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either in the letter or in the spirit. He calls for a reform in the observance of the Sabbath.” - Testimonies, volume 6, page 353.

“I was shown that there has been too much slackness in regard to the observance of the Sabbath. There has not been promptness to fulfill the secular duties within the six working days which God has given to man and carelessness not to infringe upon one hour of the holy, sacred time which He has reserved to Himself. There is no business of man’s that should be considered of sufficient importance to cause him to transgress the fourth precept of Jehovah. There are cases in which Christ has given permission to labor even on the Sabbath in saving the life of men or of animals. But if we violate the letter of the fourth commandment for our own advantage from a pecuniary point of view we become Sabbath-breakers and are guilty of transgressing all the commandments, for if we offend in one point we are guilty of all. If in order to save property we break over the express command of Jehovah, where is the stopping place?

Where shall we set the bounds? Transgress in a small matter, and look upon it as of no particular sin on our part, and the conscience becomes hardened, the sensibilities blunted, until we can go still further and perform quite an amount of labor and still flatter ourselves that we are Sabbath keepers, when, according to Christ’s standard, we are breaking every one of God’s holy precepts. There is a fault with Sabbath keepers in this respect; but God is very particular, and all who think that they are saving a little time, or advantaging themselves by infringing a little on the Lord’s time, will meet with loss sooner or later. He cannot bless them as it would be His pleasure to do, for His name is dishonored by them, His precepts lightly esteemed. God’s curse will rest upon them, and they will lose ten or twenty-fold more than they gain. ‘Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.’ - Ibid., volume 1, pages 531, 532.

WHAT WAS THE BASIC ISSUE IN THE CONTROVERSY WHICH TOOK PLACE BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE PHARISEES WITH REFERENCE TO THE SABBATH?

The charge - “This man is not of God, because he keeps not the Sabbath day” (John 9:16).

The answer is in the manner of observing the Sabbath.

(See Luke 13:14-17; 14:1-6; Matthew 12:1-8, 12, which shows how Christ refuted their charge that He and His disciples broke the Sabbath.)

“As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the righteousness of Christ their own by faith, the Sabbath lost its significance to them. Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to pervert the Sabbath, because it is the sign of the power of Christ. The Jewish leaders accomplished the will of Satan by surrounding God’s rest day with burdensome requirements. . . . The rabbis virtually represented God as giving laws which it was impossible for men to obey. They led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made men hardhearted and cruel. It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions.” - The Desire of Ages, pages 283, 284.

WHAT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION IS GIVEN CONCERNING PREPARATION FOR THE SABBATH?

“From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath”(Leviticus 23:32).

“And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (Mark 15:42).

The evening is when the sun sets (Mark 1:32).

This text, together with Luke 23:54 to 24:1, gives New Testament instruction that Friday, “the day before the Sabbath,” is the day to prepare for keeping the Sabbath holy.

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So that we may know God's will more fully with regard to preparing for the Sabbath day, He gave numberless statements and guidelines through Ellen White. The following are excerpts from pages 354 to 359 of Testimonies, volume 6.

“While preparation for the Sabbath is to be made all through the week, Friday is to be the special preparation day. . . . On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all the clothing is in readiness and that all the cooking is done. Let the boots be blacked and the baths be taken. . . . The Sabbath is not to be given to the repairing of garments, to the cooking of food. . . .”

“We should not provide for the Sabbath a more liberal supply or a greater variety of food than for other days. Instead of this the food should be more simple, and less should be eaten. . . . While cooking upon the Sabbath should be avoided, it is not necessary to eat cold food. In cold weather let the food prepared the day before be heated. And let the meals, though simple, be palatable and attractive. Provide something that will be regarded as a treat, something the family do not have every day.”

“Many need instruction as to how they should appear in the assembly for worship on the Sabbath. They are not to enter the presence of God in the common clothing worn during the week. All should have a special Sabbath suit, to be worn when attending service in God's house. While we should not conform to worldly fashions, we are not to be indifferent in regard to our outward appearance. We are to be neat and trim, though without adornment.”

“Before the setting of the sun let all secular work be laid aside and all secular papers be put out of sight.”

“On this day all differences between brethren, whether in the family or in the church should be put away. Let all bitterness and wrath and malice be expelled from the soul.”

“We should jealously guard the edges of the Sabbath. Remember that every moment is consecrated, holy time.”

“Before the Sabbath begins, the mind as well as the body should be withdrawn from worldly business. . . . We should each Sabbath reckon with our souls to see whether the week that has ended has brought spiritual gain or loss.”

“Before the setting of the sun let the members of the family assemble to read God's word, to sing and pray.”

“At family worship let the children take a part. Let all bring their Bibles and each read a verse or two. Then let some familiar hymn be sung, followed by prayer. . . . Thus you invite Jesus as a welcome guest into your home and heart.”

“I counsel you, . . . ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.’ If you desire your children to observe the Sabbath according to the commandment, you must teach them by both precept and example. The deep engraving of truth in the heart is never wholly effaced.”

“When the Sabbath is thus remembered, the temporal will not be allowed to encroach upon the spiritual. No duty pertaining to the six working days will be left for the Sabbath. During the week our energies will not be so exhausted in temporal labor that on the day when the Lord rested and was refreshed we shall be too weary to engage in His service.”

“When the Sabbath commences, we should place a guard upon ourselves, upon our acts and our words, lest we rob God by appropriating to our own use that time which is strictly the Lord's. We should not do ourselves, nor suffer our children to do, any manner of our own work for a livelihood, or anything which could have been done on the six working days. Friday is the day of preparation. . . . Nothing which will in the sight of Heaven be regarded as a violation of the holy Sabbath should be left unsaid or undone, to be said or done upon the Sabbath.” -Testimonies, volume 2, pages 702, 703.

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“Work that is neglected until the beginning of the Sabbath should remain undone until it is past.” - Patriarchs and Prophets, page 296.

HOW WAS THE PRINCIPLE OF SABBATH OBSERVANCE TAUGHT IN ANCIENT TIMES?

In connection with the giving of the manna (Exodus 16:22-26).

“In the wilderness, when all means of sustenance failed, God sent His people manna from heaven; and a sufficient and constant supply was given.” - Evangelism, page 241.

This provision was to teach them that while they trusted in God, and walked in His ways, He would not forsake them.

Nehemiah’s strong influence to bring the people of God back to true Sabbath observance (Nehemiah 13:15-22).

WHAT SPECIAL INSTRUCTION MUST BE PRESENTED TO NEW SABBATHKEEPERS?

“In establishing new churches, ministers should give careful instruction as to the proper observance of the Sabbath. We must be guarded, lest the lax practices that prevail among Sunday keepers shall be followed by those who profess to observe God’s holy rest day. The line of demarcation is to be made clear and distinct between those who bear the mark of God’s kingdom and those who bear the sign of the kingdom of rebellion.” - Testimonies, volume 6, page 353.

WHAT INSTRUCTION AND GUIDANCE IS GIVEN FOR SABBATH OBSERVANCE? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE “DO’S AND “DON’TS”?

Isaiah 58:13 and 14 lists three things we are not to do if we are to be blessed:

“If thou . . . shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words: Then shall thou delight thyself in the Lord.”

“You should not rob God of one hour of holy time. Great blessings are promised to those who Place a high estimate upon the Sabbath and realize the obligations resting upon them in regard to its observance. . . .

“Those who sanctified the Lord God in their hearts by a strictly devotional frame of mind, and who sought to improve the sacred hours in keeping the Sabbath to the best of their ability, and to honor God by calling the Sabbath a delight-these the angels were specially blessing with light and health, and special strength was given them.” - Testimonies, volume 2, pages 702, 705.

“The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God’s purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. It was God’s plan for the members of the family to be associated in work and study, in worship and recreation, the father as priest of his household, and both father and mother as teachers and companions of their children. But the results of sin, having changed the conditions of life, to a great degree prevent this association. Often the father hardly sees the faces of his children throughout the week. He is almost wholly deprived of opportunity for companionship or instruction. But God’s love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.” - Education, pages 250, 251.

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WHAT RESPONSIBILITY DO WE HAVE IN TRAINING OUR CHILDREN IN PROPER SABBATH OBSERVANCE?

“I have been shown that very many of the parents who profess to believe the solemn message for this time have not trained their children for God. They have not restrained themselves and have been irritated with anyone who attempted to restrain them. They have not by living faith daily bound their children upon the altar of the Lord. Many of these youth have been allowed to transgress the fourth commandment by seeking their own pleasure upon God’s holy day. They have felt no compunctions of conscience in going about the streets on the Sabbath for their own amusement. Many go where they please and do what they please, and their parents are so fearful of displeasing them that, imitating the management of Eli, they lay no commands upon them.

“These youth finally lose all respect for the Sabbath and have no relish for religious meetings or for sacred and eternal things.” – Testimonies, volume 5, pages 36, 37.

“The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their families and interesting them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God and what He requires of us in order to perfect Christian characters and attain to eternal life. Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children may look forward to it and have a welcome in their hearts for it.”- Ibid., volume 2, page 585.

“In pleasant weather let parents walk with their children in the fields and groves. Amid the beautiful things of nature tell them the reason for the institution of the Sabbath.” - Ibid., volume 6, page 358.

Sabbath meals should be simple, palatable, and attractive, with something special as a treat (6 Testimonies, page 357).

WHAT ABOUT SABBATH TRAVEL?

“I fear that we often travel on this day when it might be avoided. . . . we should be more careful about traveling on the boats or cars on this day. . . . it may be necessary for us to travel on the Sabbath; but so far as possible we should secure our tickets and make all necessary arrangements on some other day. When starting on a journey we should make every possible effort to plan so as to avoid reaching our destination on the Sabbath.” - Ibid., pages 359, 360.

HOW CAN WE CONTROL OUR THOUGHTS AND SPEECH?

“God requires not only that we refrain from physical labor upon the Sabbath, but that the mind be disciplined to dwell upon sacred themes. The fourth commandment is virtually transgressed by conversing upon worldly things or by engaging in light and trifling conversation. Talking upon anything or everything which may come into the mind is speaking our own words.” - Ibid., volume 2, Page 703.

“Upon the Sabbath they should conscientiously restrict themselves to conversation upon religious themes- to present truth, present duty, the Christian’s hopes and fears, trials, conflicts, and afflictions; to overcoming at last, and the reward to be received.” - Ibid., page 704.

“When you are speaking of your hope in God, in Jesus and of His soon coming, and of the beauties of the New Earth, You are not speaking your own words. Of these things you may freely speak on the Sabbath.”- Youth’s Instructor, February 1853.

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WHAT EXAMPLE DID CHRIST LEAVE FOR US IN REGULARLY ATTENDING DIVINE WORSHIP ON THE SABBATH, AND HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO OUR EXPERIENCE TODAY?

(Read Luke 4:16, 31; Mark 1:20, 21.)

We are told to assemble with God's people (Hebrews 10:25).

"None should permit themselves, through the week, to become so absorbed in their temporal interests, and so exhausted by their efforts for worldly gain, that on the Sabbath day they have no strength or energy to give to the service of God. We are robbing the Lord when we unfit ourselves to worship Him upon His holy day. And we are robbing ourselves as well; for we need the warmth and glow of association, as well as the strength to be gained from the wisdom and experience of other Christians.... God's love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another." - Child Guidance, pages 530, 536,

"We do not obtain a hundredth part of the blessing we should obtain from assembling together to worship God. . . . We must carry to every religious gathering a quickened spiritual consciousness that God and His angels are there, cooperating with all true worshipers. As you enter the place of worship, ask the Lord to remove all evil from your heart. Bring to His house only that which He can bless. . . . The place of Worship may be very humble, but it is no less acknowledged by God. To those who worship God in spirit and in truth and in the beauty of holiness it will be as the gate of heaven."- Testimonies, volume 6, pages 362, 363.

"Your neglect to attend the public worship of God is a serious error." - Counsels on Health, page 368.

"He who shuts himself up to himself is not filling the position that God designed he should. The proper cultivation of the social elements in our nature brings us into sympathy with others and is a means of development and strength to us in the service of God." - Steps to Christ, pages 101, 102.

"The religion you profess makes it as much your duty to employ your time during the six working days as to attend church on the Sabbath." - Testimonies, volume 5, page 179.

"We need to cherish and cultivate a spirit of true worship, a spirit of devotion upon the Lord's holy, sanctified day. We should assemble together believing that we shall receive comfort and hope, light and peace from Jesus Christ." - The Faith I Live By, page 35.

DO WE TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEND PART OF THE SABBATH DAY IN PRIVATE BIBLE STUDY AND PRAYER?

"As a means of intellectual training, the opportunities of the Sabbath are invaluable. Let the Sabbath school lesson be learned, not by a hasty glance at the lesson scripture on Sabbath morning, but by careful study for the next week on Sabbath afternoon, with daily review or illustration during the week. . . .

"In listening to the sermon, let parents and children note the text and the scriptures quoted, and as much as possible of the line of thought, to repeat to one another at home. This will go far toward relieving the weariness with which children so often listen to a sermon, and it will cultivate in all a habit of attention and of connected thought.

"Meditation on the themes thus suggested will open to the student treasures of which he has never dreamed." - Education, pages 251, 252.

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WE ARE ADMONISHED THAT IT IS OUR DUTY TO HELP MAKE THE SABBATH, AND EVEN ATTENDANCE AT WORSHIP, A BLESSING TO OTHERS. HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

“Everyone should feel that he has a part to act in making the Sabbath meetings interesting. You are not to come together simply as a matter of form, but for the interchange of thought, for the relation of your daily experiences, for the expression of thanksgiving, for the utterance of your sincere desire for divine enlightenment, that you may know God, and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent. . . . Never think that you can be Christians and yet withdraw yourselves within yourselves.”- Testimonies, volume 6, page 362.

Surely we will want every act of worship whether it be hymns of praise and adoration, reading of the sacred Scriptures, prayer and spiritual message, to be presented as in the very presence of God. We will be careful as to the decorum and order of our service with particular emphasis on the manner of raising money, distribution and promotion of literature, handling church “business” so that the spirit of worship is not nullified. Some have expressed the problem of so few attending their regular business meetings during the week, they feel the need of having “a commercial” on Sabbath when the whole church is together. Do not yield to this. God will honor the “few” who make the decisions during their regular business meeting. Many ministers are presenting this information by way of church letters, which eliminates the necessity of having items presented to the church which are not suitable for the Sabbath. Thus the holy hours of worship are not desecrated.

Some announcements such as those that refer to games, socials, picnics and other secular activities are totally inappropriate for the Sabbath hours and the worship service, so some other arrangement should be made to get this kind of information to the members of the church.

SERVICE TO GOD CONSIDERED “FIRST OF ALL” THUS SOME FORM OF SOUL WINNING IS IN ACCORD WITH GOD’S WILL ON HIS DAY.

“The disciples, in doing the work of Christ, were engaged in God’s service, and that which was necessary for the accomplishment of this work it was right to do on the Sabbath day.

“Christ would teach His disciples and His enemies that the service of Christ is first of all. The object of God’s work in this world is the redemption of man; therefore that which is necessary to be done on the Sabbath in the accomplishment of this work is in accord with the Sabbath law.” - The Desire of Ages, page 285.

“Man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds.” - Ibid., Page 207.

WHAT ARE SOME FORMS OF SABBATH BREAKING?

The Sabbath is desecrated by pleasure seeking. 2 Testimonies, page 584.

By hurrying, jostling, impatience. 6 Testimonies, page 357.

By pursuit of school studies. 4 Testimonies, page 114.

By reading secular papers or books. 6 Testimonies, page 355.

By allowing business to divert the mind. 2 Testimonies, page 583; 6 Testimonies, page 356.

“Those who are not fully converted to the truth frequently let their minds run freely upon worldly business, and, although they may rest from physical toil upon the Sabbath, their tongues speak out what is in their minds; hence these words concerning cattle, crops, losses, and gains. All this is Sabbath breaking.” - Testimonies, volume 2, pages 702, 703.

“A partial observance of the Sabbath law is not accepted by the Lord and has a worse effect upon the minds of sinners than if you made no profession of being a Sabbath keeper.” - Ibid., volume 4, page 248.

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“ ‘I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,’ is thundered from Sinai. No partial obedience, no divided interest, is accepted by Him. . . . It is not a small matter to rob a neighbor, . . . yet he who would scorn to defraud his fellow man will without shame rob his heavenly Father of the time that He has blessed and set apart for a special purpose.” - Ibid., pages 249, 250.

WHAT ABOUT EATING IN RESTAURANTS ON THE SABBATH DAY?

Sometimes those who travel have no other place to eat unless they are able to make some grocery purchases on Friday; but if they are in their home community, should they eat out? F. D. Nichol in his book, Questions People Have Asked Me, page 237, has adequately answered this question:

“If a person is away from home traveling, he often has no option but to go to a restaurant on the Sabbath in order to satisfy his hunger. In such an event there can be no criticism of his action. On the other hand, to go to a restaurant in one’s own community simply to obtain a variety of food or to find a new setting in which to dine, or for any other of a variety of reasons, is, I believe, contrary to the spirit of the Sabbath day. Certainly on the Sabbath, above all other days, we should try to be removed from the world, its influences, its atmosphere, and its music. . . . Better a more sparse meal in the quiet of our homes, preceded by a prayer of thanksgiving to God, than the finest meal in the finest restaurant on the Sabbath day.”

WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO THE CHARGE OF LEGALISM WHICH IS OFTEN SPOKEN OF IN REGARD TO SABBATHKEEPING?

(Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 3:20, 23, 24, 31; 4:15; Galatians 2:16; 1 John 2:3-6)

“We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life. All who regard the Sabbath as a sign between them and God, showing that He is the God who sanctifies them, will represent the principles of His government. They will bring into daily practice the laws of His kingdom. Daily it will be their prayer that the sanctification of the Sabbath may rest upon them. Every day they will have the companionship of Christ and will exemplify the perfection of His character.” - Testimonies, volume 6, pages 353, 354.

“In the new birth the heart is brought into harmony with God, as it is brought into accord with His law. When this mighty change has taken place in the sinner, he has passed from death unto life, from sin unto holiness, from transgression and rebellion to obedience and loyalty.” - The Great Controversy, page 468.

“Christ, during His earthly ministry, emphasized the binding claims of the Sabbath; in all His teaching He showed reverence for the institution He Himself had given. . . . Christ set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. . . . He . . . went straight forward keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God.” - Prophets and Kings, page 183.

“Throughout all the history of this earth God has had but one rule for those who desire to be His children and thus qualify for heaven, and that rule is, obedience to His commands.

“Likewise throughout all history there has been but one means by which men can be cleansed of the sin of their past disobedience and be enabled to give true obedience in the future; namely, the grace and power of God, which are made available through faith in the gospel.”-F. D. Nichol, Answers to Objections, page 106.

CONCLUSION

“Never need anyone fear that observance of the true Sabbath will result in starvation. (Isaiah 58:11, 12; Proverbs 7:2; Isaiah 58:14.) These promises are a sufficient answer to all the excuses that man may invent

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for refusing to keep the Sabbath. Even if, after beginning to keep God's law, it seems impossible to support one's family, let every doubting soul realize that God has promised to care for those who obey His commandments." - Evangelism, page 240.

"Live up to every ray of light you have received. Your eternal interests are involved here, and that is why I say, 'Cherish every ray of light.' On your knees ask Christ to impress your heart by His Holy Spirit, and turn not away from His law.

"Do not think that if you take your position for the Bible truth you will lose your position. You had better lose your position than lose Jesus. You had better be partakers of the self-denial and self-sacrifice of the Lord than to go in your own way seeking to gather to yourself the treasures of this life." - Ibid., page 243.

As Christians we should be anxiously awaiting the opportunity to turn from the world and its cares to the sanctuary of the twenty-four hours surrounded especially by God's special blessings and enveloping love.

Further study:

Testimonies volume 6, Chapter "The Observance of the Sabbath," pp. 349-368.
Child Guidance, Chapter "Sabbath-The Day of Delight," pp. 527-537.

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