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So God's rest is there for people to enter.

—Hebrews 4:6, NLT

Let's explore a biblical principle God set in motion at the close of creation week—the principle of Sabbath. It's so important that the violation of it in Old Testament times meant certain death.

I'm not going to suggest that we change the day of our religious activities to Saturday. Nor do I propose that we ban all Sunday activities. I simply want to introduce a concept that is valid, relevant and necessary in our contemporary society—the Sabbath rest.

Unfortunately, many bogus concepts of Sabbath abound in today's society. The most common is that the Sabbath is the only day of the week in which we are required to serve God. Report to church and you've done your religious duty for another week.

However, that concept is a minor error compared with the glaring misinterpretation of the Pharisees. In their teachings, false concepts abound: the washing of one's hands, the prohibition of carrying certain articles, various rituals and no healing on the Sabbath.

So what does it really mean for a New Testament Christian to "keep the Sabbath"? After all, doing so is one of the Ten Commandments (see Ex. 20:9-11).

A Jewish writer once described the Sabbath as "an island in time, removed from the mainland of one's work week—thus providing that peaceful calm that contemporary man aspires to but never quite reaches." The principle of Sabbath is one of rest, refreshment and reflection on God.

God's idea of Sabbath never involved constraint or restriction. It was meant to be a help to us! "'The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of the people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27, NLT).

The Sabbath was made for man—for the purpose of refreshing his spirit, soul and body. It is to be a day of complete relaxation.

The Sabbath allows time for spiritual disciplines such as solitude, silence and meditation—practices the average Christian knows little about. Is it any wonder so many of us are burning out and falling apart? We need to return to the principle of Sabbath rest.

The Bible says there is a place of rest for God's people (see Heb. 4:6). It is found in exercising the principle of Sabbath.

The Sabbath doesn't have to be observed on a particular day of the week or become the keeping of some legalistic ritual. But it is a principle that provides great benefit.

If you don't currently keep the Sabbath, begin this week—and expect to be transformed!

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