

Why It Really Matters That You Keep the Sabbath

During the creation account, God worked for six full days and rested on the seventh. Was He exhausted? Did He need time to recoup? Or was there a holy meaning for this seventh day?

According to rabbinical literature, in Genesis 2:1, when God finished the heavens and the earth, He then made it permanent. During those six days while God was creating, there was instability all around. Nothing had been made permanent as God determined if this plan would work.

Then, in Genesis 2:2, where it says, “God ended His work,” we find the Hebrew word *vayinafash*, which means *soul*. Rabbis teach that when God stopped creating on the Sabbath, the life source was brought down into each level of creation and became fixed there within its permanent fashion. Before the Sabbath came, the world literally stood by like a body without a soul, and every aspect of creation was without the inner essence of life. The holy Sabbath day brought the soul of creation, and through it, existence became whole.

Let me use the covenant of circumcision to show you a parallel. Why does God tell Abraham to circumcise his son on the eighth day? What is so special about the eighth day? Because according to rabbis, the Sabbath brings the soul. Just as it was necessary for the first Sabbath to arrive upon the world scene before creation was imbued with a soul, so it is with our inner essence of life. By establishing a Sabbath in a child’s life, it would bring a permanence of his soul, enabling him to come into the covenant of circumcision.

So now let’s go back to when God completed the work. The Sabbath confirmed the permanence of existence. In Exodus 20:11, God institutes Sabbath as part of the Ten Commandments.

We read verse 11 this way: "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth." In Hebrew, it really reads this way: "For six days, God created the heavens and the earth."

What's the difference? Rabbis teach that "for six days" means that God only put power in creation to last for six days, never forming it into permanence. Then, on the seventh day, God instituted the Sabbath, which God used to restore and revive the world's soul. This enabled it to carry on with the burden of existence for another six days. Therefore, through the process of Sabbath, the world is constantly renewed and given a new lease on life. Make sure you get this: Each Sabbath, God renews creation!

Adam, the first man, was created from the dirt of the earth. We are a part of God's creation, which means we are designed to be a part of Sabbath. However, we are the highest form of creation, with qualities like God, giving us free will to partner with God or reject His ways.

I believe that we are experiencing stress, anxiety, fear and failure—among other things—because we fail to participate in the life-restoring day of Sabbath. We live in a generation of distractions and opportunities on every side. You can fill your day with countless—and sometimes pointless—things to take up time. Because of the fast-paced society we live in, the culture doesn't participate in Sabbath, which forces many believers to not acknowledge it as well. The Sabbath was not instituted to put us under bondage, but, if acknowledged, it will restore and rejuvenate us to be people of God who make a difference in the world.

People do not understand the amount of stress and anxiety our current generation is under. Historians are declaring that when generations to come look back on this time period, it will be called the "age of anxiety." According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, 40 million people in the United States of America suffer from some type of anxiety

disorder. Why are we in the condition we are in? We have more technology and luxuries than ever before to make life easier, and yet we still live under stress. These things can't replace a God-ordained day to be observed—the Sabbath.

Where there is lack of Sabbath, there will be an abundance of stress. The human body was created to experience stress and to react to it. Stress can be positive, keeping us alert and ready to avoid danger. But if a person continues to experience stress without relief or relaxation between challenges, it becomes negative stress. Negative stress without relief leads to distress, which then affects your natural body. The body under constant distress leads to physical conditions, including headaches, upset stomach, elevated blood pressure, chest pain and problems sleeping.

Here are just a few facts about stress: Forty-three percent of all adults suffer adverse health affects from stress. Seventy-five percent to 90 percent of all doctor's office visits are for stress-related ailments and complaints. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration declared stress a hazard of the workplace. Stress costs the American industry more than \$300 billion annually!

When we are stressed, it not only affects our health, but also causes us to be unable to make a positive impact upon those around us. God's design for man was for you to make an impact for six days and then give Him one day to rejuvenate you to be effective for another six. This keeps us God-focused, showing us the true source of grace is taking a day of rest to reflect, recommit to God and be in His presence.

My prayer for you today is that you will not read this article and wonder if Saturday or Sunday is the Sabbath day but rather would take a day of Sabbath rest so that you can recoup, reflect and recommit to God in order to make an impact upon the culture around you. The Sabbath will be the key to being an effective person for God in a distracted, unfruitful

culture.

Thank you, Chik-fil-A and Hobby Lobby for being an example of what we can do as believers to be successful in only six days of business while honoring and dedicating one complete day to God alone.

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