

Women's Bible Study Fall 2010
10 Apps for Life: A Modern Look at the Ten Commandments

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App # 4: God's Rest—Exodus 20:8-11

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As you were studying this week and reading the 4th commandment---to “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy”---- what thoughts came to your mind from the past and the present about your own personal observance of Sunday? Growing up, how did you typically experience Sundays---as a day at church?---a day in front of the TV?----a day just like any other?----or something else? Was it a day that was dull and boring or was it fun and refreshing? How do you observe the Sabbath now?? Have some of the practices from your early training continued?

Last week in introducing myself I told you I grew up on a farm in northeast Nebraska. Our church was a country church located about 2 ½ miles from our home. Our lives in that small community revolved around the church and we fully participated. My childhood memories of Sunday morning included the sound of the radio in the kitchen tuned to Rev. R. R. Brown preaching from the Gospel Tabernacle in Omaha, NE, and the sound of the rolling pin hitting the kitchen counter as my mother put together a delicious fresh pie for our dinner after church. This happened almost every week. (Since everyone has had a picture to share as part of their teaching ---here is one of my mother, Eunice, who died just 2 years ago, a month short of her 99th birthday. She was a foundational part of forming my attitudes about Sunday and “keeping it holy”). As women, we have great opportunity through our words and example, to share the truths of Scripture with our family and others to help them keep “God first” in their lives, thereby being a part of influencing and shaping future generations.

Not only did I learn about love for God from my mother, but also gained a love for making pies from watching her and experiencing those flaky crusts made from “lard” !! Because our family loves pie I continue to try to find healthier ways to make the crust and have it be just as flaky----however, it's hard to beat good old Crisco !!

REFLECT ---On Sabbath Origin

Today let us look at this fourth commandment and see how we can apply it our modern way of living.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”
Ex 20:8-11

First let us define the meaning of “Sabbath”. The word is an English form of the Hebrew word “Shabbat”---meaning “ceasing” or “ending”. When “Shabbat” is used it refers to the end of the week---Saturday and the ceasing of God’s work in creation. It does not imply that God was tired and needed to take a break. It only means he stopped the work he was doing and on the seventh day rested,thus establishing a pattern for the order of the world----work for a time and then a period of rest.

This 4th commandment is the longest of the 10 and is divided into two parts. The first deals with the dignity of work, and the second, the blessing of rest. The Sabbath is based on creation. God created everything in six days, and on the seventh he rested. He was refreshed and reflected on all he had done and rejoiced in all he had achieved.

Genesis 1:31-2:3 God saw all he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening and morning ---the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing: so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

God’s Pattern-- God set the standard in the beginning in the creating work he did in Genesis 1 and 2. He could have made the world and all that is in it in an instant, but he chose to set a pattern for work and rest for us to follow. He divided up the work into six days of creating and then rested on the seventh. God showed us the importance of structure, organization, and dividing our work into manageable segments.

Are you able to give structure and organization to your work? Remember the nursery rhyme song for each day of the week? “Monday, this is the way we wash our clothes, Tuesday, this is the way we iron our clothes, etc and Saturday, this the way we bake our bread, Sunday, this the way we go to church.” Today we can’t devote a whole day to doing one thing like the song suggests. Our lives now are extremely diversified and these jobs are squeezed in among many others.

Sometimes thinking about all of our work for the week can be overwhelming. It is very helpful to divide it up into “bite-size” chunks--one day at a time and prioritize. God gave us a good example ----he didn’t try to create the whole universe at once---he divided it into days.

Before the 10 Commandments were given to Moses on Mt Sinai in Ex 20, God had already begun to train the Israelites in this work and rest pattern in the giving of daily manna, dividing their work into six days and resting on the seventh.

Ex 16: 21-26 Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person---the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded ; ‘Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD . So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’

So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. ‘Eat it today’, Moses said, ‘because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.

This training in God’s provision of daily manna continued for 40 years as the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. This was an exercise in daily trust and dependence on God to sustain them. They also received further training in the rhythm of work and rest through the yearly Feasts described in Leviticus 23. The Sabbath principle permeates each of these feasts. Each feast required cessation from ordinary work and taking time to remember the Lord by means of offerings----and sacred assembly.

God was making a people for himself set apart, and like a father was providing for them through training in daily disciplines and yearly celebrations of remembrance. God created us to have fellowship with him. He knows each of us intimately and how our minds, bodies, and spirits react to the pressures of life and just what we need. Psalm 139, one of my favorite passages tells of his

intimate knowledge of every detail of our lives---our very thoughts before we even think them. God has a plan for each of our lives as we see in Jeremiah 29:11 **"For I know the plans I have for you', declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"** God has provided the pattern of work and rest, a plan for each of us, plus the owner's handbook ---the Bible---to give us direction in our lives. It seems logical that we would want to follow that pattern.

key thought

Following God's pattern for our lives is always best and for our good.

Application----How has following God's directions in Scripture brought blessings into your life?

REST---From Our Work

Before we take a look at resting from our work, let's look at what our work is from God's point of view.

Dignity of Work

From the beginning, in Genesis 2 God ordained and gave dignity to work when he gave Adam a job description. He put Adam in charge of the Garden of Eden to tend and care for it. In addition God gave Adam the job of naming all the creatures he had created.

God expresses himself through the work of creation. He did manual work in the creation of man ----"from the dust of the ground he formed man". When God came to live among us, He became a carpenter and worked with his hands. God also works as a CEO directing others through his words. God spoke, "Let there be light" and there was light----Gen 1:3.

As women we can identify with these two areas of work. Our work in our homes revolves around much manual labor and getting our hands dirty----cleaning our homes, the laundry, fixing meals, washing dishes, bathing our children, caring for pets, the list could be endless. We also are CEO's in our homes----we direct others to action through our words.

Work is a gift from God. He has something for each of us to do. **Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**

We were created in the image of God. Our work is an expression of reflecting the image of his character. Our work may be as simple as cleaning out a closet or rearranging a cupboard----showing how God creates order out of chaos. It might be making meals for your family showing how God provides food. It might be loving and nurturing your children like God does for us. It might be working in an office and giving direction to many workers to get a job done. There are hundreds of ways we can reflect the image of God in the things we do.

What work has God given you to do? Many of you in this room have young children and you have lots of work. As your children grow up your work changes and when they leave home your work changes further. Some people in this room may consider themselves “retired”. Did you know that word is not to be found in the Bible??? God always has something for us to do to serve him as long as we have breath. We don’t ever retire--- we let God re-direct our work!!! Because the demands of family and jobs have lessened, there is now more time to use the experiences we have had through the years to volunteer in different areas and help others.

Jewish rules for work In various books of the OT, particularly Leviticus there were many rules for work, worship, and conduct. The rabbis devised many rules in defining what constituted work---a certain level of exertion and did not violate the Sabbath. For instance, you could tie a knot on the Sabbath, but only if it could be tied with one hand. You could rearrange your pillow for you head, but you weren’t allowed to fluff it with your hands. You weren’t permitted to trim your toenails. You couldn’t set a broken bone. It was not permitted to give any medical attention to someone unless their life was in danger. There were hundreds of restrictions for the Sabbath.

They were missing the point of the Sabbath rest from work to worship God, and were “nit-picking” with their do’s and don’ts. In the NT Jesus confronts this issue and tells them in Mark 2:27—**“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”** The Sabbath was created for our good---not God’s good. It’s supposed to be a day of rest and refreshment---not a burden or a chore.

In the 4th commandment none of the family is supposed to work on the Sabbath---even the servants and the animals. They were all supposed to have a day off. In today’s world our servants probably

could be classified as our appliances that help us do our work---- dishwasher, stove, washing machine, dryer, and refrigerator. Recently I discovered an interesting illustration I would like to share with you.

ILLUSTRATION----Did you know there are refrigerators that have a Sabbath rest cycle built into them? A couple from our church recently bought a new refrigerator and discovered that on Sunday the cooling system shuts down and rests. It will warn you with an alarm if the temperature gets too warm and is unsafe for the food. Then a button can be clicked to turn it on for a short time to lower the temperature to the proper level.

I don't know if there are other appliances that have a "rest" cycle for orthodox Jews who continue to follow the Law in their daily activities.

Blessing in rest—Rest is important for our health. God never planned for us to work seven days without a break. We just can't keep going at that pace indefinitely. If we do our health will suffer. Studies have shown that times of "rest" are very important. If a violin is strung at concert pitch all the time, it will break. God knew what constant activity does to the body, mind, and spirit. We need rest.

There are many references to "rest" in the Scriptures. Jesus said in Matt 11:28 **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."** In Exodus 33:14 **"The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'"** In Psalm 62:5-6 **"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him, he alone is my fortress, I will not be shaken."** Other helpful verses---Isaiah 41:10---resting in the grip of God's right hand; Isaiah 40:31---renewing strength by waiting or resting in the Lord; and Psalm 23---resting with the Lord in green pastures beside still waters, restores my soul.

All these are verses I often use when I am weary and need to focus on God and rest in Him---trusting that His Presence will go with me and give me rest in my particular situation. That can be daily, hourly, or minute by minute. God is always ready to provide what we need, right when we need it.

Rest is the enjoyment of completed work-----Is our work ever completed?? We often say, "A woman's work is never done." There

seems to always be more we can do around the house, in our jobs, in our ministries. But we can follow God's example and take one week and enjoy it's completion as he did.

What work has God helped you to accomplish this week? Maybe it was small---maybe it was huge----maybe it was very difficult. Possibly your work is not finished and is ongoing and the completion is at some point in the future. Are you able to look at the week and find enjoyment in spite of the circumstances?

My husband recently had surgery and our daily activities changed as he recovered at home. Even though some things were hard I could look back at the whole week and see the blessings the Lord added to help us along with encouragement and give us rest in its completion.

Our rest now is earthly rest, but later we will experience heavenly rest.

Hebrews 4: 9-10 "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.'

Revelation 14:13 "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord.....they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them."

For the Israelites their rest was earthly to be found in the promised land. For Christians it is peace with God now and eternal life found in heaven. We can experience God's peace and rest daily and it will not end with death but will become an eternal rest that Jesus said he was going away to prepare for us in John 14:1-4

God's intention is that as we reflect on our work completed each week, it will bring enjoyment through rest.

Key thought

Rest from our activities opens the door for God's refreshing

Application----How has God refreshed your spirit as you have rested from your many activities and made time to "rest" in Him?

REMEMBER ----The Sabbath

What does “keep it holy” mean? It means to be set apart—consecrated to God. In the OT in Leviticus 11:44—“...consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy.” In the NT we have I Peter 1:16—a quote from the Lev passage—“to be holy as God is holy and I Peter 2:9—believers are “a royal priesthood—belonging to God.” How do we keep our lives holy and set apart for God? How does remembering the Sabbath help us do that? Does it matter which day of the week we worship ?

As you have been doing your reading and studying this week you have realized that in the OT the Sabbath was on Saturday ---the last day of the week. In the NT the Sabbath is called the Lord’s Day and is on the first day of the week because Jesus arose on Sunday, the first day of the week.

Warren Wiersbe points out in his explanation of the Commandments---the Sabbath in the OT symbolizes salvation by works----six days you labor and then rest on the seventh. The Lord’s Day symbolizes salvation by grace----first you rest then the work follows---co-labors with Christ for the kingdom.

One of the greatest struggles for the American family is finding the time to be together in a qualitative way not just passing each other as we go in and out the doors and a few minutes before bed. Our time is so jam-packed with activities that our lives can hardly contain them. Look at a mom’s calendar posted on the refrigerator or elsewhere with all the various activities for the family ----school events, practices for sports or music, church activities, meetings, etc. From watching our children with our grandchildren’s activities it’s very hard for them to bring everyone for regular dinner times. Some of our grandkids are in traveling sports which seem to always have tournaments on the weekends. It makes it very challenging to carve out time to worship God and keep in mind that He is to be first in our lives.

I think every person and family has to work out what is right for them ----in setting aside time from activities to come together in corporate worship in the church. We have a Saturday night service here at Autumn Ridge and I think a number of churches do, which often gives even more opportunity for fellowshiping with other believers, and making observing the Sabbath special.

Remember ----What significance is there in the word “remember”? The 10 Commandments are found both in Exodus 20 and in Deut. 5:7-21. In the Exodus passage “remember” in keeping the Sabbath refers to God’s pattern in creation and in the Deuteronomy passage, “remember” refers to God’s redemption of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It was important for them to remember what God had done for them and not forget. In Deuteronomy “remember” is also often associated with obedience. Remembering God’s commands and obeying them brought blessing. In the OT times the stories of God’s miraculous provisions, and the escape from Egypt were relived in their memories as they told them over and over.

What does remembering do for us? How is our faith increased as we obey God and remember in thanksgiving what He has done for us? When we face some difficult circumstances in our lives if we take time to “remember” how the Lord met our needs and blessed us in another situation we are strengthened and encouraged to trust Him again this time. Psalm 107:21 “....give thanks to the Lord for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for men.....tell of his works with songs of joy.”

Not only does remembering increase our obedience but it brings blessing as well.

Isaiah 58:13-14 “**If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father, Jacob.**”

God promises that if you delight in the Lord’s holy day and honor it by setting it apart and not doing as you please, you will experience the joy and spiritual insights of your inheritance in Him.

Key thought

Remembering to honor the Lord’s day and keep it holy strengthens our faith and increases our joy.

APPLICATION---How do you honor the Lord’s day and keep it Holy by not doing as you please? How does remembering increase your joy and cause your faith to grow?

REFOCUS-----On Eternal Values

Don't you just love Sunday? What a joy coming to church worshipping together through music, being inspired through a message from God's Word, and fellowshiping with other believers. What is your favorite part of worship?

On Sunday (or Saturday) we can come to worship and set aside our troubles and worries and focus on God and who He is. We can let our minds get back their perspective. I love this quote from Colin Smith, pastor of the Arlington Heights Evangelical Free Church in Arlington Heights, IL. The 10 Greatest Struggles of Your Life, Moody Publishers, 2006.

“The Sabbath is a window in time, to help strengthen our grip in eternity.”

“God has given all of us work to do, but He has made us for eternity, so every week we rest from our work to taste what He has prepared for us.”-----a quote from Colin Smith. The Sabbath is a day of suspending our work in order to set aside time for corporate worship, so that we can grow closer to God, the source of life and peace and be “re-charged” to serve. We need to have time to stop from our regular everyday activities and frustrations and “re-focus” on God and things that have eternal value.

Key thought

Refocusing on God in worship recharges us for service

Illustration----God has provided a wonderful example of this principle in the last couple of weeks here at Autumn Ridge Church. Pastor Steer has been giving a series of sermons on “serving”—each week featuring a different area of ministry. The recent torrential rains in the area that produced flood waters and destroyed many homes gave an unusual opportunity to share God's love and serve others. Pastor Karen Anderle was at Elizabeth Lodge holding a retreat for prayer when the floods hit. The National Guard asked if they could use the Lodge as their headquarters since it was on a hill and had its own generator and water. The Lodge became a haven for food, shelter and encouragement for those whose homes had been destroyed, and for other rescue personnel.

Out of a time of prayer at the Lodge the Lord “recharged” those attending for serving food and ministering long 18 hour days----they were “re-charged” for service !! Many of you have since become involved in helping cook the food for hundreds of people involved with the cleanup from the floods.

As the sermon series on” Serving” continues in the next few weeks and as you come to worship each week,--- will you ask God to help you “re-focus” on where He may be calling you to use your gifts to serve Him?

APPLICATION- Will you let God “re-charge” you to do it?

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