

WORK AND REST

Small Group Study Guide | June 2, 2024

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discuss: How do you balance work and rest in your life?

Key Text: *“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but 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 or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.”* (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

The 10 Commandments can be divided into two major sections: The first section includes Commandments #1-4 and can be called “Vertical / Godward Commandments” because they pertain to our relationship with God:

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not bow down to idols or serve them.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The second section includes Commandments #5-10 and can be called “Horizontal / Manward Commandments” because they pertain to our relationships with one another:

5. Honor your parents.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet.

In today’s lesson, we’ll study the last of the “Vertical / Godward Commandments”: “Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Deut.5:12). The word “Sabbath” comes from the Hebrew word *Shabbat*, which means “day of rest,” and refers to the time from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday (the seventh day of the week). God set the pattern for the Sabbath rest in Genesis 2:2 by ceasing from His work of creation on the seventh day: *“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.”* God called the Old Testament Jews to keep the Sabbath holy—to set it apart from the other weekdays—by doing no work on that day as a sign of the covenant God had made with Israel (see Ex.31:13) and to remind them that they had been set apart from other nations by God as His chosen people (Deut.5:13-14).

Christians today are not bound by the Old Testament Sabbath law (see Gal.4:9-10; Col.2:14-17) since it was a special command given by God to Israel alone and not to the church. It is the only Commandment of the 10 that is not repeated in the New Testament. While Christians historically have met on Sunday—Jesus’ Resurrection Day, the first day of the week (Mk.16:9; Acts 20:7)—for worship and fellowship, the Bible never indicates that Sunday replaced Saturday as a “Sabbath Day” to be observed like the Jews of the Old Testament. However, we today can be reminded by Commandment #4 of the importance of balancing work and rest for the purpose of properly focusing on God.

1. Revelation – What is God teaching us about Himself in Commandment #4?

In Commandment #4, God is teaching us that one of His purposes of the Sabbath for the Jews in the Old Testament was to remind them of His gracious act of salvation in the exodus from Egypt (see Deut.5:15). In this, God was also foreshadowing an even greater salvation that He would accomplish for believing Jews and Gentiles through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As “*Lord of the Sabbath*” (Mat.12:8), Jesus alone satisfied all the requirements of the law and provided the sacrifice that atoned for our sins. Hebrews 4:3, 10 says, “*We who have believed [in Christ] enter that rest...Whoever has entered God’s rest [in Christ] has also rested from his works as God did from his.*” Jesus is our “eternal Sabbath rest” from futile efforts to earn salvation by good works, moral efforts, or rule-keeping!

Discuss: What kinds of rest do these verses highlight for the believer: Matthew 11:28-29; Mark 6:31; Revelation 14:13?

Discuss: What does Revelation 14:11 say regarding rest for those who reject Christ?

2. Introspection – What is God teaching us about ourselves in Commandment #4?

In Commandment #4, God teaches us that we have a tendency to try to earn our salvation through good works, moral efforts, or rule-keeping and forget about God. We are to stop all efforts to earn salvation and, instead, express a faith-rest in Christ and the work He accomplished for us through His death and resurrection.

Discuss: What do these verses say about salvation by works vs. salvation by God’s grace and mercy: Romans 11:6; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5?

3. Transformation – How does God want us to live per Commandment #4?

God wants us to have a biblical perspective of both work and rest.

- Work is not a curse; it is a part of God’s good plan for us. God Himself worked (see Gen.2:2) and assigned Adam good work to do (see Gen.1:28).

Discuss: What do these verses say about our motivations to work as followers of Christ: John 9:4; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:23-24?

- While there is always a time to work, a battle to fight, and a race to run in the service of God, there are also times to sit still and wait on the Lord.

Discuss: What do these verses say about the importance of stillness before the Lord: Psalm 46:10; Isaiah 30:15; 40:31?

- In what ways can emphasizing work over rest or rest over work be spiritually unhealthy for us?

For Further Study:

Free online study tools (commentaries, dictionaries, etc.) at blueletterbible.org

Ten Secrets of Successful Living: A Perfect 10 for Families That Win by Adrian Rogers

“What is the Sabbath Day?” article at gotquestions.org