

Keep the Sabbath?

We treat God's Word like a smorgasbord. We take what we like and leave what we don't.

Keeping the Sabbath is one of those things. We don't like it; it doesn't fit our lifestyle or culture.

We say it's legalistic. Why do we say that only about that one commandment? Would someone say you are being legalistic if you taught about murdering, or lying, or stealing, or adultery, or idolatry, or putting other things before God, or coveting, or not honoring our parents, or taking God's name in vain?

General passages in OT:

Genesis 2:2-3

²And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Exodus 16:22-30

²²Now it came about on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, ²³then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning." ²⁴So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul, nor was there any worm in it. ²⁵And Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶"Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, [the] sabbath, there will be none." ²⁷And it came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. ²⁸Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? ²⁹"See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." ³⁰So the people rested on the seventh day.

Exodus 20:8-11

⁸"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; [in it] you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

Exodus 31:13-17

¹³"But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for [this] is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. ¹⁴Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. ¹⁵For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' ¹⁷It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased [from labor,] and was refreshed."

Exodus 34:21

"You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest; [even] during plowing time and harvest you shall rest.

Numbers 15:32-36

³²Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. ³³And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; ³⁴and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. ³⁵Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." ³⁶So all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him to death with stones, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

Nehemiah 10:31

As for the peoples of the land who bring wares or any grain on the sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the sabbath or a holy day; and we will forego [the crops] the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

Nehemiah 13:15-22

¹⁵In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading [them] on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, and they brought [them] into Jerusalem on the sabbath day. So I admonished [them] on the day they sold food. ¹⁶Also men of Tyre were living there [who] imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold [them] to the sons of Judah on the sabbath, even in Jerusalem. ¹⁷Then I reprimanded the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing you are doing, by profaning the sabbath day? ¹⁸"Did not your fathers do the same so that our God brought on us,

and on this city, all this trouble? Yet you are adding to the wrath on Israel by profaning the sabbath.”¹⁹ And it came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath. Then I stationed some of my servants at the gates [that] no load should enter on the sabbath day.²⁰ Once or twice the traders and merchants of every kind of merchandise spent the night outside Jerusalem.²¹ Then I warned them and said to them, “Why do you spend the night in front of the wall? If you do so again, I will use force against you.” From that time on they did not come on the sabbath.²² And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come as gatekeepers to sanctify the sabbath day. [For] this also remember me, O my God, and have compassion on me according to the greatness of Thy lovingkindness.

Isaiah 58:13-14

¹³“If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your [own] pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy [day] of the LORD honorable, And shall honor it, desisting from your [own] ways, From seeking your [own] pleasure, And speaking [your own] word,¹⁴ Then you will take delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you [with] the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

General passages in NT:

Mark 2:23-28

²³And it came about that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads [of grain].²⁴ And the Pharisees were saying to Him, “See here, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”²⁵ And He *said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and became hungry, he and his companions:²⁶ how he entered the house of God in the time of Abiathar [the] high priest, and ate the consecrated bread, which is not lawful for [anyone] to eat except the priests, and he gave [it] also to those who were with him?”²⁷ And He was saying to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.²⁸ Consequently, the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

Luke 13:10-17

¹⁰And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.¹² And when Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.”¹³ And He laid His hands upon her; and immediately she was made erect again, and began glorifying God.¹⁴ And the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the multitude in response, “There are six days in which work should be done; therefore come during them and get healed, and not on the

Sabbath day.”¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water him?¹⁶ And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?”¹⁷ And as He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire multitude was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

Luke 14:1-6

¹And it came about when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on [the] Sabbath to eat bread, that they were watching Him closely.² And there, in front of Him was a certain man suffering from dropsy.³ And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”⁴ But they kept silent. And He took hold of him, and healed him, and sent him away.⁵ And He said to them, “Which one of you shall have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?”⁶ And they could make no reply to this.

Matthew 12:10-12

¹⁰And behold, [there was] a man with a withered hand. And they questioned Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” --in order that they might accuse Him.¹¹ And He said to them, “What man shall there be among you, who shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it, and lift it out?¹² Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

John 7:22-24

²²“On this account Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on [the] Sabbath you circumcise a man.²³ If a man receives circumcision on [the] Sabbath that the Law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on [the] Sabbath?²⁴ Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

Acts 16:13

And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

Acts 20:7

And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

1 Cor 16:2

On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come.

Romans 14:4-6

⁴Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.

Galatians 4:8-10

⁸However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. ⁹But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? ¹⁰You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Colossians 2:16-17

¹⁶Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day--¹⁷things which are a [mere] shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Violations that were not condemned:

Priests served on Sabbath

If a male child's 8th day came on Sabbath, he was still circumcised

At least one of the 7 days of marching around Jericho was a Sabbath

Common objections:

It's legalistic! _____

Jesus rejected it! _____

Not reiterated in NT! _____

Points from the OT:

The principle started at creation, before the fall

It was reiterated during the exodus (before the law)

It is the fourth of the Ten Commandments

(The decalogue is a moral code, not a ceremonial code. Therefore, the rejection of the levitical rules does not excuse the rejection of the Sabbath commandment.)

The punishment for breaking the Sabbath was death, just like that for murder, which we do still honor. (That punishment was applied, so it wasn't just there for show.)

It was applied to the non-Jews in the land

It prevented them from having others do work for them

It was a sign between God and His people

No work, even if work is urgent

No pleasure

It was a time to rest

It was a time to delight in God

It was a gift, not an onerous burden

God punished those who didn't keep Sabbath

There was a blessing promised for keeping Sabbath

Points from the NT:

Jesus often healed on Sabbath

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man. It wasn't a rule for the sake of rules.

Jesus rejected the Pharisees' additional rules

Jesus approved the necessary care of farm animals

Jesus approved emergency activities to save life

The apostles did not violate the Sabbath

The apostles did start worshipping on Sunday

Scripture commands us not to judge others about their observance of

Sabbath or their lack of it

Historical notes:

The early church began worshipping on Sunday

Sunday is not a replacement for the Sabbath, it is a continuation

By the time Constantine became a Christian and made Christianity part of the civil establishment (321 AD), he codified the practice of Sunday worship because it was the norm for the church.

Sunday "Sabbath" was practiced in our culture into the '80s.

Ethical questions we must answer:

Is honoring the Sabbath still part of God's expectation for us today?

Can I expect my child(ren) to obey the rest of the commandments if I don't obey this one?

On what day should I practice Sabbath?

How can I practice Sabbath today?

Worship?

Eating?

Family time?

Resting?

Lawn work?

TV?

Kids?

If I don't do any of my normal activities on Sunday, what do I do?

Recommendations:

Conclusion:

Numbers 15:37-41

³⁷The LORD also spoke to Moses, saying, ³⁸“Speak to the sons of Israel, and tell them that they shall make for themselves tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and that they shall put on the tassel of each corner a cord of blue. ³⁹And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the LORD, so as to do them and not follow after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you played the harlot, ⁴⁰in order that you may remember to do all My commandments, and be holy to your God. ⁴¹I am the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt to be your God; I am the LORD your God.”