Sabbath Observance – How to keep the Sabbath holy

Introduction The Bible tells us to 'keep' the Sabbath holy. How do we do that in practice?

The Bible provides guidance. We can begin by analysing what the Commandment actually says…

Exod 20:8–11 What should be done on the first six days of the week? What should be done on the Sabbath? (**Luke 23:56**, Exod 31:14) Is it possible to observe the Sabbath every day? Is it permissible to force others to work for us on that day?

What is the purpose of the rest?

Exod 23:12 What physical blessing does God wish to give us on the Sabbath?

What if you have a lot to do?

Exod 34:21 Is it permissible to break the Sabbath if you have a lot to do?

Does this apply only to paid work?

Jer 17:21–22 Should one perform heavy physical labour on the Sabbath? (Numb 15:32–36) Why? It was meant to be a blessing for the soul (**Mark 2:27**). Does that mean you can't lift anything on the Sabbath? No (see **John 5:10–11**). The Jews had misinterpreted Jer 17:21–22 to mean that you were not even allowed to carry a mat. Jesus set the record straight regarding their misconceptions.

Is it acceptable to buy and sell on the Sabbath?

Neh 13:15–17 Is the Sabbath day honoured if one engages in trade on that day? Should we go shopping on the Sabbath?

What if it is an emergency and people are suffering or at risk of dying?

Luke 13:14–16 Is essential work permitted on the Sabbath? Health and hygiene must not be neglected on the Sabbath (**John 9:6–7, 14**). IE: Fixing a puncture?

Jesus often healed on the Sabbath…

Matt 12:10-13 Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath? IE: Doctors, firefighters.

Since the Lord has made a certain time holy, when does it begin and end?

Lev 23:32 Between what time markers does the Sabbath rest occur? (Neh 13:19) Biblical days began in the evening (cf. Gen 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

But how do you know when it is evening?

Mark 1:32 When does the evening begin? (**Deut 16:6**). Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

How should we prepare for this holy time?

Exod 16:23, 29 What preparation was done for Sabbath? Friday = Preparation Day (**Luk 23:56**)

What does that mean, are we not allowed to make any food on the Sabbath?

Matt 12:1–4, 7 Were the disciples guilty of a Sabbath offence when they plucked heads of grain on the Sabbath? David even ate the consecrated bread on the Sabbath when his men had nothing else (cf. 1 Sam 21:3–6 and Lev 24:5, 8, 1 Chr 9:32).

What else did Jesus say?

Matt 12:5 Is religious work permitted on the Sabbath? (**John 7:23**, Numb 28:9)

It was not only the priests who had Sabbath duties…

Lev 23:3 What did God say the Sabbath was for? (**Heb 10:25**, **Isa 66:23**).

Jesus set us a good example here…

Luke 4:16 What was Jesus' habit on the Sabbath? An important part of Sabbath observance is gathering for worship and Bible study with other believers (**Acts 15:21**, 13:14–16, 27, **17:1–2**, 10–11). Everyone can contribute (**1 Cor 14:26**).

The Sabbath is also intended to be a time of mental rest…

Isa 58:13–14 What should we avoid talking about on the Sabbath? We also need mental rest. We can, with a clear conscience, let go of worldly worries for 24 hours a week. Should the Sabbath be a difficult day or a day filled with joy? (**Neh 8:11**)

The Sabbath is a weekly date with Jesus and therefore a joy…

Appeal Is it your desire to receive this weekly rest? Do you wish to make the Sabbath a delight and keep it according to God's word?