

March 20, 2021

*The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Mark 2:27*

As a child growing up, the importance of the Sabbath was drilled into my head. It was a day of ‘don’t do this and don’t do that because it’s the Sabbath.’ My mother didn’t **try** to make the Sabbath a drudge; to her credit she was quite inventive in ways to make it special. Nevertheless, the incongruity of some rules were never lost on me or my siblings. It was okay to canoe down a river on the Sabbath, but we couldn’t ride our bikes. It’s was never okay to go shopping on the Sabbath, but in an emergency it would be forgiven. Doing absolutely nothing was considered slothful any other day of the week, but on the Sabbath it was exalted as ‘Lay Activities.’

To this day I have ingrained, cultural habits when it comes to the Sabbath, and despite my attempts not to repeat the incongruities of my own childhood, my children have their own frustrations with how the Sabbath plays out in my home. The problem is, of course, the emphasis on what is okay to do, or not okay to do. This emphasis exists because in the fourth commandment, the Lord had to explicitly lay out for the ignorant, enslaved-for-centuries-Israelites what keeping the Sabbath should look like, and humankind has taken those words and run with it. In Jesus day, the Jewish Nation had made the Sabbath a burden with over 600 rules on what could and couldn’t be done on that day. In my childhood, Sabbaths were often long, boring stretches of not-much-to-do because ‘**rest**’ was embraced by those who had the care of me.

The benefits of the Sabbath as a rest day are well documented. People are healthier, have less stress, and enjoy deeper relationships. There is opportunity for reflection, balance, and increased productivity. There is reserve for life’s emergencies and all of these things are positive, making the Sabbath a true gift to humanity. Our Creator made us, and knew that such a day would be a blessing throughout eternity.

Jesus, Himself, said: *The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.* It was set aside and sanctified at Creation, not at Sinai in the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment. It was not created with a list of dos or don’ts, because it was established at a time that existed before sin ruled this world. The purpose is to keep mankind centered on, and acknowledging our deep, dependence on our Creator God. It is a call into a deeper, more meaningful relationship with the One who created us.

As a Seventh-day Adventist parent, I still stress out if my child goes to Target on the Sabbath, because certain ideas have been indelibly impressed in my brain. My real concern, however, should be: Does my child know God, and is my child seeking God on this very special day?

I invite each of you this Sabbath day to enjoy the true freedom in Christ that is offered us through the cross, and enjoy the Sabbath rest offered to all mankind.

*There remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God. Hebrews 4:9.*