

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

EXODUS 20:8

The 3rd Commandment is often interpreted as “Go to church.”

Judging by church attendance figures in recent years, this teaching isn’t working. In the Northwest, fewer than 20% of the population goes to church. In the more “religious” Midwest, it’s close to 50%. Going to church certainly is one way to “remember the Sabbath,” but that wasn’t the original and deep intention of the commandment. On the Sabbath (the seventh day in the creation story), “God rested and beheld all that he had created and declared, ‘It is good...very good.’” The Sabbath originally was a day to rest from our labors and celebrate the goodness of the creator and the creation. Abraham Heschel, a noted Jewish scholar, in his wonderful book, *The Sabbath*, says the Sabbath should not focus on simply recovering from or preparing for the work in our week. Rather it should be a time to savor and enjoy the gift of life itself. Sabbath should be the crown not the caboose of creation. Despite labor-saving devices, vacations, and leaves of various sorts, we are busier and more stressed than ever. McDonald’s understood our human need for rest when they coined the phrase, “You deserve a break today!” Resting is hard for some of us Type A personalities. It takes practice, but it’s worth it. Long before health experts extolled the virtues of rest, God suggested – no, commanded – we take time to rest. Try it...you’ll like it!

Reflection Questions:

- What brings you stress or makes you tired?
- How do you relax? What brings you Sabbath/rest?

Family Activity:

Talk about and decide on a family “Sabbath” (day, half-day) and what it will look like. Make it happen and make it a habit.

Teenage Activity:

Create a mini-sabbath each week (day or half-day or hour) when you turn off electronics and use that free time to pray, go for a walk, have a needed conversation, take a nap.

Adult Activity:

Choose a time to stop and reflect on the goodness of your week’s work. Review your accomplishments. Don’t make a list of the unfinished tasks, as this is easy to do, but honestly reflect on at least three items that you feel you have done well or that God has done in the week. It’s always easy to say what you need to still do, but harder to say, “Look at what I did this week. It is good. Very good!” Enjoy your Sabbath.

Prayer:

Lord, even you rested on the seventh day and commanded and gave the important example of Sabbath, I/we often get caught up in the busy demands of this world. Help me/us to rest by allowing me/us to...