

## Christian Faith and Practice through The Sabbath

This is another study in a continuing series for 'rookies' who have recently decided that there may be something to a Torah submissive walk and need a little help with understanding the applications or figuring out where to start.

One of the easiest places to start your walk is with the Sabbath. This is one of the eight festivals, 'feasts,' or 'appointed times' that are summarized by God in Leviticus 23 as belonging to Him. When you lay all of these out on a calendar, it seems like every time you turn around there's another holiday with a party. Do we have a great God or what? Party, party, party, all the time party. Our God is an awesome God, and He's a real partying kind of guy! Well, sometimes it's solemn (like Yom Kippur), but most of the time He wants us to kick up our heels and get down, get funky, and get loose.

An appointed time (Lev. 23:2) is literally an appointment with God. He sets aside specific times for us to meet with Him, where we are reminded of what He has done, is doing, and will do for us. Of course, we can meet with Him anytime, on any day, through prayer, study of His Word, relationships with others, music or work. But these days are special, sort of like having a birthday or anniversary. They are also called 'rehearsals' because there are practices within these feasts that remind us of prophetic things yet to come.

The Sabbath, day of rest, or 'Day Of the Lord' was instituted in the Garden, before the fall. So it was not started because of sin, or the Fall, although God may have in His infinite wisdom provided in advance for our stupidity by setting aside a day of rest from our labors (gee, ya think?). This study is not so much about specific celebration ideas as it is a general introduction and testimony. There are many books that will give you some suggestions for practices on the Sabbath (and the other feasts), such as "Celebrate the Feasts" by Martha Zimmerman, which you can get at a bookstore.

Sabbath is like a weekly holiday. It starts at sundown Friday and goes until sundown Saturday. How do we know this is the correct day? Well, all anybody ever had to do was count to seven. In case we forgot, God reset the time at Mt. Sinai and told the Israelites which day it was, so they just had to continue counting to seven.

Does it matter which day we use? Well, perhaps you won't get sent straight to hell if you don't practice on a particular day, at the moment anyway. But one of the important things to understand about this day is the act of doing it together as a community. If we all use the same day, we are united (Hebrew *echad* or one) in our timing though we may vary a little in our specific practices. Another reason for deciding on a common time is to avoid "each man doing what is right in his own eyes" which God never approves of. A

third reason is the importance of setting a day and leaving it set, so you always work six and rest one.

The people who advocate the “any day is okay” theory and treat this like a cute novelty hardly ever actually follow the six and one pattern. They also usually have the same “cutesy pie” attitude about the rest of the Word, too. As you “walk this way” you may find, like we did, that your reverence for our Father’s Word grows, your discernment gets stronger, and you literally begin to “hang” on every letter and syllable of His Instructions as if your “life” depended on it (which it does). You will become more able to be guided by His eye rather than having Him have to use a bit and bridle.

*“I will instruct and teach you in this way that you are to go; I will give you counsel; my eyes will be watching you.” Do not be like a horse or mule that has no understanding, that has to be curbed with bit and bridle, or else it won’t come near you. (Psalm 32:8,9 CJB)*

And there is a pattern to this that will be more apparent to you as you begin to implement this instruction from our Father. Sometimes it’s hard to explain all the benefits of Torah submissiveness unless you experience them directly. Since the penalties have been removed, the Torah functions as an excellent discipleship program having many inter-related teachings. As you build your understanding through Torah submissiveness, you will find that the Word opens up and deepens your relationship to God.

When my family first started practicing the Sabbath, the first day was real difficult because we just weren’t used to resting. Saturday used to be a day of yard work, and errands, and car repair, and work on the house, and cleaning, and all kinds of stuff. So trying to set it aside at first was a little difficult because it takes planning to get all the other stuff done on the other six days. Of course, having a holiday every week can grow on you. The second time we did it, the next week, it was a little easier because we had planned better. By the third or fourth week we were really getting into the groove (apologies to non-baby boomers) and started to relax better and enjoy it. Nowadays, we insist on it because the resting has become so beneficial for us.

A side affect of a weekly holiday is that you don’t mind working so much on the other six days. As my family slid into this practice, the workweek got easier and easier to cope with because *that was the way it was supposed to be*. We realized we were **supposed** to be working on the other six, and as weird as it sounds, instead of being resentful (sometimes), we started to relax and enjoy the work also. No matter how hard we labored we knew there was an end to the week (and by extension an eventual end to ALL labor in the Day of the Lord or what some think of as the Millennium Kingdom). We found we could actually experience a weekly cycle with Yahshua as He worked along side us during the week, and then met with us on the Sabbath during our rest. As we

honor Him by ‘remembering’ (a word that means to speak or act on behalf of) the Sabbath, He honors us by blessing both our labor and our rest with His presence and help.

The meaning of the word ‘holy’ is to ‘set apart.’ We make our Sabbath set apart by having a nice, almost formal dinner on Friday nights. The great thing about Biblical practices is there are not very many specific details in the Word. Most of the current practices are tradition only. That means we can pick and choose what seems good to us within the framework of the specifics in the Word.

The only specifics concerning Sabbath are to ‘sanctify’ it or set it apart as holy (Ex. 20:8, Lev. 23:3), remember it (Ex. 20:8; Lev. 19:30), rest from working (Ex. 16:29; 20:10; 23:12), don’t kindle a fire (Ex. 35:3 – although it was a whole lot of work back then to kindle a fire), and work the other six days (Ex. 20:9). Later on, buying and selling were added as restrictions (Nehemiah 13:15-22) because of causing other people to work. Check out Leviticus 23:12 where the Word says to ‘rest your ass’ on the Sabbath (okay, I slipped that pun in there). Work is not specifically defined in the Word, but with a little thought we can probably figure out the difference.

Our family usually uses 6:00 pm as a start time, instead of the traditional sundown, because we try to make it more consistent. However, one of these days we may switch to sundown although there is no specific command about the start and stop time. I suppose if we didn’t have clocks it would be a little harder to figure out a start time, unless we could learn to read a sundial correctly (but they’re a little hard to strap to your wrist). We use the best dishes we have (that we don’t use the rest of the week), my wife Susan cooks a special meal, and she bakes bread for us (two or three loaves – Ex. 16:29). Everybody pitches in to clean the house so there won’t be anything to do on Saturday.

There is symbolism in some of the options we choose to do for Sabbath dinner that is meaningful and enjoyable. For instance, Susan bakes two loaves of bread, and we have some wine (well, actually wine coolers - we like to use the Manishevitz kosher Elderberry with 7-Up). Baking two loaves of bread reminds us that God provides for bread on both days, even though we are resting, just like He provided manna in the wilderness for Israel. The bread and wine can also be symbolic of the body and blood of the Messiah, if you choose. But these are just neat things you can add as you begin to understand, or as you feel comfortable.

Another meaningful option is the blessing of the rest of the family by the Father (that would be me). After Susan lights a couple of candles and says a blessing to kick everything off, then I bless the wine and we pass around the cup. Then I go around and say a blessing for each person, placing my right hand on his or her head. My family enjoys this so much that they get really bummed out if we don’t do it for some reason that week.

Next, we wash our hands (saying a blessing before), then I bless the bread, break it, and pass it around, each person saying a blessing and breaking off a piece (see the book I mentioned earlier for the blessings and other ideas). Don't worry if you don't know what exactly to say or do in these cases, there is a lot of fun in learning. There are songs you can sing, other blessings you can say, head coverings if you like those, special candleholders, special food, saying the blessings in Hebrew, and many other interesting and fulfilling options to add (or not) as you learn. Practices that are good guidelines for Sabbath activities include study of the Word; family sharing; games; socializing with others; relax and sleep late; fellowship through group meetings; and watching movies together.

Preparation is needed for some of the activities. Some people light a couple of candles for light through the Sabbath because we're not supposed to kindle a fire. But we shouldn't have to worry about the finer points of what constitutes work or kindling, so don't sweat the details – they will come as you develop your understanding. We try to have enough ready-to eat or microwavable food to eat through the end of the day so no one has to cook. Dishes are usually left until sundown, although dishes from Friday are usually washed right away, otherwise it would be a whole lot more labor to clean them on Saturday night.

The admonitions in a couple of Paul's letters on not letting others 'judge' you according to Sabbath or special days (such as Rom. 14 and Gal. 4) most probably are connected with these types of practices (note the emphasis on "elemental things" which are not what the Torah is about). The Sabbath itself was never "optional" unless you consider God's Word 'optional' also. Unfortunately there were, and are, many traditions that get raised by some to the same importance as commands from our Father. And some people can be very critical with their traditions, watching closely to see if someone does something 'wrong' and refusing fellowship to the 'wrong doer.'

If anybody wants a more complete study of the Sabbath itself, see the other article on this site ([www.wholebible.com](http://www.wholebible.com)) titled The Sabbath In Scripture. Or get one or two of the excellent books from Amazon.

May the Father bless your Sabbath practice and increase the fruit of it.  
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