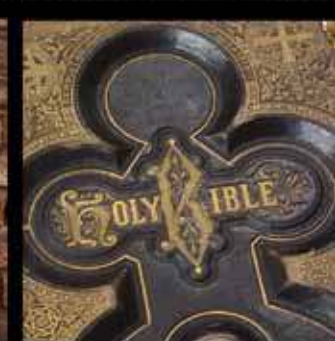


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EDITORIAL STAFF

Baraka G. Muganda
DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR
mugandab@gc.adventist.org

Jonatán Tejell
EDITOR
tejellj@gc.adventist.org

Hiskia I. Missah
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
missahh@gc.adventist.org

Maria A. Dunchie
LAYOUT & DESIGN, EDITORIAL ASSISTANT
dunchiem@gc.adventist.org

Kimberly Luste Maran
COPY EDITOR

EDITORIAL ADVISORS

Jan Paulsen
Matthew A. Bediako
Robert E. Lemon
Armando Miranda

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Mulumba Tshimanga • East-Central Africa Division
bresilien54@yahoo.com

Corrado Cozzi • Euro-Africa Division
corrado.cozzi@euroafrica.org

Peter Sirotkin • Euro-Asia Division
psirotkin@ead-sad.ru

Bernardo Rodriguez • Inter-American Division
bernardo@interamerica.org

Balvin B. Braham • Inter-American Division
brahambb@interamerica.org

James Black • North American Division
james.black@nad.adventist.org

Manny Cruz • North American Division
manny.cruz@nad.adventist.org

Dong Hee Shin • Northern Asia-Pacific Division
joshuashin@nsdadventist.org

Otmar Goncalves • South American Division
otimar.goncalves@dsa.org.br

Gilbert Cangy • South Pacific Division
grcangy@adventist.org.au

Nickolas Kross • South Pacific Division
nkross@adventist.org.au

Jobbie Yabut • Southern Asia-Pacific Division
jyabut@ssd.org

Lionel F. Lyngdoh • Southern Asia Division
lyngdoh@sud_adventist.org

Paul Tompkins • Trans-European Division
ptompkins@red-adventist.org

Eugene Fransch • Southern Africa-Indian Ocean Division
FranschE@sid.adventist.org

John Enang • Western Africa Division
njenang@wad-adventist.org

To Obey

By Jonatán Tejell



I always try to find a moment every day to study my Sabbath School lesson. I found a recent week (May 2 – 8, 2009) of the Adult Sabbath School lesson on “Sin” to be particularly interesting, mainly because each of us, Christians, think that sin is our daily fight.

When discussing the “sin” topic, one of the most used scripture is Romans 6:23:—“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” And this is true—the wages of sin is indeed death. Could it be that this is the reason we seem compelled to teach that to defeat sin we have to obey? We insist on the importance of obeying the Ten Commandments if we want to go to heaven—at least that’s what I hear many times in our churches. I am not saying this is a wrong teaching, because obedience is a very important value in the Christian life, but we can be obedient for the wrong reasons. That is when we have a problem.

I have two small daughters, Astrid and Edera. I love them very much and I’m trying to be a good father to them, and teach them that obedience is really important. But I want them to be obedient, not because I am telling them what to do, but rather, because they understand and accept that there are good reasons for obedience. I need to be sure that *they* understand that I don’t want them to obey only because they fear the consequences of being disobedient, but instead, obey because they accept and respect the values that are being taught.

As Christians, we face the same problem: we can try to be safe but for the wrong reasons.

Let’s take a look at one of the Ten Commandments—Honor the Sabbath. (Exodus 20:8-11):

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

The object of the Sabbath was that all humanity might be benefited. –Ellen G. White

As a teenager I always struggled to understand how to enjoy the Sabbath. Some of us have put so many restrictions on the Sabbath, as did the Jews, that Sabbath has become the “terrible day, the difficult day, the non—desired day” of the week.

My dad was a pastor in Spain, and I remember my mom telling me an experience she had in one of the churches she visited with my father. It was a Friday night: a woman approached my mom and said she needed to share her burden with someone. She told my mom that she needed to speak with her, woman-to-woman, and get my mom’s advice on what to do. Here is her problem as she relates it: “One of the elders in the church told me that from Friday sunset until Sabbath sunset we cannot take a shower, because, if we do so we are breaking the Fourth Commandment. But my problem is that my work is physically taxing and I perspire a lot and I do not finish my work until 30 minutes before sunset on Fridays. By the time I arrive home it is already Sabbath and I cannot take a shower. So during these precious 24 hours I smell really bad, and then I feel bad about myself. I would like to take a shower but I don’t want to break the Fourth Commandment. What can I do?”

I don’t know what your advice to this woman would be, but I think that if I were to ask each person to respond to this lady’s “dilemma” we would have many different and interesting answers. But, the real question is: How do you think Jesus would answer this lady?

I’m pretty sure that Sabbath is not a day Jesus created for us to be sad. He gave us this day with a holy purpose in mind. But, it seems to me, that sometimes we focus more on what to do or not do on the Sabbath, than the more important thing of developing a closer relationship with

God. In Matthew 12:8 Jesus said, “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath,” and in Mark 2:27-28 He says, “The Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath!” (*New Living Translation*).

On one occasion in her writings, Ellen G. White wrote that, “The object of the Sabbath was that all humanity might be benefited. After God had made the world in six days, He rested, and blessed and sanctified the day upon which He rested from all His work which He had created and made. He set apart that special day for human beings to rest from their labor, that as they should look upon the earth beneath, and the heavens above, the tangible proofs of God’s infinite wisdom, their hearts might be filled with love and reverence for their Maker”. (*To Be Like Jesus*, 2004, p. 136).

“Had the human family always kept the day which God has blessed and sanctified, there would never have been an infidel in our world; for the Sabbath was given as a memorial of the Creator’s work; it was given that, upon that day in a special sense, people might draw their minds away from the things of earth to the contemplation of God and His mighty power” (*To Be Like Jesus*, p. 136).

Sabbath has to be a day of joy with Jesus. Our mind and our focus *must* be on our relationship with Him. If we continue adding restrictions on what to do on the Sabbath, as the Jews did, instead of spending the Sabbath with our Lord Jesus, we will be far away from really understanding the reason the Sabbath was made.

It is my hope that this issue of *Accent* will help you in your Christian journey and give you a better understanding of what Sabbath celebration was meant to be. ●



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Kimberley Tagert-Paul is free-lance writer and author working from Muskegon, Michigan. She has had the privilege of publishing over 350 articles/ stories/ devotionals, but enjoys writing for young people the most. [pp. 20-25; 30-32]

A regular contributor to *Accent*, **Patti Emanuele** is a freelance writer and author of three books who has contributed to *Guide* magazine and many other Christian and non-Christian publications. [pp. 26-29]



A graduate of Southern Adventist University's film school, **Scott Fogg** has been writing skits and plays since he was in seventh grade. He wrote the book *Power Skits for Youth & Young Adults*, and co-wrote the screenplay for the feature film *The Secret of the Cave*, as well as the feature-length play *Nighthawks*. He has a passion for writing and is always looking for new and interesting ways to get the gospel message to those who would rather sit in a movie seat than a church pew. [pp. 18-19]

Natalie Davison is wife to Ben and Maman to Abigail, age 4. She enjoys spending time with her family, photography, crafting, genealogical research (secretly hoping to find a black sheep along the way!) and shopping trips with her highly entertaining daughter. She has also recently discovered the wonders of the 'Wii-Fit' - perfect for fitting some exercise into a busy lifestyle... [pp. 6-7]



Ellen G. White was a woman of remarkable spiritual gifts who lived most of her life during the nineteenth century (1827-1915), yet through her writings she is still making a revolutionary impact on millions of people around the world. We believe that Mrs. White was more than a gifted writer; she was appointed by God as a special messenger to draw the world's attention to the Holy Scriptures and help prepare people for Christ's second advent. [pp. 11-14]

A lover of the outdoors, **May Ellen-Colon** loves camping, hiking, and studying nature. She and her husband, Gaspar, are the parents of two young adult children, Ivan and Sara-May. As part of her doctoral dissertation research she surveyed over 3,400 families in 51 countries on the factors that affect their Sabbath-keeping. In 2004 she received her Ph.D in Religious Education from Andrews University. The results and lessons from her research are published in her book, *From Sundown to Sundown: How to Keep the Sabbath...and Enjoy It!* [pp. 8-10]



A registered nurse, **Gloria Beecher** lives in Atlanta, Georgia with her family. She is the mother of two girls—one a senior in college, the other a 10th grader. She loves to sing, write, cook, and play word games. [pp. 15-16]



BE STILL

by Natalie Davison

Life is busy, busy, busy! With the responsibilities I have at home/work/church and being a wife of an equally busy husband, and, mother to a very energetic little school girl, I sometimes lie awake at night wondering how it got this hectic and how it is humanly possible to fit in everything that I need to do. As I write this it is springtime in England and our social calendar has just gone berserk with the sheer number of weddings, significant birthday celebrations, church and school events, and even work-related meetings. Will it ever calm down?

But one little incident this past Sabbath helped me to stifle the panic that had threatened to display itself imminently. Sabbath mornings are like the start of a *Formula 1 Grand Prix* race—the second my alarm sounds it's as if the lights have all gone out and suddenly we are “GO, GO, GO”! After church I usually take a detour on the way home so that my exhausted daughter has the opportunity to take a nap while I finish preparing lunch. We drive around while I try and get her into a restful mood, and eventually she nods off. On this particular day, my daughter had fallen asleep a little earlier than normal, so I was able to take my eye off her in the rear view mirror and use the remainder of the drive home to think about everything I needed to prepare for the afternoon activities. While I was thinking I passed a bend in the road and what a glorious sight met my eyes! The route I drive along passes through a reasonably shady woodland area but, just at that moment, the foot of the trees seemed to glow with a magnificent carpet of bluebells. The sight was quite spectacular and, since ours was the only car on the road at the time, all mine to behold. A feeling of peace and tranquillity filled my inner being; I was able to praise God for the beauty of His creation and thank Him for opening my eyes to witness it.

What relevance does this anecdote have to you as a youth leader? Having been a youth leader myself some time ago I know what it can be like having to juggle all your many

responsibilities. I know the stress of having to organize a weekly AYS program that is interesting, relevant, spiritual, and yet still enjoyable. I know how your heart sinks when someone lets you down and you have to find a last-minute replacement or fill the slot yourself. I understand your disappointment when you bust a gut preparing a program and only four people turn up. I feel your pain when you have work and/or college deadlines due that week and everyone on the youth committee is on holiday or too busy, ill, or mysteriously unavailable to help with the program. I've been there too!

But what my little experience taught me is that even on the busiest, most hectic day of the week, when “Sabbath rest” appears to be the biggest contradiction ever imagined, God can find a way of saying to me, and to you, “Stop trying to do this by yourself. Look out of the window at the view I've created for you. I handcrafted those woods and bluebells. I created you and promised to take care of you. BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.”

Has someone let you down and now you have to cover the program at the last minute? Don't worry—maybe this is the perfect opportunity to share your testimony and let the youth get to know you better. Have only four people come to AY this Sabbath? That's OK—you can spend some quality time with those youth and create a special bond that is not possible with a larger group. Had a hectic week and now you have to run the program with very little help? Take a 2-minute time out: walk over to a window, take some deep breaths and look at the view. I guarantee you will spot something of God's beauty and creation—some wildflowers; a gravity-defying bumble bee, a tree in full glory, a perfect cloud formation, a stranger's smile, some magnificent architecture, birdsong, friendly laughter. Look for God's handiwork and in that moment you will experience His peace and it will be more than sufficient to get you through the day. At that moment you will understand that God is saying to you, “Ease up. I am the Lord of the Sabbath and I will give you rest. I know what you are going through, but remember that I'm in control. BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD.”

Happy Sabbath to you all! ●



THE SABBATH PRINCIPLE IS THE
SHOCK ABSORBER THAT OUR
CREATOR HAS BUILT INTO OUR LIVES
TO KEEP US FROM BURNING OUT.

-MARIA DUNCHIE

Guiding Principles for Sabbath Observance and Corresponding Characteristics of God's Person on which the Guiding Principles Are Based

The principles below are based on God's character, and they provide a foundation for our Sabbath rules/practices. God will help us to reflect and live His character as we translate these principles into actions. What better day to reflect His nature than on Sabbath—the day above all days!

● PRINCIPLE 1: PREPARING

Sabbath keeping means preparing for this special day so we can enjoy its benefits (see Hebrews 4:11; Exodus 16:28-30; Luke 23:54-56).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 1 is based:

God is a preparer. He prepared the beautiful Garden of Eden and the plan of salvation before He created humankind and the Sabbath (see Genesis 1-2; Proverbs 8:27-31; 1 Peter 1:20). He has prepared an inheritance for the redeemed, the kingdom prepared since creation (see Matthew 25:34); He has prepared a place for us—a custom-made home in heaven (see John 14:1-3); He will prepare the Holy City as a bride adorned for her husband (see Revelation 21:2).

● PRINCIPLE 2: RESTING

Sabbath keeping means resting from work, life's burdens, and secular concerns and distractions—one of the purposes for which God gave us the gift of the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:28-29; 20:9-10; 23:12; 34:21; Nehemiah 13:15-22; Jeremiah 17:27; Luke 23:54-56).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 2 is based:

God is the epitome of rest. "My soul finds rest in God alone" (Psalm 62:1, NIV). Through Jesus, God offers rest to all who come to Him (see Matthew 11:28). Jesus Himself rested on Sabbath after He worked all week creating the earth (see Genesis 2:1).

● PRINCIPLE 3: RENEWING

Sabbath keeping means observing the day in a manner that renews us physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and socially since our loving Creator provided the Sabbath vacation for our welfare (Mark 2:27). This produces a sense of well-being that lowers stress (Matthew 11:29-30).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 3 is based:

God is a restorer of our being—"He restores my soul" (Psalm 23:3, NIV); He exudes renewal, (see Psalm 103:5; Matthew 11:29-30; Isaiah 40:31; 2 Corinthians 4:16).

● PRINCIPLE 4: HEALING

Sabbath keeping means observing the day in such a way as to foster

healing, relief, release, liberation, and refreshment. Any action that hurts oneself or others is Sabbath-breaking (Isaiah 58; Matthew 12:9-15; Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:38-39; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; and John 9).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 4 is based:

God is a healer (see Exodus 15:26; Psalm 103:3; 147:3; Matthew 4:23; Acts 10:38). He has "healing in His wings" (Malachi 4:2, NKJV). God the Son announced that His mission is to restore sight to the blind and to release the oppressed (see Isaiah 61; Luke 4:18, 19).

● PRINCIPLE 5: CELEBRATING

Sabbath keeping means celebrating the creation, or birthday, of the world (see Genesis 2:1-3), and of our redemption (see Deuteronomy 5:15), so its atmosphere should be one of celebration, joy, and delight (see Psalm 92; Isaiah 58:13).

Characteristic of God's person on which Principle 5 is based:

God celebrates and rejoices. He celebrated creation (see Genesis 2:1-3; Proverbs 8:27-31). He rejoices

when people come to him (see Deuteronomy 30:9; Isaiah 62:5; Zephaniah 3:17; Luke 15). He will celebrate at the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). He is a source of joy (see Psalm 43:4). Speaking of God, David said, “In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11, NKJV). “You will find your joy in the LORD” (Isaiah 58:14, NIV).

● **PRINCIPLE 6: SANCTIFYING**

Sabbath-keeping means keeping the Sabbath day holy—setting it apart for a special focus on God, His Word, and His agenda, to seek intimacy with Him, embrace Him wholly, and nurture a love relationship with Him that makes us holy (see Exodus 20:8; 31:13; Isaiah 58:13; Ezekiel 20:12). This nurtures our “vertical” relationship—our relationship with God.

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 6 is based:

God is holy (see Leviticus 11:44; 19:2), personal and loving (see 1 John 4:8), and He seeks intimacy and special time with His family (see John 15:15; Revelation 3:20). He sanctifies, or makes holy, the Sabbath and His people (see Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11; 31:13).

● **PRINCIPLE 7: REMEMBERING**

Sabbath keeping means remembering, reflecting, and rejoicing about the Creation of the world (see Exodus 20:11), redemption from sin (see Deuteronomy 5:15; Luke 4:16-19), and Christ’s second coming and the

creation of the new earth (see Isaiah 66:22, 23).

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 7 is based:

God remembers and reflects on important happenings. For example, He paused to reflect on His accomplishments at creation (see Genesis 1:4, 9, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11). He remembers His covenants with humanity (see Genesis 9:15, 16; Leviticus 26:42, 45).

● **PRINCIPLE 8: WORSHIPPING**

Sabbath keeping means participating in corporate, focused worship of God with our church family (see Leviticus 23:3; Isaiah 56:1-8; 66:22, 23; Mark 1:21; 3:1-4; Luke 4:16; 13:10; Hebrews 10:25; Revelation 14:7). This nurtures both our “vertical” and our “horizontal” relationships—those with God and with our fellow human beings.

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 8 is based:

God desires corporate worship (see Isaiah 66:22, 23). Jesus attended and led out in worship services while on earth (see Luke 4:16).

● **PRINCIPLE 9: BASKING**

Sabbath keeping means enjoying, studying, experiencing, and basking in the world God made, rather than working at maintaining it (see Psalms 92:4, 5; 111:2-4; compare Romans 1:20). (At creation, God was filled with satisfaction, rejoicing “in his whole world and delighting in mankind” (Proverbs 8:31, NIV).

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 9 is based:

God is Creator, and He appreciates His creation—He considered it all “very good” (Genesis 1:31, NIV).

● **PRINCIPLE 10: RESPONDING**

Sabbath-keeping is a joyful human response to God’s grace in obedience to His loving command to remember Him and His Sabbath gift (see John 14:15). It is not meant to be a means of earning our salvation (see Romans 3:20; Hebrews 4:9, 10). We respond to God’s gift of rest by working for Him in His strength and for His glory (see Exodus 20:8, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:8; Hebrews 13:20, 21).

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 10 is based:

Love motivated Jesus’ keeping of His Father’s commandments (see John 15:10).

● **PRINCIPLE 11: TRUSTING**

Sabbath-keeping means trusting God to take care of what we leave undone during the hours of the Sabbath (see Exodus 16:14-30; 20:10; Psalm 5:11, 12; Matthew 6:33). It means learning to depend on God rather than on ourselves.

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 11 is based:

Jesus trusted His Father no matter how much Satan tempted Him to do otherwise (see Luke 4:1-13). He demonstrated this trusting attitude as He suffered for our Salvation (see Matthew 26:39; Luke 23:46).

Teach me your ways, O LORD, that
I may live according to your truth!
Grant me purity of heart that I may
honor you. With all my heart I will
praise you. O Lord, my God. I will
give glory to your name forever, for
your love for me is very great.”
(Ps. 86:11-13, *New Living Translation*)

DISCUSS THIS

*A principle is a standard that may be applied to more than one type of situation. *What rules for Sabbath practices can you derive from the above guiding principles?*

*Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *Right from Wrong: What You Need to Know to Help Youth Make Right Choices* (Nashville, TN: W. Publishing Group, 1994), p. 96.

● PRINCIPLE 12: FELLOWSHIPING

Sabbath-keeping means nurturing our relationships with family and friends (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1). In the gift of the Sabbath, God provides time for focused fellowship with the whole family—even the family animals (see Exodus 20:8-11). Sabbath and family go together (see Genesis 1:1-2:25; Leviticus 19:3). This nurtures our “horizontal” relationships—those with our fellow human beings.

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 12 is based: The members of the Godhead are relational (see John 15:15). God’s relationship with us is the foundation of our relationship with each other (see John 13:34, 35; 17:20-23). Jesus fellowshiped with others on Sabbath (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1).

● PRINCIPLE 13: AFFIRMING

Sabbath-keeping means rightly representing the atmosphere of the Sabbath by a spirit of acceptance, love, and affirmation rather than a spirit of judgment and criticism (see John 7:24).

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 13 is based: God is accepting, loving, and affirming (see Matthew 11:28; John 3:16; Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:3-10; Revelation 22:17).

● PRINCIPLE 14: SERVING

Sabbath-keeping means serving other people in love and witnessing lovingly for God (see Isaiah 58:7-10; Matthew 12:12; Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9; 13:12, 16).

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 14 is based: Jesus is a Servant and Proclaimer of the Good News (see Luke 4:18-21; Philippians 2:5-11). He went about doing good (see Acts 10:38).

● PRINCIPLE 15: CARING

Sabbath-keeping means caring for necessary physical needs on Sabbath; no creature—animal or human—should be allowed to suffer on this day (see Exodus 23:12; Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:27).

Characteristic of God’s person on which Principle 15 is based: God supplies all our needs, all the time (see Exodus 16:26, 35; Joshua 5:12; Matthew 6:25-33; John 5:16, 17; Philippians 4:19), and He advocates that we care for the needs of all His creatures (Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5). ●

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THE CREATION SABBATH

By Ellen G. White

When **God created the earth** and placed man upon it, he divided time into seven periods. Six he gave to man for his own use, to employ in secular business; one he reserved for himself. Having rested on the seventh day, **He blessed and sanctified it**. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord's rest-day, and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of his creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use, neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested. We are every day to think of God and live as in his sight; but when the six day's work is done, we are to "remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,"—to cease from labor and devote the day exclusively to meditation and worship.



When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the Decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at creation. The Creator's rest-day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden, and by men of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel's long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember his holy day.

Before they came to Sinai, they understood the Sabbath to be obligatory upon them. After the giving of the manna, the people, of their own accord, gathered a double quantity on the sixth day in preparation for the Sabbath. And Moses, upon being consulted by the rulers, declared, "This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." On the seventh day he bade them eat that which they had provided. "For," said he, "today is a Sabbath unto the Lord; today ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." When some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, they found no manna. Then the Lord said unto Moses, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."



A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on man, and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God's law has been abolished is one of Satan's devices to compass the ruin of the race.



The prophet Isaiah, looking forward to the gospel dispensation, sets forth in the most impressive manner the obligation of the Sabbath, and the blessings attending its observance: "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose



the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant, even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters. I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off."

Under the Mosaic law, strangers and eunuchs were excluded from the full enjoyment of the privileges granted to Israel. But the prophet declares that a time is coming when these restrictions will cease. The holy oracles were especially committed to the Jews; not to be an Israelite was not to belong to the favored people of God. The Jews had come more and more to regard themselves as superior by divine right to every other people upon the earth; yet they had not been careful to maintain their separate and holy character by rendering obedience to all the commandments of God. Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people. Hitherto, circumcision and a




strict observance of the ceremonial law had been the conditions upon which Gentiles could be admitted to the congregation of Israel; but these distinctions were to be abolished by the gospel. "Every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, besides those that are gathered unto him."

Again, after rebuking the selfishness, violence, and oppression of Israel, and exhorting them to works of righteousness and mercy, he declares: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places; thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,



from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

The first part of the chapter brings to view a people who apparently delight in the service of God; they seek him daily, "as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God." Yet their lives are not right before the Lord; for he commands his prophet, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins." He declares that if they will return unto the Lord with all the heart, they shall be called repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in. Then he distinctly shows them what this breach is. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,"—for



The law of ten commandments, which has been so lightly disregarded, is the foundation of many generations. . . .

—Ellen G. White

they had been trampling it under their feet as a thing despised,—”then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

This prophecy reaches down the centuries to the time when the man of sin attempted to make void one of the precepts of God’s law, to trample under foot the original Sabbath of Jehovah, and in its stead exalt one of his own creation. And when the Christian world set aside God’s holy Sabbath, and in its place accept a common working day, unsanctioned by a single “Thus saith the Lord,” they are encouraging infidelity, and virtually acknowledging the supremacy of that power by whose authority alone the change has been effected. The rejection of the Sabbath has led to the rejection of the whole law, and thousands of professed Christians now boldly declare it void.

The law of ten commandments, which has been so lightly disregarded, is the foundation of many generations; and no man or body of men has been authorized to set aside, or

vary in the slightest particular, one of the ten precepts of Jehovah. God spoke this law from Sinai in awful grandeur, in the hearing of all Israel, and he wrote it with his own fingers upon tables of stone, not for his chosen people only, but for all men, to the close of time. Christ himself declares that while the heavens and the earth remain, not one jot or tittle shall pass from this holy law.

There were two institutions founded in Eden that were not lost in the fall,—the Sabbath and the marriage relation. These were carried by man beyond the gates of paradise. He who loves and observes the Sabbath, and maintains the purity of the marriage institution, thereby proves himself the friend of man and the friend of God. He who by precept or example lessens the obligation of these sacred institutions is the enemy of both God and man, and is using his influence and his God-given talents to bring in a state of confusion and moral corruption. ●

This article first appeared in the *The Signs of the Times*, paragraphs 1 - 11, February 28, 1884

HOW MUCH SLEEP IS ENOUGH SLEEP?

According to sleep experts, **teens need at least 8.5 — 9.25 hours of sleep each night**, while adults do well with an average of seven to nine hours nightly.

WHAT'S SLEEP GOT TO DO WITH IT?

By Gloria Beecher

Jesus was definitely using a biological fact to explain the urgency of His ministry when He said, “I must work ... while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.” (John 9:4).

As Designer and Creator of the human body, Jesus knew all about the circadian rhythm—it’s the sleep-wake pattern that the body follows as it responds to natural brain activity that tells it to sleep when it’s night, and to wake when it’s day. God implanted that rhythm in every living creature—it’s like a clock that was set from the time humans were first created.

In addition to this circadian clock, the body works to maintain a sleep/wake balance. This is a biological activity that helps to create a balance between sleep time and awake time.

Adequate sleep is very important to maintain this balance and help the body function at its best.



▶ WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T GET ENOUGH SLEEP?

Inadequate sleep leads to sleep deficit and a condition known as sleep deprivation. According to information from the National Sleep Foundation, “When you are sleep deprived, you are as impaired as driving with a blood alcohol content of .08%, which is illegal for drivers in many states. Drowsy driving causes over 100,000 crashes each year”.

Besides falling asleep at the wheel and causing accidents, sleep deprivation may:

- Affect your ability to concentrate and solve problems. You may do poorly at work or school.
- Make you prone to pimples and contribute to acne and other skin problems
- Cause you to be ill-tempered and aggressive. You may display inappropriate behavior such as yelling or being impatient.
- Lead to obesity. Lack of sleep causes a decrease in the secretion of growth hormone, as the secretion of growth hormone decreases the chance for weight gain increases.
- Contribute to cardiovascular diseases such as high blood pressure. Usually, blood pressure falls during the sleep cycle; however, interrupted sleep can adversely affect this normal decline, and may lead to hypertension.
- Impair the body's ability to use insulin. This may result in the onset of diabetes.

▶ WHY CAN'T SOME PEOPLE FALL ASLEEP AT NIGHTS.

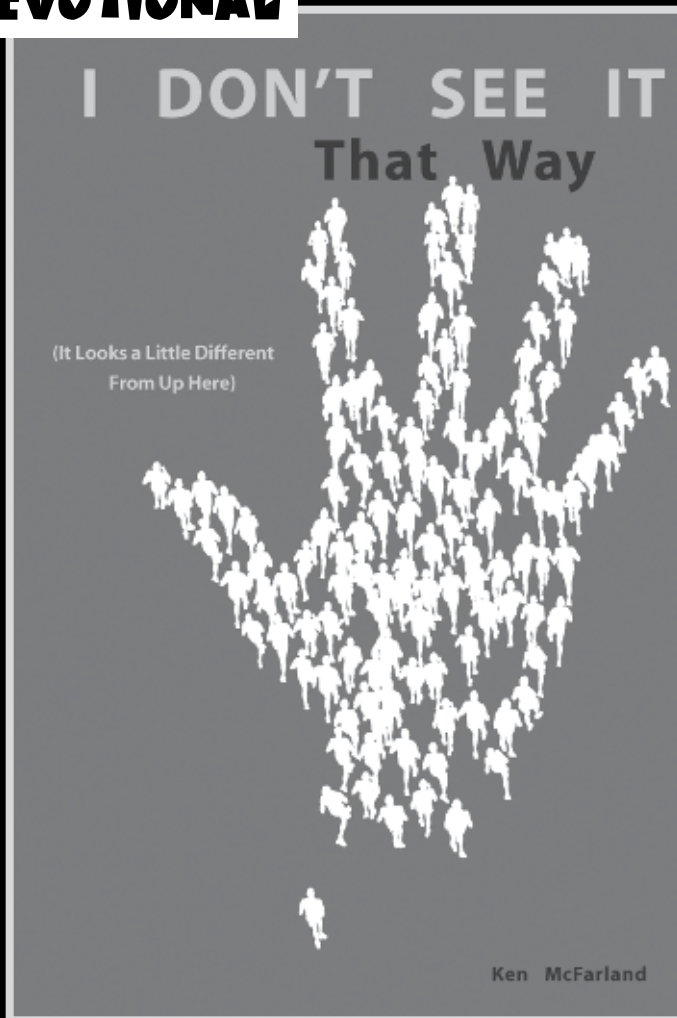
Difficulty falling asleep might be a symptom of a condition called insomnia. Other symptoms of insomnia include difficulty staying asleep, difficulty falling asleep after waking up too early, and feeling tired even after sleep. You should talk with a doctor or healthcare professional if your symptoms occur more than a few nights per week or affect your ability to function during the day.

God designed sleep to help the body get the rest it needs, but in this fast-paced world, it seems we are always in a rat race, running here, running there, and never getting enough time to sleep. Always being busy is not a good thing—lack of quality sleep and adequate rest affect not just us, but our relationship with God and others. Think about it, if we do not get enough rest can we really hear God when He speaks to us? Can we be alert to hear His voice? Getting enough rest, adequate rest, is of utmost importance to our well-being. ●

(Information for this article was obtained from the National Sleep Foundation @ www.sleepfoundation.org)

Sufficient sleep is not a luxury, it is a necessity and should be thought of as a vital sign of good health. —Center for Disease Control

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TIP FOR TODAY

Stay current!

Develop programs
that reflect the
needs, interests and
energy level of your
group.

► FOCUS:

NO STRINGS ATTACHED!

by Scott Fogg

Cast: auctioneer, cheerleader, geeky girl, pool boy

Props: costumes, crate

Bible Passages: Proverbs 14:12; Colossians 3:14; 1 John 4:18; 1 Corinthians 13

Central Bible Truth: To remind us that sexual purity is not an option for the Christian, it's a requirement. Our character and moral purity is important in our Christian walk. Check out 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

Aims: To satirize the “friends with benefits” concept, and challenge people to evaluate their relationships and their self-worth.

An empty stage. Suddenly, the Auctioneer steps right out of the 1800s and enters the stage dramatically. He's carrying a crate in one hand.

Auctioneer: Hurry, hurry, hurry! Step right up! You're not going to want to miss this!

He sets the crate down at center stage and the steps onto it.

Auctioneer: Gentlemen, may I have you attention, please? Ladies, don't you wander off too far, I've got something here for you, too. But gentlemen! Tired of all those messy relationships? Fed up with all those confusing feelings? Sick to death of all those pesky misunderstandings? I know I'm not the only one who's sat through 15 straight minutes of nagging and thought, “You know, jail time might not be that bad. At least it'd be quiet!” *[leaping off the crate]*

For you, gentlemen, I present to you the modern miracle of the post modern society. It doesn't come free, but it does come cheap. It's a little something I like to call “Friends with Benefits..” Bring me the cheerleader!

The cheerleader walks out onto the stage. The Auctioneer takes her by the hand and walks her up and down the length of the stage, showing her off.

Auctioneer: I know what you're thinking. “A cheerleader? You're mocking me with a cheerleader?”

I would never do such a thing! I'm telling you this cheerleader could be yours.

The Auctioneer stops at, and indicates, the crate.

Auctioneer: Right up here, sweetie. Let the boys get a good look at you. You're one of three people. You're either (A) someone who's dating

a cheerleader—and to you I say “bravo, sir.” But chances are you're either (B) someone who's asked a cheerleader out and has been laughed at or (C) someone who's never had the guts to ask a cheerleader out. I am here today to introduce to you a new route you can take. Asking her out? Ha! You still don't stand a chance. I'm talking about the “Friend Route.” Because fella, let me tell you, she might look like the Queen of the Scene when she's shaking those pom-poms, but behind those batting eyelashes there lurks a complete lack of self-confidence! She needs someone to tell her she's beautiful! She needs someone to walk her through long division because there ain't no way she's going to ask a question in class—what, and look like a fool? Perish the thought! That's where *you* come in, young man. While she's working on the algebra, you can be

working on the chemistry. And with my “Friends With Benefits” program, after a few late night study sessions, she’ll owe you big time.

Big time. The only problem with this particular plan is that it’s extremely high maintenance. But what’s a little maintenance when there are *no strings attached*?!

All the same, let’s bring out something a little more your speed.

[to the cheerleader]

Thanks, my dear, now clear outta here. We’re through looking at you.

The cheerleader does as she is told, exiting as the geeky girl enters the stage. The auctioneer motions to the crate.

Auctioneer: Step right up here, miss. She might not be as much to look at, but at least her appearance won’t make *you* feel like an absolute slob. She’s a bookworm and she grew up watching sci-fi flicks with her dad. What does that mean for you? She’s shy, she’s quiet, she’s got daddy issues and she’ll think every single one of your fanboy jokes is funny. When you start comparing Corellians to Klingons, not only will she know what you’re talking about, but she’ll be able to keep up. Being her friend will be a breeze.

She’s practically one of the guys. As an added bonus, her self-image is so beyond shattered that if you buy her Taco Bell, she’ll consider it a dinner date. And isn’t a few items off the Value Menu worth a night of physical pleasure with *no strings attached*!? If you can look past those glasses and tell her you see the inner beauty that no one

else sees, she’ll let you pilot the Millennium Falcon right into the Death Star Hangar Bay with—say it with me—*no strings attached*!

[to the geeky girl]

Alright, clear outta here, Bookworm.

The geeky girl leaves as the Auctioneer turns back to the audience.

Auctioneer: It’s time for the ladies! Don’t worry, I haven’t forgotten you! Because I know what it’s like for you. I might not feel your pain like my brothers’ pain, but one can only imagine what it’s like having to deal with all this testosterone. How it must frustrate you that all these boys around you only have one thing on their mind! How unfulfilled you must be when he isn’t able to reciprocate even half the emotions you’re putting into the relationship! Well, ladies, I have to play the devil’s advocate and ask you: Why do you exhaust yourself over them? If they’re not interested in a committed relationship, why should *you* be? Why must *you* put yourself out there for them to trample over? Why must *you* be the one to put out one-hundred and ten percent to make a failing relationship work? Why don’t *you* get a friend with some benefits? Pool boy!

The auctioneer snaps his fingers and the pool boy enters the stage. The auctioneer motions to the crate.

Auctioneer: Hop up there, you slab of meat. Take a look, ladies. He doesn’t have a job and he doesn’t have a future. He’s as directionless as a broken compass. I’m not saying he’s Mister Right. I’m saying he could be Mister

Right Now with *no strings attached*! I’m talking no jealousy, no petty bickering and no “why don’t we just hold each other?” He’s just a friend! When you’re bored with him, or when you can’t afford him or when you do find Mister Right, you can toss him aside with absolutely no hard feelings! Why? Because there are *no strings attached*! With everything you’re expected to do, do you really have the energy to keep a relationship up and running too? Besides, you can get some practice in with the pool boy this summer and then you’ll be ready to “wow” Mister Right whenever he decides to show up.

[to the pool boy]

Clear outta here, they’re staring at you and not listening to me.

The pool boy exits.

Auctioneer: Friends with Benefits! That’s what I’m selling! Sex at a discounted price, that’s what you’re getting. How much does it cost? As little as you can get away with. What’s it worth? That’s the million dollar question. I hope I haven’t offended anyone here today but life has taught me there’s only two options: my way or the “High Way.” You can do it God’s way if you want—I won’t stand in your way—I’ll just say a nation of nuns does not excite me. Any other questions, comments, or concerns and you can find me in the back under the banner: *Friends With Benefits: Why Didn’t We Think of That Sooner?*

The auctioneer takes his crate and exits the stage, giving the audience a final wave “good-bye.” ●

CHILI CRISPITOS by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

Bible Passages: Corinthians 6:19-20 (New International Version)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body

Genesis 1:29-30 (New International Version) The original diet

Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food. And it was so.

Central Bible Truth: God created us. We are His. It is up to us to walk with Him—He will never turn us away. We need to treat our bodies in ways that are pleasing to Him. We need to listen to *His* voice - and make choices according to *His* leading, not what others tell us is right. God will lead us, if we are willing to listen.

Teaching Aim: The purpose of this play is to help young people take a new look at vegetarianism. It will also help them look at their reasons for doing what they do and be prepared to give an answer for what they believe in. They will also learn some facts about vegetarianism, famous vegetarians, about the love of God, and his ideal plan for us.

Setting and Props: This play is set in the cafeteria of a public high school. Several students are gathered around a table eating. You will need a table, 5 - 6 chairs, and trays with food on them. On at least two trays, you will need what looks like foot-long hotdogs—use the buns only, if you want. The audience will not be able to see much of the food.) You also need a garbage can placed near the stage exit.

Characters: Jeremy, a student who is a vegetarian; Tyler, a student who doesn't know much about vegetarians; Kaitlynn, a student, who would like to become a vegetarian because of animal rights; Jordan, a student who thinks being a vegetarian isn't for the athletes; Elise, a student who loves meat; and Mr. Troy, a teacher who is both a Christian and a vegetarian.

(The play opens with Tyler, Jordan, Elise, and Kaitlynn sitting around a table in their school cafeteria. They are already engaged in conversation. They each have a tray with food on it.)

Tyler: Yikes! Chili Crispitos again. When are they going to learn that we don't want them? *(Pushes his tray aside)*

Elise: I think they do it to push the foot-long hot dogs. Notice they always serve them together? It's O.K. with me, though. I love both of them.

Jordan: Yeah! I could eat three of these babies. *(He holds up his hot dog sandwich)*

Kaitlynn: You wouldn't if you knew what the cows went through just so you could eat them.

Elise: You mean . . . butchered? I wouldn't want to eat them alive, would you?

Kaitlynn: That's not what I mean. Don't you know about how cows are treated at the slaughterhouse? They say that the cows that are too sick to walk are dragged in—broken legs and all. They treat them like machines, not animals. Chickens get shoved into cages so small they can't even move their wings. How would you like it if someone held down your arms, Jordan?

Jordan: *(Flexing his muscles)* Just let them try. Hey . . . I've got a question for you, who is *they*?

Kaitlynn: Well . . . you know . . . I've . . . read all about it.

Jordan: *(Taking a big bite of his sandwich and pointing at Kaitlynn)* So, how come you aren't a vegetarian, Kaitlynn?

Kaitlynn: *(Looks uncomfortable)* My parent's won't let me. But someday . . .

Tyler: Hey! There's Jeremy. *(Waves as Jeremy enters the cafeteria)* Scoot over, you guys. *(Looking up at Jeremy)* Pull up a chair, Jer, join the discussion.

Jeremy: *(Puts down his tray and pulls*

a chair up to the table and sits down) Whatcha talking about?

Kaitlynn: Animal rights.

Jeremy: Animals have rights. *(He looks at Kaitlynn innocently)*

Kaitlynn: Funny. You know how they treat animals just so you can eat them?

Jeremy: *(Looks down at his tray)* I . . . I don't.

Jordan: You don't what?

Jeremy: *(Squirming somewhat)* Eat animals.

Jordan: Are you kidding? You're a vegetarian? No way!

Elise: That's O.K. I eat enough for both of us. *(She holds up her sandwich)*

Tyler: Are you serious? You're a vegetarian? I didn't know that. Since when?

Jeremy: Well . . . I was born that way. I mean, I've never eaten meat.

Elise: *(Looking shocked)* Never? Oh, man. You don't know what you're missing.

Tyler: He's missing these Chili Crisпитos. I can't say I blame him there. *(He pushes his tray away from him towards the center of the table. Everyone reacts with either a giggle or nods in agreement.)*

Tyler: *(continues)* Seriously, man. You've never eaten meat?

Jeremy: Well—once. At my dad's shop. The guys thought it would be funny if they slipped me some chicken . . .

Kaitlynn: Did you like it?

Jeremy: Not really . . . the texture was different.

Elise: I'd die without meat.

Jordan: I don't think you'd exactly die.

Elise: Well, I bet it'd be close!

Tyler: So, why are you a vegetarian?

Jeremy: *(Puts down what he is eating and thinks for a second)* I guess because that's how I've been raised. My whole family is vegetarian. We don't eat any kind of meat, but we do eat some things like eggs, and ice cream.

Kaitlynn: You're a lacto-ovo then.

Tyler: A what?

Kaitlynn: You know, lacto-milk, and ovo-eggs, so he doesn't eat meat but uses some dairy. Then there's the vegan, they don't eat anything animal at all. I'm a flexitarian. I love veggies, and only eat meat once in a while.

Tyler: O.K. I didn't know any of those terms. I just thought if you didn't eat meat, you didn't eat meat. But Jeremy, why do you choose to not eat it just because your family chooses not to? That doesn't sound like a good reason to me.

(Mr. Troy: enters the cafeteria and works his way over to the kids table)

Jeremy: Yeah, I guess it isn't a good reason. I've never really thought about it. I was never raised around meat so I just don't even like the smell of it. I do think I'm more healthy because I don't eat meat. I hardly ever get sick.

Mr. Troy: Looks like you guys are in a deep discussion. What's up?

Kaitlynn: We just found out that Jeremy is a vegetarian. What do you think of that?

Mr. Troy: Welcome to the club. *(He puts his hand on Jeremy's shoulder.)* I've been one for ... about 20 years now.

(Everyone reacts with a shocked expression, or a "no way")

Mr. Troy: Yep. Not quite a vegan—but close.

Elise: So why do you do it, Mr. Troy?

Mr. Troy: Because I want to honor God with my body.

Kaitlynn: You're a Christian, too?

Mr. Troy: Full of grace. Sure am. I was reading in the Bible one day when it hit me that God's first plan for our diet didn't include meat. It just hit me that maybe we should be following the original diet.

Tyler: Which was ...?

Mr. Troy: In Genesis it says plants—seed-bearing plants and trees.

Elise: It says that?

Mr. Troy: *(laughing)* Yep, it sure does, Elise. I started following that and I've just felt better, so I've kept it up.

Jeremy: That's why my family are vegetarians, too. I just never really thought about it.

Mr. Troy: That's a good reason. People have all kinds of reasons to be vegetarians—not just for religious reasons. There are those that have health issues, the animal rights people ...

Kaitlynn: Yeah!

Mr. Troy: See, there you go. There are those that choose it for environmental issues, and just because they don't like the taste of meat. Most have more than one reason why they choose what they do.

Jordan: O.K., so here's a question: If God didn't give human meat to start with, then why do they eat it now? And do you think that makes it a sin?

Jeremy: I know when humans started eating meat. It was after the flood, wasn't it?

Mr. Troy: That's right, Jeremy. There weren't a lot of plants around, and God allowed people to eat meat. I don't think it was His ideal desire for humans. But since when has humankind ever met that? We can only try. Of course, those who weren't following God ate it long before then. And I'll ask you your own question, Jordan. Do you believe that God thinks eating meat is a sin?

Jordan: *(Squirms in his seat)* Well, I don't know God all that well, but, I can't imagine that He does, does He?

Mr. Troy: You're probably right. Not

the God I know. Besides, Jesus ate fish when He was on the earth—and you know He never sinned. Of course, that's like comparing apples to oranges.

Jeremy: What do you mean, Mr. Troy?

Mr. Troy: The diet Jesus ate 2,000 years ago was a Mediterranean diet—and people struggled just to get enough food. Today, it's very different for us. Most people have lots of food choices, healthy ones, and that does not include those Chili Crispitos. *(The youth at the table all laugh)* We don't dress like they did 2,000 years ago, do we?

Elise: Okay, I see your point. But I really do love meat. Does that make me bad?

Tyler: Of course not, right? *(He looks at Jeremy and Mr. Troy)*

Mr. Troy: It's a choice what you eat, Elise. I make one choice, you make another. I think there are plenty of things that can make us bad, but I don't think meat eating is one of them. God loves you. He created you. And He does want what is best for you. When you come to know Him, you'll see He isn't to be feared like most people think. He really is all about love.

Jordan: I didn't think it was healthy to be a vegetarian. You know how important sports are to me. I can't imagine being "a vege" and playing sports.

Mr. Troy: I'll take you on in a little one-on-one anytime on the court.

Jordan: I'll take that challenge after school. But that's what I mean.

You and Jeremy both seem pretty healthy and pretty strong.

Jeremy: I hardly ever get sick. And I'll play the winner of that little game, O.K.?

Mr. Troy: *(Laughing)* I'll take you both on. If you do it right—just like anything else—you can eat a vegan diet and be very healthy. It's just not something you want to do by just giving up certain foods. The best thing is to be educated, and make a wise choice. I know one girl that became a vegetarian on a dare. She didn't tell her family for 6 months. She just ate a lot of cheese. That wasn't the way to do it.

Kaitlynn: I really want to be a vegetarian, but my family thinks it's just a phase that I'll get over. So they won't let me. It's not a phase for me. It's something I really believe in.

Mr. Troy: A lot of adults think things are just a phase with young people. But I know working with you guys everyday that you have real passions that you believe in. I wish you all had the support that you need to live your passions.

Kaitlynn: I wish I had parents as understanding as you.

Mr. Troy: Hang on, Kaitlynn. Maybe you need to educate yourself really well about what you believe and sit down with them and really explain it. Education can help a lot. Here's a few

facts that may help. Do you know there are a lot of famous people that were vegetarians?

Jordan: Who? Any athletes?

Mr. Troy: Plenty. Ever hear of Joe Namath?

Jordan: The famous NFL star? Sure. He couldn't have been . . .

Mr. Troy: He was, my man. And plenty of others. *(As he says different names, the youth at the table should show different reactions.)* Aristotle, good old Ben Franklin, John Wesley, Albert Einstein. Lot's of writers for you, Kaitlynn, like Emily Dickinson, Henry David Thoreau, Louisa May Alcott.

Elise: No musicians?

Mr. Troy: Quite the contrary. Do the names George Harrison, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney mean anything to you?

Elise: The Beatles! No way.

Mr. Troy: Way. And lots of famous people today—like Chelsea Clinton, and Carrie Underwood. They've all made the choice not to eat meat for one reason or another.

Tyler: I never would have guessed. I guess it is a growing thing— isn't it?

Mr. Troy: Growing all the time. They now estimate 1 out of every 200 children—or youth—between 6 and 17 are vegetarians. And it gets easier as more people ask for things like

substitutes in the supermarket. Ever see how the soy milk flies off the shelf?

Jordan: You drink that stuff?

Jeremy: It's a lot better than it use to be. Even I drink that.

Mr. Troy: Don't forget to tell your parents about the health benefits, too. Things like lower risk of heart disease and lower blood pressure. Starting young even lowers the risks of some cancers, and it definitely lowers the risk of adult onset diabetes.

Kaitlynn: I guess I never though of all those things. I'll try it your way. I'll find out more and then talk with my parents armed with some knowledge. Then maybe they'll take me seriously.

Mr. Troy: Just remember, do it because you want to. God loves you just the way you are, and so do we. Do what you do for the right reasons. And, speaking of that, you might want to get going to your next class. Then your teachers will love you for being on time.

Jeremy: Can't we choose whether or not to go to class—for the right reasons? *(He grins up at Mr. Troy)*

Mr. Troy: That's another whole discussion, my friend. Now, get rid of those disgusting Chili Crispitos and get to class.

(The kids all smile, pick up their trays and throw them in the garbage as they exit the stage.) ●

HELPFUL WEBSITE: <http://www.health20-20.org/article.php?id=13>

WHY GO TO CHURCH? by Kimberley Tagert-Paul

Bible Passages: Hebrew 10:24-25; Proverbs 27:17

Central Bible Truth: The Bible tells us not to forsake gathering ourselves together with other believers. We need the fellowship to help us grow in our relationship with God. Others also need the benefit of the talents that God has gifted us with to help them grow in their relationship with God.

Program Target: To provide a place for youth to discuss the values of going to church. To explore reasons that will help them decide if going to church is important in their relationship with God.

Prep Time: Set up a small obstacle course (or several small courses) in another room. Have enough blindfolds for half of the group. Have a board and chalk, or poster and pen available. Have Bibles available for the teens.

Things to Do: Have prepared enough blindfolds for half of the group. Arrange a **small** obstacle course in another room. Make sure that no one can be hurt while navigating through it. Divide the group into two teams. Blindfold one group and then assign a member of the other team to lead them through the obstacle course. (If you have a large group - you may want to set up multiple obstacle courses to make this go faster.)

The person not blindfolded is to **talk** their person through the course. They can use only words; no physical contact. You can put several people through the course at the same time—it will help the blindfolded people to have to listen carefully to their person only.

If time allows, switch and give the non-blindfolded a turn at the course. (Just start them from the opposite end.)

After everyone has had their turn, gather back together in the meeting area as a group.

INTRODUCTION

LEADER—That was interesting, wasn't it. *Do you think you could have made it through the course without your helper? Was it harder being the one who was blindfolded, or the seeing one who had to rely only on their words to guide through the course?* (allow for discussion time)

Today we want to talk about church. Is it important to go, or can you be a

member without actually attending? Is it healthy to meet as a group? These are just some of the questions we will explore together as we see what the Bible says on this subject.

As youth, you have many needs that may or may not be the same as the adults around you. There are things that are more important for you than for your parents. Your peer group is one of those things. As teens, part of who you are may be defined by your

peers. Social needs are important to you, right? So going to church may or may not be an acceptable part of that group's values. But you are here today—and that is good.

What made you want to be here today? *(allow for discussion; write some of the ideas on a chalk board or poster that you have ready for this)*

The church is not an organization. It is a organism—it is a living group that lives and grows together. All

around you there is a battle raging for your mind and lives, whether or not you are aware of it. The things you do, the things you see, the things you hear, all battle to find a place inside of you. **Do you think that being around a group of believers can help you to fight that battle and make choices that will lead you closer to God?** *(allow for discussion)*

Can a Christian survive without going to church? *(allow discussion)* Some may have no Choice—they may be handicapped, bed-bound, or home-bound. Or, they may be isolated in an area where there isn't a church. **Can they still go to heaven if they can't make it to church?** *(allow discussion)* God is good and can meet all of our needs. He understands the unique circumstances of each of us.

God gives each person spiritual gifts. Some may have many, others a few, but each person has some gift that God has given to them uniquely. **What are we to do with these spiritual gifts?** *(allow discussion)* Let's read 1 Corinthians 12:7 out loud. What does it say that spiritual gifts are given for? *(for the common good)* Sharing and caring go hand in hand. You can't use your spiritual gifts if there aren't others around to receive them. Read 1 Peter 4:10: "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." What does this tell us?

Is church to be more than entertainment? What might be wrong if you come to church only to be entertained? If you only want entertainment, will you grow into being only a pleasure seeker? Does God call us to be pleasure seekers, or to be servants? *(Allow plenty of time to encourage the youth to open up and speak what is on their hearts about these questions)*

1 Corinthians 12:12 tells us that the body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts. Could you claim to have a body if the head were here—the legs were in California and England, and the hands were scattered over Asia? What if the neck was in South Africa?

Would you have a body, or just a bunch of parts? What parts could you live without in the body? Do you need the spleen? Can you live without it? Or the gall bladder? Anyone here not have their gall bladder? You can live without it, right? But does the body function as well? The body of Christ needs all its members. Their uniqueness is what makes the church stronger and livelier. It adds all the nuances to the family.

TO DO

The Bible is full of "One Another" verses. Give out the following verses for the youth to look up. These are "one another" commands. On the board or poster, write down the things that the Bible tells us we are to do for each other: Eph. 4:32 (compassion, forgive); Eph. 4:2 (bearing in love); Gal. 6:2 (carry burdens); Gal. 5:3 (serve in love); Phil. 1:27 (stand together); 1 Thes. 5:11 (encourage and build up); Heb. 3:13 (encourage daily).

CONCLUSION

We need each other. The Bible tells us that. We go to church to build relationships—with God and with others. We can and should have personal Bible study and prayer time. But that is like sitting on a two-legged stool. Gathering together in fellowship and worship is the third leg to the stool. With it, the stool becomes useful. We need a community of faith to spur us on—to push us to grow. We need help in being taught and led. We need the support of other believers. We need to hear reminders of God's love. We need a break from work, problems, and our own interests so we can concentrate on the Lord. We need the confirmation that others can give to us.

One question to leave you with—think about this during your week: If you separate yourself from other believers, how long before you give in to the standards of the world around you?

End in prayer: ●

Rejuvenate

Avoiding the Burn-Out Plague

By Patti Emanuele



Proper periods of sleep and rest and an abundance of physical exercise are essential to health of body and mind. To rob nature of her hours for rest and recuperation, by allowing one man to do the work of four, or of three, or even of two, will result in irreparable loss. (Ellen G. White. *Gospel Workers*, p. 422)

When Ella began her position as a youth minister she was excited, bold, and energetic. At staff meetings she nearly burst with ideas for the youth ministry. She was driven by a love for kids and a strong desire to lead them toward a godly life. She was a breath of fresh air. The kids loved her, the parents loved her, and the ministry was blessed by her addition to the team. Then, around her fourth year, her spirit began to wane.

"Why isn't Ella smiling anymore?" a parent asked Glen at a youth activity one day. Glen stopped and watched Ella. True, she did seem a bit mellow. Her smile was missing, and could it be? She seemed...tired.

As a veteran youth minister, Glen had personal experience with the highs and lows of youth ministry. He was aware of the statistics: four or five years as a youth minister was the average length of time in his chosen profession.

"We need to help Ella. I know she is discouraged. We should share how we've managed to survive the ups and downs of this career," Glenn told Anne and Chuck, fellow youth staff workers.

"Let's do it," they both said and began to prepare a list of suggestions.

RENEWING OUR SPIRIT

1. Meditation (see p. 45)

Psalms 143:5: “I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done, I spread out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land.”

When we meditate on God’s past and present works, and think of His blessings, He hears us and our spirits are uplifted.

2. Prayer

Philippians 4: 6: “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

In this verse we have a tool, a promise from God that He hears our prayers, and provides a relief to our anxieties and worries. This message continues in verse 7: “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Anxiety can wear us down and make us tired and disillusioned with our mission.

3. Dwell on His Promises

Hebrews 10:23: “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess for He who promised is faithful.”

Some other verses to think about:

Psalms 119:51: “My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.”

Romans 1:2: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle

and set apart for the gospel of God the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”

If we hold fast to God’s promises, it will serve as an anchor during trying times.

4. Remember God’s blessings

Praise Him—Psalms 92:1: “It is good to praise the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night...”

Verse 4, “For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy the works of your hands.”

The act of praising God makes us glad.

5. Listen to Music

Psalms 28: 7: “The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.”

Psalms 33:2: “Sing joyfully to the Lord, you righteous; it is fitting for the upright to praise him. Praise the Lord with the harp; make music to Him on the ten-stringed lyre. Sing to Him a new song, play skillfully and shout for joy.”

Psalms 92: 1-4: “It is good to praise

the Lord and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy at the works of your hands.”

God has given the gift of song. Music that praises Him can lift our spirits. Fasting can help us to focus on God and spiritual matters without being distracted by physical appetites.

6. Fasting

Luke 2: 36, 37, “There was also a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.”

Fasting can help us to focus on God and spiritual matters without being distracted by physical appetites.

7. Walking/Jogging/Running

Isaiah 40:31: “But those who hope in the Lord will renew; their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles, they will run and not grow weary they will walk and not be faint.”

Physical exercise such as walking, running, playing sports, etc., can help us to feel more positive and refreshed.

Exercise and increased physical fitness associated with most kinds of nature-based activities also leads to better mental health.



Isaiah 40: 29-31 (NIV)

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youth grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.”

We can only be renewed through our continuous relationship with Jesus Christ. God recognizes that we become weary, and it is only through Him that we may be strengthened. God has provided clear ways for us to be renewed and continue on successfully in our work for Him.

Research shows that exercise is a factor in reducing depression and improving some other kinds of psychopathology. Also, outdoor exercise has a more beneficial effect than indoor exercise (e.g., running on an outdoor track compared to an indoor track).

8. Eat a Healthy Diet

Daniel 1:12-15: “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see. So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.”

It is important to eat a healthy diet so that our bodies are filled with the right foods as we continue to grow and work for Him. Unhealthy eating can cause us to feel sluggish and even change our temperament. Think carefully before you gobble that doughnut and swallow that cup of coffee.

9. Parent Involvement

Luke 2:41: “Every year his (Jesus) parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.”

Jesus’ parents knew the importance of keeping holy traditions and the training of a child in the laws of God. They brought him to the Holy place for instruction, never realizing that He would be the instructor! Their involved, responsible parenting sets a good example for parents today

and gives freedom to the youth leader to ask and expect parent involvement. A confident youth leader knows that the parents will reap a blessing as they are involved in the Christian training of their young person.

10. Speak with a Friend

Exodus 33: 11: “The Lord would speak with Moses face to face as a man speaks with a friend.” We all desire a relationship such as the relationship God had with Moses, a relationship marked by trust and openness. This enables you to share with a friend your doubts and frustrations without fear of judgment or shame. Talking to a friend also have other benefits, it help you see things differently and can also release pent-up anger and frustration.

11. Take a Vacation

Mark 6: 31, 32: “Jesus said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.”

Jesus recognized the need to take a break from a consuming ministry and give the disciples a rest.

Most of us do the same things every day. We go to work, we blog, we eat at the same place, and experience the same environment very day, which reduces the opportunities for inspiration. A vacation can change that. It’s a good way to refuel, make new memories, and help provide creative inspiration.

Making good memories is good for the soul. Vacation gives you a chance to do that and much more, so, drop off the blogosphere. Get some rest. Take a vacation. Maximize your potential. You will have yourself (and your vacation)

to thank for it. You will come back feeling happier and refreshed, and much better able to cope with the stresses of everyday life.

12. Turn off the Television

Colossians 3:2: “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Television, electronics such as iPods and Blackberries are convenient for keeping in touch with people and ministry needs, but they can also sap your strength. Soaking up negative images or mindless fluff on television, is not edifying to the Lord. Try something different, like reading a positive book.

13. Enjoy Nature

Psalms 19:1, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”

A long walk or a picnic outside can relieve pressure and fatigue. Enjoying a beautiful day with nature, watching birds or scrambling squirrels can be a welcome distraction from the day’s pressures. Studies have shown that people who spend a lot of time among nature increase in compassion, wisdom, guidance, and inner peace.

14. Sleep and Rest (see p. 15)

Adequate sleep and rest is not a luxury, it is a necessity. You must take time to regroup mentally, physically and spiritually.

Psalms 4:8: “I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.”

It’s difficult to feel positive and energized when you didn’t get enough sleep. Soft music or a glass of milk, can work toward a peaceful snooze.

Do you notice that when you get sick the first thing the doctor tells you is to drink lots of fluid and get plenty of rest? That’s exactly what they mean....plenty of rest. And this is what the doctor means: rest, with no activities at all. Doing nothing when you are unwell drains your mind from the noise and hassle of the world.

15. Take up a hobby

Psalms 100:2: “Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.”

There are many activities from hobbies that can bring relief from the cares of your ministry. Singing is just one of them. If you like to paint, try that. Or try biking or sewing. Play a sport. Do something that will bring you pleasure and joy.

“Hobbies can provide many hours of relief from stress. A hobby can boost creativity, self esteem, passion, pleasure and accomplishments. Ted W. Mills grows roses as a hobby, and is a rosarian and judge. In his article, ‘True Confessions Are Good for the Soul,’ he writes ‘Facing retirement, I longed for an activity that would provide both pleasure and a sense of accomplishment. In roses I found the satisfaction.’ He goes on to write, ‘Through all the trials and difficulties that I experience at the outset, many blessings were wrought.

Lasting friendships were made and I discovered that rose people were among the best of citizens. All my industry became a labor of love as I shared God’s creative beauty to the forlorn and ill among us.’ It is quite obvious to say that Ted’s hobby brought him hours of pleasure, satisfaction, beauty, and friendship.” (*Get Into a Hobby It’s Good for You!* by Bill Malone, MSW, LISW.)

Whatever interest you have that is separate from your ministry will help you to return to your work with renewed interest.

REMEMBERING OUR SOURCE

Let us all remember where the source of our energy comes from:

Matthew 28:11: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

DON’T BE SO HARD ON YOURSELF

God recognized that we would have periods of time where we’d feel discouraged, exhausted, and unmotivated. He knows us so well He left His promises for the renewal of our minds in His Word. Let’s rejoice in His promises and look forward to another day of youth service. ●

THE SABBATH

By Kimberley Tagert-Paul

LEADERS NOTES

Ice Breaker

Official Grand Opening!

Imagine - balloons, food, music, prizes, festive signs, maybe even fireworks.

What comes to mind? Perhaps many things - but if we add in a big ribbon banner and a giant pair of scissors - does that help? Depending on where you are at in the world - these are things that usually accompany a grand opening ceremony. Stores use this type of ceremony to announce to a community that they are opening their doors for service - and they want to serve you! Other institutions often use this type of ceremony to show off their new facility - a school, a hospital, maybe even a new factory. Everyone is in a celebratory mood with high hopes for the future of their endeavors.

Perhaps the most famous of grand openings is the Olympic ceremonies. To begin each Olympic games the world literally celebrates with festivities viewed by millions. These ceremonies have become a tradition of extravagance.

The last Olympic opening ceremony was held for the 2008 Beijing Summer Games. It was watched by almost 100,000 in attendance at the “Bird’s Nest” stadium and millions more around the world via television. The four hour ceremony was one of the most elaborate and most expensive of all the opening ceremony shows. It is estimated that the show cost more than \$300 million to produce with more than 15,000 performers. In attendance, along with leaders of several countries, were 11,000 athletes from 204 countries of the world.

One of the most spectacular moments came when the fireworks lit the night sky. Twenty-nine giant footprints filled the air. Most watching live, and on television were thrilled at the sight as the footprints led from Tiananmen Square to the stadium. Only later was it revealed that the only footprint firework that was real was the one just outside the stadium. It was a clever work of computer graphics inserted into the live coverage at the correct moment.

Dig-In

Did you know that the Bible talks about a Grand Opening Day, too? Yep, it’s there right in Genesis. God created the Garden of Eden—then man and woman—and put them in that wonderful place. For the ribbon ceremony, God created a river that wound through the garden and watered it. Birds of all colors filled the sky more beautifully than any balloons or fireworks ever could. It was a festive, wonderful day—Humanity’s first full day on the new earth—and Adam and Eve spent it with their Father. What was this marvelous day? The Sabbath!

We can only imagine what that day was like. Man walking face to face with God. Perfect creation everywhere the eye can see. Imagine the angels looking on at the celebration—oh, there certainly had to be music in the air! What a day that first Sabbath had to have been. The best grand opening ever!

Hot Potato

The Lord's Day or the Law's Day?

Then, sin entered the world. Here's where the story turns from being beautiful. Adam and Eve had to leave their garden home. No longer could they walk and talk with their Father face-to-face. Imagine their broken hearts!

But God allowed them to take one thing with them when they left the garden paradise. One gift—one souvenir to keep from that spectacular grand opening. We still have that gift today. The one jewel still left from our Eden beginnings: the Sabbath.

We don't know exactly what God did with Adam and Eve on that first Sabbath. We do know it was meant as a celebration of His creation. It was a festive day. Perhaps they walked through the garden marveling at each part of the incredible creation. They talked, they feasted. It was a time of joy. There weren't rules yet on how to keep the Sabbath—they weren't needed because the Creator of the day walked with them.

It didn't take humankind long to change all that. Soon— the Sabbath went from being a blessing to being a burden. The devil likes to make things happen that way—to take the gifts of God and turn them into something God never intended. And we are good at following right down his trail!

Hot Potato Questions

When you look at that first Sabbath in Eden, how far do you think we have come from what God intended the day to be? Give specific examples. *(Leaders, be ready with some suggestions to help get the discussion started.)* Do all of man's rules for the Sabbath ever make you feel it is more of a burden than you want to be a part of? Why or why not?

Apply It/Bible Text Discovery

Genesis 2:1-3 What two things do these verses mention that God did on the seventh-day? Do you think God "rested" because He was tired? In the Hebrew, this term means that He ceased (creating). Does that change anything for you? When you make something beautiful, what do you do when you finish? Do you take time to look at it and celebrate your creation? Do you think that was what God was doing? What things do you think God shared with Adam and Eve on this first full day of their lives? How can you apply that to your worship on the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13-15 What did God Himself call the Sabbath? God used the word, "delight". Many people don't feel that the Sabbath is any kind of a delight because of what man has done to it. Holy means set aside for God, not set aside for rules. In what ways do you find the Sabbath a delight? In what ways is the Sabbath not a delight for you? Is there anything you can do about that?

Mark 2:23-28 What did Jesus call Himself in these verses? Why were the Pharisees complaining about the disciples? Did Jesus have a problem with His disciples picking the grain and eating it on the Sabbath? What does that tell us about how we can honor God on His day? Do you think that meeting our needs is important to God? Can we help others with their needs on the Sabbath? What things can you do to honor God and help others with on the Sabbath? *(Leaders, the youth may be afraid to speak out for fear of being wrong. Encourage them to share their thoughts and make a list of them on a chalk board or poster.)*

Luke 14:1-6, Luke 4:16, John 5:1-14 What things do these verses tell us that Jesus did on the Sabbath? It mentions that He was dining, going to a feast, fellowshiping, healing, and worshipping! What can we learn from Jesus' example that God intended for us to do on His day? Make a list of things that you think are appropriate for the Sabbath and compare them to Jesus' example. How do you think they fit in with God's plan? What things would you definitely not do on the Sabbath because you think they would not be in keeping with the day? Why? Do you ever get caught up in honoring the day, and forget to honor your Maker?

Exodus 16:23 What were the Israelites told to do to prepare for the Sabbath? The promise of manna was tied to their choice of celebrating the Sabbath. If they believed there would be ample food for their needs. Notice the word “keep”? What does that word mean to you? Don’t you keep the things that are a treasure to you? Do you think God feels that same way about you? Do you think that might be why He wants us to spend the day in celebration, worship, and fellowship with Him and other believers?

Extra Gem

Ellen White writes the following about the beauty of the Sabbath. “God is merciful. His requirements are reasonable, in accordance with the goodness and benevolence of His character. The object of the Sabbath was that all mankind might be benefited. Man was not made to fit the Sabbath; for the Sabbath was made after the creation of man, to meet his necessities. After God had made the world in six days, He rested and sanctified and blessed the day upon which He rested from all His work which He had created and made. He set apart that special day for man to rest from his labor; that, as he should look upon the earth beneath and the heavens above, he might reflect that God made all these in six days and rested upon the seventh; and that, as he should behold the tangible proofs of God’s infinite wisdom, his heart might be filled with love and reverence for his Maker” (*Testimonies of the Church*, vol. 2, p. 582).

Sharing Time

Define the things you think are appropriate for a day of celebration, worship, and fellowship with God. Do you think these fit in with humanity’s ideas? The Jews had a rule that they couldn’t carry their handkerchief on the Sabbath unless it was pinned to their robe on Friday before sunset. Many people think that Seventh-day Adventists keep the Sabbath in these same ways. Think of someone you can share with who needs to learn the beauty of the Sabbath—and share with them some of the things you do to “keep” this treasure of a day.

This Week’s Challenge

After studying about the Sabbath, do you have new ideas about what God intended the day to be? Write a letter to God about what the Sabbath means to you, expressing how you want to find the delight that God intended the day to be. Pray as you are writing and listen for the voice of your Creator as He shares in your delight over this marvelous gift. ●

2010

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A Promise

from God Himself

A fundamental principle of the Sabbath day is revealed in Isaiah, where God promises His people: “If you keep your feet from **BREAKING** the Sabbath and from **DOING AS YOU PLEASE** on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a **DELIGHT** and the **LORD’s** holy day **HONOR-ABLE**, and if you **HONOR** it by not going **YOUR OWN WAY** and not doing as you please and **SPEAKING IDLE WORDS** then you will find your joy in the Lord, and i will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to reast on the interitance of your father jacob.’ The mouth of the **LORD** has spoken”

(Isa. 58:13, 14, emphasis added).

MEMORIES OF SABBATH CELEBRATIONS IN MY CHILDHOOD HOME

by Baraka G. Muganda

Sabbath as I was growing up had a very special place in my home. Even now in my adulthood I still recall vividly how this special day was well anticipated by the whole family as I grew up. The preparation of the Sabbath in my home started as early as Thursday. I remember Mom preparing the firewood and making sure that Sabbath clothes for the children were washed and ironed. One could feel the Sabbath hours dawning in the house so early and they made the week very short. It seemed that as soon as we finished one Sabbath we started to prepare for the next one.



Baraka G. Muganda is the World Youth Director at the General Conference World Headquarters.

Friday was the busiest day of the entire week. All Sabbath clothes were in place. Family Sabbath shoes polished. The house grounds and yard cleaned up. Food prepared for the Sabbath all ready. The major cooking was done on Friday and on Sabbath only warming of the food was done. Before the sun set children took their baths first and then the adults with change of clothes for Friday vespers. The whole atmosphere in the home smelled of Sabbath.

The vesper program was for the whole family and community. It was a special evening where families gathered to “welcome” the Sabbath. I still smell that freshness of clothes and people as they walked in the church with their Bibles and song books in their hands. Sometimes these meetings were short but once in a while they were long, depending on the speakers. There was a lot of singing before the sermon. We children enjoyed the singing and participated fully. After the meeting closed we gathered outside the church door to fellowship. While the adults talked together we children enjoyed playing around.

Friday supper was special in my home. Mom cooked a very unique dinner. It was, after all, a Sabbath eve. As a child I looked forward to the Friday night meal. What blew up my mind was watching my mom dish some food in small dishes and send us children to deliver them to our neighbors. And as we returned to the house before supper, the other mothers also gave us something from their special dinner to share with our mother. That was the spirit of the Sabbath. Sharing the blessings of what God had given us at the table with other members of the community. After supper we had family worship. During this time we reviewed our Sabbath school memory verses. We were set for the Sabbath school by Friday night. This was another inspiring time in our lives.

I recall how we woke up so early on Sabbath morning to prepare for the day. We took our showers and put on the Sabbath attire. The Sabbath clothes were not worn on any other day except the Sabbath. No wonder they took long to get torn. A short devotion was held. We had a very special family breakfast then we were off to church. Each member of the family carried a Bible, lesson and a song book. In addition to these, Daddy or Mom made sure that we were given offering for the Sabbath programs.

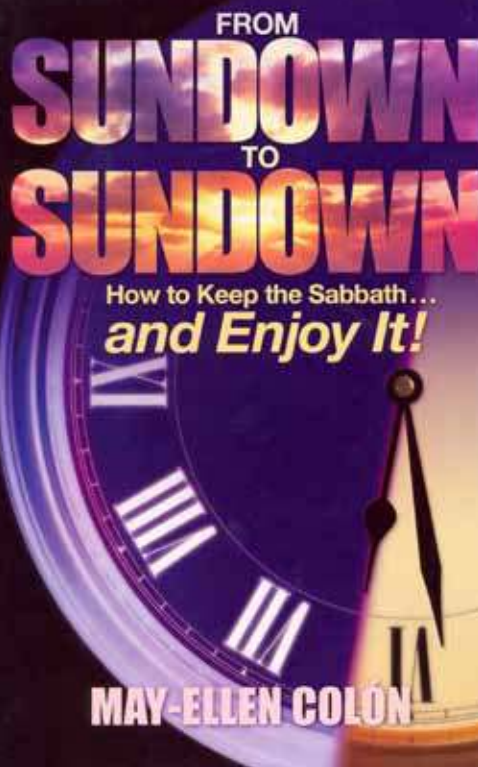
We had great Sabbath school, and we began on time. Actually, I recall our family getting to the church by 8:30 in the morning when the Sabbath school started at 9:30 a. m. My family enjoyed getting to the church service so early. And later, the Sabbath meal was special. Even the plates were special. Everything was just awesome to mark the day that God had created.

If there were no church programs on Sabbath afternoon our parents would take the entire family for a walk in the woods and we would sit on the rocks to listen to some Bible stories from Daddy. We would ask him questions and we would sing. Even today I miss those hours when nature became the main shaper of my life. Every Sabbath afternoon was filled with exciting activities to keep us focused on the Sabbath. Following the Sabbath walks we would come back home and prepare to go to Sabbath vespers. Again at the end of the service we would play around with fellow kids while parents would exchange stories of their own. I recall how men and women would gather in separate groups and then I would hear Daddy calling all of us to go home. With that, the Sabbath celebrations would come to the end.

This is how we celebrated Sabbath in our home and Sabbath was not just another day, it was a special day. I thank my family for instilling such positive memories of keeping Sabbath in my life. A great foundation was built in my spiritual life and even today I continue to pass on the same values to my own children. ●

May-Ellen Colon

Keeping the Sabbath



Available at
Adventist Book Centers
and Amazon.com

NAD

THE ARMS OF GOD

by
Emily Young



Emily Young is a mass communication major at Southern Adventist University.

Ever since I started college three years ago, Sabbath has been something I look forward to as nothing else. No matter what is going on in my life—the papers, deadlines, boy problems—I can take a break from it to be with my God. On Sabbath, I let go of my problems and relax in the arms of God.

But it wasn't until one particular Sabbath afternoon when volunteering with FLAG Camp, that I began to see how God must feel about our Sabbath time together.

I'd never heard of FLAG Camp before going to Southern Adventist University in Collegedale, Tennessee. Every other weekend, a group of students go down to the housing projects in Chattanooga to play with the children who live there. The kids do crafts, sing, have snacks, and hear a Bible story. For some of those kids, the students who come are their only positive role models.

One particular little girl, Stephanie, captured my attention. As soon as all of the kids got there and started to play, she ran up to me and grabbed my hand, looking shyly up at me.

"Can I do your hair?" she asked, flashing me a snaggletooth grin.

"Sure you can," I replied. I picked up a piece of glass from the ground, throwing it in a nearby trashcan before sitting down. Taking the ponytail holder out of my hair, I heard a tiny gasp from behind me as Stephanie grabbed a fistful and proceeded to jerk. She assured me that she was doing a beautiful job and that I wouldn't believe how it looked when she was done. She pulled a purple plastic butterfly clip from her own pigtails and dug it into my scalp. Before long a small crowd of little girls was watching Stephanie. They offered their own hair clips to the cause—pink, blue, green.

"It's done," Stephanie proclaimed after a painful 10 minutes.

I looked at the finished product in the reflection of my friend's sunglasses. My formerly straight hair had regressed to its naturally curly state after being handled by sweaty little fingers for so long. Clips held some of it up in braids. The rest of it was jammed haphazardly in several ponytail holders on the sides of my head. I stifled a laugh and then turned to Stephanie. Her expectant gaze met my eyes.

"Beautiful," I said, mustering up as much genuine enthusiasm as I could.

Her face beamed. She hopped into my lap and threw her arms around my neck. I hugged her, expecting her to get up and go play with her friends. She laid her head on my shoulder and closed her eyes.

"Stephanie, don't you want to play Duck–Duck–Goose?" I asked, pointing to her friends who were laughing and playing a few yards away.

She buried her head against my neck. "No," she said quietly. "Can you please just hold me?" The way she says it broke my heart. I pulled her small frame closer, and she sighed contentedly.

As I held her in the middle of the playground, I hoped that my embrace was making her feel safe. My mind could only imagine what this sweet little girl has gone through in her short years of life that make her choose being held tight over playing with her friends. Had she ever been hugged like this before? I didn't need an answer; I just needed to hug her. This little girl wanted to be held safe in someone's arms, and she chose me. Even though my feet were falling asleep from sitting cross-legged, I didn't think for a moment of asking her to get up. I was happy to be the one to give her some comfort in the middle of her crazy world.

I think this is how God must feel when Sabbath comes each week. He longs for us to put our arms around his neck and lean on him. He wants us to feel safe. He hopes all week that when Sabbath arrives we'll come to him so he can protect us from our crazy world. ●

THE SABBATH AND ME

by Sarah Peden

NAD

My name is Sarah, and I turned 14 on February 20. My parents are Frank and Cherie Peden. I have three younger sisters, and I have been a Sabbath keeping Seventh-day Adventist since birth. The Sabbath (Saturday) has always been my favorite day of the week. On Sabbaths my family does many things together. First, we attend Sabbath school. I lead out in song service as the chorister up front. After some joyful singing my dad has prayer and we split into our different Bible study groups. I attend the Real-time Faith Teen Bible Study. After Sabbath school my family stays and attends the worship service.

My favorite way to spend Sabbath would be hiking with my family at Nelson Kennedy Ledges near where I live. Or hiking with my family and watching wildlife (especially birds) at the Eagle Creek Nature Preservation. On very cold afternoons in the winter (I live in northeastern Ohio) I like to play Bible games such as “Egypt to Canaan” with my family.

The Sabbath means a lot to me. Especially since I have no school or work (chores). It also gives a chance for my family to spend a special day together. Also, it is a day I can spend learning more about my Creator and Jesus, my hero. ●



Sarah Peden is a 14-year-old who lives in Ohio.

NAD

HOW I SPEND THE SABBATH

by Vashti Brantley



Vashti Brantley is homeschooled and in the 4th grade. She lives in Indian Trail, North Carolina, U. S. The youngest of five girls, Vashti attends the Monroe Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

On Friday evenings we open the Sabbath by praying, singing songs, and reading a story. Sometimes we play Sabbath games. In the morning we go to church and Sabbath school. We learn about God. Right now we are learning the books of the Bible. We do crafts and read our lesson. Next we go to the sanctuary. We sing and then we have the service. My favorite part is the children’s story. Then we listen as the pastor preaches.

After church we have potluck. When we are finished eating, we have bell choir practice. My sister Savannah teaches us and tells us what to play. Then we go home or go to the nursing home to sing for the residents. Sometimes we go to visit friends from church. In the evening we sometimes go to vespers. After we close the Sabbath, we usually eat popcorn and smoothies. I like Sabbath because I can spend time with my family and with God. ●

THE VERY BEST DAYS OF MY LIFE

by
Daniela Holbrook



Daniela loves everything about nature, her passions include bird watching, cave exploring, backckpacking, wilderness camping and she loves little frogs.

EUD

Sabbaths have been some of the very best days of my life, especially when I get to spend them with God in His world of nature. I recall one of those particularly special Sabbaths back in the spring of 2002. I had been struggling for some time with a decision that would radically change my current life patterns and sense of mission. I had been totally involved with my local Pathfinder Club and unit for several years and had felt a real mission in the mentoring of each one of my club members. Then I had been given the assignment of leading all our Pathfinders in my country Romania. But now, God was asking me to renounce that world without yet opening the next door to my life. That Sabbath, while helping out at one of a conference's camporees, the emotions of having to put so much of this behind finally got the best of me and I went for a very long morning walk into the forest to have a serious time talking with my God.

I soon happened onto a pair of woodpeckers who were busy feeding their young in a tree hole above me. I stood there transfixed by their activity. They would fly back and forth in a very big hurry with what seemed like only a few moments between each trip, always returning with a flourish and a big bug or worm for a hungry beak. It was obvious that they took their task very seriously and were totally immersed in it without any regard for my presence. As I watched, I began to think of these parent woodpeckers's yearly cycle and began to see how it fit my life. They had obviously picked a very good location because they were in very close proximity to a large supply of food for their young. After picking the best place for the nest hole, they had a brief courtship, hole digging, egg laying and incubating, then finally now—feeding time. In the near future the young would fledge, learn to fly, leave the nest and their parents.

I began to understand that God also had for me different assignments at different times of my life, and a new assignment was in the making. I needed to leave my current Pathfinder responsibilities in other capable hands and take on the next challenge. I was even able to see a bit of humor in the situation. There is a time for each kind of activity. What if I were the woodpecker and wanted to bring worms to the freshly laid eggs or wanted to sit warming the baby woodpeckers instead of feeding them? It was the first time in several months that I could smile about the changes God had in mind for me. It seemed, however, that God still had some more lessons for me that Sabbath day.

After enjoying the woodpecker family for awhile, I wandered on through the forest and soon found a very large pile of soil crawling with ants. It seemed there were ants everywhere in total confusion yet as I watched I saw that each ant knew exactly what its work was and where it had to go and why they had their work to do. I imagined how it must look inside the dirt pile through all the tiny tunnels with ants running everywhere, each on its specific mission. Some were cleaning the tunnels, some bringing in food, some protecting the eggs, others taking eggs from the queen and storing them where others would nurture them and so on.

I began to imagine our Earth to be like that ant hill. I watched them for perhaps an hour. One of those ants might be me. Jesus has given each of us an assignment, I was given mine. It was not a time for me to stop and argue about what that assignment was or is to be or to think I want a different kind of role of my own choosing, one that I like better. These ants were not concerned about who was doing a nicer job or even if the others were doing a job at all. Each simply worked on their part. We work in teams, sometimes large ones with unclear boundaries, sometimes small ones where we know each other well. We often have problems because one or another do not seem to carry their part of the work. That sometimes had been what I found.

That day, the ants taught me a few things: do the work God has for me for a specific time; do it the best I can with God's help; and I am not responsible for other's work, nor need to waste time worrying about them. God asks me about my assignment, not that of any others. I needed that, but the lessons were not yet over.

I had finally reached the other side of the forest and arrived at a beautiful, small valley full of saplings. I sat down beside a tree to think and watch two-three deer feeding not far way. I always take with me my binoculars and a small notebook where I write my prayers to Him and special things God impresses upon me. I thought this would be a great spot to sit and write my new discoveries and the joy

I felt in my talking with my God. But it seemed that was not yet the right time for that because another "small" event interrupted me. I must interject here that when I walk in the forest I always walk very slowly in silence and wear natural "eco-friendly" colors that blend in to my surroundings, and I don't wear perfumes or anything else that might give away my presence. I like to watch nature without disturbing it. Actually, you would have a very hard time finding me among the shadows of the trees or shrubs this way. This is why the deer just kept feeding when I came, even though I was close to them.

Here I spent yet another hour. One of the deer decided to move to a different spot—in my direction—until it was about 8 meters away... *mmmmmm*...then it continued on nibbling leaves as it moved away, never fearing my presence. Then I saw a very large stag beetle (the largest I'd ever seen) on a tree trunk about 2-3 meters away. I slowly got up to get a closer look at it but when I stood up I lost sight of which tree trunk it was on. I looked around but seemed to have completely lost it. A bit disappointed, I turned to look out elsewhere and... *WOW*...just about 25 meters away I saw a doe with a fawn that was drinking milk from her. I had my binoculars around my neck but didn't move; it wasn't necessary. Mother was placidly eating the lush grasses while baby nursed. The fawn would take a break and use its long tongue to lick its black lips and mother would reach around and lick the sides of her fawn, nudging it in affection. After several

minutes, mother decided to move on to greener grass and simply took off slowly walking without even so much as a glance back at her fawn. The whole scene was one of the most special ones I have ever had in nature—and again the lesson hit home. My life needed to be that of the doe/fawn relationship. The doe knew the fawn would follow her without question right through that forest full of all kinds of dangers for the little fawn. That was what I needed to do—go follow what my God had for me, even if I did not know where it would lead or what I would be doing next.

I was finally ready to return to our camporee the happiest person in the world. Yet there was one last brief comical lesson waiting for me along the way. Shortly, I sensed someone was watching me. Indeed, an owl was perched not far away and I wondered, since it was daytime, if he could see me or not. Anyway, for me the moment was like I had eyes yet could not see very far or clearly as my God could.

I could now go ahead and let another very special, talented young woman take my work with leading the Pathfinders in my country with new ideas, enthusiasm and hard work. I could now tackle the production of the resources our Pathfinders were in such bad need of without the burden of leading them at the same time. There are numerous ways God speaks to each of us but for me nature remains one of the most exciting, interesting and deep ways to learn about my God and His work for me. Truly, this was one very *special Sabbath*. ●

MY SABBATH STORY

by Ragjhon Brown

According to an Internet search engine, the Sabbath is generally a weekly day of rest and/or time of worship that is observed in any of several faiths. The bible refers to the Sabbath in Exodus 20:10: “but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.” But to me, the Sabbath is the best day of the week. It is also the most important and captivating day of the week.

Our family celebrates the seventh day Sabbath given to us by God at the time of Creation (Ex. 20:11). I marvel at how wise God was, knowing we would be so caught up with life that we would need, mentally, emotionally, physically, *and* spiritually, a day to unwind, commune with God, and leave the world behind.

Our Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday and ends at sundown on Saturday (Gen. 1). So, for that 24-hour period we give our time to God and our family. For that 24-hour period, I know that it is okay to *not* clean the house, *not* do the laundry, *not* work on school projects, or *not* do anything laborious. For that 24-hour period, I know that I can spend my time with my family, worshiping my Savior, and enjoying a physical rest.

I am so anxious for the week to end so I can put aside all the Northern Caribbean University course work and focus on God. I am overwhelmed when I enter into His court on Sabbaths to worship and also fellowship with other church members, eat lunch, and share the many blessings. The Ramble Seventh day Adventist Church in Manchester, Jamaica, makes my Sabbath complete by giving me a family who cares and great opportunity to visualize the true meaning of worshipping, fellowshiping and enjoying the Sabbath to the maximum. Oh, how I look forward to Sabbath school, singing hymns such as no. 381 “Holy, Sabbath Day of Rest” and turning the hymnal to 382, “O Day of Rest and Gladness” and the mighty hymn # 388, “Don’t forget the Sabbath”!

This is true joy and can be found nowhere else but in the Lord. And what perfect day to express one’s self: the Sabbath.

The best part of Sabbath, though, is the opportunity to worship a loving Savior, and the opportunity to devote an entire 24-hour period solely to Him and His will for our lives. It is like tithing our time. We set aside the Sabbath for Him because of His incredible love for us. How could we want anything less?

Yes, you can and should praise Him daily. I do. But it is not enough for me. I need the Sabbath day not only for the rest it provides, but for the renewal of spirit. ●



Presently a third year student at Northern Caribbean University in Jamaica. Ragjhon Brown is a member of the Ramble SDA Church where he presently serves as the youth leader. He is an optimist who strives for excellence in everything he does. His personal philosophy is “to whom much is given, much is required” and “If God brought you to it, He can bring you through it”.

ENTERING INTO GOD'S PERFECT REST

by Astel Fearon

The Sabbath represents to me the beauty of resting in God's goodness, not my own. As it reminds me of God's creative and redemptive power, the Sabbath is not to be a burden, but rather a delight. The way in which we keep the Sabbath reflects our perception of God. If we view God as harsh and tyrannical, our Sabbath keeping will be dictated by a round of ceremonies and rules to keep "on the good books;" however, if we view God as loving, our Sabbaths will be a time to reflect on God's goodness and express our love for him.

Luke 13:10-16 refers to Jesus healing the woman who had the spirit of infirmity on the Sabbath Day. The religious establishment contended that the healing should not be done on the Sabbath, as this was the day of rest. Jesus condemned their hypocrisy, pointing out that the deliverance of this human being and daughter of Abraham couldn't have happened on a better day than the Sabbath! Jesus revealed the true nature of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day for renewal and spiritual power—not a day of stifling rules.

It was reported in the Jamaica *Gleaner* (Dec. 21, 2008) how, after a tragic crash, a Seventh-day Adventist man chose to assist in the rescue operation rather than go to church. I would contend that failing to help in this situation would constitute the *breaking* of the Sabbath, not keeping it. It is worth pointing out that the Pharisees, despite their strict attitude toward the Sabbath, didn't have a problem with plotting to kill on the Sabbath day (Mark 3:1-6). Why did they get it so wrong? They did not find that spiritual rest in God. Thus, while they made numerous and complex laws on the keeping of the letter of the law, their spiritual blindness led them to fail in the keeping of the spirit of the law. Sabbath is a holy day, however, the more important point is that Sabbath points us to God, who can make us holy on every day of the week.

Therefore in sum the Sabbath represents reflecting on God's perfect work in the creation of mankind (Gen. 2:1-3), His continuous work in the saving of humankind (Heb 5: 14-16), and His soon to be completed work of restoring mankind (Rev. 21). It means entering into that rest of God's goodness. Sabbath should be viewed positively, as an opportunity to worship as a Christian family in corporate church worship, as well as working for God in the local community.

Sabbath for me usually begins at home with family worship, though at times the church may put on a program we all seek to attend. The Sabbath school and divine service is quite traditional and is followed by fellowship lunch that features dishes from a range of countries as our church is of a multicultural nature. The evenings are used to engage in Bible study, youth programs, Pathfinders, community service or evangelism. I enjoy the opportunity to worship, fellowship, and be of service in my local community.

I find that it is best to remember that Christ is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2: 28). When we follow His example our Sabbaths will be rewarding, and most enriching. ●



Astel Fearon, originally from Jamaica, resides in Aberdeen, United Kingdom. He is 22 years old, and serves as a Sabbath School leader in the Aberdeen SDA church. His hobbies include football, listening to music, reading, and contributing to the development of his local church.

SABBATH IN THE LIFE OF A LONG HAUL TRUCK-DRIVER

by David Lorencin

Having grown up an Adventist, going to church on Sabbath was simply what an Adventist did on a Saturday morning. It wasn't until I became a long-haul truck driver that I began to appreciate some things about the Sabbath. And while I've heard it said that Sabbath is simply an arbitrary test of obedience, I have now found such blessings in the Sabbath that I can say much better things about it.

In our lives that are becoming busier by the day, it's just wonderful to call a time-out one day in the week and just rest. If for nothing else, just to take a breath and take stock of what just happened during the week. So thank you, Lord, for a day off!

Spending Sabbath stuck at a random truck stop somewhere in the continental U. S. may seem far from ideal, but I relish it. The advantage of my "home" travelling with me is that I can draw the curtains on the mayhem outside, and, for those precious hours, it's just me and the Lord. I have time to read, and listen to tapes or online material. And God bless you—all of you who so generously work to put good content on the internet, it is truly appreciated. I have time to talk with God. I believe this is what God meant for Sabbath to be—a day to spend together with God, to get to know one another and grow that relationship with Him that we so often talk about in very nebulous terms. Relationships only develop when time is spent together, and Sabbath provides that time.

The Sabbath commandment itself also says: "remember." And as the history of this world—and my own experience—goes on, there is more and more of God's work that I can remember. I find it invigorating to remember



David Lorencin is a 30 years old, professional OTR—Over-the-road (read: long-haul) truck driver. He and his wife, Kelley live in Battle Creek, Michigan, USA (even though he spend more time in his truck, is only a home away from home ☺). Dave and Kelley run a ministry called Genesis Road.

things or read about things and just ask: God, what is going on here? Why did You do that, or what did You mean by this? And in trying to understand the background and principles behind the events, and see the bigger picture of everything that is going on, I have gotten to know a God that is a downright genius! I love to spend time with God, because I always get to learn something new and exciting about Him.

I have also learned to appreciate the times I can be at church all the more. To worship together with fellow believers, to share what I have discovered about my Friend, is now much more valuable to me than a Saturday morning habit. Being in my home church has its own rewards, but the Adventist Church is a large, world-wide family. Occasionally, I will find a Seventh-day Adventist church close to where I am parked for Sabbath. And it is so wonderful to come to a strange place and be welcomed with open arms by your fellow believers.

So today, Sabbath makes me look forward to the day when we will all meet together as God's universe-wide family to praise and worship, and at the end of it all, the person standing at the door shaking hands and saying "Happy Sabbath, glad you could be with us today" is God Himself. May that day be soon! ●

F R I D A Y N I G H T

genesis

"See, I am doing a new thing." Isaiah 43:19

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well" (John 14: 6, 7 NIV). A little later, He goes on to say, "Now this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent" (John 17:3 NIV).

Jesus seems to be saying that the knowledge of God is the very essence of salvation. And so, in the spring of 2005, Genesis Road was born for one specific purpose: to talk about God. Every first Friday night of the month, we gather together for the Friday Night Genesis program, a time to fellowship as we share supper together and then join in worship. This program has become a safe, neutral place where people can just come and meet God. We have also started a newsletter to share more good news about our God, as well as advertise upcoming events. You might think that after four years, material has to be drying up. Not a chance! Ellen White says that we will be learning about God throughout eternity, so this is really just a warm up. So many things tell us about God: the very existence of the Bible tells us of a God who wants to communicate with us, and Sabbath tells us of a God who set aside a day to spend with us—to rest and remember, to give two examples.

In addition to the monthly program and the newsletter, we are preparing materials for future workshops to help others revitalize worship in their churches and communities. Through personal experience, we have learned that this is not about a change in worship style (traditional vs. contemporary), but rather a change in focus. We'd like to challenge churches to quit focusing on *us* and start focusing on *Him*. We'd like to challenge our fellow believers to make their churches known in their communities for one thing: as the place where people can come and meet God.

About the name? Both words have dual meanings. "Genesis" means we feel it is the beginning of something new and wonderful, and also that God is restoring us to our original condition. And "Road" means that, like the prodigal son, we want to be on the road toward home, and also that learning about God is not a cul-de-sac, but a journey that will continue into eternity.

For more information, or to sign up for our free newsletter, contact:

David and Kelley Lorencin

Genesis Road Inc.

116 N. Union St.

Battle Creek, MI 49017

www.genesisroad.org

email: worship@fridaynightgenesis.com

SWEETEST GIFT FROM ABOVE

By Susanne Lau
Hong Kong



Susanne Lau is from SDA Tai Wo Church in Hong Kong. She got baptized on May 26, 2001. She started with an associate degree course in Bilingual Communications (Chinese and English) for a year and then proceeded to the Bachelor Degree (Hons) in Teaching English as a Second Language and Minor in Business Communications in City University of Hong Kong. Currently, she is working as executive in an international PR consultancy. Susanne determines to keep Sabbath despite challenges in life, as she believes that it is the Holy gift from God.

On November 13, 2007, I received the university certificate from my professor. Deep inside my heart, I was full of contentment.

After the secondary school, when I noticed that I was not able to get in university due to keen competition, I could not stop myself from bursting into tears. I was helpless as I had never prepared for such a situation. After prayers, I calmed down myself and decided to apply for a pre-university course, which was provided by a college. I was not sure if it could connect me to university afterwards as the course was still new at that time. When I finished my first semester, I tried to apply for the university degree courses with the grade I attained at college. I did not have strong expectation as I knew that I had not yet completed the college. However, I love trying out things that seem impossible, remembering that “nothing is impossible in Christ.”

God gave me the amazing gift in life. After that interview and written test, I was granted one of my favorite degree offers from the university. It was an honored bachelor degree in teaching English as a second language. I promised God that I would study even harder as I treasured this gift. I took five courses during my first semester in university. Among those, I had to sit the final examination for a course that I had to pass in order to continue my study. When I received the examination timetable, I felt upset. It was a Saturday. I informed the church conference of the situation, requesting them to issue me a letter for special examination arrangements to the university.

Carrying the letter, I made an appointment with my professor, explaining the issue. “I hope you do understand the university policy that we cannot change the timetable and spend extra resources for only one student’s special request. I will receive your letter. However, I don’t think I can do anything for this,” my professor said. I could not stop crying again after receiving the reply and I talked to myself: *God Father, this is the heavenly gift from you and I really treasure it but why do I need to face such conflict?*

The response from professor made me feel lost. I went towards the computer lab and simply wrote the following e-mail to God:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I am sure you must know my situation. I feel very sad and helpless. Please help me with this problem... I’m unhappy but I know you must have solved the problem for me. You let me enroll in this subject (my favourite) and I’m sure you will guide me through. God bless...

After writing the e-mail, I felt better. That same evening I went into the computer lab again, planning to print out the notes for the next day's lecture. I opened the e-mail box and surprisingly, I received an e-mail from the professor. I opened it with nervousness. It read:

Dear Suzanne,

After talking to the pastor at your church on phone, and having confirmed that it would be possible for faithful members to sit the exam as from 6:30pm on a Saturday evening, I decided to make a special exam arrangement for you. On the date of the EN2701 exam (December 13), you will be required to come to a room (venue to be confirmed later) at around 6:15 P.M....

It must be the work of the Holy Spirit! I hardly believed that my professor would open the letter and even try to call my pastor for an explanation. It was the first time for the department to arrange for such a special examination. It took place in the evening after Sabbath in a conference room with only me and an examiner. I went through it with the abundant blessings and prayers from church brothers and sisters. After this experience, challenges do not stop in my life but I believe "I am able to do all things through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

On November 13, 2007, under the witnesses from parents, I finally received the university certificate from the professor. I thank God for the experience of walking with Jesus and this sweetest gift from above. ●

What Are the Benefits of Christian Meditation?

There are countless benefits to Christian meditation. I believe the three greatest benefits of Christian meditation is that it allows us to spend more quality time with God, teaches us to control our thought life, and helps us maintain our mental health and emotional well-being.

Spend More Quality Time with God. The Psalms 46:10 tells us to be still and know God. In order to know God we need to spend time with him. The more time we spend in God's word and abide in his presence, the more we take on his character and likeness. In Luke 19, when Jesus went to Zaccheaus, the tax collector's home, it is said that Zaccheaus told Jesus as a result of his visit, If I has wronged or cheated anyone I will repay them back with interest. When we dwell in God's presence we are changed. When Mary and Martha had Jesus over as a dinner guest, Martha became upset because Mary wasn't helping her with the preparations. Jesus told Martha that she had many cares, but that Mary had made the better choice, to dwell at His side, and it will not be taken away from her.

Control Thought Life. Ephesians Chapter 6 tell us to cast down every fiery dart that exalts itself against the knowledge of God and bring every thought into the obedience of Christ. Meditation helps us to still our minds so that we can observe the subtle or unconscious thoughts that we're thinking. If we are not controlling our thoughts, then our thoughts are controlling us. Many people live unconsciously or by mental default. They have never examined their internal dialogue and live by reaction instead of purposefully. Meditation can help you to observe the mental chatter in your mind so that you can eliminate and replace them with God's word and rise above lower level consciousness.

Promote Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being. Just like we rest and cleanse our outer and inner bodies, our minds also need consistent rest. Without mental rest we become overwhelmed by the worries and the cares of our lives. We need to mentally detox from all the mental clutter, messages, and information we're constantly bombarded with. It is during times of quietness, stillness and reflection that we're in the best position to hear and commune with God. During meditation we learn to surrender every situation to God. In return, we receive that peace that passes all understanding. We release the stress and many toxic emotions that interfere with our peace of mind.

—Source: <http://www.thechristianmeditator.com/FAQ.html>



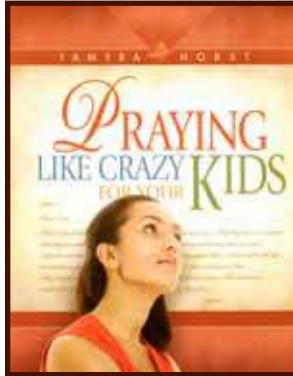
Savannah Brantley is homeschooled and in the 7th grade. She attends the Monroe Seventh-day Adventist Church.

THE SABBATH

by Savannah Brantley

A delight, a joy, a thrill to girls and boys,
The Sabbath I love—a gift from God above!
So many things on Sabbath I do, it's hard to tell them all to you.
But I will start where it begins, on Friday night my family sings.
We sing about God's loving grace, we sing we soon shall see His face.
We read, we study, we talk, we pray, and then we sleep till the next day.
On Sabbath morning we go to church. We go to Sabbath school where we search,
We search the Bible and there we find, God's promises to keep in mind.
We listen to the sermon that pastor brings today
The LORD is speaking through him. God tells him what to say.
After church is over we go, to the fellowship hall to eat.
Hey Kayla! Save me a seat!
When we go home, we usually read or rest.
This is one of the things that I like best.
Sometimes we like to go on a hike. I might even ride my bike.
What I like most about Sabbath, God's holy day,
Is its different than any other, no matter what others may say.
The Sabbath is a joy to me, and I hope it is for you.
Take some time to enjoy His rest, and it'll be a joy for you too.

readIT: book info

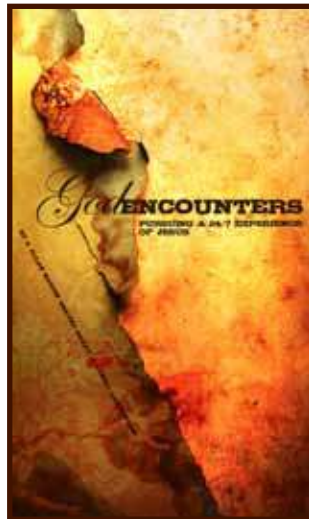


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