

The TENDER Commandments
Exodus 20:7
Love for God must be Safeguarded

This commandment is one that seems so out of touch with the world today, right?

FULL DISCLOSURE- my preaching on Keeping the Sabbath can easily be viewed as a conflict of interest, right?

As a pastor, I have a vested interest in seeing people come here on Sunday.

Full disclosure #2 – honestly there are weeks when I’d just as soon sleep in or take Sunday off like a lot of people do.

(On Monday I got an email with a link to an article – “Why Christians should stop going to church”. I was curious. It made a good point – We’re not called to “go to church”; we’re called to BE the Church. The church isn’t a building; it’s the people who make up the body of Christ. That’s a different series, but found it interesting as I was preparing for Remember the Sabbath. Honestly, most people think “keeping the Sabbath” simply means – go to church (60/90 minutes a week, or 2-3 times a month and maybe Sunday school or small group). Once that is done, then the Sabbath has been kept or remembered.

Some of us are old enough to remember the days when almost everything was closed on Sunday. Imagine that. It was like every business was a Chick-fil-a, except they didn’t all have the great service with a smile and a “my pleasure” added in.

Those days represented what had been the practice in much of the Christian world for hundreds or years.

If you’re new or visiting I want you to know that our **Our mission, as a local community of believers, is to meet people where they are and help them become maturing and equipped followers of Jesus. The Ten Commandments may be new to you, and that’s OK. I hope you’ll have a better understanding of them as you come each week and hear the series.**

As we continue, my prayer is that in this series, we’ll all understand that

-The Ten Commandments ARE NOT ABOUT WHAT God WANTS FROM US, BUT WHAT HE WANTS FOR US.
-Remember that THE Ten Commandments ARE SOMEONE WE MEET BEFORE THEY ARE SOMETHING WE OBEY.

The context of the Ten Commandments is to be understood as a Covenant commitment ceremony, Stipulations Relating To Loving

LOVE FOR God IS SINGULAR – EXCLUSIVE

Love for God is SPIRITUAL

Love for God must be Sincere

Today we see **that love for God must be Safe Guarded**

–Just like any good relationship there must be time that is given to it. So too with God, individually and corporately. We are not just called to a personal relationship with God. We are called into a family – the Body of Christ.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them,

and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. Ex 20:8-11

HOW WOULD THE ORIGINAL AUDIENCE HAVE UNDERSTOOD THIS COMMANDMENT?

“Go to church on Sunday” NOT – the day was “Saturday” and there was no church. There was no synagogue or set time or place of corporate worship.

I can imagine that of all the commandments, this one meant the biggest change and difference. The people of Israel had come out of 400 years of SLAVERY – constant, demanding, back breaking work. This commandment must have sounded GREAT – like life and freedom. IT WILL SOUND THAT WAY TO US TOO, when we understand it, and ourselves.

Even though there was no list of Ten Commandments prior to this, it was generally understood that one should NOT commit adultery, lie, cheat, steal, or have a heart of covetousness.

<http://reformedreader.org/rbb/reisinger/lawandgospel/chapter03.htm>

There are pre- Sinai examples of people condemning or punishing others for murder, stealing, lying, etc. BUT IN this commandment there is a command to REST.

THE OTHER commands forbid doing bad things, but this one forbids a GOOD THING – work. That good thing is to have a stopping point, so that we might do a BETTER thing – rest in God and Trust His gracious provision.

This is a commandment that is often discussed in certain circles and generates a wide range of views in terms of meaning and application.

Even in Jesus day there was much debate and confusion about what it meant to obey the Sabbath. Jesus often got into controversy with the Pharisees over what was or wasn't allowed on the Sabbath. It is easy to create man made rules to make the commandment fit what we want:

EX: Pharisees “Sabbath’s day journey from home”

EX: Strict sabbatharian view about recreation on Sunday

“it’s alright to take a walk with your family, but you can’t play catch”

“It’s alright to walk up to a lake and go wading, but you can’t swim on Sunday.”

“You can wade up to your ankles, but not to mid-shin” etc.

WARNING: No matter how you practice the Sabbath, if you do so with consistency, you’ll run into two responses:

-You will meet more pious religious people who think that you are living in violation of the 4th commandment.

-You’ll have non-Christian friends or acquaintances who won’t understand your practice (they will think that you’ve become a religious freak.)

The thrust of the command goes beyond the issues noted above and a text from Mark will help us get a grip on this issue.

First note the connection between commands 1-3 and #4. If God is to be our great treasure, delight, meaning, and worth isn’t it only right and normal that He would be given time set apart just for HIM?

EX: guy meets girl who is “my soul, my inspiration, without you baby what good am I?” do you think he has to be reminded to spend time with the girl? WE GIVE TIME TO WHAT WE TREASURE. In fact you can tell what you treasure by what you give your time to.

Now a text related to the 4th commandment Mark 2:23-28

Sabbath Rest. There are different views and relationships to work – some want more, some want less, but many today lack Sabbath Rest (SR).

WHY WE NEED SPIRITUAL REST

Jesus and disciples were condemned for reaping grain – an act of work forbidden by Hallakah – rabbi writings of the day. It sounds crazy to us and legalistic, but Jesus doesn't say, "the son of man has come to get us beyond all this, but rather " I'm all about the Sabbath."

Judith Shulevitz book review (New York Magazine) of Bring Back the Sabbath

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/02/magazine/bring-back-the-sabbath.html>

"The first idea is that everyone, not just the upper classes, not just the priests and doctors and elites and the king have the right to rest in a regular way one day a week. Look, it was so radically progressive that it even mandated that you had to give your animals the day off. That's a radical idea. In its time the Sabbath was an enormously radical idea, and you know, it's one that in every generation seems to be on the verge of disappearing, which is certainly true today."

– she was raised Jewish, but moved out of it, then began to see a change:

"My mood would darken every weekend until Sat. afternoon I was morose. My routine of brunch with friends made me feel restless. Then I began to do something I gave up as a teen – I dropped in on a synagogue. If formerly people suffered from the Sabbath rules I now suffered from the lack thereof. There is evidence that our relationship to work is out of whack. Let me argue on behalf of an institution that has kept workaholism in check for thousands of years. Most people believe that all you have to do to stop working is to stop work, but the proponents of the Sabbath saw it was more complicated. You can't downshift casually. The Jewish and Puritan Sabbaths were so intentional. Interrupting the ceaseless round of striving requires a surprisingly strenuous act of the will, one that has to be bolstered by habit as well as by social sanction. "

Our workaholic culture dare not turn up its nose the effort to give to people what is crucial for them – rest – it makes life human.

The **Zeigarnik effect** states that people remember uncompleted or interrupted tasks better than completed tasks.

The undone tasks resonate in our hearts. If no ritual to stop, we have a hard time stopping and resting. It's like insomnia of work. Our hearts are like that.

She points out that there can be abuse, but our relationship to work as a society is so out of sorts that to think you can rest simply by taking off when tired is very naïve. **The ability to deeply rest is a life or death ISSUE. We need it, but it is not simple or natural. It takes practice and discipline.**

What???

Sleep experts know you need deep REM sleep to be restored; it requires time and depth. Shulevitz says "there is work, but there is a work underneath the work – the inner machinery of self censorship"; it is not guilt, it is a need to prove yourself to yourself and others and that is exhausting and difficult. That work is never enough. You need REM of the soul but can't get it when trying to prove yourself. Even vacations don't help.

II. WHERE DO WE GET IT?

Jesus refers to David who ate the consecrated bread. He takes this from 1 Sam 21 – David fleeing for his life and he takes the showbread from tabernacle and eats it. He was never condemned for it by God. Jesus calls us to think out the implications – if the Sabbath rules can be set aside, but no place for the moral law to be set aside, then it means the Sabbath rules are temporary. They will end when something comes along to which they point. Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. This is loaded.

Jesus is the one to whom the Sabbath rules point; he can give the deep REM of the soul; the Lord of Rest. If you want rest you must go to him; if you think you've gone to him but haven't found rest you still don't know what you have, haven't taken hold of what you have.

How is He Lord of Rest?

Gen 1 -2 God creates the world and then declares it good and he rested the seventh day. Was he tired? No. What does it mean for God to rest? At each stage in creation God says, "that's good" then finally, that's very good! To rest is to be satisfied with what's been done. To put your doing down you must be content with the doing, so you can relax.

Hebrews 4 - talking about the gospel - "there remains a rest for the people of God..." **Hebrews 4:9-10** ⁹There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

This should amaze us. To become a Christian is to enter into God's rest. We are now able to look at our life the way God looked at his own work. How? Through Jesus Christ you can look at your life and be satisfied that all is done; God sees us that way as well. Nothing else needs to be done to prove ourselves. All the work is finished. Only through Christ can this be.

Shulevitz " *not even our group leisure activities can do for us what the Sabbath rituals were once counted on to do. Religious rituals don't just promote togetherness; they are designed to convey to us a story about who we are; the story of the Sabbath is that God rested and we rest in order to honor the image of the divine in us; to remind us that there is more to us than our work.*"

She has discerned what Hebrews is saying. There is a deeper work. The problem isn't the presence of work, but the absence of deep rest. The deep work is trying to know who you are and showing it to others; we all do it.

Religious people do it through being good

Secular people do the same - they set standards and self-image rests on meeting those standards and goals. That is the work under the work; having to assure yourself that you are somebody important, but that work is never finished; you can never say, "its good"; tomorrow ALWAYS brings a new test.

Through Jesus alone can we find this soul rest. Matt 11: 28ff

We all serve something, but only if Jesus is our meaning will be able to look and say, "it is finished".

How is it possible? Luke 6:5, 11

He is claiming to be God. They are furious and decide to kill him.

On the cross he is restless

Isaiah 57:20-21 ²⁰But the wicked are like the tossing sea, For it cannot be quiet, And its waters toss up refuse and mud. ²¹"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."

2 Cor 5:21

Jesus took infinite restlessness on the cross, on a cosmic level, so he can say, "it is finished" All that is need to satisfy the deepest inner murmur, he did it all. In HIM God sees us as good; we rest on His works and record, not ours. His righteousness comes to us and our sin to Him when we come to him by faith.

The only one who matters give us His "it is good"

EX: chariots of Fire –the most significant movie of last 35 years about the Sabbath – two men. One, Harold Abrams, can't stop working Why?' "I have ten seconds to justify my existence" he wants to prove himself.

Eric Liddell learns about the Sabbath race and drops out; not legalism, but security in Christ. The first guy gets the gold but it isn't enough.

In Jesus God says, "it is good" you hear "it is finished"

III. HOW DO WE PRACTICE IT? (more next week)

WARNING: No matter how you practice the Sabbath you'll run into someone who thinks that you are living in violation of the 4th commandment. We all have our happy inconsistencies

Any practice of Sabbath before you understand the rest in Christ won't work for our souls.

Apply certain disciplines to practice Sabbath

INNER disciplines:

1. – **Sabbath is an act of liberation**; if you don't rest you're a slave. If you can't rest you're a slave – some are over committed, can't say no. You're a slave to company or to other's hopes and expectations or to being the rescuer. You must in your heart say, "this is an act of liberation. My work doesn't define me, nor money, nor my performance, or pleasing others. I'm taking time off."
2. **Act of trust** – it points to God's rest – you're not God, HE IS. You don't keep the world running, God does. Trust HIM

EXTERNAL

1. **Take more Sabbath time** – more than you take now: Prepare for it by keeping reasonable hours on Saturday night, rise early enough on Sunday so that you aren't rushed getting to church; come ready to participate (sing, pray, discuss, listen,")
EVALUATE WHERE YOU ARE? Is it a time set apart for spiritual rest and nourishment. I'M not suggesting that you go from where you are to a strict version of OT or Puritanical practice of Sabbath. EX: strict Jewish Sabbath-observers pre-rip toilet paper on Friday afternoons so they don't have to engage in ripping during Shabbat.

Figure out what ONE THING you can begin doing or stop doing so as to make the Sabbath more restful, reflective and restorative for your soul and your relationships.

2. **Balance Sabbath time** – some avocational, contemplative, – do things you don't normally do, enjoy God's finished work. Contemplate – tell the story of who you are – worship; Inactive time – the people and land of OT got a Sabbath year; take unstructured time; contemplate during the day- the blessings of knowing Christ, the shortness of life – VoV "Requests
3. **Be accountable for Sabbath time** – we have seasons when we tend to overwork; you need someone who can call you off and stop you.
4. **Community** – get others in your job and lifestyle to discuss how to do Sabbath

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT AND ROOTS, BRANCHES, FRUIT

The Ten Commandments show us the Nature of God, so we can sink our ROOTS INTO HIM

God rested from His creative activity and enjoyed what He had done. As those in His Image we are called to imitate Him in a day of rest. God provides the true rest for our souls.

They show how we are to RELATE TO THE OTHER BRANCHES

Rest and worship together is restorative to our souls and to relationships.

They show what the fruit of Loving God and Others looks like.

There is a leveling that comes from Sabbath rest as it reminds us that we all need His restorative care. The Sabbath principle is a relational leveler.

I don't say this to be flippant or irreverent in any way (3rd commandment), but there is a song that came to mind while preparing this sermon. It's not a hymn or praise song. It is a pop, or should I say MOTOWN song from the 60's. Any guesses? It's from Diana Ross and the Supremes

The living God says to ex-slaves – “on the 7th day, you are to STOP...in the name of Love
In the context of the first three commandments, the words to the song could be applied. You can unpack that in your small group or at home this week.

Come to the table

Stop! In the name of love
Before you break my heart

Baby, baby
I'm aware of where you go
Each time you leave my door
I watch you walk down the street
Knowing your other love you'll meet
But this time before you run to her
Leaving me alone and hurt
(Think it over) After I've been good to you ?
(Think it over) After I've been sweet to you ?

Stop! In the name of love
Before you break my heart
Stop! In the name of love
Before you break my heart
Think it over
Think it over

I've known of your
Your secluded nights
I've even seen her
Maybe once or twice
But is her sweet expression
Worth more than my love and affection ?
But this time before you leave my arms
And rush off to her charms
(Think it over) Haven't I been good to you ?

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