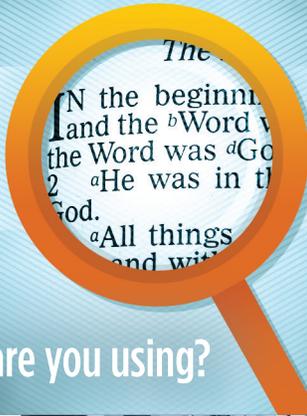


BIBLE OPTICS



What lens are you using? The WORD or the world?

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From the Pastor

“Come see what I made!” she says, a plea in her big brown eyes. I lay aside my work—I’d rather be with her anyway—grab her grubby fingers and follow her to the yard.

She leads me to a mud and stick creation decorated with yellow daisies. “I made it just for you!” she glows. “Do you like it?”

Of course, I do! It’s a gift from one of my favorite little people. How could I not treasure this token of her love?

Every Sabbath Jesus offers a gift to you and I—the gift of time with Him. How can we turn Him down?

“To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption.” - Ellen White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 289

In this issue of Bible Optics, we explore the blessedness of this gift and its relevance for our lives in 2021. We pray it reinspires your love for God and His holy day.



Nelson Mercado | Pastor
Nashville First Seventh-day Adventist Church

The Sabbath Solution

Have you ever watched the chaos around you in a busy city? The blare of car horns, the rumbling of a subway beneath your feet, people hurrying by. The rush of the city used to stay there, but now we take it wherever we go. The hustle is an accepted part of society. Living a life of peacefulness seems countercultural.

In the beginning, God wrote order and peace into the DNA of the universe. He established the Sabbath as the primary anchor of peace in our lives. It is His prescription for our hectic, modern lives. Besides the gift of salvation, it is God’s greatest blessing for our world today.

The Sabbath a Solution for Being Overworked

John Maynard Keynes, an English economist of the 20th century, believed that his grandchildren would work only 15 hours a week. Technology was supposed to make us the generation of leisure.

Today, Americans work less hours than any generation in the past 150 years (in 1870 Americans worked an average of 3000 hours annually, in 2017 the average hours per worker was 1760 annually), yet we have no leisure time. We take half as many vacation days as the rest of the world. Technology has slashed our work hours, but it means we never leave work behind.



THE SABBATH IS GOD'S ANSWER TO OVERWORK.

Imagine if we had one day every week to put away all distractions and simply rest. I've got good news for you! God knew we would all become workaholics, so in His mercy He created a whole day for us to rest. God doesn't just give us 20 days of vacation (the average amount for an American) each year. He gives us 52 days a year! The Sabbath is God's answer to your overwork. Once a week, God invites us to a 24 hour mental, emotional, and spiritual reset. Jesus said, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

A Solution for Anxiety and Media Addiction

We may not be the leisure generation, but we are the anxious, media-addicted generation. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S. Currently, there are 4.14 billion social media users worldwide. If social media were a religion (which it kind of is) it would be the largest religion in the world, doubling Christianity and quadrupling Islam. Social media addiction causes anxiety, yet we average 2 hours and 24 minutes daily on it. Whenever we have a spare moment, we use our phones to distract us from boredom. Our obsession is costing us our mental health.

One day a week, we must put it away. Imagine how refreshed we would be if we turned our phones off and stayed away from media all day. I recently decided to do this, and my Sabbath was much more refreshing.

Are you anxious? The Bible tells us to be anxious for nothing (Philippians 4:6). The Sabbath can help you break an addiction to media and lower your anxiety. Try it this coming Sabbath. Turn off all notifications, uninstall all your social media, and for 24 hours find rest in the quietness. Instead of using technology to cure your boredom, use the time to connect with God and the people around you.

A Day Made for You

When I was a kid, I would count down the hours till sundown so that I could

play my games or watch my favorite movie. I saw the Sabbath as an inconvenience, not a gift.

Now I look forward to the Sabbath every single week. I anticipate the mental and physical rest and the time with my Savior. The Sabbath has radically changed my life.

While the world searches for new ways to combat our anxiety disorders and workaholic addiction, God has given us the perfect solution—the Sabbath. "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

By: Elijah Ramjattan



The Heart of the Sabbath

In this day and age, taking a whole day off work each week seems ridiculous. And taking Saturday off instead of Sunday, for rest and worship?! Completely foreign.

But when you truly know Jesus, The Sabbath isn't foreign at all! You want to take off time to spend with Him. It isn't just a day off work, it's the very heart of God's love for you.

Obscured Truth

In John 14:15 Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." On the surface, this sounds hostile, but what Jesus means is, "Because you love Me, you will keep My commandments." Without a true love for Jesus, the Sabbath is a burden.

Many of us have been looking at Sabbath keeping all wrong. We see a list of dos and don'ts, because the devil has painted God as an impersonal entity with no connection to His followers. But the beautiful truth is that God is actually an individual whose heart is yearning for us to know Him. This wonderful fact is the whole point of the Sabbath. We are relational human beings because we have been created by a relational God. And God created our relationship with Him to be centered around one thing: trust.

Brave Sabbath-Keeping

It takes a brave soul to worship on Saturday. The modern workplace isn't always welcoming to Sabbath-keeping and you could lose your job. Your family and friends might disagree with you, causing a negative effect on your inner circle. For many, the possible ramifications of keeping Sabbath are too great. "Risk losing my job and maybe even my family? Risk losing everything? No way."

But to those whose hearts belongs to Jesus, it's not. When we know the Lord, we know that His presence fills, heals and satisfies our soul. Honoring His day is worth the risks! He's your best friend—you would do anything for Him!

It takes humility to receive God's love—especially on His Sabbath. He asks us to put away our work and focus on His love. It's a complete reliance on the heart of God; trusting in His love for you. "Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His steadfast love, that He may deliver their soul from death and keep them alive in famine. For our heart is glad in Him, because we trust in His holy Name" (Psalm 33:18, 19).

He Just Wants You

Being with the Father on the Sabbath will revive your soul. The more time we spend with the Lord, the more whole we become. God says, "...I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15).

Above all, Jesus just wants you. You are His beloved. The Sabbath is proof of this love for you—why else would God take a whole day off work? He did it to spend time with His best friend. Adam could have been left to take care of himself, but instead Jesus stayed and invested time and love into His son.

The Sabbath is really very simple. Jesus wants personal and uninterrupted time with you. He said, "Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). A whole day set aside for you and your best friend? It sounds almost too good to be true!

My best friend from college lives across the country and I seldom get to spend time with her. It would be amazing to have a whole day with her each week! Imagine if this was our mindset with the Sabbath? Aching to spend twenty-four hours with your beloved Best Friend, never to leave His side.

This is what the Sabbath is for you! A time set apart for Jesus to invest time and love into your relationship with Him, making you holy. Because one thing is for certain, we were made to be loved by God. The Sabbath is the very essence of this love.

By: Sara Scarpino

Bible Q&A



How is the Sabbath a Sign of Loyalty?

God's Loyalty to Us

God celebrated the very first Sabbath with Adam and Eve as a sign of their origin and His love for them. The Sabbath day was evidence of His loyalty to them. It continues to be a sign of His love for us as our Creator and Redeemer.

Our Loyalty to God

Sadly, humanity has betrayed our loyalty to God over again and again. No one has been loyal to God except one man, Jesus Christ.

There is no longer a tree of knowledge of good and evil to test our loyalty as there was for Adam and Eve. Instead, we have a different test of loyalty. Jesus

said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments," (John 14:15) and the apostle John later stated, "By this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments" (1 John 2:3). This includes the fourth commandment to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

Many Christians dismiss the seventh-day Sabbath as being unimportant or no longer binding. Others are ignorant of its true importance. The Bible tells us that as we near the second coming, God's people will "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). The one commandment that has been disregarded by the vast majority of Christians will be the final test of loyalty. (We'll explore this more in upcoming issues.)



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK!

Loving Bible Optics? Or not so sure? We'd love to hear your thoughts about it. Please stop by www.godled.org/bible-optics-survey and take our five minute survey today. Thank you!

Experiencing The Blessing

How to Prepare for and Celebrate the Sabbath



Adam and Eve spent the first Sabbath with God, rejoicing in His beautiful new creation and His love for them. It was a day of rest, gladness and fellowship.

The Sabbath is still an invitation to dine upon God's goodness and love. It is a day of fellowship with our Creator, a day to rest in Jesus as our Redeemer. He provides "Sabbath rest" (Hebrews 4:9 ESV) for our souls. When we observe the seventh-day Sabbath, we give evidence that we have received that rest (Exodus 31:13) and that Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) is abiding in our hearts.

Yet for many of us, our Sabbath keeping has lost its holy glow. How can we return to the Eden ideal of Sabbath keeping? It begins on Sunday morning.

How do we prepare to keep the Sabbath?

"Six days you shall labor and do all your work (Exodus 20:9).

The first six days of the week are a prelude to the seventh. They exist to prepare for the holy Sabbath day, the high point of every week. What we do on those days directly impacts the blessing that we receive on the seventh. It's vital to stay connected with our Savior throughout the week.

Practical ways to prepare for the spiritual feast that Sabbath brings:

- Time in prayer and the Scriptures fuels each day and prepares us for witnessing opportunities that God has in store. It's a pleasure to share the experiences we have in an active Christian life with fellow believers on Sabbath.
- Attending prayer meeting is a great way to recharge spiritually and encourage others as we look forward to celebrating the Sabbath together.
- It's important that we make biblically approved work and entertainment choices during the week. If we don't honor God in these things, we'll not care to honor Him in Sabbath keeping.
- Plan to be done with all work several hours before sunset. Nothing can ruin a Sabbath evening like working up till the last minute on Friday. We should give our minds time to disengage from secular activities.

God's Gift to Families

How to enjoy the Sabbath with Your Children



“Why did you sleep in so long?” My angry words flooded the car as we drove to church. “You know I need extra help on Sabbath mornings!” Our three-year-old’s eyes grew big as he listened to my tirade.

“I’m sorry honey,” my husband sighed. “I’ll try to be up earlier next week and help you more.” He had a right to be tired, and I knew it. He was working almost full-time and going to graduate school at night.

“Thanks,” I mumbled, finally letting myself relax. Why are Sabbath mornings so hard? I wondered. I want this to be the best day of the week for our family, and I always get stressed and ruin it for everyone. God, please show me how to make Sabbath a good day for our family!

God led me to pray about our Sabbaths a lot over the coming months. As I prayed, He changed my heart and showed us ways to make Sabbaths a blessing. We still don’t always get it right, but today Sabbath is our three children’s favorite day of the week.

Practical Tips for Enjoying Sabbath as a Family

- **Lead by Example:** Our children will never see Sabbath as a joy if we don’t. A sunrise walk and quality time with Jesus make sure my heart and mind are refreshed in God so I can enjoy the Sabbath.
- **Prepare for the Sabbath:** I try to plan for the Sabbath early in the week so I’m not scrambling on Friday afternoon. I don’t always succeed. When possible, I make food ahead of time and plan Sabbath activities. Most importantly, we pray for wisdom to make it the best day of the week.

- **Cherish the Time Together:** The Sabbath is a perfect time to invest in our children. “God’s love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.” Ellen White, *Child Guidance*, p. 536
- **Make it Special:** When our kids were small, we had a box of toys that only came out on Sabbath. These toys invited Biblical play and helped them to look forward to the Sabbath. These days, we make the day special with Sabbath traditions and quality time together.
- **Get Outside:** Sabbath afternoons outdoors provide so many opportunities to learn about God in His second book. Our family enjoys Sabbath walks, canoeing, biking, and nature observation. No matter how your family chooses to get outside, remember these are times to seek God together, not compete or conquer. Ask God to guide your adventures with your children in nature. There are rich blessings here!
- **Serve Others:** About once a month we spend a Sabbath bringing joy to others. Sometimes we invite someone to our home for lunch. Other times we serve our church family or someone in the community together.
- **Invest in Your Children’s Spiritual Growth:** Most importantly, attend church together and help make it a place your children love. Other things we enjoy are mission stories, Bible charades, Bible board games, story-telling with felts, and faith-building audio stories ([Your Story Hour](#), [Bible in Living Sound](#), and [Discovery Mountain](#) are great options).



Saying No

Sometimes we have to stop our children from doing certain things on the Sabbath. We've found it helps to explain the "why". When our children see that the Sabbath is a gift from God because He loves them, they are more willing to keep it sacred. Rather than telling our kids "no" on the Sabbath, we aim to fill it with activities that honor God and allow us to be together as a family. "Do not be overcome with evil but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

A Delightful Sabbath

Differences of opinion on how to keep the Sabbath have sometimes caused tension among our extended family. So last Christmas I rose early Sabbath morning

and spent time seeking God's blessing on our day with family. God answered! It was one of the best Sabbaths we've had with our extended family. We enjoyed a multi-generational church service complete with a kid-friendly Bible study, fun conversation around mealtimes, and walks in the countryside around my grandmothers' home. Not once was there a conflict. God truly answered prayer!

I know He'll do the same for you and your family if you ask Him to bless and guide your Sabbaths.

By: Shenalyn Page



Nelson Mercado
Pastor

Our goal is to help you grow in your understanding of key Bible teachings, gain a Biblical perspective on what is happening in our world today, and find tools to share your faith more effectively.

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