

How to Keep the Sabbath Holy?

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The Sabbath is God's gift to us, an offer to improve the quality of our life and the quality of our relationship with the Godhead. Therefore, God does not only tell us to observe the Sabbath day, but gives us instruction on how to do it so that the day may become a real blessing for us.

I. The Sabbath as a Benefactor

- Mark 2:27 – In his love God instituted the Sabbath to benefit humankind.
- Isa 58:13-14 – The Sabbath allows us to take delight in the Lord.
- 1 Cor 13:1-3 – We do not just keep the Sabbath because it is the day God wants us to observe, but because we love him.

II. Tips for a Happy Sabbath

1. Beginning and End

The Sabbath last from sundown to sundown (Gen 1:5; Lev 23:32; Luke 4:31, 40).

2. Biblical Advice

- (1) *Preparation*
 - Exod 16:22-24 – For the Sabbath to become an anti-stress day and a good experience it must be prepared in advance (Luke 23:54).
- (2) *Rest*
 - Exod 20:8-11 – Humans and animals should enjoy rest on the Sabbath. Fellow humans do not need to work for us. Children and youth participate in the joy, rest, and reflection on God by if not attending school or college.
 - Exod 34:21 – Even when pressed by deadlines we still enjoy the divinely given rest.
- (3) *Activities*
 - Matt 12:9-12 – Jesus set an example of Sabbath keeping by having an eye for the needs of fellow humans and doing good. We serve God and may proclaim the gospel (Acts 17:2-3).
 - Heb 10:24-25 – We are called to attend the worship service to encounter our Lord.
 - Mark 1:29; Luke 14:1 – Hospitality is important which allows for fellowship with humans and God.
 - Matt 12:1 – Oftentimes in nature we feel closer to God. Jesus spent part of the Sabbath in nature.
 - Isa 58:13-14 – We turn away from selfishness and do things that are pleasing to God. That includes avoiding things that rob the Sabbath of its distinctness and its blessing such as watching non-Christian TV programs, reading the newspaper, attending non-Christian meetings, undertaking long journeys (Matt 24:20), selling and buying (Neh 13:15-22), etc.

III. An Ideal Sabbath

- (1) *Anticipation*

During the week our thoughts go to the Sabbath. The preparation for the next Sabbath begins on Sunday.
- (2) *The Day of Preparation*

On Friday the cleaning of the house and the preparation of food etc. for the festive day is being finished.

(3) *Beginning of the Sabbath*

Fellowship with the family or believers is important. We create a Sabbath atmosphere, for instance, by having special but simple meals, flowers, good music, etc. We try to be creative. Without hectic and yet in time we begin the Sabbath with a devotional, songs, prayers, and we take time for our children (telling a story, spending time for questions, playing a biblical game). We go to bed in time to be fresh for the next morning.

(4) *Sabbath Morning*

We try to create a loving atmosphere, get dressed for church, have a good breakfast, and attend church. In church be take part in the worship service, show respect, but are open to others and fellowship with them. A silent prayer after we have entered the sanctuary may help us to concentrate on worshipping God.

(5) *Sabbath Noon*

We may participate in a fellowship meal, enjoy hospitality or invite people to our home. A simple but good meal on a nicely laid table can be wonderful.

(6) *Sabbath Afternoon*

A nap, a walk through nature, reading good books, studying Scripture, listening to or making good music, witnessing, visiting other people, playing biblical games with children, having meaningful conversations may be good Sabbath afternoon activities.

(7) *Ending the Sabbath*

Attending a vespers or having a devotional in one's home thanking the Lord for the Sabbath and looking forward to God's guidance during the new week may be meaningful.

These suggestions regarding an ideal Sabbath are not rules but suggestions that may help us to create a wonderful Sabbath experience. By refraining from some things and doing others the day becomes a special day, the best day of the week.

We remember: The Sabbath is a day of worship, a festive day, and a day of service. It is a foretaste of the new earth. We thank the Lord for this extraordinary gift and do what is pleasing to him. That will also be most beneficial for us.