

Carved in Stone

Embracing God's Value System

Teen Lesson Six

Fond Memories

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it
(Exodus 20:8-11, NRSV).

SCRIPTURE

- Exodus 20:8-11
- Joshua 3-4
- 2 Timothy 1:3-7
- John 4:24
- Mark 6:30-46

WHAT YOU NEED

- Bibles
- A rock for each student
- Index cards
- Pens/Pencils
- A copy of Handout #6.1 for each student

PURPOSE

To know: The Sabbath is not just about taking time off. It is reclaiming our significance and purpose in time.

To value: Honoring Sabbath allows us to be reminded that life is not up to us and that God is not primarily concerned with what we can produce.

To apply: Give the Sabbath to the Lord. Allow that to be his time and no one else's. Avoid the temptation of allowing this commandment to simply be a hindrance to certain activities and privileges.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The observance of a Sabbath was unique to the Israelites in ancient Palestine. People



lived in a subsistence economy in which everyone was needed and there wasn't the luxury of being able to take time off. If people didn't work, they didn't eat. This is the context in which the observance of Sabbath is to be understood. In a world where people viewed life as up to them, the Israelites viewed life as a gift from and dependent on the God who called the world into existence and fashioned humanity with his own hands.

The importance of Sabbath cannot be overstated. It was the time when the people realigned with God's purpose for the world. God's intention was continual communion with his people. His goal was continual Sabbath. It is clear from the opening accounts in Genesis (see 2:2) that to keep Sabbath is to be in sync with the way God intends the world to work.

WHAT'S IT MEAN?

To Remember. In honoring the Sabbath we are taking time out of the busyness of life to remember both who God is as well as who we are. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River Joshua instructed that a pile of stones be placed as a reminder of what happened. When children would ask about the pile of rocks, the parents would tell them their story. They couldn't forget their story. The first verse of Exodus 20 begins "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." This was their story and it was important that they never stopped telling it. Sabbath was central for this purpose. It was a time of re-alignment with God in the original intention for creation.

To Worship. Worship was central to their identity. While worship is not directly mentioned in this passage, it is clear that Sabbath was used as a time for God to draw his people back into communion with him. Through remembering we are brought to the place of worship. In resting and ceasing from activity we are reminded that life is dependent on God. In keeping Sabbath we express trust that God will protect us, provide for us, and continue to be the God who goes before us. While all of life is to be given in worship, Sabbath is the day that we set aside distinctly for that purpose.

To Find Strength. By the time of Jesus, observance of Sabbath had become very distorted. The focus had shifted from a time of rest and remembrance to ritualistic observance of difficult commands. When confronted on the issue Jesus responded "Man is not made for the Sabbath, but Sabbath is made for man." That time was set aside for all living beings. Everyone needed that time to withdrawal from work and to rest. We were not created to work continually. We were created to live in communion with God. While work is essential to our survival, Sabbath is the goal of creation.

Interactive Lesson Guide

GETTIN' GOIN'

Begin the lesson by distributing index cards to the students. Instruct them to write a short embarrassing moment or funny story about themselves. Collect the cards and read the

stories without sharing the name. Ask the students to guess whose story was told.

When all the cards have been read, ask the students to share some of their family traditions (Christmas, birthdays, vacations, Thanksgiving, etc.). If they cannot think of any tradition, they can share a tradition they would like to establish. One of the goals of these introductory activities is to get the students thinking about the importance of remembering and stories. Use the material from the What's Going On section to make a transition from these activities to discussing the role of Sabbath.

DIG IT

Read Exodus 20:8-11. Ask **Why do you think God instituted a day of rest? What did he want to happen on that day?**

Say **We are going to look at three main aspects of the observance of Sabbath: remembrance, worship, to find strength.**

Remembrance. Read the To Remember section printed above. People who forget their past lose sight of the future. The emphasis on remembrance is everywhere in scripture. When the people disobeyed God and lost sight of their future, the verdict was always that they forgot their identity because they forgot their story.

Say **We live in a very busy society and often fail to see the significance for quiet and rest.** Ask **What are the things in our society designed to give us more time?** (Drive-thru windows, cell phones, quick internet access, etc.) Say **Our society is so present and future oriented that it is easy to lose sight of the past.** Ask **Why is the past important? Why is it important to remember our history?**

Give each student a rock. Share the story of Joshua leading Israel across the Jordan River (Joshua 3-4) and highlight the significance of the rocks. Ask **What did those rocks represent?**

Ask the students to think about their past. To help them in their personal reflection, ask **What events and people have shaped you the most? Who taught you the most about God?** After a few moments of reflection, invite the students to place their rocks in a pile in a corner of the room. As each rock is placed on the pile, ask the person to share (if they would like to) a significant event that he or she wants to remember. This testimony should relate to a person or event that has shaped their understanding of God and the world. After the students have finished placing the rocks in a pile, share a personal story (or recount the Joshua story) that shows the benefit of remembering. Tell the students that these rocks will serve a similar purpose to that of Joshua's rocks. They will remain in the room through the next several weeks (or beyond) and whenever the student sees the rocks they will be reminded of God's faithfulness.

Worship. Read the To Worship section printed above. A significant part of remembering is worship. When you look back and see God's faithfulness in the past, your response should be to worship.

Read 2 Timothy 1:3-7. **Ask What did Paul remember?** (His forefathers' faith; Timothy's tears, faith, spiritual gifts; Lois and Eunice.) **What did the memories produce in Paul?** (Thanksgiving to God.) Say **Paul remembered how God had been faithful, and his response was to honor God in worship.**

Ask **What is the purpose of worship? Why do we sing songs in Church?** The words we sing shape our view of God and the world. We express our gratitude and allegiance to God through many different means, including singing. **Is worship only a matter of singing?** (See Romans 12:1-2.) **If not, what else is involved in worship?**

Read John 4:24. Ask **How are we to worship God? How is the observance of Sabbath an act of worship?** In observing Sabbath we show God that we trust him with our lives and acknowledge that life is not up to us, but is truly a gift of God. We set aside time for God and him only. An unwillingness to do this suggests that God is not in control.

To Find Strength. Say **Sabbath is not only a day for spiritual renewal, but also physical and emotional renewal.** Read the To Find Strength section printed above. This section will not need as much explanation as the other two. The main area to highlight in this section is that God is not concerned with only our spiritual lives. You are a "whole" person and that includes your emotional, spiritual, and physical life. We are to worship God with everything that is within us.

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Read Mark 6:30-32. Ask **Why did Jesus direct the disciples to find a place to rest?** Be ready to briefly tell the story of Mark 6:33-44, then read Mark 6:45-46. Say **It seems like Jesus was very determined to find a place of rest, not only for himself, but also for the disciples.** Ask **Why do you suppose Jesus worked so hard to find a quiet place?**

Ask **What is our purpose for living? Does God have a purpose for our lives?** Yes! Our purpose is to worship God and enjoy his fellowship. God designed the Sabbath for us to renew our strength, remember who and whose we are, and enjoy fellowship with him.

Ask **Based on the actions of people you know, is Sabbath still important? If not, why doesn't the Sabbath seem to have the same importance today as it did in previous times? How do we typically spend Sundays, our day of rest? How should we approach the Sabbath? What changes might we make to better align ourselves with the fourth commandment?**

TAKE OUT

Distribute Handout #6.1, Sabbath Keeper. Complete the handout as a class, in small groups, or individually. When the list is finished, ask each teen to note the one they will seek to implement that day.

Close with a prayer.

Sabbath Keepers

We seem to have an easier time making a list of what not to do in a Sabbath observance than in making a list of what we are to do. Let's conquer that inclination. Using the three parts of a Sabbath we discussed in the session, write a list of things we might do to be Sabbath Keepers.

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|-------------------------|--|
| TO REMEMBER | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3. |
| TO WORSHIP | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3. |
| TO FIND STRENGTH | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1.2.3. |