

What Should a Typical Sabbath Look Like and Why?

By Ryan M. McGraw

There is a difference between understanding a principle in theory and knowing what it looks like in practice. For example, most Christians realize that the Bible teaches that they must put to death their sinful deeds and desires (Rom. 8:11–12). Yet agreeing with this principle does not bring automatic victory against gluttony, sexual lust, discontentment, anger, and other indwelling sins. While we must have right principles in order to build right practices, practical examples and personal illustrations help us think and pray through how to make our principles concrete in the Christian life.

Sabbath keeping follows this pattern. It is important to develop practices in keeping the Sabbath that grow from the biblical purpose of the Sabbath. After giving five reasons why the public and private worship of God is the aim of the Sabbath in Scripture, the rest of this article seeks to provide families with a practical picture of Sabbath keeping in order to help them enjoy the Sabbath to God's glory more profitably. The goal of this article is to help turn theory into practice by wedding theory to practical examples.

1 WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL EMPHASIS OF SABBATH KEEPING?

Nearly every disagreement over Christian practice results from working from differing principles. Yet sometimes people do not realize that they are working from different principles. Even believers who agree that there is a Christian Sabbath can disagree over the significance of keeping the day holy. That we should keep a Sabbath and how we should do so are not the same thing. The primary question affecting how we keep the Sabbath is whether we believe that the purpose of the day is rest, whatever form that may take, or “spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship” (Westminster Shorter Catechism 60). In other

words, the issue is whether the accent of the fourth commandment falls on, “in it you shall do no labor,” or, “remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” How you think about the Sabbath determines what you do with the Sabbath. Thinking correctly about the Sabbath as a day dedicated to divine worship can help us answer most questions related to how to honor God in thought, word, and deed throughout the day.

If you believe that the purpose of the day is rest, then the emphasis of your Sabbath-keeping will be upon activities that make you feel well rested. However, if you believe that the purpose of the Sabbath is keeping it holy, then you should seek to pursue everything that promotes the public and private worship of God, excluding everything that detracts from this pursuit. Five reasons why the purpose of the Sabbath is worship rather than merely rest are the situation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the fact that God “sanctified” the Sabbath, the place of the Sabbath among the Ten Commandments, the character of the commands associated with Sabbath-keeping, and the connection of the Sabbath to the hope of heaven.¹

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1. The material in this article was adapted and re-written from chapters 1, 3, 4, and 6 of McGraw, *The Day of Worship: Reassessing the Christian Life in Light of the Sabbath* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2011).

1.1 *The Garden of Eden*

The situation in the Garden of Eden prior to the fall implies that the design of the Sabbath was worship and communion with God. The Lord sanctified the Sabbath as soon as he completed the sixth day of creation (Gen. 2:1–3). The Ten Commandments remind us that God’s example at creation set the pattern for mankind in history. God gave the Sabbath to Adam and Eve prior to their fall into sin. This meant that the Sabbath had no initial relationship to sin or to redemption. The Sabbath was not originally a type of Christ the Redeemer, since sin and death did not exist when God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it. Salvation was not yet a relevant category for Adam and Eve. This does not mean that redemption was not part of God’s plan before the foundation of the world. However, the Sabbath became part of the pattern toward which God restores man in redemption through Christ by the Spirit. In the Garden, Adam and Eve worshipped and served God every day. They performed their labor daily with joy in their hearts to the glory of the Lord and in communion with him. Yet, when the Sabbath came around, they worshipped and served him differently than on the other days of the week. They were to lay their worldly employments and recreations aside in order to worship God directly. While Adam and Eve show us what it means to live all of life in worship to God, they also show us that it is necessary to set aside special times for nothing but worship. What more could a sinless man and woman have desired, and what other purpose could the Sabbath have served in paradise than to foster direct and immediate communion with God in worship?

The Sabbath rest in Paradise could not be inactive. God, who is the pattern for Sabbath-keeping,

2. Robert L. Reymond, “Lord’s Day Observance,” in *Contending for the Faith: Lines in the Sand that Strengthen the Church* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 181.

3. John Murray, “The Sabbath Institution,” in *The Collected Writings of John Murray*, volume 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 209. Emphasis original. David Dickson, the Puritan, in emphasizing the point that the Sabbath cannot be kept merely by specific acts of worship on the day, but by dedicating the entire day for worship, added the interesting point that if all that was required was to “set apart some indefinite time” on the day for worship, then the Sabbath would not differ substantially from the other days of the week, on which worship was required as well. David Dickson, *Truth’s Victory Over Error: A Commentary on the Westminster Confession of Faith* (1684, repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2007), 155. If the fourth commandment required worship at all, it required worship exclusively. If the fourth commandment required rest only, then it would be impossible to distinguish the worship required on the Sabbath from the requirements of every other day.

never ceases laboring in his works of providence (John 5:17). Those seeking to follow his example cannot do so through being idle. For this reason, Robert L. Reymond observed, “‘rest’ cannot mean mere cessation from labor, much less recovery from fatigue. . . . ‘Rest’ then means involvement in *new*, in the sense of *different*, activity. It means cessation of the labor of the six days and the taking up of different labors appropriate to the Lord’s Day. What these labors of the Sabbath rest are is circumscribed by the accompanying phrase, ‘to the Lord.’ They certainly include both corporate and private acts of worship and the contemplation of the glory of God. . . .”²

We must also avoid the error of concluding that since we should live all of life to God’s glory (Rom. 12:1–2; 1 Cor. 10:31), we may “worship” God on the Sabbath in any activity that we can pursue lawfully on every other day of the week. John Murray made a distinction in this regard that many will recognize intuitively: “while it is true that we ought to serve the Lord every day and in all things we must not forget that there are different ways of serving God. We do not serve him by doing the same thing all the time. If we do that, we are either insane or notoriously perverse. There is a great variety in human vocation. If we neglect to observe that variation, we shall soon pay the cost.”³ For example, Psalm 149 calls believers to praise God in every area of life. We must praise him in dance, with trumpets, in warfare, and on our beds, as well as in the sanctuary. Yet doing all of these things at the same time or in the same context would result either in a confused life or a confused worship service. The absurdity of dancing with swords on our beds while worshipping in the sanctuary should be obvious. We must serve the Lord differently and appropriately in every area of life. Doing the right thing in the wrong way, for the wrong reason, and at the wrong time turns otherwise virtuous actions into sin. This applies equally to the fact that serving the Lord in our labor for six days (Col. 3:23) is strictly forbidden on the Sabbath.

The situation in the Garden prior to the fall points to God’s design in setting apart the Sabbath for worship. Adam and Eve would have enjoyed the Sabbath as a day of uninterrupted direct worship and communion with God. For this reason, Murray added:

There is release from the labors of the six days, but it is also release to the contemplation of the glory of God. Cessation from the labors of the week must itself have its source and ground in obedience to God, and the gratitude which is the motive and fruit of such obedience will minister to the worship which is the specific

employment of the Sabbath rest. This is just saying that rest from weekly labors and the exercises of specific worship are inseparable and they mutually condition one another. It is a Sabbath of rest *to the Lord*; we cannot have the one without the other.⁴

The Pharisees mistakenly treated the Sabbath in terms of inactivity. This resulted from a negative emphasis on what was forbidden on the day rather than a positive stress on what was required on it. This kind of thinking robs the day of its God-given purpose. The positive goal of the Sabbath is to take up the entire time with the public and private exercises of God's worship. This should push out all unnecessary thoughts about our worldly employments and recreations, because such thoughts make our Sabbath-Keeping like an arrow falling short of its target. Murray concluded: "Even in innocence man would have required time for specific worship. We are too ready to entertain the notion that religion in a state of sinless confirmed integrity would have required no institutions as the medium of expression.... Unfallen man would need to suspend his weekly labors in order to refresh himself with the exercises of concentrated worship."⁵ The original purpose of the Sabbath should serve as a sound counselor helping us make godly decisions over how to spend the day.

1.2 God Sanctified the Sabbath

The fact that the Lord "sanctified" or "hallowed" the Sabbath means that he set it apart for the purposes of worship.⁶ Leviticus 27 illustrates what this meant. This chapter gives regulations related to people, animals, objects, and offerings that were dedicated as "holy" to the Lord. Such things were dedicated to the service of the Tabernacle, and they were used in the worship and service of the Lord exclusively. Objects that were holy to the Lord belonged to the Lord in a peculiar manner. The Lord said, "no devoted offering that a man may devote to the Lord of all that he has, both man and beast, or the field of his possession, shall be sold or redeemed; every devoted offering is most holy to the Lord" (Lev. 27:28). So when God sanctified the Sabbath and made it "holy," he set it apart for worship exclusively. This is comparable to other biblical expressions such as, "the Lord's Supper," and, "the Lord's Day."

This means that the operative phrase in the fourth commandment is, "keep it holy," rather than, "in it you shall do no labor." Korah, Dathan, and Abiram erred in asserting that since "all the congregation is holy, every one of them" (Num. 16:3), it was wrong to treat a

single group of men (in this case Aaron and his sons) as dedicated to the worship and service of the Lord in a peculiar sense. Moses responded by asserting, "Tomorrow morning the Lord will show who is his and who is holy, and will cause him to come near him" (v. 5). The holiness of the priests distinguished them from other men in leading the public worship of God. So its relation to divine worship distinguishes the Sabbath from the other six days. We must keep the Sabbath holy by dedicating it wholly and only to the worship and service of the triune God. As the Lord dedicated every firstborn son to himself, so the Sabbath must be like the firstborn of days to our souls, dedicated wholly and only to the Lord.

1.3 The Place of the Fourth Commandment in the Ten Commandments

The place of the fourth commandment among the Ten Commandments shows that its aim is worship rather than merely rest. The first four commandments are recognized generally as related to our duties to worship and serve God immediately. The last six commandments then outline our service to God mediately by way of serving our neighbor. The first commandment concerns the *object* of worship, the second the *manner* of worshipping him, the third the proper *attitude* of worship, and the fourth the *time* that has been set apart for worship. For this reason, John Owen argued that the fourth commandment is "the keeper of the whole first table," since it aimed to preserve the worship required in the first three commandments and to bring it to its highest expression.⁷

Treating the Sabbath as a holy day rather than simply a day of rest reflects the distinctively God-centered nature of the Ten Commandments. Shifting the emphasis of the day from holiness to rest sometimes results unintentionally in a man-centered view of the day. One of the most flagrant examples of this man-centered shift that this author has seen was a sermon on the fourth commandment entitled, "Take a rest, you deserve it."

4. Murray, "Sabbath Institution," 210. Emphasis original.

5. Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 34.

6. For a more in-depth examination of this point, see Iain D. Campbell, *On the First Day of the Week: God, the Christian, and the Sabbath* (Leonminster, UK: Day One Publications, 2005), 45–48. Also see Joseph Pipa, *The Lord's Day* (Geanines House, Fearn, Ross-Shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1997), 32–34.

7. John Owen, *A Day of Sacred Rest*, in, *An Exposition to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854–1855; repr., Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991), 2.289.

While it is true that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27), many Christians have abused this principle in order to shift from a worship-centered view of the Sabbath to a man-centered view of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for man, but the Sabbath does not belong to man. The Son of Man is Lord, even of the Sabbath. We do not keep the Sabbath holy by pursuing what we think is restful on the day. This was why Owen entitled his book on the Lord's Day, "A Day of Sacred Rest," rather than, "A Sacred Day of Rest." The latter would imply that we keep the day holy by resting, while Owen's title illustrates that we rest in order to keep the day holy. Remembering the place of the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments will help keep us walking on a straight path without getting lost by turning aside to the right hand or the left.

1.4 *The Duties of the Sabbath*

The varied duties connected to Sabbath observance in Scripture are limited to acts of worship. Every Sabbath, God required Israel to hold a "holy convocation" to the Lord (e.g., Lev. 23:3). The morning and evening sacrifices, which were an integral part of Tabernacle and Temple worship in the Old Testament, had to be doubled on the Sabbath. Psalm 92, which is entitled, "A Psalm for the Sabbath Day," depicts God's people giving thanks to the Most High and praising his name morning and evening with instruments and gladness, because he made his people triumph through the works of his hands (Ps. 92:1-4). In the New Testament, Christ's disciples gathered together for worship and fellowship on the first day of week as Paul preached to them (Acts 20:7ff). The first day of the week, or Lord's Day, was singled out as the most appropriate time for taking an offering for the poor (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This was the day on which the risen Christ met with his disciples prior to his ascension as well.

The body of requirements attached to Sabbath keeping in both the Old and the New Testament relates to duties of public or private worship. If you consider the commands associated with the Sabbath in isolation from the purpose of the day, then you might be tempted to conclude that such acts of public worship were necessary on the Sabbath without precluding worldly employments and recreations. However, when you connect the character of these commands with the three inferences drawn above, then you should conclude that our aim on the Sabbath should be to dedicate the entire day

to worship. Rest from your ordinary labor and activities is merely a necessary pre-requisite to keeping the day holy.⁸ The public and private worship of the triune God is like a planet pulling every Sabbath activity into its field of gravity.

1.5 *The Sabbath as a Foretaste of Heaven*

The Sabbath as a type of heaven directs us to devote the entire time to God's worship. The biblical picture of heaven is a place consumed solely with the worship of God through Jesus Christ (Rev. 21-22). We must not merely think of the Sabbath as looking forward to heaven, but we must regard the Sabbath as patterned after heaven. There is much speculation about the continuity and discontinuity between this life and the life to come. Whatever we may infer legitimately from the biblical evidence about the next life, we must recognize that the only places in the New Testament where we receive explicit glimpses of heaven reveal glorified saints and angels bowing before him who sits upon the throne and before the Lamb who was slain (Rev. 4-5). God designed the Sabbath to help believers anticipate this heavenly rest (Heb. 4:9-11). Every day of the week, the saints should long for heaven (Col. 3:1-2). On the Lord's Day, however, they act as though they are already there.

1.6 *Conclusions*

Clarifying the purpose of the Sabbath goes a long way in shaping our plans for keeping the Sabbath holy. For example, understanding what it means to keep the day holy places the oft disputed question about the role of "worldly" recreations "which are lawful on other days" into proper perspective. The question should not be whether or not it is lawful, for instance, to take a walk with a child on the Lord's Day, but whether or not everything we do on the Sabbath aims at promoting public, family, and private worship. It is too easy to treat Sunday as "our day" rather than the Lord's Day. The reason why the Westminster Confession and Catechisms excluded "worldly recreations" from the Sabbath was because they contradicted the purpose of the day. Sports, games, and television on the Sabbath are like a man putting on clothes that are either too small or too large. As the clothes do not fit the man, so such activities do not fit the day.

If we love God's worship and aim to keep the day holy, then practical reasons reinforce the shape our Sabbath keeping should take. How can we be concerned with our recreations when we worship in the presence

8. For more on this point, see Reymond, 180.

of God with reverence and awe? How can we be satisfied with being preoccupied with football games or shopping trips on the Sabbath when we are gathered to meet with the risen Christ? If we were consumed with the glories of our redemption and of our Savior on the Lord's Day, then we could no longer use what we think is restful as the measure of our Sabbath keeping. John Owen wrote, "those whose minds are fixed in a spirit of liberty to glorify God in and by this day of rest, seeking after communion with him in the ways of his worship, will be unto themselves a better rule for their words and actions than those who may aim to reckon over all they do or say."⁹

Developing such a focus in relation to the Sabbath also has the benefit of making our approach to the Sabbath positive and proactive. As the Scottish theologian John Dick noted, "He who understands in what the sanctification of the Sabbath consists, has no need that the sins in the fourth commandment should be pointed out to him."¹⁰ This re-emphasizes the point that most disagreements over Sabbath keeping result from a lack of clarity regarding the design and purpose of the day. Now that these principles are clearer in light of Scripture, it is possible to explore some possible ways to put these principles into practice.

2 WHAT SHOULD SABBATH KEEPING LOOK LIKE?

Our approach to the fourth commandment should shape what our Sabbath keeping looks like in practice. Treating the Sabbath as a day of worship simplifies our approach to everything that we do on the day. We should be less consumed by what we should not do on the Sabbath and more preoccupied with "taking up the entire time in the public and private exercises of God's worship." This gives a beautiful simplicity to our Sabbath keeping, enabling us to pursue divine worship vigorously and joyfully. We should not forget that there are many things that we should not do on the Sabbath because there is ultimately one thing that we should do on it. Giving some practical examples of what this looks like can help give readers some ideas how to use the day well. This is particularly true in relation to learning to include our children in our activities throughout the day. The examples below are suggestive only.

2.1 *A Typical Sabbath Day*

The form your Sabbath keeping takes will be largely suggestive rather than mandated, keeping in mind the great mandate of keeping the day holy. In many respects,

keeping the Sabbath begins the night before. A person preparing to go to college does much preparation. They map out what classes they need to take and in what order. They make sure that they can pay for their expenses. They must find a place to live and they need to purchase their textbooks. Success in such things demands at least some foresight and planning. So it is with the Sabbath. It is helpful, if not often indispensable, on Saturday to ensure that our housework is out of the way, our meals are planned if not prepared, our clothes set out, and our hearts prepared through worship, meditation, and prayer. This is not an exhaustive list with the force of, "thus says the Lord." It is a helpful set of guidelines governed by the question, "How can I best worship the Triune God tomorrow with the fewest distractions?" We prepare for things that excite us and interest us. What is more exciting to the believer than coming to the Father, through His Son, by His Spirit with His people on the day that He has provided for this purpose exclusively?

In the morning we can begin profitably with private Bible reading and prayer. We should think through the purpose of the day, lay hold of its promises (e.g. Is. 58:13–14), and pray for the ministry of the Word and the worship services. We should also come together for family worship, as we do on other days, with the specific purpose of preparing for public worship. Our family has often found it useful to sing either prior to or on the Sabbath Psalm 92, which is entitled "a song for the Sabbath day," and to discuss its contents in relation to God's work of redemption for us and in us. You could also read one of the crucifixion and resurrection accounts in the gospels each Lord's Day in private or family worship in order to focus on Christ's great works of redemption. You can vary the form these activities take based on what is most profitable to your family. Family worship can also be an appropriate time to review the sermon texts for that day and to review catechism questions that will be relevant to the sermon. You can do this at the breakfast table.

It is helpful to attend the Sunday school classes in addition to the morning worship service. The lack of Sunday school makes a long morning in which families, especially those with young children, must work harder to use their time well. The drive to church and breaks between Sunday school and worship break up Sabbath activities into manageable segments so as not to weary

9. Owen, *A Day of Sacred Rest*, 447.

10. John Dick, *Lectures on Theology* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1838; repr., Stoke on Trent, UK: Tentmaker Publications, 2004), IV, 459.

members of the family. Those attending all of the meetings of the church often achieve greater knowledge of Scripture and spiritual maturity than church members who participate in only some of these activities. If you have to travel long to church for worship, then this may modify or hinder your participation in some church classes. If this is the case, then you should try to compensate for this by using your time in the car profitably through singing, reading, catechizing or other profitable activities. You should attend the morning worship service expecting to meet with the risen Christ and to experience the power of His Spirit in your hearts through the ministry of the Word, by means of all the elements of the worship service, and in the context of Christian fellowship.

In the afternoon, it is useful to occupy your time with Christian fellowship and other edifying activities. This is an excellent opportunity for you to exercise the grace of hospitality beyond your own extended family. Inviting other church members builds bonds of affection and friendship in the body of Christ. Inviting visitors makes them feel as though they belong to the community and this encourages them to come back. Including your guests in family worship after the meal is a great way to guide conversation in an edifying direction. This has even proved to be a useful evangelistic tool in some cases, when an unconverted spouse of a member or a visitor has sat with us at the table. This is a natural way to promote godly conversation for everyone, including children. Some people take naps on Sunday afternoons due to the flurry of spiritual activity. This is a virtue only if it is a means of promoting your ability to worship the rest of the day. Do not use napping as an excuse to make the day pass faster because you do not know what to do with your time or do not want to do it. The Sabbath is a great means of examining our sincerity before the Lord and of exercising our spiritual muscles.

The question of evening worship often arises at this point. While circumstances vary and not all churches have been able to hold evening services for a variety of reasons, this practice at least falls short of the pattern set by the morning and evening sacrifices of Old Testament worship. If the Old Testament saints, who enjoyed less spiritual light, less knowledge of the Father's love, Christ's redeeming work, and the Spirit's power in their hearts met twice for worship on the Sabbath, then why should we do less on the Lord's Day? Evening worship is one of the best means to prevent us from losing sight of the purpose of the day and of finishing the day well in worship in the special presence of Christ and

his saints. If you are in a place where your church and other churches around you do not offer evening worship, then you will need to compensate for its absence creatively in some way. In just such a situation, our family gathered in the family room on Sunday evenings to listen to sermons on sermonaudio.com and we sung Psalms together. However you spend this time, your goal should be to find ways to use the whole day for divine worship. This is extraordinarily difficult without an evening worship service. Churches can become creative over this point as well. In order to accommodate large numbers of people travelling long distances to church, for example, some congregations have tried a morning service followed by a fellowship meal and an afternoon service in order to help such families. Using Sunday evenings well is left partly up to the discretion of the leadership in the congregation and partly to the parents in being proactive in keeping the day holy regardless of their present arrangements. Of course, if your congregation holds an evening service, then you should attend it if you are able to do so. What often happens in such cases is that those who should be there do not come while some who want to be there cannot come due to illness or other factors. Our attitude toward public worship should mirror David's longing in Psalm 84. If we share such zeal and love to the triune God in some measure, then why would we not want to attend evening worship?

2.2 What About Our Children?

Another important question regarding Sabbath keeping is how to help small children enjoy the Sabbath. The short answer is that we should try to incorporate children, as much as is possible, into everything that we do on the day. Small children will often have greater need of naps on the Lord's Day than adults. When children outgrow naps, we should include them in our conversation with adults. This is much easier if you engage in hospitality on the Lord's Day. Your children will often begin to anticipate eagerly who you will invite over next. You do not have to do this weekly and you may need to take breaks, but children will often be more eager to have people into the home than their parents are.

You should teach your children particularly to participate in worship services to the degree that they are able to do so. You should teach small children first how to be quiet during the service. Then you can add simple practices, such as how to say "Amen" after prayers and songs (1 Cor. 14:16). They can learn the songs sung in church if you get them and practice them during the

week leading up to the service and if you sing regularly in family worship. They will begin remembering key words that you feed them from the sermons and you can perhaps help them find one thing that stands out to them. Pastors can help on this front by addressing the children directly in their sermons and by including illustrations that children can understand and enjoy. Family worship and catechizing keep them involved in fellowship with the rest of the family and with friends on the Lord's Day as well.

Sometimes our children (and we) will face challenges by having their friends over on the Sabbath. You can offset potential distractions by putting up toys that you do not want them to get into on the Lord's Day and by replacing them with sound, Bible-related books and Christian biographies for children. This will also help prevent visiting children from ransacking a child's room without permission (which has happened frequently in our home).

There may also come an awkward time when children's naps coincide with the beginning of evening worship. This is challenging, but thankfully it is also temporary. When we moved to Sunnyvale, our evening worship was early. This meant that two of our children often went to the evening service in tears, which was difficult for the entire family. However, after a few months, they adjusted to the schedule and the early evening service afforded the greater advantage of getting home at a reasonable time after evening worship.

However, the great key to teaching children to enjoy the Sabbath is our own attitude towards the Sabbath. If we are not excited about worship and if we are not learning to enjoy a whole day dedicated to divine worship, then how can we expect our children to do so? If we are not using all of the means of grace available to us through the local church on that day, including Sunday schools and evening worship, then we will likely create too much empty time that we and our children will struggle to fill profitably. If we are proactive in keeping the day holy to the Lord and enjoying all of its blessings, then we will often wonder how the time passed so quickly.

3 CONCLUSION

What a glorious privilege and blessing such a day ought to be! What a mercy from God that we should have one day in seven to enjoy God without the distractions that encumber us throughout the week! Does this not make neglecting the Sabbath to be base ingratitude? If Adam and Eve needed a day of worship before the fall, do you

not need such a day? When you disregard the Sabbath by bending your conscience to the will of employers, or to the lusts of the flesh rather than the Word of God, do you realize that you are actually despising the privilege of worship? You are not simply disobeying a commandment of God; you are spurning one of his greatest gifts to mankind. If the Sabbath is designed simply for "rest," then our rule shall invariably be, "What is restful for you is restful for you, but what is restful for me is restful for me." However, since the Sabbath is designed for worship, we should confess gratefully, "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by an holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and taking up the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy" (Westminster Shorter Catechism, 60).

Though all of these things are true, let us, above all, learn to be positive and proactive in our approach to the Sabbath. The Lord's Day should be a day of rest and gladness to us, to our families, and to our churches. In aiming to keep the day holy, we will give less attention to what is forbidden in the fourth commandment by giving more attention to what is required in it. ■

In Brief: John Owen on Isaiah 58:13

These cautions seem to regard the Sabbath absolutely, and not as Judaical. But I much question whether they have not, by the interpretation of some, been extended beyond their original intention. For the true meaning of them is no more, than that we should so delight ourselves in the Lord on his holy day, as not to desire to turn aside to our own pleasures and vain ways, in order to pass over the Sabbath: a thing complained of by many; and by which sin and Satan have been more served on this day, than on all the days of the week beside. But I by no means think, that there is a restraint laid on us from such words, ways, and works, as do not hinder the performance of religious duties, belonging to the due celebration of God's worship, and which are not apt in themselves to unframe our spirits, or divert our affections from them. And those, whose minds are fixed in a spirit of liberty to glorify God in this day of rest, and who seek communion with him in the ways of his worship, will be to themselves a better rule for their words and actions, than those who may aim to reckon over all they do or say; which may be done in such a manner, as to become the Judaical Sabbath, more than the Lord's day. *Exposition to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 7 vols. (Edinburgh: Johnstone and Hunter, 1854-1855), 2.289. ■