

SABBATH

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

Have you ever gone up to a tree stump and counted the growth rings? On really old trees, it's hard to keep them straight. Each ring represents a year of life for the tree. The larger gaps between rings tell us which years rained more, and the smaller gaps tell us when the tree lived through a drought. Those rings, whether they are big or small, represent every year of the tree's life. The rings are almost like a reminder of another birthday, another year. And every ring is a reminder of the Creator, who made that tree and gave it life during every one of those years.

Every week of life we live, God has put a special "ring" or reminder for us to remember how much He loves us. And just like the rings on the tree represent time, the weekly reminder of God's love is a 24-hour period of time too. In fact, you can find this day in God's law in the book of Exodus.

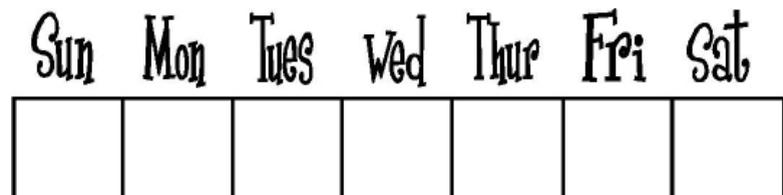
Exodus 20:8-11 says, "Remember the _____ day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the _____ day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it _____."

As God was creating the world, He knew that it would be easy to forget about Him and how much He loves us, and so He created a special day each week that would be reserved as time where we could get to know Him. He called it: **SABBATH**. Sabbath is a once-a-week celebration of Who God is and a 24-hour period dedicated to knowing God. Basically, God sets aside this time in His schedule and asks us to set aside this time in our schedule so that we can spend time with each other.

But, there are some obvious questions that we have to ask...

"What day is the Sabbath?"

I'm so glad that God is really specific about what day He chooses to dedicate time for us. He says that the Sabbath is on the 7th day of the week, Saturday. Our week starts on Sunday, the first day of the week, and ends on Saturday, the last day of the week.



It has ALWAYS been this way! The calendar has only changed once in 1582 when we forgot to account for leap year, and so 10 days were removed. But, the weekly cycle stayed exactly the same. The seventh day has always been the seventh day, and Saturday has always been the seventh day. God made Saturday the special day each week to remind us of Him.

One way we can know for sure which day of the week is the Sabbath, is to look at the weekend that Jesus died. Jesus died on a Friday afternoon, and the Bible says,

Luke 23:54 says: "It was Preparation Day (Friday), and the _____ was about to begin."

Luke 23:56 says: "Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the _____ day in obedience to the commandment."

Luke 24:1 says: "On the _____ day of the week (Sunday), very early in the morning, the women took spices they had prepared and went to the tomb."

Saturday has always been Sabbath, ever since creation.

Genesis 2:2-3 says: "By the _____ day, God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the _____ day, he rested from all his work. And God blessed the _____ day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done."

God created it during Creation. The children of Israel kept it in the Old Testament. It was kept by Paul in the New Testament, and it was even kept by Jesus while He was here on Earth.

Luke 4:16 says: "He (Jesus) went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the _____ day, he went into the synagogue, as was his custom."

Jesus went to the synangoge, the "church" of His day, to spend time with His Father. He kept Sabbath as a special day for His Father. Saturday, Sabbath, is a day that God sets aside for us, and He asks us to set it aside for Him. He asks us not to work and not to make others work for us either. He made it a holy day, something that only God can do, and it's a day for us to be with Him. Doesn't that tell you about Who God is? He's a God that designed time for us to be together. He's a God that wants more than anything to just be with us and allow us to know Him better.

Although God is often specific about certain things (like which day He has given us to reserve for Him), He is rather vague when it comes to specifics about how to keep Sabbath.

BASIC POINT

God cares so deeply about us that He reserved a special day to spend time with us.

That can be a little difficult if we are supposed to just guess how to honor God on Sabbath. I really think that God leaves His instructions on keeping Sabbath kind of vague so that we will let the Holy Spirit lead us. Are we supposed to just go to church on Sabbath and copy what Jesus did? Well, I believe that is a really great start. Church does offer us an opportunity to connect with other believers and worship together as we try to connect with God. That's a natural place to spend your time with Him. But, here's something that is often forgotten. If church disappeared, there would still be Sabbath! Church does **NOT** equal Sabbath. Sabbath is so much more than going to church. It's an entire day to devote to knowing God better. It's a day that should be different than all the rest of the week, a day that is special and set aside for knowing God.

Keeping the Sabbath holy and set aside as a day that really honors God may be hard to wrap your mind around. Knowing how to do that may be pretty difficult too. One thing for sure is that keeping Sabbath is not about what you CAN and CAN'T do. It's about choosing to do things that bring you closer to Jesus. In fact, Jesus wants to bless you through Sabbath. Listen to how Isaiah describes what happens when you choose to honor God by saving that day for Him.

Isaiah 58:13-14 says: "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a _____ and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your _____ in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob."

Isn't that cool? God has a special reward for those that choose to use Sabbath as a day to spend with Him, not just doing whatever you want, but being intentional about choosing to spend your day with Him. When we think of Sabbath as a delight, then Jesus gives us JOY! It's just another side benefit of keeping Sabbath.

One last piece to Sabbath is the incredible symbol it really is. God not only gave the Sabbath to us as a way to get to know us and for us to get to know Him, but it is also a sign to the world that He is our God, and we are His children.

Ezekiel 20:12: "I gave them my Sabbaths as a _____ between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy."

When we choose to accept Sabbath as the day that God gave to us and reserve it for Him, it is a sign that we belong to Him. Sabbath is not only an unbelievable chance to know God better and to receive the joy that comes from keeping Sabbath, but it also is a visible way of showing everyone Whom you serve.

"Why do so many people honor Sunday as the Sabbath?"

Satan is the king of counterfits, and if he can create something that people will follow that goes against God, he will! Many believe that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday when Jesus died. Sunday is an important day, because it's the day Jesus rose from the grave.

But, we celebrate this on Easter! The Sabbath (Saturday) still remains as God's special day for us. Way back in history (AD 321), the Emperor, Constantine, did his best to unite a country, and he declared that Sunday be the national day of rest. No one was allowed to work. The Catholic church confirmed this decision and imposed it on everyone. Because of tradition, churches began worshipping on Sunday and keeping it instead of Saturday. Now, rather than honoring God and obeying His design of having Saturday as the Sabbath, the majority of Christian denominations follow this tradition.

As the Bible closes in the book of Revelation, God gives a final message to the world saying:

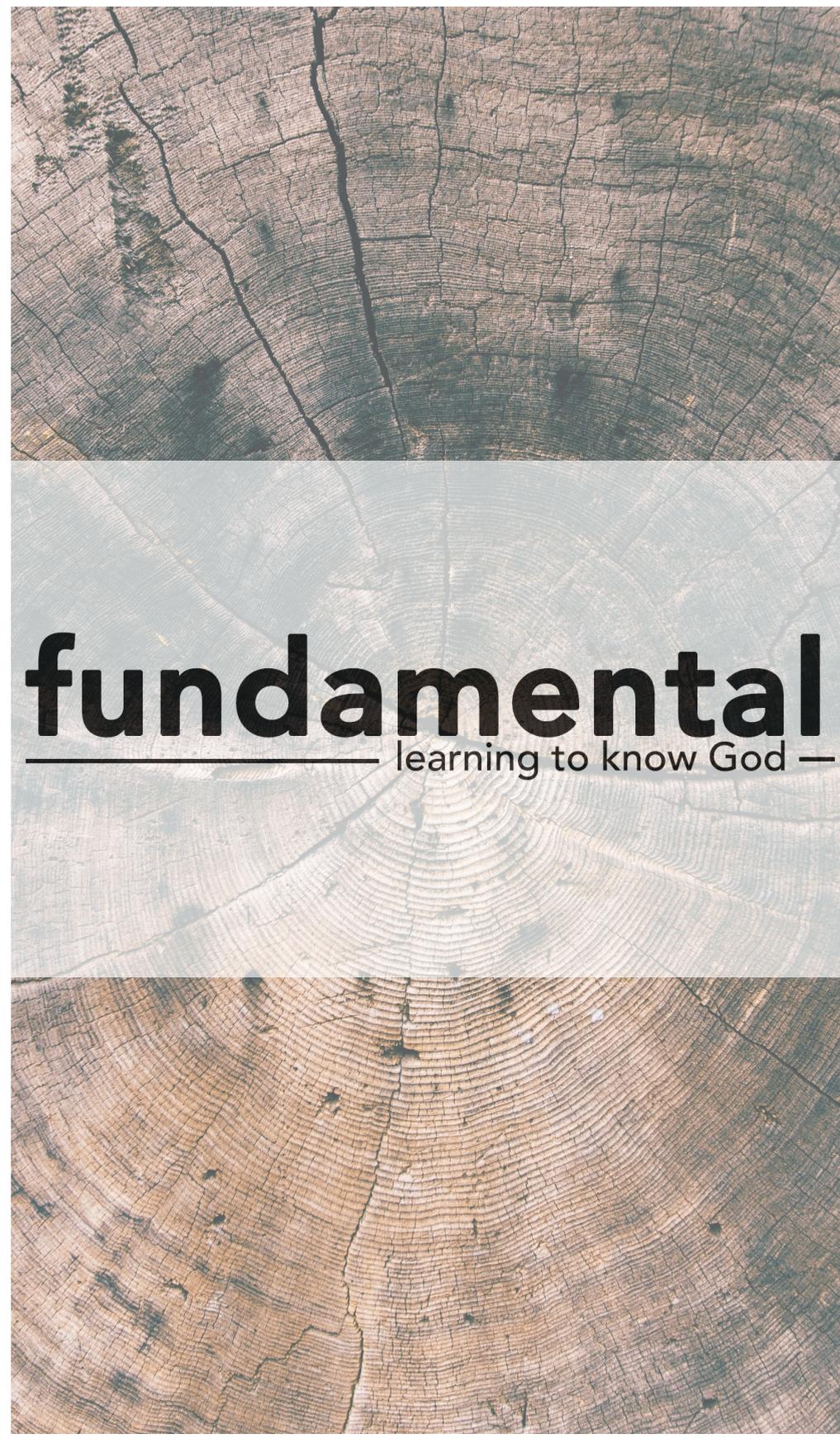
Revelation 14:7: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. _____ him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

God's final message is about worshipping the Creator, and as we worship Him, He calls us to worship on the special day that He has set aside specifically for it. He wants to spend Sabbath, the day that HE chose, as a day for us to be together. May we follow His plan and make Sabbath a special day with God!

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. What do you think are the best ways to spend Sabbath getting to know Jesus better?
 2. Do you feel like Sabbath is a burden?
 3. How can you make Sabbath a delight?
-

LESSON 7: SABBATH



fundamental
learning to know God —