

Commandment law. God said “remember,” but most of the world has forgotten.

Would you like to thank Jesus for His gift of rest? Would you like to tell Him you desire to keep His Sabbath each week? Would you like to say, “Yes Lord! I desire to find delight in the day You have established.” Why not make that commitment right now:

Dear Heavenly Father: I thank You for the promise of salvation-rest each day to meet the challenges of life, and for the promise of Sabbath-rest each week to cement my relationship with You. I thank You for the promise of power from above to change my heart and give me right desires and motives. Please make me loyal to the Saviour, who gave up everything so I could experience life in all its fullness. Make me responsive to Your will. Help me always to welcome the opportunity to experience heavenly rest. In Jesus' name. Amen.

[You may be wondering: Who changed the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week? When was the change made? Did God authorize the change? These questions will be answered in guide 21.]

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DISCOVER

THE SECRET OF HEAVENLY REST



Just a few years ago sociologists were predicting we would soon have more leisure time than we'd know what to do with. Testimony before a Senate subcommittee in 1967 maintained that by 1985 people would be working just 22 hours a week.

There were good reasons for those confident predictions. Computers were crunching through month-long

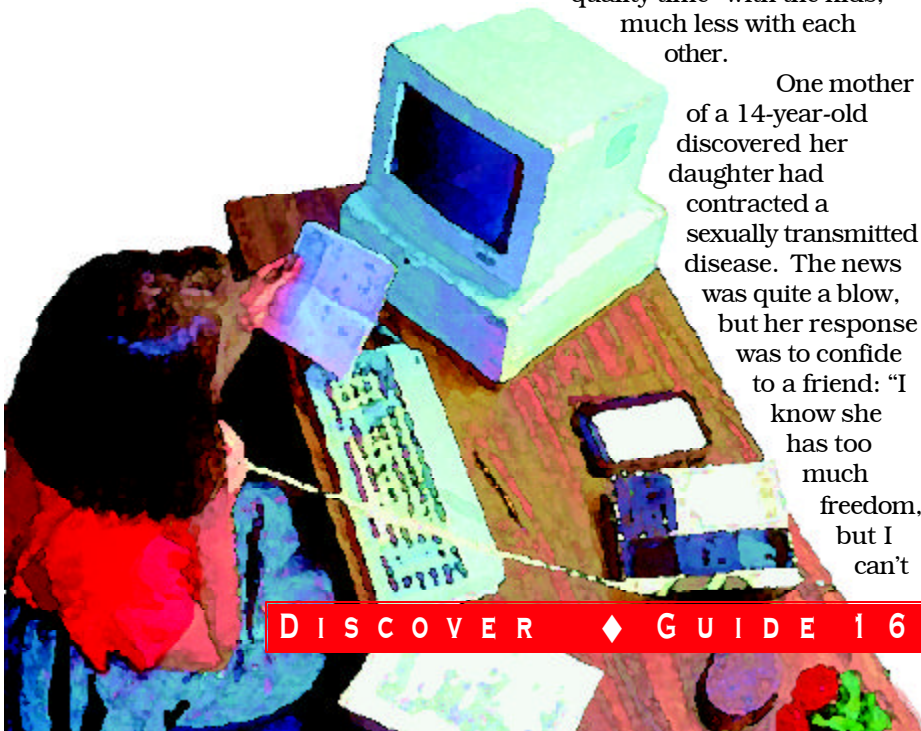
tasks in fractions of a second. And robots had begun to handle the grueling jobs of heavy industry.

But after the computers have been whirring and the satellites spinning and the automation automating—we're more out of breath than ever. As a Manhattan architect put it: "Technology is increasing the heartbeat."

People are running out of time these days. For example, between 1967 and 1985 the amount of leisure time enjoyed by the average American shrunk 37 percent, and more than 40 percent of American workers put in more than 40 hours a week. Nearly 20 percent had second jobs. And that trend has continued to the present.

Above all, families are running out of time. Husbands and wives communicate more and more through the answering machine. It's hard to schedule "quality time" with the kids, much less with each other.

One mother of a 14-year-old discovered her daughter had contracted a sexually transmitted disease. The news was quite a blow, but her response was to confide to a friend: "I know she has too much freedom, but I can't



5. A FORETASTE OF HEAVENLY REST

We can sum up the benefits of linking up with Jesus through a *daily* and a *weekly* encounter in one word—rest. The word "Sabbath" comes from a Hebrew word that means rest, so it's not surprising that the Scripture calls the seventh day "a Sabbath of rest" (Leviticus 23:3). It serves as a foretaste of the perfect rest we'll experience in heaven.

***"[God] has spoken about the seventh day in these words: 'And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.' . . . THERE REMAINS, THEN, A SABBATH-REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest."*—Hebrews 4:4, 9-11.**

Experiencing "Sabbath-rest" gives us a weekly hint of the joy we will experience in the eternal rest of heaven. This rest isn't just inactivity, it refers to the sense of security, peace and well-being that lie at the root of the truly abundant life. This kind of spiritual rest can be appreciated only through experience, and the testimony of those who have experienced salvation-rest and Sabbath-rest is universal: If you enter into the rest of Jesus through a daily and weekly connection with Him, you will discover the greatest joy in life.

Our Lord Himself gave us the Sabbath at creation. It was not given to the Jews, but to the entire human race, two thousand years before there was a Jewish people. Jesus "blessed" and "sanctified" the Sabbath. It is a special day set aside by God for renewing our spiritual life. It is part of His Ten

for families. Stop rushing past each other; stop letting the most urgent things crowd out the most important things. The Sabbath is one day when we can replace entertainment with interaction, pressure with prayer, labor with laughter, busy schedules with quiet reflection. Sabbath-rest provides the entire family with the time to link up with Christ and tap into His spiritual energy.

5. The Sabbath is a time when Jesus comes especially near. Every relationship needs time, quality time, and our relationship with Christ is no exception. Devoting a whole day to Christ each week is a great way to keep our friendship with Him fresh and exciting. The Sabbath gives us extra time for Bible study and prayer, extra time to simply be alone with Christ in a quiet place and listen.

Jesus “blessed the seventh day and made it holy” with the promise of His presence (Genesis 2:3). You can understand why it is important to observe Saturday, the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, because it is the day Christ set apart at creation to communicate with us in a special way.

When Jesus created the Sabbath it almost seems that He had our generation in mind. It’s exactly what we need in our stress-filled environment: a day that is truly a break—a complete break from everything else. A day to worship God, get in touch with creation again, and concentrate on relationships instead of things. The Sabbath is a breath of fresh air in today’s smoggy, non-stop freeway of life.

give up my social life to watch her all the time.”

Priorities upside down. Time running out.

One study in a small U.S. community showed that the average time per day that fathers spent alone with their very young sons was—37 seconds! Families are out of time and out of touch.

How can we slow down enough to get in touch again?

1. THE REMEDY FOR HIGH TENSION LIVING

Jesus understands the problems of families under stress and He wants us to grasp this fact first of all: spiritual rest is part of the quality of life:

“COME TO ME, all you who are weary and burdened, and I WILL GIVE YOU REST. Take my yoke upon you and LEARN FROM ME, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”—

Matthew 11:28, 29. (Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural texts in the DISCOVER guides are from the New International Version of the Bible [NIV].)

The Bible suggests we experience this kind of rest in two ways: coming to Christ on a *daily* and a *weekly* basis.

2. A DAILY LINK WITH JESUS

Jesus should have been “running out of time” all the time. Crowds constantly clamored for His attention. In a brief period of three-and-a-half years He had to carry out a spiritual revolution that would

change life on planet earth forever. He was constantly dodging Pharisee spies and plots.

And yet Christ communicated a peaceful, tranquil spirit to everyone around Him. How? He invested time each day communing with His Heavenly Father. He depended on His Father continually for the resources to meet life's challenges.

“Just as the living Father sent me and I LIVE BECAUSE OF THE FATHER, so the one who FEEDS ON ME will live because of me.”—John 6:57.

Our Saviour depended on the Father. If we are to live the serene, steady life that He did, we must daily “feed” on Jesus—let His Word and Spirit fill us and shape us. The best way to counter the forces burning us out as individuals and tearing us apart as families is to invest quality time with Christ. He tells us:

“REMAIN IN ME, and I will remain in you. . . . APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.”—John 15:4, 5.

One of the greatest needs of our time is for people to tap the spiritual resources available through forming a day-by-day relationship with Jesus. Guides 14 and 15 showed us how we do that through daily prayer and Bible study.

One very important point that needs to be emphasized about our relationship with Christ is this: His finished work on the cross. True rest, real security, can only exist because of the great accomplishment Jesus referred to when he cried out as he was dying: “It is finished” (John 19:30). In other words, His work of redemption was completed.

“But now he [Christ] has appeared ONCE FOR ALL . . . TO DO AWAY WITH

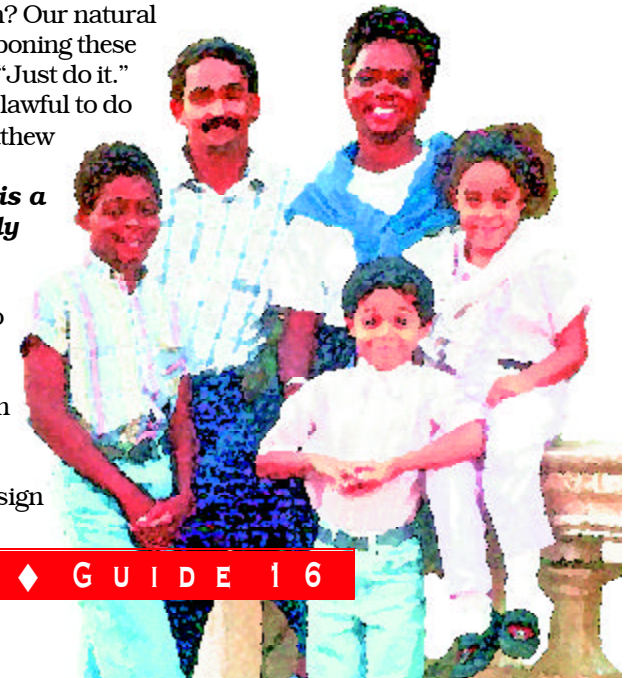
faith publicly, and socially, as well as in the privacy of our hearts. The Sabbath gives us that special time of coming together as a church body to recharge our spiritual batteries.

Isaiah understood the joy of Sabbath worship.

“Blessed is the man who does this, the man who holds it fast, who keeps the SABBATH without desecrating it. . . and who hold[s] fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain AND GIVE THEM JOY IN MY HOUSE OF PRAYER, . . . for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”—Isaiah 56:2, 6-7.

3. The Sabbath provides occasions to perform thoughtful acts of kindness. Has a neighbor been sick during the week when you had no time to visit? When a friend needed a sympathetic ear after her husband's death, did the pressure of daily living deprive her of your loving attention? Our natural inclination is to keep postponing these things. The Sabbath says, “Just do it.” Or as Jesus advised, “It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:12).

4. The Sabbath is a day to strengthen family ties. When Christ commanded, “On it [the Sabbath] you shall not do any work” (Exodus 20:10), He couldn't have given a better prescription to workaholic dads and stressed-out moms. The Sabbath is a giant STOP sign



inheritance.” People today are trampling over each other in the rush to “have it all.” Individuals are burning out and families are falling apart under the strain. But God presents the Sabbath as a much better way to get there—to the good life—from here.

Let’s look at some of the specific benefits of Sabbath rest.

“In our culture, work has become a god. It is the pre-eminent factor in organizing human life and establishing personal identities. It so dominates people’s lives that there is little time for themselves or their families. The Sabbath is God’s answer. It serves as a counterbalance, establishing the inalienable human right to rest. It is designed to protect us from the dangers of physical exhaustion, psychological stress and the interpersonal alienation which result from idolization and over-identification with work.”—Richard Exley, *The Rhythm of Life* (Tulsa, Okla.: Honor Books, 1987), p.73.

1. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation, and by keeping it holy, we erect a memorial to our Creator. Its sacred hours offer a wonderful opportunity to get in touch with our roots in God’s created world. When was the last time you or your family took time to really soak in the quiet beauty of a forest path or rocky stream? It’s harder to really hear or see nature these days; there’s so much else drowning out its peaceful sounds and sights. The Sabbath gives us a space in which to catch glimpses of God again in the midst of the wonders He has made for us.

2. On Sabbath we experience the joy of worship and fellowship with other Christians. The Sabbath points us heavenward. We desperately need this weekly perspective adjustment. And we need to look up together. There’s a benefit from praising God with others as a group of worshipers, and that benefit simply doesn’t come any other way. We need to express our

SIN by the sacrifice of himself.”—

Hebrews 9:26.

“WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ ONCE FOR ALL. . . . By one sacrifice HE HAS MADE PERFECT FOREVER those who are being made holy.”—Hebrews 10:10, 14.

When Jesus died, He did “away with sin.” The devil can no longer hold our sins against us, for our Substitute made full provision at Calvary for forgiveness. Since Jesus “has made perfect forever those who are being made holy,” Satan can no longer hold our failures and inadequacies against us.

That’s why it’s said that the believer who has confessed his or her sins can “rest” in the finished work of Christ. We’ve made it; we’re accepted. Guilt is the force that drives most compulsive behavior. Guilt lies behind much of the frantic pace of our lives today.

But Jesus solved the guilt problem once and for all at the cross. Jesus’ cry, “It is finished,” sealed His promise of “I will give you rest” as an established fact. Christ completed the work of redeeming us at Calvary [Titus 2:14], then He rested in the tomb over the Sabbath, and rose from the grave Sunday morning as the Victor over sin and death. The Christian can have no greater assurance than to rest in the finished work of Christ.

“Therefore . . . let us draw near to God with a sincere heart IN FULL ASSURANCE OF FAITH, . . . let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL, and let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”—Hebrews 10:19, 22-24.

Because He “who promised is faithful,” we can enter into the salvation-rest Jesus has promised. The stability, peace, and rest we experience in Jesus *every day* is a result not of anything we do, but of what He did at the cross.

We can rest in Christ because our salvation is assured. That assurance creates a response of loving obedience [as we saw in guide 15]. And it motivates us to spend time with Christ each day, feeding on His Word and breathing in the atmosphere of heaven through prayer. A rendezvous with Jesus helps us turn a stressed-out lifestyle into a peaceful and purposeful life.

3. A WEEKLY LINK WITH JESUS

After Christ created the world in six days (Colossians 1:16-17), He provided *Sabbath-rest*, which is a wonderful *weekly* opportunity for us to cultivate our connection with Him.

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast

declares the LORD, . . . ‘from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the LORD.”—
Isaiah 66:22, 23.

God originally established the Sabbath as a memorial of creation, so it’s fitting that His last-day message should include a call back to worshipping our Creator through obeying His commandments (Revelation 14:7, 12). This message from the last book in the Bible includes observing the Sabbath commandment as a memorial to the Creator.

4. THE BENEFITS OF SABBATH-REST

God gives those who delight in the Sabbath a great promise:

“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 DELIGHT 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 JOY IN THE LORD, and I WILL CAUSE YOU TO RIDE ON THE HEIGHTS OF THE LAND AND TO FEAST ON THE INHERITANCE OF YOUR FATHER JACOB.”—Isaiah 58:13, 14.

This passage suggests the Sabbath is a doorway through which we can experience the best things in life: we “ride on the heights” and “feast on the

great work of redemption had been accomplished. Then as if to celebrate His finished mission, Jesus rested in the tomb over the Sabbath. Just as Christ completed His work of creation on the sixth day and then rested on the seventh day, so through dying on the cross He completed His redemptive work on the sixth day, and then rested on the seventh.

On Sunday morning Jesus came out from the tomb, a victorious Saviour (Luke 24:1-7). He had already asked His disciples to maintain the Sabbath encounter with Him after His resurrection. Speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place nearly forty years after His death, He charged them:

“Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.”—Matthew 24:20.

Our Saviour wanted His disciples and their converts to continue the practices He had taught them. He wanted them to experience both salvation-rest and Sabbath-rest. They did not disappoint Him. The disciples continued to observe the Sabbath after Christ's death (see Luke 23:54-56; Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2; 18:1-4).

The beloved apostle John kept up his weekly link with Christ on the Sabbath day. In his later years he wrote, “On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit” (Revelation 1:10). According to Jesus, “the Lord's Day” is the Sabbath, “for the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8).

On the Sabbath we celebrate the Lord's two greatest accomplishments on our behalf: creating us and saving us. This Sabbath experience will continue in the new earth:

“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’

array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he RESTED from all his work. And God BLESSED the seventh day and MADE IT HOLY, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”—Genesis 1:31-2:3.

As their Creator, Jesus “rested” on the first Sabbath with Adam and Eve, and He “blessed” that day and “made it holy.”

God established a seven-day weekly cycle—not for His own benefit, but for Adam and Eve and for us today. Because He cared so much for the two people He had made, He planned that every seventh day throughout their lives should be dedicated to seeking His presence. Each Sabbath, as He called it, was to be for them a day of both physical rest and spiritual refreshment.

The entrance of sin into our world only made the need for Sabbath rest more acute. The same Saviour who promised Adam and Eve “rest,” gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) about two thousand years later. Jesus chose to place the Sabbath-rest commandment at the very heart of the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment reads:

“REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY BY KEEPING IT HOLY. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh 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 manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 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 HOLY.”—Exodus 20:8-11.

God established the Sabbath as a day to “remember” the Lord who “made the heavens and the earth.” Sabbath rest each week links us with the Creator who blessed this day and set it apart.

When Jesus lived on earth, He took advantage of every opportunity to sustain His union with the Father. He benefited from Sabbath rest by worshiping on Sabbath, as Luke tells us:

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and ON THE SABBATH DAY he went into the synagogue, AS WAS HIS CUSTOM.”—

Luke 4:16.

If the divine-human Jesus needed to rest in His Father’s presence on the



Sabbath day, we human beings certainly need it more. When Jesus swept aside the legal restrictions the Jews had placed on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-12), He pointed out that God had made it to benefit people:

“He said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’”—Mark 2:27, 28.

Jesus highlighted the importance of the Sabbath even in His death. He died on Friday, the “Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin” (Luke 23:54). At that moment He declared, “It is finished,” that is, His work of coming to this world

and dying as substitute for the human race was complete (John 19:30; 19:30; 19:30). The