

Delight in the Lord's Day

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the biblical term *Sabbath*? Many people, including those familiar with the New Testament, may think first of legalism. That's because nearly every mention of "Sabbath" in the Gospels has to do with the Pharisees accusing Jesus of violating their manmade rules. God's original intention, however, was for the Jews to "call the Sabbath a delight" (Isaiah 58:13). He meant for each of them on that day to "delight [themselves] in the Lord" (verse 14). Far from being a day to dread because of its restrictions, God designed the Sabbath to be a delightful day, the best of the week.

If that was true in the Old Testament, how much more should those who know God through Christ and have His Holy Spirit find delight in "the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10)?

How do we do this? As I mentioned in the previous chapter, there are differing views on what the Bible teaches about the Lord's Day. But those rooted deeply in Scripture would agree on at least these two principles (though some would argue for much more): First, our greatest privilege and most important responsibility on the Lord's day is to worship Him with His people. Not only was the Old Testament Sabbath a day of worship, but we have the apostolic command about "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:24). And the apostolic example associated with this command is worship "on the first day of the week" (see Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

Second, all our activities on Sunday should reflect the fact that it is "the Lord's day" (over and above the fact that, according to Psalm 118:24, *every* day is "the day which the Lord has made"). As you would expect, the practical aspects of what this means are very personal and intensely debated. In general, I think it means devoting ourselves to the pursuit of those things that promote the enjoyment of God. This also includes those activities that edify our church and family, extend the kingdom of God, and refresh our souls and bodies.

Years ago I began to delight in the Lord's Day much more intentionally. One change was to redirect the time I spent watching sports on Sunday afternoons. It wasn't because I don't like viewing sports on TV anymore, for I enjoy that as much as ever. Rather, I stopped watching in order to turn to activities that would better restore my soul and recreate my body. People speak of "vegging" in front of the television. Staring at a screen for hours may not make us more tired, but neither does it invigorate us. Unlike taking a nap, a prayer-walk, reading the Bible or other good book alone or with family, or having a time of spiritual fellowship with other believers, we don't feel refreshed after an afternoon of TV-watching.

Imagine living to age seventy and spending every Lord's Day in the ways I've suggested. You'd experience ten years of worshiping the Lord with His people, reading great literature, playing with your children or grandchildren, taking walks, enjoying fellowship, and taking naps. Does this sound like a burden to you? Most people dream of a life like this. It's the kind of life you *can* enjoy when you delight in the Lord's Day.

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