

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



The Word and Work



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

APRIL, 2002

The Commands of the Lord about Our Work, Rest, Time and Family

Was Indiana University basketball coach Mike Davis *crazy*?

The day before his team was to play in the "final two" -- for the national championship -- coach Davis didn't make them practice! "We never practice on Sundays," he said. He believes Sundays are for *faith and family*.

* * *

In this hectic world, where the Christian walk seems overrun by the rat race, how does one "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8)? Should one even bother with this outmoded command? Aren't Christians part of a new and busier covenant? Perhaps the "Lord of the Sabbath" can grant us a new perspective on this fourth but forgotten commandment. --Darren Johnson

* * *

How much do Christ and His spiritual body the church mean to you?

Would you attend the meetings of the church more regularly if you were offered \$10 every time you came? \$20? \$50?

Would you regularly meet with the Lord's people if you had to *pay* to attend? What if the price of admission were the same as the cost of attending a movie, or concert, or ballgame?

Our use of time and money reveals a great deal about our attitude toward the Lord. --the Editor

NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

Correction and Apology: In last month's Voices section, there was a glaring mistake. The letter from the Nakaharas in Japan omitted their family name and just said Michiya and Tomoko. We are very sorry for that error.

5th Stone-Campbell Dialogue to meet in Louisville: This Dialogue meets twice yearly, bringing together 20 ministers, historians and teachers from Churches of Christ, Christian Churches, and Disciples of Christ. They seek to deepen understanding among the 3 groups which began as one movement, and to foster a constructive atmosphere for discussing their differences, their common concerns, and any ways they might cooperate without compromise of conscience. This is not a merger movement, but a desire to promote cooperation. The *ultimate* goal is for such meetings to expand to local settings across the land, getting *local churches* to become familiar with members of the other churches, and discuss these matters together.

The next Dialogue will meet in Louisville on June 17-18. For the first time it aims to include some meetings with local believers and interaction with elders and ministers from the local area.

On Sunday night June 16 at 7:00 there will be a meeting *open to the public*, at the Okolona Church of Christ, 6105 Outer Loop; 969-7654. It will include brief talks by a speaker from each of the 3 groups, & prayers, plus a 45-min. concert by the fine & well-known singing group *Acappella*. In its 19 year history *Acappella* has performed over 2000 concerts across the U.S. & in over a dozen other nations.

Then the next night, **Mon. June 17 at 7:00 p.m.** at Southeast Christian Church, local congregational leaders from all 3 branches of the Stone-Campbell movement will meet together with Dialog members. They will seek to identify ways for dialogue at local levels to progress. This meeting is by invitation: elders & ministers may call Brother Arnis Pape at 893-0342 (day) or 429-3659 to register. The regular sessions of the Dialog group will be held during the day on Mon. and Tues. Pray that the Lord will guide and use all these meetings for His glory.

Same Church, New Name: "Living Stone" is the new name for the former Southeast Church of Christ at 12610 Taylorsville Road in Jeffersontown, Kentucky. A main reason for the change was that when folks heard "Southeast Church" most

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THE WORD AND WORK

"Declare the whole counsel of God"

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Bennie Hill, News & Notes

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Crucial Topics

Alex V. Wilson

Was he *crazy*? Lots of people were wondering about Indiana University basketball coach Mike Davis. The very next day his team was to play in the "final two"! -- for the NCAA Tournament championship. And he didn't make his team have a workout! There was only a brief, voluntary shooting session. Davis explained why. "We never practice on Sundays."

But this was the Sunday before the biggest day this team would have--the chance to be national champs! That didn't matter to Davis. He believes Sundays are for faith and family. Hmmmm.

Faith and family. Our use of time. Honoring the Lord. A day to gain refreshment and renewal. Building strong families. Those are subjects of vital importance. So read on.

This month we continue our study of the Ten Commands by examining numbers four and five. The Fifth is about families -- and authority, and generation gaps. The significance of those matters is obvious.

The Fourth is about a weekly day of rest, and its implications. Sincere Christians hold differing views here. Because of this, some statements in this issue may seem to contradict others. Weigh them carefully, and seek understanding from Above as to how to apply this command. But whatever we do, let's not miss the blessing God wants to give us in the continuing principle regarding our use of time.

The 4th COMMANDMENT

Some folks think God's 10 Commands are out of date. O no! They are truly relevant to us today. Rick Atchley, an outstanding Church of Christ preacher in Texas, makes that point very convincingly. He says, "Two words summarize our lives: hurry and worry." He goes on to point out that in Command #4, "Rest was built into God's plan for us. Regular times of rest and meditation are a safeguard; a reminder to keep our priorities right with God. They are a blessing for the body and the soul" (*Sinai Summit*; I added the emphasis).

Work

While the emphasis in this command is on Rest, let's make a brief point about Work, since it's mentioned too: "Six days you shall work...." Some

widely-researched surveys show that workers in the U.S. spend over 20% of their work-day goofing off. That translates into seven or more hours a week of no productivity. They also found that 1/2 of the workforce calls in sick regularly when they are not sick.

But we Christians are told, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Col.3: 23). Christian workers may not be the most skilled, and Christian students may not be the most brilliant -- but they *should* be the hardest working when it's working time.

2 Opposite Extremes to Avoid

It's obvious we ought not be lazy loafers (just mentioned). Nor should we be workaholics either, who act just the opposite -- people who are driven by their job. Their job enslaves them and it seems they *can't* stop. Why not? Here are a few of many possible reasons.

1) Some folks may be workaholics *to compensate for feeling like an underachiever in other areas of life.* (I identify with Ziggy, who said, "I'm an under-achiever but I'm not very good at it.") That is, they find a sense of importance and fulfillment at work that they don't find anywhere else.

2) For others, being immersed in their job may serve as an escape from unhappy family relationships, or sad memories, or a guilt-ridden conscience.

3) Other workaholics may be running away not from circumstances but from God. They desperately fear having free time because they don't want to remember their failures and sins or to think about God, death or eternity. If someone has to be distracted by constant busyness (such as video games) or, for that matter, by noise of some kind all the time -- tv, radio, walkman, or cellphone, -- that seems to be a sign of inner emptiness of heart.

For these reasons, many people become compulsive workers. They never relax, and often have no time for family, friends, church, or the Bible.

However, more must be said. For more and more workers in our time are almost *compelled by their company or boss* to be workaholics! Vast changes have occurred in the past half-century. Few companies now seem to have any deep concern for their employees, and therefore few workers feel any strong loyalty for their company. In some cases long hours are demanded, or else! In other cases, workers desire to be fulltime but are restricted to part-time hours so the company need not provide benefits for them. Qualified Christian economists, businessmen and labor leaders need to seek fair and honorable solutions to these complex issues.

Now we turn to Ex.20:8-11. But before we read, notice some definitions: *Sabbath* in the Hebrew language means "rest" (not seventh). And *holy*

first of all means "distinct or different" (compare our term, the "Holy Bible"). So the command to keep this day holy means *treat it as different or distinct from the other days*, set it apart for God in a special way.

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. [*In His case, it was not rest from exhaustion but the rest of satisfaction. He ceased His creative activity because He was satisfied with the finished work He had produced.* --*avw*] Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Also notice a sentence Moses added in Deut. 5:15 when he repeated the ten commands. "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day."

Two Foundations are given for keeping this command. Observe it because God was their Creator, and also their Redeemer from Egypt. They were to "remember" and apply these facts. The command presupposes that six days (or at least most days) we will need to work. Then at least one day will be devoted to *resting and remembering*. The rest-day, then, is God's gift to His people: *leisure from our labor*. But it is also our duty to God: remember Him, worship Him -- it is a "sabbath to the Lord."

God knows we are like 7-day clocks. He made us so that we need to be wound up again -- by rest -- every week. Otherwise we run down. He knows that in the *rush-rush-rush* of life, we need to stop, rest, and review. We need to examine our hearts and our relation to Him. We need to be still and know that He is God -- to honor Him -- to be renewed by Him -- and thus be refreshed. So He gave us this command for our blessing.

James Packer says that "the sabbath was made a day of holy *Rest* [physically] so that it might be a day of holy *Work* [spiritually -- for God and others]. In our sedentary and lonely world, physical recreation and family fun will not be excluded from this holy work, but **worship and Christian fellowship will come first.**"

Differing Interpretations of This Command

Let's examine the three main views which various Christians take about the Sabbath.

View #1. Saturday is the Sabbath forever: We should keep it now as Israel kept it in OT times for it is God's unchanging moral law: This view is

held by the Seventh Day Adventists, and was taught by the late cult-leader Herbert W. Armstrong. (By the way, many in the Worldwide Church of God, which he founded, have now renounced his many heresies and become evangelicals -- i.e., grace-centered gospel-believers! They still strictly observe the Sabbath, but not as a matter of salvation. They no longer believe that disciples of the Lord who don't do so are lost.)

It's hard to accept this view, for the command was addressed to Israel -- never to us Christians. When the apostles at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 sent instructions to non-Jewish converts to Christ, they said nothing at all about the sabbath. And the apostles in the epistles never tell Christians to keep it. Instead they say in several places that we now are *not* under this law. (Dennis Allen's article says more about this.)

View #2. Saturday was the OT Sabbath day for the Jews, but now Sunday is *our* rest-day. We should keep Sunday strictly for rest and worship since it is the "Christian Sabbath." This was the interpretation held by most of the Puritans before, and some Evangelicals now hold it also.

View #3 (which I believe is correct) is this: The NT "Lord's Day" (as Sunday is called in Rev.1:10 and also in early Christian writings outside the NT) is not entirely like the OT Sabbath. In fact there's no such thing as a "Christian Sabbath" *laid down as a law* for the Church, God's New Covenant people. This command was addressed to Israel -- as all the 10 Commands were -- as an inseparable part of the Old Covenant, which ended at the Cross.

Someone may respond, "What?! The 10 Commands are not for the Church?! Then why devote these issues of *Word and Work* to them?"

I reply: Because nine of them are repeated in the New Covenant scriptures directed to us as the church, God's NC family. But this fourth command is not. Nor is sabbath-breaking mentioned in any list of sins after the church began. Rom.1:29-31 gives a roster of at least 17 evils; Gal.5:19-21 mentions 15; and 2 Tim.3:2-4 gives an ugly catalog of 18 vices. But, in contrast to the OT, sabbath-breaking is never included.

The clearest passage about this is Col.2:16-17. Paul says, "Do not let anyone judge you ... with regard to a religious festival [*yearly* feasts like the Day of Atonement, and Passover], a New Moon celebration [*special monthly* celebrations -- see Num. 10:10; 28:11ff.] or a Sabbath day [*the weekly day of rest*]." So he includes all the OC special days, saying they are not binding on the Church. Yet, as we'll see, a regular day of rest is an important *principle* just the same, so we should not just ignore it.

Perhaps you reply, "Now you've just confused me more. Make up your mind! Does this fourth command have *any relevance for us now, or not?*"

Yes it does, for in Mark 2:27 Jesus showed that the principle of a weekly rest-day is for our advantage. He said, "*The sabbath is made for man, not man for the sabbath.*" The legalistic, nit-picking scribes had added on to God's law countless detailed rules about that one command. According to Joy Davidman, "In Christ's time there were 1,521 things one could not do on the Sabbath" (*Smoke on the Mountain*). They made the day a dreary drudgery, an immense burden rather than a blessing. Jesus rebuked them for this, and rejected their human traditions. But in doing so, He did not altogether reject the principle of a rest-day. "*The sabbath is made for man.*" A weekly rest-day is for our help and health.

Evidence from History

History supplies examples of this. Notice three instances:

1 & 2. During the French Revolution (1789 and following) and also the Marxist Revolution in Russia (starting in 1917), the new governments -- both atheistic -- attempted to change the 7-day week. They lengthened the work-week to nine or ten workdays and then one day off. But both experiments failed. So in each case they later reverted to a 7-day week as Scripture describes it-- six days of work and one day of rest.

3. During a certain period of World War II England faced the awful threat of an invasion by Hitler. Reluctantly the English government cancelled all weekly days-off due to the emergency, resulting in seven days of work with no rest day. But in the following weeks they found that when workers were at their jobs 28 out of 28 days they produced less than when they worked only 24 out of 28 days! There were *worse results*, not better, due to the increase in sickness, careless mistakes, and friction among workers. So England too reverted to the Biblical pattern, even during that crisis time.

The sabbath -- a weekly day off from our usual work -- is God's good provision for us. He planned it to benefit His creatures. Yet it is not given to us Christians as a moral law which we should obey at all costs -- like the other nine. God knew that at times circumstances would make it impossible for believers to do this on a weekly basis. For example, many early Christians were slaves owned by unbelievers. Their masters would never let them take a day off from work. Yet where it is possible it is very important. Read on.

What to DO (and not do?) on the Lord's Day

Alex V. Wilson

[Read the preceding article first]

How do we apply all this in practical ways? What differences should it make? Here are four basic principles.

1. Assemble with God's people for teaching, worship and encouragement. The example of the first Christians is clear. They devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper and prayer (Acts 2:42). And Heb.10:25 commands us, "Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another."

Apart from this explicit duty there are no definite New Testament rules -- no code or list. But principles and examples are given.

2. We saw that Jesus said we need regular rest and renewal. This is the rest, not of *No* activity, but a *Change of activity* from our regular schedule, so we may be physically and mentally refreshed.

3. Deeds of kindness and service are encouraged. Examples include sharing the gospel, teaching God's word, visiting the lonely, and feeding the hungry (so fellowship-meals are okay!).

4. Jesus taught that deeds of mercy, emergency and necessary service are of course allowed. This includes the work of doctors and nurses, police and firemen, pastors and teachers. (See Matt. 12:1-14.) All these folks need to compensate somehow for their on-call-much-of-the-time status.

Point #2 above is where the rub is. To what extent and in what ways should we rest?

Some Snapshots from Modern History

Like the Jewish religious leaders during Jesus' day, many Puritans in England, Scotland and America made up detailed lists of restrictions. In the 1700s the Presbytery of Edinburgh denounced those who "immediately before public worship, and then after it is over, take recreation by walking in the fields or meadows, ... or profane the Sabbath by giving or receiving social visits, or by idly gazing out of windows beholding vanities abroad."

Many Americans in the 1800s also observed Sunday strictly, as Laura Ingalls Wilder described:

On Sundays Mary and Laura must not run or shout or be noisy in their play. Mary could not sew on her nine-patch quilt, and Laura could not knit on the tiny mittens she was making They might look quietly at their paper dolls, but they must not make anything new for them. They were not allowed to sew on doll clothes, not even with pins. They must sit quietly and listen while Ma read Bible stories to them, or stories about lions and tigers.... They might look at pictures, and they might hold their rag dolls nicely and talk to them. But there was nothing else they could do. --*Little House in the Big Woods*.

One Sunday Laura protested vehemently against the dullness of the day. So Pa told her a story about his father's boyhood, when restrictions were far more rigid than then. If you have this classic book around your house, read the humorous story of "Grandpa's Sled and the Pig" in chapter 5.

A few people today, wanting to please the Lord in this matter, raise numerous questions: If you are enrolled in school, is it okay to study your assignments on the Lord's Day -- if, of course, you first attend church? Is it all right to buy groceries? eat at a restaurant? attend or play in ballgames or other athletic meets? attend a concert, or movie? take a trip? What should parents allow their children to do?

We should refrain from being like the scribes, setting ourselves up as judges in areas where Scripture is silent. Where the Head of the church did not lay down detailed rules, we should refrain from doing it too -- *for other people*, that is. However we should study and reach convictions of our own. And in doing that, discussion with Christian friends can be very profitable. The complexities of modern life sometimes make it hard to know exactly what to do or not do, but let us neither neglect meeting with our fellow-believers regularly nor rob ourselves of the rest God knows we need. And since it is hard for most families to spend quality time together, the Lord's Day can help meet that need too. While some of our ancestors may have been legalistic, most Christians today have moved to the opposite extreme.

Cheer Up, the Worst is yet to Come

Amid the uncertainties some things are clear. One very obvious fact is this: In recent decades secularism and pluralism have spread deep and wide. So the former respect for Sunday as the Lord's Day has greatly dwindled. (When trains first began to run, for years they never operated on Sunday.) Also we face more and more competition for our use of time. I refer to rivals not just for after-church time, but for the whole Lord's Day. Nor do I refer to obviously bad activities but ones that are innocent in themselves. One early and strong rival

was/is Little League baseball. (Interestingly, people who often came to church late just *had* to get to those games on time! Hmmm.) Then other sports events became common. Then more stores began staying open on Sunday, and for longer hours. And more companies began requiring employees to work then. Mark my word, this trend will affect us more and more.

We will face more, not fewer, temptations along these lines -- as Christians did in the first three centuries! Sundays as non-work days were unknown till the early fourth century. Thus many Christians met before work hours. That was the only time available.

What if we faced the same dilemma? **Would you attend church if afterward you had to put in a full workday? Would we see you next Lord's Day at our 6:30 a.m. service, if that were the only time most of us could attend? Makes you think, doesn't it?** How much do Christ and His spiritual body the church mean to us? Would you never miss a meeting and never be late if the elders paid \$50 to everyone who arrived at the starting time? From another angle, would you regularly meet with the Lord's people if you had to pay to attend? What if the price of admission were the same as the cost of attending a movie, or concert, or ballgame? Our use of time and money reveals heaps about our heart condition.

Let's conclude where we began: "Two words summarize our lives: hurry and worry." How can we tame those two tyrants, and find freedom, and bring pleasure to the heart of our God? By zealously applying, as best we can, these principles:

1. The rest-day was made for man -- for our blessing.
2. The rest-day, then, is God's good gift to us, providing *leisure from our labor*.
3. But it is also our duty to God, that together with other disciples we might *remember and worship* Him. In other words, the rest-day was made a day of *holy Rest physically* so that it might be a day of *holy Work spiritually* -- for God.

Is Christ the Lord of your time? Is your schedule of worship, work and rest what He wants it to be? The writers Robinson and Winward put it this way:

It is God's plan to help us consecrate All of our time by a Special consecration of Part of our time.

[Be sure to read Darren Johnson's probing article too.]

“Think on These Things”

“Perhaps Jesus -- by His many miracles on the Sabbath -- was also demonstrating that the Endtime Sabbath (the Kingdom; the “Year of the Lord’s Favor”) was breaking into human history through His ministry. If so, His Sabbath acts (healing the hurting, befriending the neglected, delivering the oppressed) can give Christians some clue as to what it might mean to keep a ‘sabbath unto the Lord’ now.” --Darren Johnson

* * *

Some Quotations from Early Church History: *The Didache* (meaning *Teaching*) is a writing probably dating from the 90’s A.D. Its unknown writer says, “Having earlier confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure, come together each Lord’s day, break bread, and give thanks.”

Ignatius was a bishop who was taken to Rome and martyred there sometime between 108-115. In his *Letter to the Magnesians*, obviously referring to Jews who became believers in Jesus as Messiah, he writes, “Those who lived according to the old practices came to the new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath but living according to the Lord’s day, in which also our life arose through him and his death....”

The Epistle of Barnabas (not the Barnabas of the book of Acts), probably written during the 130’s, said, “We keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose from the dead.”

Justin, a teacher of Greek philosophy, was converted to Christ and became a leading defender of the faith to Greek and Roman intellectuals. He was executed because of his faith, and is usually called Justin Martyr. Around 150 he wrote, “On the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district.” He then describes a typical meeting: The writings of the apostles or prophets were read “as long as time permits,” and then explained and applied (the sermon). There were prayers, and the Lord’s Supper, and the offering of funds to help orphans, widows and others who are needy. He also wrote, “We all make our assembly on the day of the Sun, since it is the first day, on which God ... made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day.”

* * *

“Each of the Ten Commandments is an expression of an eternal principle, which stands under the new dispensation as well as the old. The great underlying thought of the fourth command is man’s need of physical rest and spiritual refreshment. The Sabbath was

made for *man*, to meet his need. In the Lord's day that need is met in a higher way, and it is not law now, but privilege But woe to the man who despises his privilege. He will suffer. Woe to the man who makes this day a day of secular activity, of work or hilarity or amusement, and forgets he has a soul to refresh by the study of the Word of God and prayer and work for Christ. He will suffer grievously in spirit, soul and body. But the Christian will not keep the Lord's day in the bondage of a servant under law, but in the joyous liberty of a child of God." --R. A. Torrey, evangelist, Bible teacher, author

* * *

Blue Laws? "Christians cannot of course force people to go to church, and would not wish to use legislation for this purpose. But we are anxious that the law will protect people from being obliged to work on Sundays (e.g. by an indiscriminate permission for spectator sports and open stores)." --John Stott in *Christian Basics*

The Gospel for the Weary

Reclaiming a Christ-like Perspective on the Sabbath

Darren Johnson

It's 8:00 AM. Brother Bob arrives at his church office. As always, he is greeted by a barrage of e-mails, phone messages, and multi-colored memo notes. In true biblical fashion, he winnows the messages until the most significant ones are separated from the chaff. Brother Bob then opens his day-planner and reviews his crammed itinerary: the weekly staff meeting at 9:00, the 10 o'clock Bible study at the retirement village, lunch with the Sunday school superintendent at noon, a counseling appointment at 1:30, hospital visitation at 2:45, Bobby Jr.'s tee-ball practice at 4:30, and a visit to the home of a prospective church member at 7:00. Somewhere in his web of commitments, this overworked minister hopes to complete the first draft of his Sunday morning message.

The working title: "Remember the Sabbath."

In this hectic world, where the Christian walk seems overrun by the rat race, how does one practice the biblical injunction to "remember the Sabbath and keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8)? Should one even bother with this outmoded command? Aren't Christians part of a new and busier covenant? Perhaps the "Lord of the Sabbath" can grant us a new perspective on this fourth but forgotten commandment.

The Son of Man Had No Time to Lay His Head?

At first glance, the life of Jesus might seem to offer little solace for Brother Bob and other frazzled souls. The Gospel accounts are not leisurely jaunts on the scenic byways of Palestine, but action-packed narratives that hurtle along like BMWs on the Interstate. Six days out of the week, Jesus was hounded by the Galilean paparazzi, mobbed by the needy, assailed by opponents, interrupted by howling demoniacs, and awoken by pestering disciples. No wonder Mark uses the word "immediately" over forty times in his Gospel; Jesus was a very busy man!

Then came the Sabbath, the blessed "day of rest." And what did Jesus do with the Sabbath? He abolished it, of all things! That, at least, is what many Christians assume. A careful reading of the Gospels, however, reveals that Jesus did not nullify the Sabbath, but fulfilled the Sabbath by restoring it to God's intended purpose. Indeed, the offer and experience of "Sabbath" are central to Jesus' mission...and ours.

No Rest for the Weary

Many readers are familiar with Christ's soothing invitation to the weary: "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). But most overlook the fact that this invitation prefaces a series of disputes between Jesus and his arch-critics, the Pharisees, over the true meaning of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14).

The Pharisees viewed Sabbath observance as an immovable boundary that distinguished the Jews from their pagan neighbors. To ensure that the Sabbath was observed without compromise, the Pharisees went beyond the strictures of the Law and built a chain-link fence of additional regulations around the fourth commandment. For example, the Pharisees limited writing on the Sabbath to one penstroke, no more!

Some went so far as to restrict women from looking into a mirror on the Sabbath, lest they see a gray hair and be tempted to pluck it out! In their zeal for safeguarding the holiness of the seventh day, the Pharisees transformed the Sabbath's rest into a cumbersome load of works.

A Fulfilling Sabbath

Jesus offered the weary a refreshingly different kind of rest -- a rest based not upon punctilious human performance, but upon the merciful character of God. In each of the Sabbath controversies, Jesus

peeled away the thick, often contradictory, layers of fallacious reasoning and revealed God's original design.

According to the Mosaic Law, the Sabbath was instituted by God for the benefit of His people. It was to be a day of renewal and recuperation for all, but especially for those most in need of rest from their labors: the outcast and poor, the alien and slave (Ex. 23: 12). In this way, the Sabbath not only commemorated the liberation of God's people from Egyptian slavery, but renewed this gracious freedom in their ongoing life (Deut. 5:5). The Sabbath rest was liberating, not burdensome. This idea was most clearly expressed in the observance of the Sabbath years (every seventh year) and the years of Jubilee (every fiftieth year). During these special times, ancestral properties were restored, debts were forgiven, slaves were emancipated, and fields were left fallow for the poor to glean (Lev. 25:8-55). Sadly, these laws were never put into full effect because of Israel's stubborn sin (2 Chron. 36:21). The Hebrew prophets, therefore, longed for a day when God would usher in an eternal Sabbath for His beleaguered people and sin-ravaged creation (Isa. 61: 1-3).

Jesus' teaching on the Sabbath should be viewed against this broad Old Testament backdrop. The Son of Man recognized that the Sabbath was instituted by God as a means of reinvigorating the weary, restoring the hurting, and releasing the oppressed. "Man was not made for the Sabbath," Jesus declared, "but the Sabbath for man" (Mk. 2:27). The Pharisees, unfortunately, had it all backwards. Their onerous traditions made the Jewish people a slave to the very law which was supposed to protect their liberty.

Jesus disclosed the true meaning of the Sabbath not only in word but in deed. At least six of Jesus' recorded miracles took place on the Sabbath (cf. Mk. 1:21-28; Lk. 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Jn. 5:1-9; 9:1-12, 14). It's as if Jesus made a point of using the Sabbath to reach out to those most burdened and alienated by the Pharisaic program of "purity." The Pharisees talked at great length about the fine points of Sabbath observance, but only Jesus shouldered the burdens of dispirited, oppressed people, enabling them to experience the fullness of God's rest. Rest from disease. Rest from injustice. Rest from the slavish quest for legalistic righteousness. Rest from the tyranny of sin. Eternal rest (Heb. 4:1-10; Rev. 14:13).

Taking Time-Out from the Rat Race

Multitudes found "Sabbath" in Jesus during the days of His earthly ministry. But where is the good news for weary people today? The Body of Christ must embody Jesus' invitation to rest. To take on His yoke and learn from Him is to become a rest-giver oneself. Unfortunately, it is easy for Christians to get so caught up in the rat race

that they fail to stop and lend a hand to those who have been trampled in the stampede down life's superhighway. In Augustine's commentary on the parable of the Good Samaritan, the ancient expositor likens the church to an inn. What a fitting image! Think of how your church can be an inn, a place of rest, for weary people. For the single mom forced to hold down two jobs. For the overworked and underappreciated employee. For the ten-year-old boy slaving away in a third-world sweatshop. For the world-weary pilgrim.

The life of a refresher, however, can be draining work. In your efforts to provide rest for others, do not allow yourself to become like Brother Bob, a potential casualty of physical fatigue and spiritual burn-out. Exhaustion is not a fruit of the Spirit. In the immortal words of Dick Vitale, "Take a T-O, baby!"

Jesus can help frazzled souls find the time-out they so desperately need. On numerous occasions, Christ himself shunned the din of the multitudes and retired to a tranquil place to commune with the heavenly Father (Mk. 1:35; 6:31-32; Lk. 6:12). As you follow Jesus and learn from His humble example, retire with Him to the rolling countryside or the prayer closet. Jesus balanced such moments of personal devotion with corporate worship on the Sabbath. As a flickering ember is reignited when it is placed among live coals, so a flagging Christian is recharged in the company of other worshipers. The Gospels also record that Jesus took a break from His hectic schedule to go on retreats with His closest companions, attend dinner parties, or just kick-back at a casual get-together. There is exhilarating joy in the Savior's Sabbath!

So let us sing the old hymn with new gusto, "Ye that labor and are heavy-laden....." There is good news for the weary, the worn-out, the work-aholic. That good news is found in Jesus Christ and His offer of a fulfilled Sabbath! It is a gift He graciously bestows upon all who accept His yoke of love and service.

* * *

"Our heart is restless until it rests in You."

Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*

DOES THE LAW OF MOSES APPLY TO CHRISTIANS?

David R. Reagan

This question has prompted fierce debate and sharp division within the Body of Christ. Churches have divided over it. New denominations have been formed as a result of it.

I receive at least one letter every week from a Seventh Day Adventist radio listener who tries to prove to me that the Law of Moses requires Christians to observe the Sabbath. Others write to encourage me to teach that Christians should observe the dietary rules of the Law, eating only kosher foods.

The attempt to apply the Law of Moses to contemporary professing Christians seems to be particularly popular among cultic groups, probably because it fits in so well with their legalistic approach whereby they try to control all the activities of their members. At the opposite extreme are the liberal theologians who tend to dismiss the Law as nothing more than "the tribal rules of a tribal god."

My Personal Heritage

When I was growing up, the church I was a member of taught that the Law of Moses was "imperfect" and thus had to be replaced by "the perfect Law of Christ." This assertion made me wonder how a perfect God could give an imperfect Law? I became even more confused when I noted that in the New Testament the Apostle Paul refers to the Law as "holy" (Romans 7:12) and "good" (1 Timothy 1:8). And Jesus Himself said He had not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17).

Our preachers were forever emphasizing that the Law had been "nailed to the Cross" and was thus invalidated by the death of Jesus. Unfortunately, they went even further, for they identified the Law with the Old Testament. They therefore argued that all the Hebrew Scriptures--the entire Old Testament--had been abrogated by the Cross.

We declared ourselves to be "a New Testament Church," and we considered the Old Testament to be inappropriate for serious study. We equated the Bible with the New Testament, and many of us did not even own a complete Bible. We had only a New Testament, with the Psalms added as a sort of devotional appendix. We viewed the Old Testament as a quaint story book to be used solely for the purpose of teaching children stories like Noah and the Ark.

A Reservoir of Ignorance

I have since discovered that this deprecating attitude toward the Old Testament is widespread within Christendom. The result is that most Christians are biblically ignorant regarding the content of the Hebrew Scriptures. Most would be embarrassed if they were asked to find the book of Hezekiah. They would be even more embarrassed to discover that there is no such book! This is a sad situation because the New Testament cannot be understood apart from the Old.

One result of this ignorance of the Old Testament is a grievous lack of knowledge concerning the Jewish roots of Christianity. Most Christians seem to be oblivious to the fact that the early church was composed entirely of Jews and that it was therefore thoroughly Jewish in its worship and customs.

I'm certain that most Christians would be surprised to learn that Paul was speaking of the Old Testament when he wrote the following words to Timothy: "... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15). Paul had to be talking about what we call the Old Testament because the New Testament did not even exist when he wrote those words.

Ignorance of the Hebrew Scriptures is also one of the most important reasons why there is so much confusion within the Christian community today regarding Bible prophecy. Take the book of Revelation for example. How can that book possibly be understood apart from the book of Daniel when the two fit together like a hand in a glove?

Or consider the fact that the book of Revelation contains more than 300 references to the Old Testament Scriptures, and not a one of those references is identified. A good example is the theme of the book. It is expressed in Revelation 1:7 where the reader is told that the Messiah is going to return in the clouds and those who pierced Him will see Him and mourn over Him. That verse is constructed from two Old Testament passages that are put end-to-end, one from Daniel 7 and the other from Zechariah 12.

The Meaning of the Law

The first point we all need to keep in mind is that the Law of Moses and the Old Testament are not synonymous. The Law of Moses constitutes only a small part of the Hebrew Scriptures. If the Law of Moses was nailed to the Cross, that nailing certainly did not include the Old Testament histories, the wisdom literature, or the prophetic books.

But was the Law itself, constituting most of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, invalidated by the Cross? Or, were only portions of it annulled--like the civil and ceremonial laws? What about the moral law as expressed in the Ten Commandments? Does it apply to Christians? And, if so, does that mean we should observe the Sabbath?

A Law for Israel Only

The fundamental point that must be kept in mind is that the Law of Moses was given to the nation of Israel and not to Gentiles or the Church (Deuteronomy 4:7-8; Psalm 147:19-20; and Malachi 4:4).

The Jews recognized this clearly in their oral law that was later catalogued in the Talmud. In their view, Gentiles were subject to the commandments of the Noahic Law, the law given to Noah after the flood. Those commandments are recorded in Genesis 9:1-17.

From those verses the rabbis drew seven laws for the Gentile nations. The first was an authorization of human government, with capital punishment required for the crime of murder. The other six laws consisted of prohibitions against blasphemy, idolatry, sexual impurity, theft, the eating of blood, and the devouring of a limb of an animal without killing it.

After the establishment of the Church, the issue of the application of the Law of Moses arose when Gentiles began to accept the Gospel. Should these new converts be required to obey the Law of Moses, including the rite of circumcision?

The issue was so important that a church conference was called in Jerusalem to debate the matter. After extensive discussion, it was decided that the Gentiles should not be "troubled" with the observance of the Mosaic Law except for four rules (Acts 15:1-29).

The rules selected were abstinence from fornication and abstinence from the eating of blood, things sacrificed to idols, and things strangulated (Acts 15:20,29). All of these prohibitions had been included in the Noahic Law for the Gentiles that preceded the Law of Moses. So, Gentile converts to Christianity were not subjected to any laws that were unique to the Mosaic system.

A Temporary Law

Another foundational point is that the Law of Moses constituted a temporary system. God never intended it to be permanent.

The other covenants that God made with Israel--the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Land covenants--are all declared to be "everlasting"

(Genesis 17:7; 2 Samuel 23:5; and Psalms 105:8-11). The Mosaic Law is never classified in Scripture as eternal. In fact, Jeremiah prophesied that it would be replaced by a "new covenant."

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers . . . My covenant which they broke . . ." --Jeremiah 31:31-32

In the very next chapter, Jeremiah proclaims that this "new covenant" will be an "everlasting one" (Jeremiah 32: 40). This New Covenant is the one that was mediated by the blood of Jesus. The writer of the Hebrew letter affirms that it invalidated the Mosaic Covenant (Hebrews 8: 1-13 and 9: 15-16) and that it is eternal in nature (Hebrews 13: 20).

A Total Abrogation

The annulment of the Mosaic Law was total in nature. The Bible never speaks of portions of the Law being "carried over" into the New Covenant. As the Hebrew writer reminds us, the giving of the New Covenant "has made the first obsolete" (Hebrews 8:13).

This includes even the Ten Commandments, as Paul makes clear in 2 Corinthians 3: 6-9. In that passage Paul states that we are "servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life". He then refers to the "letters engraved on stones" as a "ministry of death" (verse 7) and a "ministry of condemnation" (verse 9).

The "letters engraved on stones" is a direct reference to the Ten Commandments. Those were the only commandments in the Law of Moses that were written on stone by the finger of God. All the rest of the remaining 603 commands were written down by Moses at the instruction of God.

Does this mean the Ten Commandments are no longer applicable to Christians? Not necessarily. It means that as part of the Law of Moses they no longer apply. But any of them that are incorporated in the Law of Christ do apply--and the fact of the matter is that nine of the ten have been included in the New Covenant and have even been expanded to cover our thought life (see for example, Matthew 5: 21-48). The only one that is not mentioned in the New Covenant is the command to keep the Sabbath.

An Illustration

The best explanation I have ever run across of the relationship between the Law of Moses and the New Covenant of Jesus is one I found recently in an article by the Messianic Jewish evangelist and scholar, Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum. Here's how he illustrated the relationship:

I received my first driver's license in the state of California. As long as I drove in California, I was subject to the traffic laws of that state. But two years later I moved to New York.

Once I left California, I ceased to be under California's traffic laws. The traffic laws of that state were rendered inoperative in my case. Now my driving was subject to a new law—the traffic laws of the state of New York.

There were many laws that were different. In California I was permitted to make a right turn at a red light after stopping and yielding the right-of-way. But in New York this was not permitted.

On the other hand, there were many similar laws between the two states, such as the edict to stop at red lights. However, when I stopped for a red light in New York, I did not do so in obedience to the state of California as I once had, but in obedience to the state of New York. Likewise, if I went through a red light without stopping, I was not guilty of breaking California law but New York law. Many laws were similar, but they were, nevertheless, under two distinctly different systems.

This illustration should make it clear what I mean when I say that the Law of Moses has been nullified and that we are now under the Law of Christ. The two laws have many different commandments. For example, under the Law of Moses the eating of pork was forbidden. The Law of Christ permits it. But there are also similar commandments. Thus, both prohibit adultery and theft. But if you commit adultery, you stand guilty of violating the Law of Christ, not the Law of Moses.

Freedom in Christ

So, the answer to our original question. "Does the Law of Moses apply to Christians?" is that Christians are free from the necessity of keeping any of the commands of the Mosaic Law. But, it is very important to keep in mind that Christians have the freedom in Christ to observe portions of the Mosaic Law if they so please.

This point is what Romans 14 is all about. That chapter makes it clear that a Christian has the freedom to observe or not observe the Jewish feast days and dietary laws. Paul wrote that chapter, and he practiced it by observing the Sabbath, the feast days, the laws pertaining to vows and the purification laws. Yet, he did not try to enforce these observances upon other Christians.

Like Paul, many Messianic Jews today observe various portions of the Law of Moses. They have the freedom in the Messiah to do so. But they must be cautious that they do not carry their observance too far. Here is how Dr. Fruchtenbaum expresses that caution:

There are two dangers that must be avoided by the Messianic Jew who chooses to keep portions of the Law of Moses.

One is the belief that one who does so is contributing to his own justification and sanctification. This is false and must be avoided. The second danger is that one may demand or expect others to also keep the Law. This is equally wrong and borders on legalism.

The one who exercises his freedom to keep the Law must recognize and respect another's freedom not to do the same.

The Words of Jesus

Some of you at this point may be wondering what Jesus meant when He said in His sermon on the mount in Galilee, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). How can these words be reconciled with my conclusion that the Law has been abolished?

The answer is so obvious that it is hard to see. The Law of Moses did not end with the coming of Jesus or with the initiation of His ministry--but with His death. As long as Jesus lived, He--as a Jew--was under the Mosaic Law and was obligated to fulfill it, which He did perfectly. But when He died, He became the testator of a New Covenant that completely replaced the Old.

The Question of Salvation

One final point--many people are under the mistaken impression that a different way of salvation existed under the Law of Moses. The argument usually goes this way: under the Mosaic Law salvation was obtained by obedience to the Law; whereas today, under the New Covenant, salvation is by grace through faith.

Obedience to the Law never saved anyone; first, because it was impossible to obey the Law perfectly, and second, because the sacrifice of animals was insufficient to atone for human sin.

The law served as a tutor to prepare people for the coming of the Messiah (Galatians 3:24). It did this first of all by convicting people of their sins. Second, it motivated them in this sin-consciousness to look for a Messiah who would shed his blood to atone for their sins.

-- From Lamb and Lion Lamplighter

The Sabbath Principle

Rod Cameron

One of the big problems facing Christians today is referred to as stress or burnout, depending on its intensity. Big business piles on the work and then gives courses in 'Stress Management.' Denominations provide counselors and retreats without addressing the workload. We tend to deal with the cure instead of the prevention. God had a better idea.

The Ten Commandments are not just law. They are expressions of universal and eternal principles. We recognize that in all but the fourth commandment which we deliberately ignore--the principle of periodic rest.

In Genesis 2:2 we read, "He rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." "Rested" is the root word for Sabbath, (shabath) which means 'to repose, i.e., to desist from exertion.'

In Exodus 16, we find the first establishment of the Scriptural Sabbath (shabath) in regard to the gathering of the manna. The Israelites were forbidden to keep any manna over till the next day with the exception of the sixth day. Then they were to gather for two days and cook what they would eat that day and the next. No cooking on the Sabbath. OK, we'll eat out!

In Exodus 20 we find the Ten Commandments and a clarification of the Sabbath principle in verses 8 through 11. It is made clear that everyone and everything is to "desist and repose" (quit and rest) every seventh day. Four verses are devoted to the fourth commandment, more than any of the other nine. God must have thought it important. How dare we totally ignore it?

Without a penalty, there is no law, so Exodus 31:12-17 provides the death penalty and Numbers 15:32-36 established that it was applied, in this case, to a man collecting sticks (working) instead of resting on the Sabbath. God was really serious about this rest. It was a demonstration of faith by the children of Israel, even to a prohibition of kindling a fire on the 'rest' day. (This was in the days of wood fires.) Could you try to keep the fire going? Would a microwave be OK or is it cold meals? Let's not become legalistic Pharisees.

God expanded on the Sabbath principle in Leviticus 25:2-13 with the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee when the land was to rest. As far as we can tell, the Jews never kept those years of rest for the land,

but God took care of that the way He said He would. Second Chronicles 36:20, 21 explains that the seventy years of captivity were to enable the land to rest. It is interesting that historically recessions run in a seven-year cycle and depressions in a fifty-year cycle. God will see that His will be done, but we would probably have better soil and less of a farm problem if we practiced it willingly.

Nehemiah even established some "blue laws" (Nehemiah 13:15-22) to prevent a repetition of the sin and punishment cycle. He indicated that the wrath of God had come upon Israel because of the violation of the Sabbath principle and all that it implies.

Jesus' view--The Pharisees had a lot of rules about the fourth commandment. This was one of the charges they brought against Jesus--violation of the Sabbath, based on their legalistic application. In Matthew 12:10-13 we find Jesus healing the man with the withered hand. There was no law against healing. Who could violate it but God, at any rate? Still, the Pharisees were against it. Jesus established the principle of doing good on the Sabbath with His 'sheep in the pit' story.

In Mark 2:27, 28, Jesus not only established His authority over the Sabbath, but pointed out that it was for man's good, not God's. We could avoid a lot of needless stress by keeping a Sabbath regularly. James Dobson points out that over-commitment is the greatest enemy of the American home today. I talked with professors from two of our biggest Bible colleges. I asked, "How do you deal with the problem of burnout?" The answer was, 'Turnover.' What a waste! Then I asked Lowell Lusby of Kentucky Christian College at Grayson. He drawled, "Well, we haven't ever really had that problem." I asked, "Do you think it might be because of the Appalachian philosophy?" He grinned, "You know, they don't 'get too excited about work.' I think he's on to something!

There seems to be a sort of spiritual machoism about overwork among Christians. I asked one man if he took a Sabbath each week. He boasted, "No, I don't have to. I'm the kind who has to be busy all the time, seven days a week, at fourteen different things at the same time. I don't need to rest."

I said, "I believe you have had two heart attacks and have had to cut back on your work load. Isn't that right? And didn't you rest then?"

"Yes," he sheepishly admitted.

Which day should we keep? I think Romans 14 and Colossians 2:16, 17 makes it clear that we no longer have special religious days. All our days belong to God, but the Sabbath principle still applies. We still need one day out of seven to rest.

The preacher can't rest on Sunday. That's his most stressful day. However, most everybody else should be able to rest then. My wife and I try to rest on Thursday because that's when the witch doctors in the Zambezi Valley said to rest. You may laugh, but there is a lot of significance in that. How did those pagans know that man needed one day out of seven to rest?

Could it be that this eternal principle of rest is clearly seen through the nature of man?

Our neo-pagan culture has been influenced by the "work ethic" to the extent that we read "rest" as "loaf" and "relaxing" as "being lazy." No wonder we have trouble when we try to "wait on the Lord." We no longer can "be still and know that I am God."

Plan now to restore the Sabbath principle in your life. It just might help your disposition and creativity and turn back the tide of heart disease, cancer, divorce, burnout, etc. The Sabbath was made for man. Take advantage of it.

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The 5th COMMANDMENT

As we study the 10 commands, the attitudes and feelings we take toward God's Law and God the Lawgiver are of vast importance. Are they orders barked out by a dictatorial drill-sergeant? -- "Do this! - Don't do that!"

NO, of course not! Oh it's true that God demonstrated His overpowering awesomeness when He spoke from heaven accompanied by lightning, thunder and fire. Yet remember: He had *chosen* them for special privileges, and *liberated* them from powerful enemies who had enslaved them. He had proved how much He loved them.

It will help us to know that the Hebrew word for 'law,' *torah*, often refers not to decrees handed down by a domineering government, but to *parental teaching*--"the sort of instruction a good parent gives his child. That will give us a right idea of the nature and purpose of God's law. It is there to lead us into those ways that are best for us.

God's parental law expresses God's parental love." (James Packer, *I Want to be a Christian*)

They *are* Commands, not just suggestions. But the Lord Himself said to Moses, "Oh that their hearts would be inclined to *fear* me(!) and keep my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever" (Deut.5:29).

Thus one writer calls these precepts not the ten commandments but God's *tenDER* commandments. Amen to that!

Review & Preview

Command #1 is related to our *will or loyalty* (Who we worship), while #2 applies to our *mind or thinking* about the Supreme Being (How we worship). #3 pertains to our *tongue* (how we speak of and to Him) -- and #4 is related to our *time and rest and work*. Now #5 points out responsibilities within *the family*.

Notice that the first four commands are about our duties toward the Lord, and #5-10 tell our duties toward our fellow-humans. Number Five, being about the family, is the logical bridge between God and men. For it is in the family, the basic unit of society, that we first learn attitudes toward both God and others. Attitudes *learned from* parents and *taken toward* parents by and large will shape a child's attitude toward Authority in later life -- the authority of teachers, employers, the government, and the Lord. This precept is foundational.

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

(Ex.20:12. NIV used throughout.)

To Honor one's parents surely includes (1.) Obedience. Children should obey whether it pleases them or not, whether it is convenient or not. That's the general rule which Paul gives to children in the NT, based on this command which he quotes. (Eph.6:1-3; Col.3:20.)

The obligation is clear. But there are a few limits. Sometimes, though rarely, "there are parents who do not deserve the obedience of their children because they ask for what a child has no right to give, the sacrifice of its conscience. But such cases are the exception." (John Eddison, *Christian Standards*.) Jesus said that anyone who loves his parents more than he loves Him is not worthy of Him. This makes it clear that occasions may arise when Christ's will and our parents' are clearly opposed, and what He requires of us in such cases. (Matt.10: 37).

There also is an expiration date to the duty to obey. "There comes a time in every family when parents have no longer the right to expect obedience, nor need children feel obliged to give it. Just when this

comes depends upon many things. I would say that the right expires when children are no longer dependent upon their parents. The girl who is married or the boy who is earning his own living, cannot be ordered about like children, and no sensible parents would try to do it.” (Eddison).

When God first mentions marriage, He tells of the bride and groom *leaving* their parents as well as *cleaving* to each other. They form a new family. (Gen.2:24.) Nevertheless, the exceptions merely prove the usual rule. And that rule is, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord. Honor your father and mother.” Whether it pleases you or not; whether it is convenient or not.

A professor at Wheaton College told of a girl who, after graduating from college, “felt the Lord’s leading to join a particular Christian organization. She took the basic training of this ministry and saw the immense need in the world for people to know Christ. She was thrilled about the prospect of joining the organization and helping to meet the need. However, her parents asked her to live at home for a year and teach school. What should she do? What would *you* have done? Or perhaps better still, what was *God’s* desire?

I think the Lord speaks explicitly to this situation, and many others involving parents and children, in the 5th commandment... The girl went home in obedience to her parents and taught school for a year. Today she will tell you how thankful she is that she did – for at the conclusion of her year at home, her parents were killed in a car accident. What if she had not obeyed God and His Word?” (– Ralph Alexander.)

(2.) To Honor your parents also includes Respect. Prov. 23:22 says, “Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.” Mark Twain said that when he was sixteen years old he was really ashamed of how dumb his pa was, but when he got to be twenty-one he was amazed at how much the old man had learned in just five years. Yes, the old folks may fumble around on the computer (if they even know how to turn it on), but in the basic matters of life they’ve learned a thing or two. They deserve a careful hearing even if in the end you feel it best not to follow their advice.

This respect, by the way, should be extended to older people in general. “Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat... older women as mothers” (1 Tim.5:1-2). I well remember how my father taught and demonstrated this trait, going out of his way to express interest and concern for the elderly.

To honor parents means to respect them (always), obey them (usually) and also (3.) Love and care for them, especially because of the

love and care they gave us when we were helpless, troublesome babies.

Listen to them. Tell them your plans, hopes, and views. Ask them about the old days. Write to them! Visit them. James Packer tells how one of his university classmates achieved a brilliant academic career, but grew ashamed of his parents (his father was a baker), and would not visit them or let them visit him. *How sad; how disgraceful!*

Scripture is clear that we should provide for them financially, too. 1 Tim.5: 4,8 says, "If a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God....If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever."

A Sweeping Promise, a Basic Principle

We have contemplated God's Command, now let's ponder His Promise: "Honor your father and your mother . . . so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." In writing to Christians Paul applied the promise in this way, "...that you may enjoy long life on the earth" (Eph.6:3).

Hmmm. Probably you can think of lots of exceptions to that promise. Our Lord Jesus obeyed this command, yet He died young. And so have many of His outstanding servants. And some wicked folks live long lives. So how can we explain all this? Critics seem to be right when they say, "See, God doesn't keep His promises. You have just admitted it."

Well, first we should realize that this is a *general rule* -- a promise made to many people concerning this present life. In such instances, exceptions occur by the very nature of the case. Yet though life does not always work out that way, the statement is an abiding basic principle. Young people who constantly ignore the advice or rebel against the commands of their parents (and other adults too) usually suffer serious consequences. Sometimes fatal consequences. You probably know of some such cases. Those who honor and obey their parents improve their chances of long life. There are exceptions, but they are exceptional.

Second, this was originally a *national promise*, made to Israel as a people about to enter the promised land. It was not about longevity of life so much as about permanent possession of property -- the land God was about to give them. Looking at the command in this way, Joy Davidman sums it up, "Honor your parents lest your chil-

dren dishonor you.” When such dishonor becomes widespread, whole nations crumble -- as we in the U.S. see occurring today. Davidman concludes, **“A society that destroys the family destroys itself.”** That happened to Israel later. Due to their moral collapse in home and worship, the Lord let foreign nations conquer and deport them from the promised land. The strength of any nation (and any church) depends to a vast extent on the strength of its families.

God, give us Christian homes! Christians, honor God by honoring your parents.

* * *

“Some people are offended by Jesus’ words that unless we ‘hate’ our parents and other relatives, we cannot be his disciples (Luke 14:26). It is a good example both of the dramatic way in which he taught and of the Hebrew habit of expressing a comparison by a contrast. We certainly must not interpret him literally. How could he tell us one moment to love our enemies and the next to hate our parents? The clue is found in the parallel passage in Matthew’s gospel, where Jesus states that anyone who *loves his parents more than he loves him* (Jesus) is not worthy of him (Matt.10:37).” (John Stott, *Christian Basics*)

Show a Little Appreciation

Bill Hybels

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you.” Exodus 20:12 (NASB)

A great way to honor our parents is by appreciating what they’ve done for us. Most of us can honestly say that our parents have made a larger investment in our lives than anyone else. I didn’t realize that twenty years ago.

But the experience of being a parent myself has taught me some valuable lessons.

When my wife became pregnant with our first child, she had no idea what was in store for her. She didn’t know she would spend the next nine months fighting desperately to “keep her lunch down.” She didn’t know that the miraculous, yet traumatic, experience of child-birth would arouse such fears in her. She didn’t know that nighttime feedings, dirty diapers, and interrupted plans would be so overwhelming.

Nor did I know how drastically children would alter our lifestyle. Or how hard it would be to coordinate family needs and ministry needs. Or how challenging the role of being a father would be.

It has been estimated that it will cost the average parents hundreds of thousands of dollars to raise one child from infancy to eighteen years of age. But that monetary investment is nothing compared to the investment of time, concern, prayer, and planning that most parents put into their child-rearing practices. My wife and I discussed our children more frequently than any other subject during their formative years. How could we best meet their needs? How could we stimulate their minds? How could we build their self-esteem? How could we help them uncover their strengths and abilities?

Parents have to grapple with these and many other issues. Because we're imperfect, we make mistakes and have regrets. But the fact remains that we make a tremendous investment in the lives of our children. Our love for them demands it.

What's the best way to crush your parents' spirits? Just neglect to show appreciation for what they do. Keep on taking, taking, taking, without ever saying "thank you" -- without ever showing gratitude.

On the other hand, what's the best way to lift your parents' spirits? Show a little appreciation. You don't have to get fancy. Just say, "Thanks for preparing that meal. It was great." Or, "I really appreciate the way you do my laundry." Or, "It's nice of you to pick me up from school."

When my kids thank me for simple things, it makes a tremendous difference in my attitude toward parenting. It motivates me to make even greater investments in their lives. The same thing happens when they obey me without an argument or display an attitude of respect. When they honor me, they encourage me to be the best parent I can be.

If your parents are still living, you have hundreds of opportunities every day to offer obedience, respect, and appreciation. Why not take advantage of this? Your parents will benefit by it -- and so will you.

--Excerpted from *Engraved On Your Heart, Living the Ten Commandments Day by Day*, Cook Communications Ministries, 2000. Used by permission. The author, Bill Hybels, is the Senior Pastor at Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, IL. He is a husband, father, speaker, and the author of numerous books.

The Ministry of Motherhood

Rick Atchley

I've seen her in every congregation where I have ever preached. She usually sits at the back of the auditorium. She is accompanied by two or three young children, but no other adult. She attempts to sing or listen to the sermon, but most of her time is spent just trying to keep her kids quiet. Coloring books and Cheerios spend much more time in her hands than the Bible.

If this wasn't frustrating enough, she has to endure countless gazes from those around her who have forgotten how their own kids behaved, and are now terribly "distracted" by hers. When the assembly is dismissed, she looks exhausted more than uplifted. She trudges with her troops back to the car, and wonders if it was worth it.

To many, she and her children were nuisances. To me, she is among the grandest of all saints. Before you take another look at her, read on. You are probably aware that the only family Paul ever mentions are his brothers and sisters in Christ. He never married. He never had kids. Yet there was one who was a son in the faith to him, and as dear as anyone he ever knew.

That young man's name was Timothy; Paul met him on his second missionary journey when he returned to the town of Lystra. In that little band of saints, there was an elderly sister and her daughter. Though both were Jews, the daughter had married a gentile man who apparently had never converted to the Christian faith (Acts 16:1-3). To this marriage a son had been born, and through the influence of these two ladies, he became a Christian. The brothers in Lystra spoke well of him, and an immediate bond was established between Timothy and Paul.

This young man, Timothy, apparently filled a void in the apostle's heart that had been there since John Mark's departure. Later Paul would write, "I have no one else like him.. ..Timothy, has proved himself because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel" (Philippians 2:20,22). It is not surprising then, that the last letter Paul ever wrote that became Scripture was to Timothy: It might be surprising, though, to learn that some of Paul's last words to his son in the faith were to remind Timothy of the ministry of his mother!

What had this grand lady done? First she had instilled in her son a respect for the Scriptures.

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it,

and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" Timothy 3:14-15).

First, notice that Timothy's exposure to Scripture began when he was a very young child. The first thing Timothy learned about was God. Paul reminded Timothy of that and of "those from whom you learned it," namely his mother and grandmother. Eunice and Lois did not take those early years for granted. They shared the faith of their people so this young lad would have the moorings he would need as he grew up in a predominantly pagan environment. Surely this training prepared Timothy well for the first time he heard the gospel, and motivated him to accept Jesus as both Messiah and Lord.

Second, this great lady instilled in her son an authentic faith.

"I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded, now lives in you also" (2 Timothy 1:5).

Faith is not inherited--it is learned. And so Eunice was not just a mother; she was a model. She understood that it would not be enough for her young son to read about faith from a scroll. He needed to see faith lived out in a life.

The word Paul uses to describe Timothy's faith as being sincere literally means "non-hypocritical," and Paul adds that this same quality of faith lived in his mother Eunice. In other words, her love for God and his will was not phony. It was genuine to the core, and Timothy picked up on that. After all, no one knows better whether a parent's Christianity is authentic than the children. Timothy saw something sincere in his mother that was appealing.

Third, this godly woman must have instilled in her son a desire to minister. Apparently, Timothy eagerly accepted Paul's invitation to travel with him and be trained on the mission field. He had already been doing some preaching in the area. Even the fact that Paul had been stoned and left for dead the last time he had come through town did not deter the young man from answering the call. Now how can that kind of commitment to ministry develop, if it has been discouraged at home?

Could that be the reason why the number of young people among us who want to enter the ministry is in decline? Yet there was a woman who loved her son enough to share the Scriptures and her faith with him and loved God enough to let him go when the call came. Ask any mother of a missionary if that is easy. When Timothy left Lystra it is probable that he never made it back. It is significant that Eunice is never

addressed in any of Paul's letters. No doubt tears filled her eyes as she watched her boy walk out of town. But how her heart soared as she witnessed the fulfillment of what she had prayed and prepared for since before he could crawl.

Fourth, and finally, perhaps the most amazing thing about this wonderful sister is that she did all of these things for her son with no encouragement from her husband. That is not to say that Timothy's father was a bad man. He may have been a good man in many ways, but he left no spiritual deposit on his boy. That is not how God meant for it to be, but in that home, and in millions since, that is the way it was. Nevertheless, Paul found in the young man a deep sensitivity to spiritual things. Never underestimate the influence of a godly mother.

Now take another look at that woman mentioned at the first of this article. Does she need your glares and frowns? Does she need more discouragement? Or, could she not instead use some support, some respect, some appreciation? It bothers me that all some church folks seem concerned about with such a woman is how to keep her kids quiet. It seems to me that we need to ask how we can help that sister hang in there when it doesn't even seem worth it, and how the church can assist her in making a spiritual deposit in those kids in the absence of a father who will do so.

Perhaps I empathize with these ladies more than most. I should, for I owe my salvation to one. You see, my grandmother was one of those women who dragged her two boys to church Sunday after Sunday by herself. At my birth, she was the only one of my grandparents who was a Christian. Yet her influence upon my father was profound, and I enjoyed the tremendous blessing of being raised in a Christian home.

Today I'm blessed to serve with a great church and have been afforded the privilege of addressing saints across the nation. My grandmother, on the other hand, served the Lord in an inconspicuous way in central Texas. She is not well known, she has received no honorary doctorates, her name has never appeared in any major publication, yet I want you to know that I would not be a Christian today, much less a preacher, if it were not for the stubborn faith of Anna Atchley. (By the way, her husband, my grandfather, later did accept Christ and became an elder and served the church. Godly wives can have great influence, too.)

So, take special care of those ladies who sit at the back of the auditorium. That little boy beside her could be the next Timothy: I wonder who will be his Paul?

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[Continued from Inside Front Cover]

of them thought of the megachurch, Southeast Christian Church. This was confusing. "With God's leading, we have worked hard on the refocusing of our mission and have stated it through the development of a new mission statement. As we begin anew, our goal is to develop a healthier body and sharpen our focus on a missional, rather than maintenance, model of serving." From the Shepherds of Living Stone.

Graduate Student from Japanese School of Evangelism Jun-ichi Uzawa writes: "Thank you for coming to Warabi Church of Christ and having fellowship with us. I was encouraged very much because I could see you were working hard for the God's glory, serving people. I pray for all works in Jesus' name." Jun-ichi and his wife will be moving to Ibaraki prefecture soon to begin apprentices work in one of our churches there. Pray for this dedicated young man and his wife.

"Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:6) has certainly taken on new meaning. Smoke billowed over the West Bank town of Bethlehem recently as scores of Palestinian gunmen hid inside the Christian shrine, revered as the birthplace of Jesus, as they sought refuge from an attack by Israeli troops. With these daily newsbriefs, more and more people are turning to the Word of God for answers. Will you "be

ready to give an answer concerning the hope that is in you..." (1 Peter 3:15)?

School of Biblical Studies...continues to provide an opportunity for a thorough grounding in the Word of God for all who wish to serve the Lord Jesus Christ and His church. At the SBS lecture-ship last month, John McNerney (minister at Parksville) received his certificate for finishing the 2-year "associate" course. He plans to go on for SBS' 4-year degree. The Parksville members say his studies have added depth and insights to his preaching.

As the Spring Semester for 2002 comes to a close will you consider taking classes during the fall semester which will begin the week of August 19th? You may contact Portland Christian School at 2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212 or call (502) 778-6114.

LaGrange Revival...was held the first week in April and once again the fellowship was encouraging as sound Bible teaching was presented each night. Thank the Lord for Bro. Louis Schuler and his dedicated help-meet Joyce who continue to serve this congregation.

Linton Indiana Church of Christ announces their spring revival with Bro. Dale Offutt (voice of Words of Life Radio) for April 7-12, 2002. For more information contact Jerry Carmichael at (812) 847-4571.

Kentucky-Indiana Christian Fellowship Week - August 5-8, 2002. This year's theme: "Renewing our Commitment to a Life of Holiness." *Evening* speakers will include: Gary Pearson, Ron Wagoner, Earl Mullins Sr., & Julius Hovan. Mark your calendar and plan now to attend this great time of fellowship. Great congregational singing begins each night at 7:30 p.m. at Sellersburg, Ind. *Day* sessions will be at Portland Ave. Church, Louisville, from 9:00 to 2:00. More details later.

5th Sunday Sing in Central Kentucky was hosted the first of April at the Ebenezer Church of Christ and as always everyone was edified through song. Churches represented included Bohon, Ebenezer, Parksville, Cramer, and Mackville. The next 5th Sunday Sing is scheduled for June 30, 2002 and to be hosted by the Parksville Church where SBS graduate John McNerney ministers. Time is 6:30 p.m.

The 5th-Sunday Singing Meeting in the Louisville area was held on - guess what? - the 5th Sunday also! About 150 gathered at Portland Church. Graham McKay stirred us with stories of song-writers Charles Wesley, Bill Gaither, Tillit Teddlie, P.P. Bliss, Joseph Scriven, and William Cowper. Thus we sang their songs with thoughtful enthusiasm.

Longtime preacher Kenneth Lawyer had a fatal heart attack on Wed. April 3. He was in the

yard at the time, and must have died almost immediately. We hope to have an obituary next month.

"Islam is a religion in which god requires you to send your son to die for him. Christianity is a faith in which God sends his Son to die for you.--Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft, quoted by Cal Thomas.

Notable & Quotable: "Christianity is incomprehensible without Judaism, as Judaism is incomplete without Christianity." So said Benjamin Disraeli, the Jewish-Christian Prime Minister of England in the mid-1800s. This was quoted in the Christian news-magazine, *World*, in its special Passover/Easter 2002 issue. The theme of that issue is "Jewish/Christian Relations, Past and Present." It contains over 45 pages on that theme, with many articles, pictures, quotes, and a timeline. Order a copy from World Circulation Dept., PO Box 420235, Palm Coast FL 32142-0235

New Bible School in Winchester, Ky.: The Winchester Center for Biblical Studies is a college-level organization which will soon seek to be licensed by the Ky. Dept. of Education. Its classes meet in what many W&W readers will remember as the Olmstead Library at Southeastern Christian College. WCBS works alongside a Winchester branch of Lexington Community College, which has

renovated the library into a classroom building.

WCBS began in Aug. '01 with a board of conservative Christians in Winchester (including David Lanier and Ben Rake Jr.--graduates of S.C.C.). They seek to work together to establish a program of college-level Bible studies to prepare God's servants to better accomplish His work. After an initial unadvertised semester which included one class, Harmony of the Gospels, with 7 students, WCBS has begun the spring semester with about 40 students. Classes offered are Romans (offered as an extension class of Louisville Bible College), the Parables, Wisdom Literature, and Harmony of the Gospels again.

"Where is the Lord leading?" We do not know beyond this semester and beyond our present classes offered, although plans are being made for the future. L.C.C.-Winchester has a vision for being a center for points east, and a student from Georgetown is enrolled. Please pray for the Lord's continual blessing." The School of Biblical Studies in Louisville is in touch regarding possibilities of cooperating. --Information supplied by Ben Rake Jr.

Still a Good Test of Love: "I love you not for what you are but for what I am when I am with you."

YOUR ATTENTION, PLEASE:

Starting last Sept. we reluctantly raised our subscription price to \$11/year. (That's still a low price considering our costs; and in bundles of 10 or more magazines sent to the same address, the cost is only @ \$10). Yet despite our repeated announcements we recently received several renewals with only \$8 (our former price) enclosed. [It's hard to form new habits. Also I must admit that the Jan. issue relapsed and gave the old price rather than the present one.]

We try to keep our prices as low as possible, but inflation keeps on making our expenses swell up. If our financial situation does not improve, we'll have no choice but to up the price of our Bible class quarterlies too.