

FAMILY WORSHIP HELPS

WEEK 53

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS

QUESTION 57: *Which is the fourth commandment?*

ANSWER: The fourth commandment is, "Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it."



MONDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Exodus 20:8-11

Key Thought: *The 4th commandment is unique among the decalogue.*

Questions:

- ☞ Can you see anything in the form or wording of the 4th commandment that sets it apart from the other nine? (Some have found at least four special characteristics.)
- ☞ To whom does this commandment apply?
- ☞ How does this commandment relate to the first three?
- ☞ In the simplest terms, what does this commandment say?

Prayer

Notes: This week we begin studies on the 4th commandment, which requires the sanctification of the Sabbath Day. Of all the commandments, this is perhaps the most controversial. There are many who accept the validity of the other nine, but insist that the 4th commandment ceased to be binding upon Christians after the resurrection of Jesus. Throughout the week, we will examine the arguments against Sabbath-keeping, and seek to demonstrate that the Lord's command to set apart one day in seven for worship and works of mercy and necessity continues to be an essential part of the life of the Christian, the neglect of which will inevitably bring serious consequences. We will also see that the keeping of the 4th commandment brings wonderful blessing to those who "call the Sabbath a delight" (Isa. 58:13). The first thing that most people reading through the Ten Commandments recognize is that the 4th commandment is considerably longer than the other nine. This is but one of several distinguishing characteristics of the Sabbath law. It is also the only commandment that includes a historical account of its institution, tying it into the pattern of creation. It is the only commandment delivered both positively and negatively ("You shall" and "You shall not").

And, it is enforced with more arguments to strengthen it than any other commandment. It is as though God anticipated the fact that men would try to sweep this commandment away, and so He gave it extra anchors within the decalogue. Discuss the other features of this commandment with your children, helping them to become familiar with its basic content and structure.



TUESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Genesis 1:14-19; 2:1-3

Key Thought: *The Sabbath is a creation ordinance.*

Questions:

- ☪ What is a “creation ordinance”? Are there others besides the Sabbath?
- ☪ If people stopped keeping the Sabbath as God’s holy day, would we still have seven-day weeks? Why?
- ☪ When did God “invent” the Sabbath? Why is this important?
- ☪ Are there other ways that the Sabbath can be seen as part of God’s wise plan for His creation?

Prayer

Notes: In Genesis 1, we read that God placed the sun, moon, and stars in the heavens “for signs and seasons, for days and years.” In other words, God set up the universe to run according to a time clock of His devising. The Sabbath is built in to the very fabric of this divine time-clock. The pattern of six days of labor and one day of rest and worship is a creation ordinance—that is, an ethical norm based upon God’s work in creation. Another example of a creation ordinance is marriage, which God instituted before sin entered the world. Creation ordinances are binding upon all mankind throughout every generation, since God built them into the very structure of His creation. Even if the Christian Sabbath were rejected by every person on the face of the earth, the world would continue to run on the basis of a repeating pattern of seven-day weeks. The Inventor of time has imposed this pattern upon His world. In His infinite wisdom, God has provided for the periodic refreshment (both physical and spiritual) of His creatures and His creation itself (the land also needs a Sabbath rest in order to remain productive). Further, the Sabbath serves as a regular reminder amidst the drone of daily life and labor that we are not independent beings, but the products of a divine Creator and responsible to Him for the use of each day.



WEDNESDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Exodus 31:12-18; Exodus 16:23-30

Key Thought: *The Sabbath is part of the moral law, not the ceremonial.*

Questions:

- ☪ Was the Sabbath instituted before or after sin entered the world?
- ☪ What was the purpose of the ceremonial laws? How do they differ from the

moral laws?

- ☞ Did the events recorded in Exodus 16 occur before or after the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai? What does this show us?
- ☞ Does anyone argue that the other nine commandments can now be ignored?
- ☞ Why would God place the 4th commandment among the other nine if it was a fundamentally different kind of law?

Prayer

Notes: Today we note that the institution of the Sabbath is part of the moral law of God, and not merely the ceremonial law. Those who argue against the continuing obligation of the Sabbath base their case on the presumption that the Sabbath was ceremonial, and thus was fulfilled by Christ and is no longer part of the life of the New Testament believer. A few important observations answer this misconception. First is the fact that the Sabbath was instituted before Adam and Eve fell into sin. The ceremonial law came as a response to sin, in order to point Israel toward their only hope of salvation through God's promise to send Christ. Second, the moral law of God is found in the Ten Commandments, written upon stone by the very finger of God Himself. This was to demonstrate their unity and their lasting authority. The idea that God would have included one specific ceremonial law in the middle of the Ten Commandments, which He intended to remove later, while leaving the other nine intact, is foolish. Third, if the Sabbath were part of the ceremonial law, it would be sinful and immoral for Christians to observe the Lord's Day, just as it would be wicked to continue to offer sacrifices or observe the other types and shadows after their fulfillment in Christ.



THURSDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Hebrews 4:1-11

Key Thought: *The Sabbath is both a type and a memorial.*

Questions:

- ☞ What is different in the wording of the 4th commandment in Deuteronomy 5?
- ☞ A "type" is something that looks forward to a greater fulfillment. What did the Sabbath look forward to?
- ☞ A "memorial" looks back to something God has done? What did the Sabbath look back upon?
- ☞ Does the Sabbath still function as a type and a memorial? How?

Prayer

Notes: Some of the confusion over the continuing validity of the Sabbath commandment results from the fact that the ceremonial law did include various Sabbath laws which were based upon the perpetual moral Sabbath, but which had only temporary application until the coming of Christ. Yet even the moral Sabbath law was designed to serve as both a type and a memorial. As a type, the Sabbath anticipated the rest that would come through God's covenant promise to the fathers—first realized in the settling of Israel in the land of Canaan, but ultimately in the rest from sin accom-

pished in Christ. As a memorial, the Sabbath pointed back to the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The author of Hebrews tells us that the Sabbath continues to serve as a type for us. Though Christ has given us rest from sin, the consummation of that eternal rest is still future, when we enter into His eternal glory in heaven. "There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God." Likewise, the Sabbath continues to point us back to the accomplishment of our deliverance from bondage through Christ's finished work.



FRIDAY



Praise: Sing Psalm 84A

Scripture: Read Isaiah 58:13-14; Mark 2:23-28

Key Thought: *The Sabbath is designed for our benefit.*

Questions:

- ☞ What instructions about the Sabbath does God give through Isaiah?
- ☞ Why does Jesus say, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"? What extreme view does this guard against?
- ☞ Why does Jesus also say, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath"?
- ☞ What extreme view does this guard against?

Prayer

Notes: It is unfortunate that much of the discussion around the keeping of the Sabbath day seems to presuppose that it is a cumbersome chore laid upon the shoulders of men. Yet John tells us that the commands of God are not burdensome (1 John 5:3). The Lord's Day is not an imposition, but a gift from God to His people. The desire of God expressed through Isaiah was that His people would learn to "call the Sabbath a delight." It is only man's sin that has caused him to see this blessing as a curse. One way that this happens is when men add their own restrictions to God's law, seeking to bind the consciences of others to their own list of permissible activities. The legalistic Pharisees had perfected this perversion, and it is to them that Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." In other words, this day of rest and worship was not designed to be a heavy weight upon men's shoulders, but to free them from their daily labors to serve God with delight. For those who would be tempted to turn liberty into license, concluding that they were free to do whatever they wanted on God's holy day, Jesus added, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Those who forsake self-seeking, and by God's grace turn their hearts toward Him, will find wondrous delight in the practice of consecrating the Sabbath.



Note: Only five lessons per week are included. You are encouraged to lead your family in worship seven days a week. On weekends, you may want to review or build upon the lessons from the previous week, discuss the sermon from Sunday morning, or work on questions from the Catechism or memory verses. These lesson suggestions are intended to provide a simple framework for parents to build upon. You are not limited to this content. The habit of morning and evening family worship is the biblical ideal. We hope you can use these lessons as a starting point for the development of a blessed practice of family worship in your home.