

***Question: I believe it is important to be in church every Sunday, but I've been offered a job that will require that I work some Sundays. What would Jesus do?***

The fourth of the Ten Commandments says: "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" (Exodus 20:8-10). This law was given to Israel for two reasons: (1) as a reminder that God rested on the seventh day after six days of creating the world (Exodus 20:11; Genesis 2:2-3) and (2) as a reminder of redemption from slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:14).

As a faithful Israelite, Jesus observed the Sabbath, although he refused to be bound by human rules about how to keep the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; 13:10-17). He also made it clear that Sabbath did not mean a total cessation of activities (Luke 6:1-11). It was to be a day to cease from ordinary labor in order to have a time of rest and communion with God. When Jesus was accused of breaking the Sabbath law, he declared of himself, "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8). After the resurrection of Jesus, his followers began assembling on "the first day of the week," the day on which Jesus was resurrected (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Matthew 28:1). By the death and resurrection of Jesus, Christians have been redeemed from slavery to sin just as Israel was redeemed from slavery in Egypt.

Although we have no expressed command for Christians not to work on Sunday, the principle of a Sabbath rest continues to be important (Hebrews 4:1-11). The setting aside of one day out of seven as a day dedicated to our Lord and as a day of rest goes back to the creation long before the law of the Sabbath to Israel (Genesis 2:2-3). Setting aside one day for the Lord reminds us that this is God's world. In doing this, we also practice stewardship by giving back a portion of our time to the glory of God. We belong to Him. The experiences of those who work seven days a week illustrates the wisdom in setting aside one day for rest. Our minds, bodies and spirits will suffer from the strain of overwork. We need times of renewal that come with a day of rest and from fellowship with others in Christian worship.

I cannot say that it is a sin to work on Sunday, but to follow this path as a regular and intentional

practice when unnecessary is certainly not good. At the same time, I recognize that it has become necessary for some to work on Sundays in today's world. Some business owners and corporations are driven more by the profit motive than concern for the good of employees and righteousness before God. Thus, they demand that people work on Sundays or lose their jobs. The loss of a job can make it difficult to fulfill our God-given responsibility to work and provide for basic family needs (1 Timothy 5:8).

In the secular world and weakened economy of today, having Sundays off from work is not always possible. When a person finds himself in this position, there are other ways to celebrate Sabbath rest. He can use whatever day he is off from work as his own Sabbath of rest. He can find personal time with the Lord and look for a group of Christians who may get together for Bible study, fellowship or devotions to the Lord at alternative times. He might consider beginning such a group for himself and others in similar jobs. Christians should always give the best they can as employees. When this is done, there may come a time when one can appeal to his employer for more time off on Sundays. I would hope that the leadership of our churches would try to help people who face this challenge. If these suggestions do not work, one may have to consider looking for other employment whenever possible.

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