

Sermon preached at Faith Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Virginia,  
on October 7, 1990, by the Rev. W. Graham Smith, D.D.

## **WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY**

### **EXODUS 20:8**

“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....”

### **TEN STEPS TO THE GOOD LIFE** **(4) HOW TO PREVENT BURNOUT**

Let me begin by giving you a little quiz this morning:

- Question 1 - Do you ever use Sunday to catch up on unfinished work?
- Question 2 - Do you ever feel as tired on Monday morning as you do on Friday afternoon?
- Question 3 - Has anyone ever accused you of being a workaholic?
- Question 4 - When you relax, do you ever feel just a little bit guilty because you know there are things you ought to be doing?

If you can say “Yes” to any of those four questions, I’ve got good news for you this morning because we’re going to hear about the antidote: we’re going to hear what God has to say about taking a day off.

The Fourth Commandment is the longest of the ten. God says more about taking a day off than He says about murder or adultery.

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

What is a “Sabbath”? Well, it’s that one day a week that God wants you to make special. The word “Sabbath” comes from the Hebrew verb “shabath” which means “to cease from something” or “to rest.” So “Sabbath” in Hebrew really means “rest.” It’s a day of rest. God wants you to rest every seventh day. Now why did God give this commandment? Well, look at Mark 2:27 where Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Now

the reason Jesus said that was because they had so perverted it by His day that the Sabbath had just become a set of rules and restrictions. Jesus said, "God made the Sabbath for your benefit. God knows you need rest; and this is to prevent burnout." Someone has called the Sabbath "God's prescription for people under pressure." Take a day off every seventh day.

Most people today ignore the Sabbath, but in Jesus' day they perverted it by bringing in all sorts of rules and regulations regarding it. They turned a blessing into a burden. By that time, the Scribes had figured out 1,521 things you should not do on the Sabbath. Basically, you were forbidden to work on the Sabbath, so you couldn't prepare a meal on the Sabbath; you couldn't walk more than three-quarters of a mile from your home on the Sabbath. You couldn't bear a burden on the Sabbath. A Jew could not wear false teeth on a Sabbath because that would be bearing a burden! A man could spit on a rock but not on a piece of soft ground, because to spit on soft ground would leave a small indentation, a furrow, and a furrow meant plowing, and you mustn't plow on the Sabbath because that is work. However, to spit on a rock would leave no mark, and so that was kosher! Reaping is work, so a woman must not look in a mirror on the Sabbath lest she see a gray hair and be tempted to pull it out, and that would be reaping!

Nobody could really relax on the Sabbath because they were afraid they were going to do something wrong. So, Jesus said the Sabbath was made to meet human need. God said, "I made it for you because I know how you are made, and every seventh day you need to rest."

Now, when is the Sabbath? What day is it to be celebrated? Have you ever been to Jerusalem? It's a fabulous city where three different religions, Moslems, Jews and Christians all observe the Sabbath on a different day: on Friday the Moslems celebrate it, Saturday the Jews, and Sunday the Christians. As we know, in the Old Testament times they worshipped God on the seventh day, Saturday; but in the New Testament Christians began to worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, because that was the day Jesus was resurrected; so, to honor the resurrection we worship God on Sunday, which is the Lord's day.

Look what Paul says in Romans 14:5,6: "One man considers one day more sacred than another... each man should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord." What's the point? The point is: it doesn't matter what particular date you select on the calendar so long as you understand the principle that every seven days you are to have a day off for rest and worship and to spend the time doing something different. Some of you say, "Pastor, I have to work on Sunday." O.K. Take another day and make it your Sabbath. Paul says, "One person considers one day, one considers another." Just observe it -- one day in every seven.

I want to speak to you this morning about "What do you do on the Sabbath?" and I want to give you three purposes of the Sabbath:

First, I want you to notice that the commandment says, "Remember the Sabbath..." In other words, keep it in mind, don't forget it, make it a priority, don't skip it; don't say, "Well, I'll put it off this week. We're having house guests; we'll not make it to church." It says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it (what?) - HOLY." Now, what does "holy" mean? "Holy" simply means "set apart, special, unique, different." God says, "I want this one day a week to be

different. If you work at one thing all week, do something different on this day. It is meant to provide a change of pace.”

How do you keep it holy? By doing the things God intended for you to do. It’s for your benefit, physically, mentally, and spiritually. So how do you do it? In three ways:

**1. Use the day to rest your body.** Remember that “Sabbath” means “rest.” Now notice in verse 10 God lists all these people who shall not work on the Sabbath — “your son, daughter, manservant, maidservant, your animals, nor the alien within your gates.” You get the point - God is saying, “I want this to be perfectly clear -- no work!” The word “work” in Hebrew is “melakah” which means your “occupation,” your “business,” “what you do for a living.” And God says, “One day a week you don’t bring home the briefcase. One day a week you take a total change of pace. You rest your body.”

Look at Psalm 127:2 (Living Bible): “God wants His loved ones to get their proper rest.” Folks, there you have the biblical justification for a Sunday afternoon nap! He’s saying, “Whatever you do for a living, stop it one day in the week; totally forget it; and as a result, you’ll have more energy, more productivity, when you go back to work.”

Look at Psalm 23:2: “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” Let me ask you a question, “Has God ever had to make you lie down?” “But God, I don’t have the time. I can’t rest right now. You don’t know the deadlines I’ve got to meet. People are waiting on me; there’s too much work to be done. I can’t rest.” And God says, “You’re going to lie down whether you like it or not.” I’ve discovered that workaholics, who never take a day off, eventually make up for it with time spent in the hospital.

But some of you say, “Pastor, when I relax, I think of all the things I’ve got to do and I feel so guilty!” Jesus never felt guilty about taking a break. In Mark 6:31,32, for example, Jesus said to His disciples, “Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” So, they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place.” And remember, even God took a day off after He had created the universe. Rest your body every seventh day.

I’ve discovered that people who never rest their bodies exhibit marks of insecurity and immaturity. Have you ever noticed that kids hate to go to sleep? How many of you parents know that?! They argue with you. They gripe and groan — “I don’t wanna go to bed!” “But you need your rest.” The last thing an immature person wants to do is rest. But as a responsible parent, you know that unless they get their rest, they aren’t going to be fit to live with the next day. Some of you haven’t taken a day off, and you’re not fit to live with! Ask your spouse. You become grouchy and uptight; and as soon as church is over, you’re going to hurry home and work on stuff for the rest of the day and try to catch up on a hundred things. And you never really turn it off for a full 24 hours. You’re always working, and you’re cranky.

Sir James Crichton Browne, the famous English physician, has written, “We doctors are now constantly compelled, in the treatment of nervous diseases, to prescribe periods of absolute rest. Some periods are, I think, only Sundays in arrears.”

Use the day to rest your body.

**2. Use the day to recharge your emotions.** How many of you would agree that stress drains you emotionally? It does, doesn't it? Americans are always in a hurry, and chronic fatigue is the result. And we all need periodic time breaks for inspiration and encouragement, to get our emotional batteries recharged because we're constantly being drained.

During the French Revolution, they abolished anything that had to do with religion, and one of the things they cut out was observance of Sunday. It became a workday just like the other six. But within a short period of time they had to reinstate Sunday because the health of the French people was collapsing because nobody was allowed a day off.

Now, how do you recharge your emotions? Let me show you three things from Scripture that I think will help you recharge your emotions. You ought to use these things on Sunday, your day off.

a. Quietness. There's so much noise pollution. We just need to be quiet. The Bible says, "In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15). It says, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10). Look at Psalm 23:3 — "He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul," How refreshing it is to get out into the country by a stream or lake and hear the lap of the waves on the shore. People say, "Why do I feel so close to God in nature?" And the answer is -- because we were made to live in a garden. When God made man, He put him in a garden.

"He leads me beside quiet waters." Just be quiet during a segment of the day. Forget about the TV for a time. Too often we're frantically trying to pack a quart of activity into a pint of time on the weekends.

I heard about an African safari, and they walked every day for six days, and on the seventh day the guide and his staff sat under a tree; and the people came over and said, "Let's go!" and they said, "Oh no, this is the seventh day. We will rest today and let our souls catch up with our bodies." It's a wise thing to let your soul catch up with your body.

Did you notice that this commandment doesn't even mention worship? It says "Rest!" Of course, worship is a part of the Sabbath rest. Rest your body. Recharge your emotions.

b. Family. Spend time with your family on Sundays. Look at Ecclesiastes 9:9, a great verse: "Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love." Some of you ladies should type up that verse and put it on your refrigerator door where he will see it! And if he makes a comment, just say, "Don't you want to be biblical, Honey?" Enjoy life with your wife (not the boys) -- with your wife, whom you love." Spend time with your family.

You know, in American history, up to 70 years ago, Sundays in America had two purposes: (1) Sundays were for church, and (2) Sundays were for family. I think that was part of the strength of our nation. The people spent time in worship and with their families. And Sunday was a quiet day. So plan special times with your family. Do things that bring your family

together on Sunday. Husbands, talk to your wives and play with your children.

I didn't see this when we were in Israel, but I am told that after the synagogue services on the Sabbath, Jewish families almost all go picnicking and have fun together, and that's a great way to strengthen family life.

A lot of churches refuse to have Sunday evening services. In some churches, up to 80% of the women work, and Sunday evening is an excellent opportunity to have family time. You see, the family is God's institution. There was a family long before there was a church. And so, many churches have a Wednesday evening service, for a midweek lift.

c. Fellowship, Fellowship is another way to recharge your emotional batteries. We draw strength from being together.

Hebrews 10:25 says, "Let us not give up meeting together... but let us encourage one another." It's like coals in a fire. When you keep the coals together, they burn brightly. But take a coal out of the fire and place it over by itself, and it grows cold. We need to be together to encourage each other and to inspire each other as believers.

You won't make it very long in the Christian life if you don't have Christian friends. Some people say, "I don't need to go to church. I can worship God in nature." And that is partly true. You can worship God out under the blue canopy of heaven. We can get close to God as we look upon the wonders of His creation. You can worship God in nature, but you can't fellowship in nature. You need fellow Christians. And you come on Sundays not just for worship, but for fellowship as we build, each other up.

As I read the Book of Acts it amazes me how often the Christians ate together! We know that in the first century -- the Christians met at or before dawn for worship on Sundays. You say, "Why did they meet so early?" For two reasons: (1) -- the theological reason was that this was when Jesus was raised from the dead on Easter morning, and every worship service was a celebration of the resurrection. But (2) the practical reason was that many of the early Christians were slaves, and they had to work on Sunday just as on every other day in that pagan society. So, they met about 5 a.m. and had worship and the Lord's Supper, and then from about 6 to 6:45 a.m. they had their "agape meal," their "love feast." Those who could afford to brought food, and they had what amounted to a "potluck breakfast"; and for many slaves this was perhaps the best meal they had all week. Then before 7 a.m. the slaves took off for work.

Today we live in a really isolated society. I suppose most of you don't even know your neighbors. We live separate lives, so we don't have fellowship. And then we come to church; we do our thing in an hour and a quarter; we get in our cars and, go our separate ways. I think our study and fellowship groups in the homes during the week provide much needed fellowship; and of course, the "Supper Six" is a fantastic idea where we get together in sixes each month for good happy get-togethers in our various homes. I hope many more of you will sign up for "Supper Six." We should seek to develop within ourselves the gift of hospitality. We need to build relationships, for this is very important. Do you want to do something to make your day special? Invite somebody out for dinner after the service today! But someone says, "I'm so tired.

I'm just not up to going home and making a meal and fix things." Do you know what the Bible says? - "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed" (Proverbs 11:25). When you give out, you will always get more back. And when you get out and fellowship, you will always find yourself saying, "My, I'm glad we did that!"

So, quietness ought to be a part of your Sunday. Family ought to be a part of your Sunday. And fellowship ought to be part of your Sunday. Use the day to rest your body. Use the day to recharge your emotions, and

**3. Keep the day holy by using the day to refocus your spirit.** Tune in to God! Look what Psalm 122:1 says, "I was bored when they said to me, 'Let us go up to the House of the Lord.'" Is that what it says? "I was irritated when they said to me, 'Let us go up to the House of the Lord.'" "I was going 'Oh no!' when they said to me, 'Is it Sunday again?'" I was (what?) GLAD! Instead of saying, "TGIF - Thank God it's Friday," we ought to say, "PGIS - Praise God it's Sunday!" I'm going to get my bucket filled. I'm going to fellowship. I'm going to get spiritually recharged. Sunday is preeminently a day to worship. It's a day to re-clarify our values and realize what's really important. It's a day to stop and say, "Lord, You're the reason for this. If You weren't here, I wouldn't even be alive! And everything I have, God, is really Yours because You've allowed me to have it."

It's amazing how many people on Sunday take care of their physical needs. They're out jogging at 7:30 a.m. when I'm out taking my walk. And that's all right. But that's not all. Some people take care of their emotional needs. They do fun things. They relax. They play with their family, and that's great in its proper place. But they forget about the most important need in their life, their spiritual need. "Oh, but we can't let God interfere with our Sunday plans. We're going to the beach!" "Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy."

You see what's happened -- Americans have turned Sunday into Fun-day. We've turned a holy day into a holiday -- "I mean, man, it's 'Miller Time' -- give me the paper, fetch me a Lite, and turn on the ball game." No thought of God at all. For many, the beach is more important than the Bible, and golf is more important than God. Make it a day to refocus your spirit.

A Christian's first priority on Sunday is worship. We will give God the first part of the first day of every week as a reminder to say, "God, You are first in my life." Then there's time for other things. And then you go through the rest of the day with an attitude of gratitude. And what you do with your family can be worship to God, because you're saying, "Lord, I'm grateful for the gifts you're giving me -- my health, my family, my friends, the freedom we have in America, the finances we have to do things. God, you are so good in blessing us the way You do!" And everything you do is an offering of praise and gratitude to God.

The owner's manual that came with your car tells you when to change the oil, when to get a lube job, when to change your tires and so on; and the guarantee is: Proper maintenance equals maximum performance. Now that's true of human beings also. God says, "Proper maintenance equals maximum performance," and fortunately we have our Owner's manual, and in it He says that every seventh day you take off from work, and you'll last a lot longer! The Sabbath was made for man; it's for your benefit, to avoid burnout. You'll be healthier; you'll have more

emotional stability; you'll be closer to the Lord; and you'll be a stronger Christian. You see, you don't need a half a day; you need a full day of rest. You don't come to worship, and then go home and open your briefcase, or do the laundry, or cut the grass. You just need a little extra planning to get these things done at more appropriate times.

And parents -- here is an area where you can provide spiritual leadership for your family, and that is in your faithfulness to worship. You say, "It's Sunday; of course, we're going to go to church!" "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). You don't have to tell your children your priorities. They will pick them up easily enough simply by looking at what's important to you -- the way you spend your time. And if you have a casual attitude toward the Lord, "Oh, we don't need to go to church today," what do you think your child's attitude is going to be? But if that child can see that for you Sunday is first for the Lord, then it's for family, and then it's for fellowship, they will catch on. So be a model to your family in this matter.

Make a commitment this morning to take Sunday seriously. Use the day to rest your body, to recharge your emotions, and to refocus your spirit; and God will bless you and your family beyond your fondest expectations!

**AMEN.**