A Beginner’s Guide to the Sabbath

Bible Sabbath Association

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Chapter 1

What and When is the Sabbath?

The Sabbath is a day of rest from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. It is mentioned in the beginning of the Bible. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, we learn about God creating the heavens and the earth. In six days, He formed the face of the earth and fashioned it with animals and other living creatures. During these six days He created. On the seventh day, He rested. We know this day to be from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

Because of God’s eternal nature, His act of rest changed time as we know it. He set a precedent of rest that has transformed every seventh day for eternity. In fact, the Sabbath will be honored by all humanity in the New Heavens and the New Earth. We learn from Revelation 21 and 22 that the New Heavens and New Earth is the last phase in God’s redemptive plan.

Isaiah 66:22-23

“22 ‘As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,’ declares the Lord, ‘so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,’ says the Lord.”

Mankind was created by God on the sixth day. The Sabbath was that special time set aside by the Creator to spend time with mankind. Keeping the Sabbath is connecting with the original Sabbath rest observed by our Creator in Genesis 2.

The Sabbath began in the beginning. Later in Genesis, we learn something very important about Abraham. The Bible tells us that Abraham “…obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws” (Genesis 26:5). The Sabbath is listed as a commandment in Exodus 16:28, Exodus 20:8-11, and many other places. Abraham kept the commandments, which means he kept the Sabbath! He did so without having a Bi-
ble. He just trusted God! His trust resulted in obedience.

When the Israelites went down to Egypt, they lost the Sabbath. The Egyptians had a ten-day work week (Fagan, 202). After God brought them out of Egypt in Exodus chapters 12-14, one of His first acts in the desert was to reveal to them the true Sabbath.

In Exodus 16, the Bible records the miraculous giving of the manna from Heaven. God told the Israelites to gather manna for five days and on the sixth day to gather twice as much. The seventh day they were not to gather any. He even said in Exodus 16:29, “Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days.” Many people have heard the story of the manna in the desert. Very few know that the entire lesson of the manna was to show them the true Sabbath day!

This question may come to your mind: “How do we know in the modern world that the Sabbath is from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset?” This is a valid question. First, we must understand that days in the Bible begin and end at sunset. Genesis 1:5b reads, “… And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.” Sunset is the beginning of one day and the ending of another day. Below I have listed a few more examples in the Bible:

**Leviticus 23:32b** – referring to the Day of Atonement
“From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath.”

**Deut. 24:14-15**
14 Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. 15 **Pay them their wages each day before sunset**, because they are poor and are counting on it.

**2 Samuel 3:35**
35 Then they all came and urged David to eat something while it was still day; but David took an oath, saying, “May God deal with
me, be it ever so severely, if I taste bread or anything else before the sun sets!”

We can see from these examples that a day in the Bible begins and ends at sunset. Night time is the beginning portion of a day and day time is the concluding portion. Perhaps God did this to show us that He brings our lives out of darkness and into His marvelous light. This helps us define a Biblical day.

How can we know which day of the week the Sabbath is on? From the time that the manna was given in Exodus 16, the Jewish people have preserved this day. In the Jewish culture, the Sabbath is the only day of the week that is named. The other days of the week are named “first day”, “second day”, “third day”, etc. This is why no day of the week except Sabbath is named in the Bible. This is one reason why it has been easy for the Jewish people to keep up with the day of the week that the Sabbath falls upon from the past until now. It is the same day kept in Jesus’ time and the same day kept by them today. Through the persecution of the Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Muslims, Catholic Inquisitions, and Nazi Germany, they have held on to the Sabbath.

In the third century, The Roman Historian Cassius Dio tells us that the Jewish people rested on the day that the Romans called “the day of Saturn”. (Cassius Dio, Roman History, 37.16.1-4) Saturn is the name given to the day of the week we call Saturday.

In over 100 current and ancient languages, the word for Saturday is sanbat, sabatu, saptu, sabado, sabato, or a variation thereof. A chart in the back of this booklet gives you a short list. Let’s take one example. In Spanish, sabado is the word for Saturday. The foundations for the Spanish language were formed starting in 711 AD when the Moors conquered Spain. From then to now, the name for Saturday has been unchanged.

God mentions the Sabbath over 140 times in the Bible. God never mentions a requirement in the Bible without giving us a way to understand how to obey it. The Way of God is easy (Deut. 30:11-
15, John 5:1-5, and James 1:25-27). He has left us a witness through history, language, and the example of the Jewish people. He made provision for us; He made sure that we would know when the Sabbath is today.

Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). He did not say the Sabbath was made just for the Jewish people. They have preserved the Sabbath, but the Sabbath is for all mankind!

**Bibliography**

Chapter 2

Practicing the Sabbath

8 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 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. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Since the Bible is clear that we should not work or perform normal labors on the Sabbath, we might pose the question: “What should we do or not do on the Sabbath?” In the verses from Exodus, God mentions that we should do our work and our labor for six days. Work refers to our normal job. Labor refers to strenuous and time-consuming chores.

Keep in mind that these are not restrictive rules. These are rules that give us freedom. We should look at the Sabbath as a day of freedom! We have freedom from our weekly job and weekly chores. We also have freedom from the anxieties/burdens of life. Our actions on Sabbath should reflect this. This chapter is not an all-inclusive list of “do’s” and “don’ts” for the Sabbath; it is a guide to give you some practical examples.

We can plainly see from the Bible verses above that we should not go to our normal work on the Sabbath. Later in this booklet, we have a chapter to help guide you in getting the Sabbath off at work. This part of the commandment is easy to identify. The Bible also mentions getting our “labors” finished in six days. How do we specifically define “labor”?

As mentioned above, labor refers to strenuous and time-consuming activities. These activities include mowing the yard,
other types of yard work, washing your car, cleaning the entire house, washing loads of clothes, and things of that nature. A Sabbath-days mess should certainly be cleaned up. As an example, if you a garment or item is stained and needs to be washed immediately, by all means do so.

The issue of exercising on the Sabbath comes up often. Swimming laps in the pool and playing sports on Sabbath are contrary to the “rest” aspect of the Sabbath. We must remember that resting your body is part of the Sabbath. Children shouldn’t be made to do homework or normal chores. It is a day of freedom and we want them to look forward to this day. You want them to enjoy the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is not a day to do everything you forgot to do during the week. This makes the Sabbath about your desires and not God’s ways. Don’t dump your leftovers on His day. His ways are higher than our ways. It’s not a time to do the shopping we missed during the week. You always want to honor God and keep how HE feels first and foremost in your mind. It is a day to honor Him.

From time to time, emergencies happen. The Bible does talk about an ox falling in the ditch. Situations where someone’s life is on the line require immediate action. Another example might be a busted pipe. It will have to be taken care of immediately. If something can be safely “patched up” and then fully resolved after Sabbath, then by all means do so. If you “shove an ox in the ditch” and create your own problem, it’s not an ox in the ditch. These are exceptions, not the rule.

We have reviewed some things for us not to do on the Sabbath. Always remember that God asks us to refrain from work and regular activities not as an end, but as a means to an end. The physical rest on the Sabbath is a means to a greater end – making that intimate connection to the God of the Universe.

Notice that God calls the Sabbath a holy time. God asks us to re-
frain from common activities to focus for 24 hours on holy work – the gospel of Jesus Christ. This would include praying, reading the word, fellowshipping with believers, teaching, praying for other people, family time, and carrying out our Kingdom assignments.

We can listen to sermons and teachings we have wanted to hear. We can listen to worship music that helps us focus on God. The body, mind, emotions and spirit need rest from the rigors of our daily lives. It’s easy to say – “I can do that any time”. As a general rule, we should always focus on God. However, we don’t. We have work and labors that need tending to and they detract us from that focus.

Instead of telling God that what He said is not valid, let’s just do what He said. The point of not working is so we can spend time with Him. It is a weekly appointment to meet with our Savior. There is a tremendous spiritual and physical refreshing available on this day. The Sabbath is only 14.2% of our week – it will change your life to dedicate this time to the Lord.

In Exodus 20:8-11, God tells us that the family should be free from these burdens on the Sabbath. We live in a world foretold by the prophet Daniel where “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” During the week, families are often divided by activities. Parents are going to work and children are going to school. Later in the day, there are various afterschool activities or visiting with other family and friends. We are truly darting “to and fro” as the Bible foretold.

Friday night is a great time to get the family together and focus on God as a whole. Throughout the week, the kids are running around and the parents are tending to business. This is a time to slow down and bring everyone together. It is a time to share our blessings and burdens. The meal on Friday night should be something to look forward to. It is a special time when we come together to meet with our God. Wouldn’t it be nice to spend more time with your family?
Some Sabbath keepers and Messianic groups practice a short ceremony called an *Erev Shabbat* ceremony. *Erev Shabbat* literally means “the evening of the Sabbath”. In this ceremony, you spend time blessing your children and spouse. This service is a powerful way to bring the family together to focus on the Lord. The powerful tool can be found online.

God gave us this day to slow down and enjoy His blessings in our lives. Some blessings are spiritual, some are material, and some are mental or emotional. A deep revelation from God is a spiritual breakthrough. A passing score on a test is material, but it also lifts mental and emotional stress off of us. The Sabbath is a time of reflection on the blessings we received from our Creator in the past week.

In Exodus 31:16, the Lord said, “The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant.” The Hebrew word translated as celebrate is *shamar*, and it means to guard, protect, or celebrate. One of the ways we guard our minds from wandering away from God on the Sabbath is to celebrate Him! The devil will send all sorts of things your way to distract you from the Sabbath—anxious thoughts about situations in your life, calls from your job, and attitudes. When we celebrate, we are so focused on Him that those things are drowned out! They become less important.

Let’s enter the gates of Sabbath with thanksgiving and praise!

**More Information on Family Time and Children’s Activities**

I am often asked about children and the Sabbath. Children have a lot of energy. One really important key to resolving this question is to make sure your children get plenty of physical activity during the week. In general, most children in America do not get enough physical activity. They are boxed indoors at school, after school, or daycare programs. Children need to run off that excess energy. Make sure on Friday before sunset that you take them
outside and run them around. Have them ride bicycles or something really physical. Make it fun and exciting; make it a competition! Keep score with who wins. Be creative in this area. There are ways to lessen that energy before sunset on Friday.

The main reason God set apart the Sabbath is to honor and spend time with Him. A sub-reason for the Sabbath is to spend quality time with the family. So, we learn to spend time with the family to the extent we bond with them. We also want to focus attention on honoring God.

During the week, you might have to put on that “Veggie Tales” video to keep them distracted. On the Sabbath, change it up and do some interactive things with them. Picture books are great, as children love pictures and illustrations. You can always take a family walk with them. Play “gettings” with the children where you tickle them. Another fun thing kids like to do is arts and crafts. You could build Noah’s Ark. Make puppets with them and do a puppet show based on Bible stories. Make them tell the story. You can make finger puppets (even with popsicle sticks). This will help them to learn about the Bible and make it fun all at the same time.

Of course, you can pray with your children and read the Bible with them. As the old saying goes, “the family that prays together stays together”. Explain stories in the Bible in a way they can understand. You can always come up with Bible lessons for children to teach them before or after church on Sabbath. Have Sabbath school at home before church. The BSA website has some great resources for children on our website: biblesabbath.org.

This will teach them to look forward to the Sabbath as a time when they get interactive, quality time with their family. It will leave an imprint on their lives. No matter where they go or what they do, they will know what their parents are doing from Friday sunset through Saturday sunset. This will instill in them the greater lesson about spending interactive time with the Heavenly Father and the Family of God.
As it pertains to the Sabbath, a great verse to build on is Isaiah 58:13-14: “13 ‘If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, 14 then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride in triumph on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.’ For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”
Chapter 3

Spiritual Reasons for the Sabbath

As we mentioned earlier, God calls the Sabbath holy. The only thing that can make something holy is God’s presence. In Exodus 3:5-6, Moses is on the mountain with the Lord. The Lord spoke to him and told him to take his shoes off because the ground was holy. Why was the ground holy? Because Christ was there. His presence made it Holy. In Exodus 29:43 the Lord said, “And there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory.” The Spirit of God and the Glory of God consecrate things to make them Holy unto Him.

When God rested on the Sabbath and made it holy, He made the entire 24-hour space of time Holy to Him. This means that His transformative power is present to touch, heal, and minister to us. A 24-hour outpouring of unlimited Holy Spirit power is available each Sabbath. The gifts of the Spirit are in the greatest degree of operation during this time.

In Ezekiel 40-46, God revealed a magnificent Temple to Ezekiel. It has never been built. Some say it is figurative, while others say it is a literal temple to be built in the future. Regardless of our belief about this temple, we can receive an amazing revelation when it comes to the Sabbath. In Ezekiel 46:1-10, we learn that this Temple has gates closed for six days, but open on the seventh day. In Hebrews 8:5, we learn that the earthly Temple represents the heavenly Temple. For the Temple in Ezekiel’s vision to have open gates every seventh day means that the gates of Heaven are open during the Sabbath!

The gates of heaven are open when the sun sets on Friday! As the word of God says, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise His name.” Enter the gates of Sabbath with praise and thanksgiving for His rich provision in your life. Seek Him for the things you may need. What do you need from God? Do you need a breakthrough in
your finances? Do you need a revelation from God? Do you know someone who needs healing? Jesus did many of His miracles on the Sabbath! This is the time to reach out to Him. He is waiting on us to enter into the gates of the Sabbath every week.

In Ezekiel 46:8-10, we learn that the Prince is allowed to exit the same gate through which He entered. Jesus is called the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6. Everyone else has to go out a different gate than the one they entered. This shows us that we should not leave the Sabbath the same way that we came in. There is a transformative glory poured out on this day that does not allow us to leave the same way we came in. If we are really applying ourselves and forming our week around the observance of this day, we will be changed. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, who with unveiled faces reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.” (NIV, 1984)

Another great reason to honor the Sabbath is to spend time with fellow believers. In Leviticus 23, the Sabbath is called a “holy convocation”. This simply means a public gathering. We have a directory you can order to help find a church near you. More information is located in the back of this booklet. If you do not have a Sabbath-keeping church near you, then you can play worship music and watch or listen to a sermon at home. Pray and ask the Lord to have one started near you.

This day also is a celebration of salvation. Just as we do not work on the Sabbath, we do not work to earn our salvation. Our works transition on the Sabbath from common to holy. In the same way, salvation marks the start of holy works that edify God (Ephesians 2:8-10).

In the Bible, the number seven can mean “to covenant with”. It was sometimes said that a person “sevened” themselves when they made a covenant. When Abraham was trying to make a covenant with Abimelech in Genesis 21, he brought Abimelech seven ewe lambs. They then named the well Beersheba, which
means well of the seven or well of the oath. The Sabbath is a weekly celebration of our covenant with Jesus Christ! Jesus even called himself the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8)! He is Lord of this day. When we break from doing things our way, we are affirming our covenant with the Lord. It is a weekly celebration of our covenant or “seven” with Christ—which is another reason why it is on the seventh day.
Chapter 4

How to Get Off Work on the Sabbath

How can you get off work so you can enjoy this glorious time of rest? The fact of the matter is that we live in a fallen world. The world at large does not keep the Sabbath. This means Sabbath keepers have to request to get the Sabbath off. There are some ways to do this.

The first and easiest way is to see if you can trade shifts with someone else. Let's say a friend of yours wants off on Sunday to go to church. You want Saturday off, so you offer to work their Sunday as long as they agree to work your Saturday. Some people might want another day of the week off of work. You just have to find the right person with whom to make a trade.

Always remember that the Sabbath ends at sunset. This means you can work from Friday until sunset and then Saturday after sunset. You might just be able to re-arrange your schedule and get the Sabbath off that way. You can always try to find another position at your company that would allow you such freedom. Or, you can look for a different shift within your same position.

If this does not work, then you will need to talk to your supervisor. Thankfully, we have laws to protect our religious beliefs in America. There are links on the BSA website with legal resources (biblesabbath.org). You can meet with your manager or boss and tell them that you would like to have the Sabbath off from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. You can offer to make up the work on other time - say Sunday afternoon - or perhaps come in earlier or work later on a day. In the summer months, sunset is later. You can offer to work later on Friday. In the winter, sunset is earlier. You can offer to work on Saturday after the sun sets.

When you talk to your employer, you want to show the employer how important it is that you work for their company and how you enjoy working for them. During the conversation, you can say
something to the effect of “Company ABC has been really good to me. I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of the team here, and I would love to continue to do so. I have recently come into a religious conviction where I need to get from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset off of work to observe the Sabbath. I am willing to work a little earlier or later on other days to make up any hours, even if it means working on Sunday afternoon. I further desire to stay a part of the team here at Company ABC.”

This kind of conversation can be adjusted when you are applying for a new job. It would be great to show enthusiasm about the job and the type of work you will be doing. You may have to “sell it”.

If, for some reason, you cannot get through to the employer in any of these ways, then it would be time to find a new job!

This is a web link to help you understand your legal rights to have the Jewish Sabbath and Feast Days off from work: http://www.jlaw.com/LawPolicy/accommodation.html

If you are ever discriminated against because of your religious beliefs, call the local EEOC – the Equal Employment Opportunity Center – or a local lawyer to file a suit. There are laws that protect your religious liberties in this nation.
Conclusion

The Sabbath is not a burden. It is a tremendous opportunity to rest the body, refresh the spirit, and connect with our family/fellow believers. I have honored the Sabbath for almost 9 years now, and the Sabbath gets better each and every time.

**Our entire weekly activities and planning must be centered around entering this rest.** The writer of Hebrews tells us that, “9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from their works,[or labor] just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest…” (Hebrews 4:9-11)

In the New Testament, we see clear proof that the Sabbath remains. We rest on the seventh day. Let us make every effort during the week to get our labors out of the way so that we can honor His rest.
Short List of Languages Around the World that Have Saturday Named After the Sabbath

Indonesian – *Sabtu*

Tagalog (Philippines) – *Sabado*

Latin – *Sabbatum*

Italian – *Sabato*

Spanish – *Sabado*

Portuguese – *Sabado*

Greek – *Savatoh*

Russian – *Subota*

Polish – *Sobota*

Arabic – *Al Sabt*

Somali (East Africa) – *Sabti*

Mandingo also called Mandinka (West Africa) – *Sibiti*

Ormo or Galla (East Africa) – *Sanbata tenna*

Kisii, also called Gusii or Ekegusii (Africa) – *Esabato*
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<td><strong>Sabbath</strong>: Acts 18:1-4 (with Jews and Greeks for 1 ½ years)</td>
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<td>Ephesians</td>
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<td>Philippians*</td>
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<td>Thessalonians</td>
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<td>Cyprus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td><strong>Sabbath</strong>: Hebrews 3:1-19, 4:1-12</td>
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*Philippi was a city without a Jewish Synagogue. This shows us that Paul kept the Sabbath even in cities that were Gentile.
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More Sabbath Materials Available Through the BSA

Do you want to go deeper in understanding the Sabbath? These materials will help you satisfy your hunger to learn more about God’s Holy Sabbath.

**Shipping is FREE for members!**

**Non-members add $3 shipping minimum**

**ORDER**

**Mail:** BSA, PO BOX 7707, BONNEY LAKE, WA 98391;

**Phone:** 888-687-5191

**Email:** biblesabbath@comcast.net

Sabbath Directory – Directory of Sabbath Churches in North America - $9 per directory, plus $3 postage; or three books for $25, postage paid. Add $10 per book for extra postage to Canada.

“Holy Time With God” by Bill Shults ($5 suggested donation)

“52 Things To Do On The Sabbath” by Glen Robinson ($4 suggested donation)

“Why I Am a Sabbath Keeping Christian” by Dan Jarrard ($2 suggested donation)

“35 Reasons Why I Keep The Bible Sabbath” by Robert Franklin Correia ($8 suggested donation)

Shipping is FREE for members!

Non-members add $3 shipping minimum

For more books than what are listed here, visit our website at biblesabbath.org. Go to the Products Section, then the Books subsection.
What Is the Bible Sabbath Association?

The Bible Sabbath Association, also called the BSA, is a group of believers from all Sabbath keeping backgrounds who have a common belief in three things:

1) Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.
2) The Ten Commandments are God’s guiding principles for the Christian Life.
3) The Sabbath is from Friday Sunset to Saturday Sunset.

Founded in 1943, the purpose of the BSA is not to bring all churches under an umbrella. Instead, we serve as a support group to all Sabbath keeping groups.

We have a wide variety of materials to help you defend and affirm your belief in the Sabbath. Additionally, we provide materials to help churches reach their communities.

Our main purpose is to promote fellowship and cooperation between Sabbath-keepers of various groups; to promote Sabbath observance on a nondenominational basis; to restore respect and honor for the Ten Commandments as a whole, with special emphasis on the Fourth, which has been forgotten by most of the world; to encourage the repeal of laws which enforce the keeping of Sunday (or any day) by any unit of man's government; and to defeat the adoption of any calendar which would disrupt the seven-day weekly cycle.

Residents of the United States can deduct the offerings from their income, for tax purposes.
The Sabbath is a weekly celebration from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. This delight was given to mankind to help us spend more time with God and our family. In this booklet, you will learn basic questions such as “How Can We Know When the Sabbath is?” and “Why Does it Matter?”

You will also learn important ways to practice this special day so that you can get in tune with God’s Sacred Rhythm.