

Good Sundays Can Change Your Mondays

Mark 2:27, Isaiah 58:13-14

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Some of the greatest disasters in the past 50 years, like the Exxon Valdez, Costa Concordia, Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and the fatal destruction of the Challenger space shuttle were the result of human error caused by fatigue.

In the Challenger space shuttle disaster, key NASA officials made the ill-fated decision to go ahead with the launch after working twenty hours straight and getting only two to three hours sleep the night before.

Their error in judgment cost the lives of seven astronauts and nearly killed the U.S. space program. We ignore our need for rest and renewal at the peril of ourselves and others.

Today as we continue our series, *I Love Sundays*, we're going to learn that rest and worship are important.

Last week we talked about the fact that part of what makes Sundays great is going to church; the need for corporate worship. Today I want to talk about the other reason that Sundays are important, the need for rest.

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God made the Sabbath to be the best day of our week. During Biblical times, the nation of Israel tried to over manage the Sabbath so that by the time Jesus came along it had become a burden instead of a blessing.

One time, when Jesus was with His disciples on the Sabbath, they began debating which Sabbath laws applied to them and which didn't. Jesus clarified God's purpose for the Sabbath.

Mark 2:27, *“Then he said to them, ‘The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.’”*

Jesus was saying that God knew we would need a day to break from everything else we were doing in order to refuel, refresh, and refocus.

So, when God arranged the rhythm of the world, He designated one day for refueling. The Sabbath was built into creation for us.

Since the dawn of time, whenever people took the time to set aside a day for rest, a day to focus on God, their lives had gone better. They felt better about themselves, enjoyed their families more, and were more productive.

Today, the idea of a “day of rest” has been lost. Our lives are more hurried and busier than ever before. We never seem to have enough time. Our plates are always full!

We work longer hours and then still worry about having enough money to make ends meet. We fill our non-working hours with activities that wear us out even more. Day in and day out we live with pressure.

I can remember, years ago nobody worked on Sunday. Businesses were closed. People used Sunday for a rest day.

People got a lot less done on Sundays, but as a result, they got a lot more done on Mondays. After a day of rest, they attacked the week eagerly.

Do you want to be prosperous and successful? Listen to what the Bible tells us.

Joshua 1:8, *“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.”*

God was telling Joshua that the secret to getting ahead in life was to spend time in the Bible. Why? Because the more you get into this Book, the more this Book will get into you.

When this Book gets into you, when you follow its principles like rest and worship, you'll become the kind of person who's prosperous and successful.

This has been proven true time and again. In eighteenth century in England, Jonathan and Charles Wesley started a movement that resulted in 100,000 weekly Bible studies.

For the next one hundred years, England was the most prosperous nation on earth.

Back in 1857 Jeremiah Lanphier started a noontime prayer meeting in New York that sparked a movement of Bible reading throughout North America.

As a result, the history of America's westward expansion was marked by households huddled around their kitchen tables at night. Mom or dad would read the Bible to the family out loud for an hour.

The result was that over the next one hundred years, the United States became the most prosperous nation on earth.

More recently we've seen this in different nations all around the world. Years ago, there was a video that came out called *Transformations*.

It told stories from Columbia to Kenya of how whole communities and nations were radically transformed through revival.

Spiritual strongholds were broken and the result was lives transformed and economies raised.

In some cases, it showed that even the land started to produce more fruit and vegetables as a result of God's blessing.

What I'm trying to say this morning is that the way to make better Mondays is to start with better Sundays.

If you will learn the principles of rest and worship, you'll be blessed and your life will be better. That's the concept of the Sabbath.

In the Bible, God prescribed fifty-two Sabbaths a year as part of our health-maintenance plan. That's seven and a half weeks of spiritual vacation every year! Sundays should be a day of rest.

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God also made Sundays for us to help and to bless us.

Isaiah 58:13-14, "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, 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."

Do you call Sundays a delight? Do you look forward to Sundays? Is it the best day of your week? Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath beginning on Friday evening, continuing to Saturday.

I've heard that in Israel, Sabbath celebration is so sacred to the Jewish people that they put their elevators on automatic during the Sabbath to avoid even the slightest amount of work, like pushing an elevator button.

Israeli elevators are programmed to stop and open on every floor from the beginning of the Sabbath to its end.

Today, we celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday. In A.D. 321, Constantine made Sunday into a day of rest, closing the law courts and forbidding all work except agricultural labor.

The Sabbath was never changed from Saturday to Sunday by Jesus or the Apostles. Sunday became the day of rest and worship for mainstream Christianity through the Catholic Church.

It was through pagan influences and through anti-Semitism that Christians adopted the first day of the week as our Sabbath using the reasoning that it celebrated the day Jesus rose from the dead.

Regardless of how Sunday came to be, the principle is the same: take a day to rest. Sunday is built around God and family.

In Exodus 20, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment reads:

Exodus 20:8-11, "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 male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 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."

Why did God rest on the seventh day? Was He tired? Had the task of creation worn Him out? Of course not. He did it to model for us the principle of rest.

The idea of the Sabbath is built into creation. We were created with the need to take one day in seven to rest. You can either accept that fact or reject it, but it's true.

It's like the story of three men who were hiking and came upon a large raging river. They needed to get to the other side, but they don't know how.

The first man says, *"God, give me the STRENGTH to cross this river."* Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs, and he swam across the raging river. It took him two hours, but he made it.

Seeing this, the second man prayed, *"God, give me the strength and the tools to cross this river."* Poof! God gave him a rowboat, and he rowed across the raging river. It took him 60 minutes, but eventually he made it.

Seeing this, the third man says, *"God, give me the strength, the tools and the intelligence to cross this river."*

And poof, suddenly his wife appeared beside him. She reached into his backpack, pulled out a map, walked him downstream 50 yards and pointed to the bridge that was there all the time.

We believe, as Christians, that God will give us the strength and the tools necessary to overcome obstacles. Sometimes what we really need is the wisdom to see what's already before us. Wisdom is accepting God's rhythm of work and rest.

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Now, it's one thing to believe that rest is important for most people. It's another thing to believe that rest is important for you!

Think about it. We only believe the parts of the Bible we put into practice. It's one thing to believe that the Sabbath is important. It's another thing to keep it.

It's easy to rationalize why we don't rest. It's easy to come up with reasons why it may be good for others but it's not that important for us as individuals.

A pastor rode by a farm one Sunday morning and saw a member of his church, a farmer, at work harvesting.

The pastor said, *"Brother, don't you know that God made the world in six days and rested on the seventh?"*

"Yes," said the farmer, *"I know all about that, but God finished His work in six days and I didn't!"*

We're not to rest because our work is done; we're to rest because God commanded it and created us to have a need for it.

As one pastor wrote: *"Sabbath is taking one day a week to remind myself that I did not make the world and that it will continue to exist without my efforts."*

The Sabbath is a day when our work is done, even if it isn't. The Sabbath is a day when my job is to enjoy. Period. The Sabbath is a day when I'm fully available to myself and those I love.

The Sabbath is a day when I remember that, when God made the world, He saw that it was good. The Sabbath is a day when I produce nothing.

The Sabbath is a day when I remind myself that I'm not a machine. The Sabbath is a day when, at the end I can say, *"I didn't do anything today,"* and I don't add, *"And I feel guilty."*

The Sabbath is a day when we should turn our phones off; when we don't check our email. We need to rest on the Sabbath, but we also need to prepare for it.

Charles Swindoll once said, *“Tragically, precious little in this hurried and hassled age promotes intimacy with God. We have become a body of people who look more like a herd of cattle in a stampede than a flock of sheep beside green pastures and still waters.”*

Sabbaths are important. Like everything else in life that’s of great worth and value, the Sabbath is something for which we need to plan. It requires thought and preparation.

On a normal weekend, the Smith family may go out and stay up late on Saturday night. Then they sleep until the last-minute Sunday morning and then rush around getting ready for church.

Often this leads to them arguing all the way to the church parking lot. Then they walk into church pretending everything is great.

It’s difficult to have a great experience at church if you’ve had a miserable experience getting there?

One author once wrote, *“Anyone who has ever put on a plastic smile knows how difficult it is to concentrate on something wonderful when they’re feeling something awful. One of the greatest things about church is that people often walk in a mess and walk out at peace. Imagine how much better off we would be if we walked into church already at peace?”*

Now, what if the Smith family, instead staying up late on Saturday night, they changed their plans. What if they decided to develop a plan for preparing for Sunday?

What kind of difference would it make in your church experience if every member of your family woke up rested on Sunday morning and everything they wanted to wear was already ready for them?

The U.S. Marines have a saying, *“Proper prior planning prevents poor performance.”* Plan for church.

I know this is crazy talk, but imagine this. Say it takes 15 minutes to get to church. What if you were in the car 30 minutes before church? No breaking the speed limit. No honking. No bickering.

Then, when you got out of the car, you could actually walk across the parking lot leisurely.

You could stop and have a conversation with your friends and still arrive in your seats with a few minutes to spare. Preparation makes a huge difference.

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Conclusion

So how will you prepare for next Sunday? Let me suggest a few things:

- Make church a priority.
- Plan to attend.
- Figure out your advanced plan. Like, what time do you want to leave for church next Sunday morning to get there on time.

Back in 1842, the first Sunday train from Glasgow to Edinburgh ran.

Pastors in Glasgow denounced the running of Sunday trains as quote *“a flagrant violation of the law of God as expressed in the fourth commandment. A grievous outrage on the religious feelings of the people of Scotland. A powerful temptation to the careless and indifferent to abandon the public ordinances of grace, and most importantly a disruption to the quiet of the rural parishes along the railway line.”*

The Edinburgh paper described the scene as “a threatening battery of ministers” lining the platforms telling the passengers, who were getting ready to board the train, that they had just bought tickets to hell.

Maybe that was a little extreme and I don’t want to threaten anyone this morning. I do however want to remind you that the Sabbath is important.

Going to church and having a time of rest is important. Therefore, accept God’s plan and acknowledge your need of the Sabbath and make sure you prepare for it.

Psalm 118:24, *“This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.”*