

Reverence & Rest

Exodus 20:7-11



Reverence

Read Exodus 20:7. “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD¹ your God” (20:7a). In more general terms, use God’s name reverently,² *not* inappropriately, irresponsibly or lightly.

📖 *For example, God said, “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:12, NIV)*

Rest

Read 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.” (20:8-10a, NIV)

“Sabbath” means “cessation, rest.” God commanded his people to take a break from their regular work on the seventh day (Saturday). The Sabbath was a day for rest and reflection. It was a sign of the covenant³ between God and his people (*Exodus 31:13*) and a special day to reflect on God’s deliverance of his people from their slavery in Egypt (*Deuteronomy 5:14*).

Theologians differ on how the Sabbath commandment applies to Christians.⁴ Some believe we are still commanded to “keep the Sabbath,” though most apply the Sabbath to Sunday.⁵

Others believe that Christians are *not* commanded to keep the Sabbath since it was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, in whom we have the ultimate “rest” (*Matthew 11:28-29; Hebrews 4:1-11*). Though not commanded, most would agree that a weekly day of rest is wise and of great practical value.⁶

📖 “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” (*Col. 2:16-17, NIV*)

¹ ‘LORD’ (‘Yahweh’) is God’s self-revealed name signifying his special self-revelation to his covenant people (*Exodus 3:13-17*). In general, we should not misuse any of God’s names, including the names of the Son of God.

² In this context, ‘reverence’ refers to deeply felt honor, respect, awe and adoration.

³ ‘covenant’ refers to God’s agreement or disposition with his people that establishes their relationship.

⁴ The ‘ten commandments’ (including the Sabbath commandment) and the Law were given to Moses and Israel at a specific time in the history of God’s people, and are part of the *Old Covenant*. When Jesus came, he fulfilled the *Old Covenant* and inaugurated the *New Covenant*. So Christians are under the *New Covenant*. Some theologians believe that Christians are still under the authority of the Sabbath commandment. In their view, it is a ‘creation ordinance’ (established prior to the Law given to Moses) and/or it is part of God’s ‘moral law’ (distinguished from the ‘ceremonial and civil laws’ given to Moses). Others believe that Christians are *not* under the ‘binding authority’ of the Sabbath commandment (or any of the ‘ten commandments’) because they are part of the *Old Covenant*. I favor this view. It should be noted that all of the ‘ten commandments,’ except the Sabbath, are repeated in *some* form in the New Testament. The book *Perspectives on the Sabbath*, edited by Christopher John Donato (2011), presents and defends four different views. The view I favor is also presented in the book *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, edited by D.A. Carson (1982). Also, there are helpful articles on the Internet. Ask me for links.

⁵ Certainly, Sunday (‘the Lord’s Day,’ the day of Jesus’s resurrection) became the special day of worship for Christians. However, the biblical basis for changing the ‘Sabbath day’ to Sunday is lacking in my opinion. Others believe that Christians should still observe the Sabbath on Saturday.

⁶ The weekly Sabbath had great practical value under the Old Testament, and a weekly day of rest *still* has great practical value. While Christians may not be commanded to keep the Sabbath (per the Old Testament), it is still advisable to set aside a weekly day of ‘rest’ (Sunday works well for most) or else set aside other times for rest.

📖 *Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28, 29b, NIV)*



Discussion Questions

1. In what ways can we misuse God's name?⁷ What are specific examples?
2. As Christians, how should we feel and what should we do when we hear another person (especially a Christian) misuse God's name?
3. How do *you* think the Sabbath commandment (in Exodus 20:8-10) applies to Christians today? What should we do, and not do, if other Christians disagree with our view?⁸
4. In our world today, we work, work, work. If we are "successful" in our work, it brings a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Is our work the most important thing about us? Explain.
5. Our work can never truly fulfill the deepest needs of our hearts.⁹ To realize this, we need "rest."¹⁰ In what ways do we need to "rest" from our work? Whether or not we are commanded to "keep the Sabbath," in what ways can we apply the Sabbath to our lives?

Reflection/Application

- To truly use God's name rightly, we must address Christ as Lord. To experience true "rest," we need to stop working to earn our true significance or salvation,¹¹ and receive God's gift of "rest" through faith in Jesus Christ. Do *you* need to trust in Jesus as Lord of *your* life?
- Brothers and sisters, do you ever use God's name irresponsibly or lightly? By focusing on him, develop a lifestyle of using God's name in ways that honor and glorify him.
- Brothers and sisters, is your work consuming you and preventing you from experiencing "rest?" What specific things do you need to do to experience greater rest in the Lord?

⁷ In one of Sandy Young's sermons, he mentioned the following: to speak falsely in his name (to attach his name to false claims or unbiblical descriptions of God); frivolous oaths (e.g., 'I swear to God'); using God's name in a profane way, like cursing; using his name in a 'throw-away' manner (e.g., 'Oh my God', OMG); 'praying on autopilot' (e.g., using 'in Jesus' name' thoughtlessly).

⁸ Christians will continue to disagree about how the Sabbath commandment applies to God's people today. We should study the subject for ourselves and explain to others why we believe what we do. In any case, let us 'make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification' (*Romans 14:19*). As Paul wrote, 'One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord.' (*Romans 14:5-6a, NIV*)

⁹ Work is certainly not bad. God made humans as workers (*Genesis 2:8, 15*). Christians should view their work as part of their service to God (*Colossians 3:23-24*). However, work is not the sum and purpose of human life. The Sabbath is a reminder of this fact. True meaning, purpose, and fulfillment are found only in relationship with God.

¹⁰ Biblical 'rest' is in relation to God – the Source of peace, purpose, true meaning and fulfillment & every blessing.

¹¹ While we should work for the Lord, we can never earn our salvation (see *Ephesians 2:8-9*).