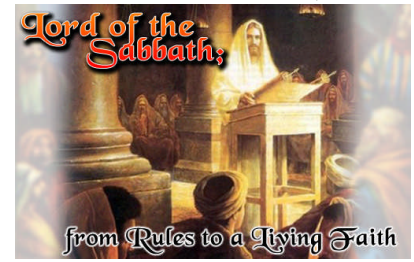


Lord of the Sabbath;  
**from Rules to a Living Faith**

The Sabbath is a gift from God. It is a gift under threat. It was given to protect us from overwork, from never getting a day off, from being treated like a machine. Jesus faced the other side of that dynamic; making a rule out of a gift. Christ tells us, life is a gift, my gift to you, and opens the door to a living Faith.

December 21, 2008



**Matthew 12:1-13** At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, "Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath." He answered, "Haven't you read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.'" Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" He said to them, "If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

**Reflections**

Who has time to relax these days? Any time off from work is usually overwhelmed with doing projects around the house, rushing children to endless lessons and sports, paying bills, or working on other time-consuming "urgent" tasks. How does God expect us to take an entire day off to rest when there is so much to be done?

God gave us the Sabbath not to be a burden, but a blessing. Understanding what the Lord intends the Sabbath to be – and not to be – is important for us to begin to honor the Sabbath. The purpose is to celebrate God's creation of the world as well as our salvation. God rested on the seventh day of creation not because of fatigue but to set an example for us to live by. The Sabbath was instituted by God for our own good.

In the Old Testament, Moses instructed that certain years were to be designated as holy. One

year in seven – the sabbatical year – was devoted to rest and worship. In addition, two consecutive years, a Sabbath year every forty-ninth year followed by the jubilee year in the fiftieth year, were holy times when all debts were forgiven and all slaves were set free.

God created time, therefore the use of time should revolve around God. The Sabbath days, weeks, and years taught Israel that God was the center of its life. By observing the designated days, weeks, and years, Israel experienced and celebrated its unique relationship with God. The Sabbath days, weeks, and years taught Israel that God was the center of its life. These days and times of rest were reminders of God's saving care. The Sabbath was a true holiday (holy day). People were set free from toil and debts to rest, worship, and celebrate.

Unfortunately even in Jesus' life, the gift of holy time had been turned into a legalistic religious

burden. What was and was not permissible became the focus of the Sabbath. We have also forgotten that time is ordered by God and not by a PDA or a day planner.

Holidays have become vacation times and Sundays are national days for sports and leisure. Taking a day off and keeping a Sabbath day are not the same.

*"Lord, we ask forgiveness for seeing a Sabbath day as a luxury rather than a necessity. Provide each of us strength and clarity to arrange our weekly schedules around your plan for Sabbath rest, instead of us trying to fit you into our plan. Amen."*

—Mickey Kibler

**References:**

Jesus and Sabbath. A One Year Road Trip with Jesus – Part Two, Week 12. Ginghamburg Church. 2003.

# Readings

## Sunday, December 21

### Matthew 12:1-13

By naming himself “Lord of the Sabbath,” Jesus turned Sabbath observation from a Jewish law into a day to give our time and attention fully to Christ. How is Jesus Lord of your Sabbath?

## Monday, December 22

### Exodus 16:21-30

What connection do you think exists between not observing the Sabbath and drifting away from God?

## Tuesday, December 23

### Luke 13:10-17

On the Sabbath Jesus miraculously set a woman free from bondage. If you regularly took time for Sabbath time with God, what could He free you from?

## Wednesday, December 24

### Exodus 20:11-20

Do you think God minds as much today, as he did in Old Testament times, if we don't keep the Sabbath holy and as a day of rest? Why or why not?

## Thursday, December 25

### Luke 23:50-56

Has it ever been difficult for you to take time with God instead of pursuing urgencies on your “to do” list? Give an example.

## Friday, December 26

### Genesis 2:1-4

Why did God rest on the seventh day? What can you learn from his example?

## Saturday, December 27

### Luke 4:40-44

Jesus worked hard to create and protect time alone with God. What distracts or competes with your priority of maintaining regular Sabbath time?

***Don't have a Bible? Access these scriptures at [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).***