

ESSENTIALISM
Exodus 20: 8-11 June 26, 2016
The Church of the Covenant

What's wrong with this statement? "I am too busy and too tired to go to church this Sunday. I have too many other things to do to go to church today." What's wrong with that statement is that by entering into the life-giving presence of God you will have life, more life, new life, abundant life and eternal life. By honoring God's command that we "*Remember the Sabbath...*" (Exodus 20: 8) and by honoring HIM on Sunday it GIVES US LIFE...it doesn't take it away.

I remember the drill on Sunday morning, growing up. Chaos. Get washed, get dressed, get fed. Everyone's running around in twelve different directions. Dad is running up and down the hallway jingling his change in his pocket, just sure Mother won't be on time for church. Mother is in the bedroom stuffing her hair under her hat (remember when women wore hats to church?) Bedlam and chaos and stress. But we would pile into the car and get to church, ALMOST every Sunday on time. But here's the promise in it –when you place GOD FIRST, on the FIRST DAY of the WEEK, on Sunday, and you make it your SABBATH, and you focus the first fruits of your heart on the FIRST DAY of the WEEK on the FIRST PRIORITY of your life, which is to say the new life to be received through the Lord, the giver of life, *then*, the whole rest of your week will go well; it will be ordered in a way that sets everything else right; miss church and your week is askew; make church and "all these things shall be added unto you as well".

There were less distractions when I was growing up and we were seeking to go to church on Sunday. The Pennsylvania Blue laws pretty much assured that almost nothing was open for business on Sunday, other than church. Only one gas station was open in my community and that from Noon to 2:00 p.m. restaurants weren't open so you had to eat in a motel (I remember driving all the way to Washington just to have Sunday dinner at the Ramada). You weren't supposed to mow your grass on Sunday. There simply weren't other activities. Basically, you spent your day at church and then in the afternoon you visited family. You were together as a family, not going three thousand different directions at once. And at the end of the day, you had a day that was unlike any other day of the entire rest of the week. And by the way, you had something else, too. You had SABBATH REST. "Enter into my rest" invites the Lord. "My yoke is easy; my burden is light". Don't be like the world. They will take away your PEACE and your REST and any ability to be quiet in my presence and any time to spend together as a family with your family. Stressed? You don't have to be. You can be BLESSED by the BEST and NOT STRESSED if you just take God's advice to "*Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy...*" (Exodus 20: 8)

It says to "keep it holy". That means to keep Sunday as a day unlike the way the rest of the fallen, secular, pagan and heathen culture keeps Sunday. You know, lots of sports practices, lots of yard work, pick up that stack of papers from work and do it. Go to your cottage and spend the day cleaning and repairing it, instead of resting. Have frenetic activities and hobbies that never allow for a moment of peace. Fill up your day from daybreak till the moment you drop dead in bed at night tired of exhaustion. Be just like the world. Don't focus on God on the Sabbath. Don't keep it holy. Don't be separate and set apart from the fallen culture around us. By all means, work and have frenetic activities all seven days of your life, make one day just like the rest of them, never take a moment to regroup or to focus on the source of your life. How's that working out for you? How's your stress level? Do you think that the God who created you just might know a thing or two about what you really need in your life????

When God told Israel to "Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy" Israel was surrounded by a fallen Canaanite culture. In the pagan world there was no rest; you worked 24/ 7 till the day you died. What

was unique about the people of God is that they were unlike their pagan culture around them; they took a day of rest, because God told them to, and sign of the very fact that they were CHILDREN of the ONE TRUE and LIVING GOD was precisely that they took one day a week, the first day of the week, to make God the first priority of their week, and to honor God by worshipping HIM on the Sabbath. Holiness, being different from our culture, requires rest. So, are you a PAGAN? Or are you a CHILD of GOD? Make your decision. I choose Sabbath rest. **Sabbath rest, not stressed. I choose to be Blessed by the Best.** How about you? Sabbath time, going to church on Sunday, isn't a harsh duty. No, Jesus said, "Man was not made for the Sabbath, the Sabbath was made for man." God said to honor HIM by remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy is in order for His creation, for you and for me, to enter into His Sabbath REST –a very good thing indeed.

I am almost amused that some more secular type people have also "discovered" this principle. Amazing how smart God really is! In Greg McKeown's book *Essentialism* he argues for a downsizing and a paring away of non-essentials in order to concentrate our life on that which IS essential. He calls it, "The disciplined pursuit of less". This is, of course, in stark contrast to our culture today that bids us engage in more, bigger, better, best, more activities, more hobbies, more things in our calendar, more stuff to maintain, more things to purchase and store and clean. He contrasts the Undisciplined pursuit of MORE with the disciplined pursuit of LESS. Intentionally, choosing what NOT to do, what NOT to put in our calendars, why we choose NOT to do what our neighbor does, or our fallen secular culture demands. We choose LESS, not MORE. We identify what we do that we do because others expect us to do it; we examine those points in our life where we feel frustrated. We ask ourselves, where am I feeling DRAINED of my energy and my life? And we take out a paring knife and we PARE IT AWAY. We cut out the trivial and non-essential and focus on what gives us life. And then as McKeown argues, we have an "invincible power of choice". We are not dictated to by our culture, or our neighbor, or what the television says we are to buy or to do. Nothing is placed in our calendar that we do not agree with and allow to be placed there. Parents, you are the spiritual leaders of your family. God has appointed you to lead your family and set the priorities for your children. *Honor your Father and your Mother*, was the commandment we examined last week on Father's Day, and today we are examining the commandment to honor our heavenly Father by *remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy* and having our Sabbath keeping and our Sabbath rest be a sign that we are the ones in covenant with our heavenly Father. We honor God with the Sabbath. And God has given Mothers and Fathers authority over their families to make those choices that lead to life in HIM.

So, Mothers and Fathers, call a family meeting. Say to your children, beginning this Sunday we are choosing Sabbath rest; we are choosing to honor God with our time and our lives; we are choosing to demonstrate to you that God's ideas are always best and always for our blessing. So the priority this Sunday is FIRST GOD and honoring HIM by worshipping HIM and by entering into His Sabbath Rest. And our second priority this Sunday is SECOND FAMILY and being together as a FAMILY. Go to church together and then come home. Maybe visit your grandmother. But choose to hang out together all day. Play Monopoly. Bring in a pizza. Hang out together. Sit on the porch. No work. No chores. No shopping. No hobbies. No sporting events. Just REST. Just BREATHE. Just PEACE. Relationship. Being together and being together in the presence of God.. You honor God in that way and I will make you a promise –you will have rest for your weary souls, and you will have strong families, and you will be BLESSED by God of the Sabbath. Sabbath REST, not stressed. Be BLESSED by the BEST each Sunday...and watch how Monday is a far, far better day. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*