

## Interfaith Voices GT Column: The Sabbath is a Delight

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What is the Sabbath and why is it important? In this article, I will use the word “Sabbath” instead of “Sunday” because various faiths celebrate the Sabbath on different days.

In the Old Testament, we read, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” In Hebrew, Sabbath means “rest.” God himself rested on the seventh period of creation. The prophet Isaiah called the Sabbath “a delight.” Jesus Christ said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Could the Sabbath be a gift from God who knows of our need for a break from daily work and a rejuvenation of mind, body and soul?

In the past, the Sabbath was a day different from the other six days of the week. One of my ancestors, Cornelis Melyn, lost his patroonship of Staten Island because he didn’t attend church as frequently as was required back in the 1600s. Growing up in Corvallis in the ‘50s and ‘60s, Sunday was a unique day. Most stores were closed, people attended worship services, and sporting events were not held. Now, it is often difficult to differentiate the Sabbath from any other day.

Though I don’t feel “keeping the Sabbath” is something to enforce on others, I do believe we’ve lost the benefits of a Sabbath when it is unrecognizable from other weekdays. But what was God’s purpose when He asked us to remember the Sabbath and to keep it holy? Spencer W. Kimball (1895-1985), a former president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gave these suggestions:

“The Sabbath is a holy day in which to do worthy and holy things. It is a day in which to worship and to express our gratitude and appreciation to the Lord. It is a day when bodies may rest, minds relax, and spirits grow. It is a day when man may climb high, almost annihilating time, space, and distance between himself and his Creator.”

Members of the LDS church are encouraged to visit the sick, attend church, partake of the sacrament, study the scriptures and good books, write in one’s journal, research family history, and, if possible, refrain from shopping, attending events such as movies, and employment while being mindful that law enforcement, fire prevention, and health care services are needed daily. Members of the LDS Church are in no way experts at “keeping the Sabbath,” but many strive to remember this day as a covenant between themselves and God. We believe that blessings come by keeping the Sabbath day holy.

There is an increase in news articles discussing the need for a day or period of rest in the hectic lives of most Americans. Studies show that we are working more and sleeping less, resulting in stress, isolation, and physical ailments. Technology prevents us from disconnecting from the world. No wonder our bodies are craving emotional and physical benefits that come from a day of rest.

When my husband was in medical school, we had three small children and limited finances. It was a stressful time. Together we decided that he would forgo studying on the Sabbath. During those four years, I knew he would be home on Sunday, helping with the children, attending church as a family, and providing emotional support. He looked forward to a break from books and the library and discovered that his grades did not suffer. That decision was one of the best we ever made. Writing this article has renewed a personal commitment to seek out restful and uplifting activities on the Sabbath and reconnect more deeply with family and Jesus Christ.