

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES - A MAN AND THE SABBATH
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On Tuesday morning, October 1st, Man in the Mirror is going to have a fundraising event to make people aware of what Man in the Mirror is doing. Some of you have probably gone to banquets for Young Life or Campus Crusade, where they make a presentation then will have an opportunity to participate. We're going to do something similar to that. We're going to have David Tindall, who runs videos, put together a high-energy video for the occasion. We'll have some powerful testimonies about how God is working in men's lives and in the lives of families, and it will be an opportunity to learn all about what Man in the Mirror is doing, which is really pretty amazing. I say, "Golly, how did this all happen?" I really don't know, but it's amazing what God is doing for Man in the Mirror. So we are going to do that on Tuesday morning, October 1st. We will have 30 tables, and we need 30 table captains. The responsibility of the table captain will be to fill up the table with nine or ten people. If you would be interested in being a table captain and inviting some men, hand me your business card today, or within the next week or two, and write down your name and put "Table Captain" on there. Your opportunity would be to invite some guys you know to come to a breakfast. It will be exactly one hour. We're going to have a buffet from 7 to 7:25. We're going to ask everyone to be in their seats by 7:25. At 7:30 we'll start with a video, and we will adjourn exactly by 8:30. If you are interested in being a table captain, see Jim or me, and give us your card.

Deuteronomy: Chapter 5. We are doing a series on Spiritual Discipline for the Man in the Mirror. We are going to look at A Man and the Sabbath this morning. Now, some of you at this point are probably thinking, "Oh, man, I could have slept in this morning." But I want you to know this is not going to be a harang about the Sabbath; in fact, the point I really want to get across this morning is that the Sabbath is a right that we have, it's a privilege that we have as Christians. In fact, I will go ahead and give you the big idea for the day. It is legal for you to set apart one day a week to rest. It is legal for you to set apart one day a week to rest.

When I put together these talks, I really try to come up with a problem that I feel like you men are dealing with that will be addressed by the text. So, this morning, the subject is Sabbath or, for most of us, what do you do with Sunday?

I want to talk to you about three things this morning. I want to talk to you about rest, I want to talk to you about the legislation, or the legality of the Sabbath, then I want to talk to you about the question, is the Sabbath for today or is it just an Old Testament idea? Then we will look at a few applications as well. Now the problem I think some of us are dealing with in this room is what I am going to call rest-interval dysfunction. In fact, I like that term so much I am thinking some psychology student should use it as a thesis for a Master's paper - rest-interval dysfunction.

At Man in the Mirror, we require our people to lead balanced lives. We do this because part of the message that we're trying to communicate is the importance of leading a balanced life. So, it would be a little hypocritical to have a ministry where you ran your people 70, 80 or 60 hours a week and then your message is to lead a balanced life. Obviously, we can't tell people what to do when they're not working, but we can tell people they shouldn't be working. One of the great things that a person can do is understand how God has given us this day of rest, this Sabbath, and that they would work it into their lives.

I am not a legalist, and I am not saying that somebody should never work on Sundays because from time-to-time I work on Sundays. A few weeks ago I worked for nine days straight. I just had some deadlines, had to do it, and had to get it done. It was interesting though on the tenth day, I was suffering from rest-interval dysfunction. In other words, I was a little surly with my wife, and I was impatient. I got a couple of e-mails and thought to myself, "these people are so stupid. This is the dumbest question I've ever heard in my life. Why can't people figure it out for themselves?" So I decided to take the afternoon off. At least I was smart enough to know I was suffering from rest-interval dysfunction.

Now God tells us that we can set apart one day a week for rest, and we find that in Deuteronomy: Chapter 5, verse 12. You will notice that the context for this legislation is the Ten Commandments. This is right within the middle of the Ten Commandments; in fact, it's the fourth Commandment. You might also notice that it is the longest of the Ten Commandments.

I know there is a lot of controversy about the Sabbath, what do you do and so forth, but what I would like to get across to you this morning is that yes, it is your responsibility, but it's also a right, a privilege that we have. "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it Holy, as the Lord your God has commanded you. 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 manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day." So you see a few things in there. Remember the purpose of it is to have a time to remember. It's a day that is set apart. We don't work. We don't require others to work. That's kind of what the Sabbath is about as we see it here in the Old Testament.

Just for fun, look into Exodus: Chapter 23, Verse 12. As you are turning there, I'm going to read to you from Psalm 127, Verse 2. "In vain you rise up early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat - for he grants sleep to those he loves." We know that Jesus says in Matthew: 11, Verse 28, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Men, Jesus is the Lord of rest, and we, as men, need rest. On this day of rest the way we most revitalize ourselves is to set it apart as Holy unto the Lord and on that day to remember. We'll talk a little more about that later. Exodus: Chapter 23, Verse 12 says, "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed."

So the first thing we see here is that the Sabbath is a beautiful gift of God to his children. It is something that is legal. He has made it legal for us to set apart one day a week in order to rest. Why would we include the Sabbath in a series on Spiritual Disciplines? Well, first the Sabbath is a huge part of the teaching that's made about Orthodox Christianity. It's very integral to Orthodox Christianity. This is one of the ten most important pieces of legislation that has ever been passed in the history of the world. Think about the Ten Commandments, the ten most important pieces of legislation that God has passed. The Decalogue, the Ten Commandments, is the foundation of Western Civilization. In fact, it is said in Paris that when they stopped observing the Sabbath that suicide rates increased until finally the suicide rate in Paris is the highest of any of the cities in Christendom because of a failure to keep the Sabbath. So it's an important part of the teaching of Orthodox Christianity. Secondly, the Sabbath is badly misunderstood, often abused, and frequently neglected. One student trying to draw attention to the neglect of the Sabbath in our generation wrote a satirical track and the name of the track was, "I believe in all nine of the Ten Commandments."

Think about this. What happens to a family when you, as the head of the house, neglect your family and work all the time? When you're not working, you're playing all the time which maybe actually doing something or watching ESPN, the men's channel. When we do those things to the neglect of our family, what happens to our family? What happens to the relationship in the family? They grow stone cold and families disintegrate when they do this. I would suggest to you that without the teaching of the Sabbath and spending some time to be a part of God's family, men end up being stressed out, they become spiritually isolated from God, and they end up making poor decisions for their life. More than that, the church gets weakened as well. The church is weakened when men are not observing God's Sabbath.

God has made it legal for you to take a day of rest. It's okay. He's made it legal for you to take a day of rest. If you work on a Sunday occasionally, it's okay, but, you know, if every Sunday night you feel compulsively that you need to take an hour or two to plan out your week, you may want to think about the idea that you are not keeping the Sabbath, that you are not trusting God. He's made it legal for you to have a day of rest, and if you feel you can't get by without working on the Sabbath, you may want to be challenged to rethink that.

I'm going to step on some toes now. If you're sitting in church on Sunday, and it's 12:00 and the service is supposed to be over and you have a luncheon reservation at 12:15 and your impatient that the pastor is going on too long, and that's the only time it has ever happened, that's probably okay. But, if every week, week in and week out, you make it your practice to be impatient with your pastor because he's interfering with your dinner reservation, you may want to think about the possibility that you have a wrong view of the Sabbath.

There are different terms I was thinking about this week, and you'll have a chance to look at them yourselves. Sunday, or the Sabbath for us, is thought of as a family day for some people. That sounds pretty noble when you get started. Other people would think of it as game day. That's football season or whatever it is. Other people think of Sunday as fun day. This is the day that I kick back, I ride my jet ski or pull the kids behind the boat, or we go to a park. Some people would think of Sunday as my day. Every other day belongs to my creditors, but Sunday is my day, and I don't want anybody to interfere with my day. So, I get up on Sunday, I kick back, I have a third cup of coffee, I read the newspaper, I go to church sometimes but only if I feel like it because it's my day. Then the other idea would be that Sunday is the Lords' day. It's interesting because the reality is that probably each of us has a way of thinking about Sunday as a particular kind of day. You may just want to reflect on what your real heart attitude is because the Lord is not so interested in the external behavior. He's more interested in what's going on in the heart.

Now to the subject of is the Sabbath for today? A lot of people will have the thought that the idea of a Sabbath is an idea that comes out of Judaism. It's a holdover from the Old Testament. Is that true? Actually, the idea of the Sabbath predates Judaism. Remember in Genesis: Chapter 2, Verse 3, "On the seventh day he rested." So just think how profound the idea of a seven-day week is. A seven-day week doesn't relate to anything. It doesn't relate to the lunar cycle, it doesn't relate to any cycle of stars, it basically comes out of the creation ordinance. Think about how profound the impact of a seven-day week and how we organize our entire lives. Think about your business. Everything is organized on a seven-day week. It's a very significant thing and it predates Judaism by quite some time.

Why doesn't the New Testament do away with the Old Testament law? Doesn't the Scripture say that Jesus cancel the written code and nail it to the cross? The Scripture does say that, doesn't it? Colossians: Chapter 2. So what written code is it that has been cancelled and nailed to the cross? This is a pretty basic thing that there are three kinds of law in the Old Testament. Who can tell me what they are? You have Ceremonial Law, the ceremonial rituals of the Old Testament; Judicial Law because Israel was a Theocracy and they had Judicial laws; and then the third kind of law is Moral Law. So we have Ceremonial, Judicial and Moral Law. It is true that all of the Ceremonial Laws and all of the Judicial Laws were repealed in the New Testament by the coming of Christ. But God's Moral Law, and moral being that which is right, was not repealed. In fact, Jesus teaches extensively on the Sabbath. He teaches extensively on Moral Law. And what is the Moral Law? What is it that is brought forward into the New Testament by every writer? It's the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. Jesus even says in Mark: Chapter 2, "I am Lord even of the Sabbath." He's the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is very much a part of the New Testament.

So what are your convictions about the Sabbath? I would challenge you this morning to just think about how you are spending your Sabbath. Are you so tired on Monday mornings that you can barely function? You have rest-interval dysfunction. If you go so hard on Sunday, and maybe you do go to church, but then you come home and maybe go out to eat, you should think about whether or not you should go out to eat. I think it's a matter of liberty.

When my children were coming up, we went out to dinner every Sunday night. We went to Steak 'n Shake, Burger King or something like that. It was a way for us to pull the family together at the end of the weekend and making sure we were doing something we thought was the overflow of living out the Sabbath. Now, however, my daughter then goes into ministry and on to Seminary where she's getting a degree in Counseling, and going through all these Theology classes, so about a year and a half ago, she called and asked where we were when she called. She was just interested and where we were. We told her we had just returned from our Sunday night dinner. She said it was very interesting that she been studying about the Sabbath lately, and she made a case as to why that for her own self she didn't think she would go out to eat any more on Sunday just as a matter of her own personal conscience because it did force other people to work. I'm thinking, they're going to be working anyway, so why not go. Unfortunately, that was the argument I used on her. But she said, "Yeh, I know, but it bothers my conscience that I'm contributing to them having to work. For me I'm not going to go to eat anymore on Sunday."

That started working on me, and if you were to look at the Ten Commandments from a mosaic perspective, you will come up with a long list of little "do's" and "don'ts," right? If you were looking at it from a mosaic standpoint, you would come up with all kinds of rules and regulations about what to do on the Sabbath. If you were taking a Christ-set view of the Sabbath, though, you would understand that what Jesus is interested in is in the attitude of your heart. So, he gives you great freedom and liberty. All of the teaching that Jesus did on the Sabbath was to legalists. People who were tried to say you couldn't do works of mercy, you couldn't do works of necessity, you couldn't do works of righteousness on Sunday because it's the Sabbath. The Pharisees had that problem, and we have the exact opposite problem today in most cases. There may be a few legalists here, but in most cases in the world we live in it's the opposite problem. It's what's called antinomianism (anti, against/ nomas, law), against the law, so you have all these people who are down with the establishment. I grew up in the 60's, and any kind of authority, I rebelled against. Why? It had nothing to do with whether or not it was going to do me any good, it's just the fact that it is authority.

That's what I am trying to teach you this morning, not as something you have to do, and not that it is a responsibility. It's a right, it's legal, and it's okay. The upshot of all this is that my wife and I have stopped going out to eat on Sundays, but it's a personal thing. It's just the way God is working in my heart. Do I never go out to eat on Sunday? From time-to-time I do. I preached at a church here a couple of weeks ago for Tom and John here, and they said would you like to go out to lunch afterward? I said, "What time?" It was great, but the attitude in my heart is that I am using the Sabbath for the way that God intended the Sabbath to be used. I am not abusing myself so much that I am exhausted on Monday, and I'm not working so hard that I'm exhausted on Monday. But if you work at physical labor all week then the thing for you to do on Sunday might be to take a nap in the afternoon. If you have a sedentary job all week long, and you have a little rim above the belt (I have one, too), you may want to exercise in the afternoon. That might be a way of you setting a part the day. That's the point I was trying to make.

If you're a legalist, the proper reaction is not to become antinomian. If you're an antinomian this morning, and just kind of rebel against having any responsibility whatsoever to deal with the Sabbath as my day, the reaction is not to go all the way over and become a legalist. In my book, *Discipleship for the Man in the Mirror*, I have a chart. Obviously you can't see it, but if you were to draw a continuum on the left you put "law" and on the right-hand side of the continuum, you put "license" those would be the two inappropriate extremes. In the center of the continuum, you would put the word "liberty." You have law, liberty, and license. You have to figure out how to balance it. Abuse of the law is severe legalism. Abuse of license is to have a loose antinomianism. The proper biblical response is to hit the middle with liberty that comes through grace and brings freedom.

If I was rethinking this today, I would say, "Well, what's the goal?" The goal would be wisdom; wisdom in the use of my liberty. If you have a little rest-interval dysfunction yourself, you may want to think about a few suggestions for what you might do this Sunday.

Here's what a day of rest might look like. I wake up at the normal time. I don't roll out of bed right away. I sort of lie in bed for 15 - 20 minutes, and I decide I'm going to pray. I'm going to thank God for the Sabbath, and I'm going to think about the fact that this is a special day in the economy of God, and He's made it legal for me to set this day aside as a day of rest. Then the reason I am going to set this day aside

as a day of rest because He wants me to make it Holy. He wants me to remember. He wants me to worship. He wants to have fellowship with me. He has made it legal for me to spend some time with God. The Sabbath is about spending time with God. He has made it legal for me to set a whole day to do that. So, I get up, and I have a time of personal devotions. In this time of personal devotions, I pray back through the week, day-by-day. I just go back chronologically throughout the whole week, and I thank God for all of the things He did to protect me and to watch over me. I remember a few things that are going rolled toward the next week, and I pray about that, too. Then, when I finish that, I pray forward through the week to come, day-by-time, all the of things at which I am going to be working, and I ask God to watch over me, to give me favor and to bless me, to guide me, to give me wisdom. So I have an extended time with personal devotions.

The next thing I'm going to do is to take a look at how much money came into the household the past week. Then, I really don't need a calculator for this. The only reason you need a calculator to figure how much you're going to give is if you're not giving 10% because 10% you can do in your head. So I'm going to calculate my tithes, then, I'm not going to wait until they start passing out the Alms basins in church on Sunday and write a check. No, I'm going to, in advance, think through, intentionally, how much my tithe is this week, then I'm going to write out the check at home before I leave for church, then I'm going to pray and I'm going to offer to God the sacrifice of praise.

The next thing I'm going to do is go to church, but even before I leave for church, I'm going to be thinking about other brothers and sisters in the church who I know are hurting. When I get to church, I'm going to look around, and I'm going to look for somebody with drooped shoulders. I'm going to look for somebody who's standing off in the corner with nobody to talk to, and I'm going to pray for those people. I might go over and engage someone in a conversation before church. When they sing the music in church, I'm going to let go. I am going to worship God. I'm not going to worry about what the people around me are thinking of my singing. (Of course, I am taking singing lessons to alleviate that problem right now, too.) But I'm not going to worry about what they think. I'm going to be singing to Jesus, to my Father through the Holy Spirit. Then, when church is over, we'll have a little fellowship with some people afterwards, and I'm going to eat lunch at home. Then, depending on how I feel at that point, I may want to take a nap. Usually I don't take a nap, but what I'll do is watch something on television. All I do is read and study so I kind of like to have a little zoning out time. So I just zone out. Now if all you do all week long is zone out, then maybe you ought to read. But, for me, I want to zone out for a little bit. Then, towards the evening, Patsy and I will have dinner at home together, and we spend some time talking about what's going on in our lives. Then, I'll probably go to bed early so I don't wake up with rest-interval dysfunction on Monday morning.

So, you might want to think about what could you do this Sunday to better receive this gift, this beautiful gift that God is giving to each of us. What can you do this Sunday to receive it because it is legal? It's okay, it's legal for you to set apart a day to rest.

Let's pray:

Father, the Sabbath is a beautiful part of our lives but, of course not if we don't think of it that way. You have given us the Sabbath as a legal right. It's a privilege, and it's also a responsibility. Father, I pray that you would give each of us the wisdom to see how keeping the Sabbath will affect us at 9:00 Monday morning and all throughout the week. For those of us who do have this rest-interval dysfunction, this rest problem, I pray that you would help each of us look at our own hearts to see if maybe the Sabbath is part of the problem for that. For those of us who are legalists, help us to view the Sabbath as liberty, and for those of us who have been against the Sabbath, help us, Lord, to think righteously and to reach that freedom that comes through your liberty. We pray this prayer in the power and name of Jesus. Amen

/cjb 11/13/02