

## Time-Out - Exodus 20:8–11

The term has many different applications. Parents use it as a disciplinary tool. A coach uses it to stop the game for a short time. The idea of time-out is stopping, ceasing, or taking a break. Long before the idea of time-out was thought of for child discipline or made a sports staple, God called for a time-out in Exodus 20:8–11.

**Israel and the Sabbath** - Israel has a very long and storied history with the Sabbath. Let's take a quick look at the Sabbath in Israel's history.

### **The Institution of the Sabbath**

- The practice began a week before the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 16:23).
- God gave it as a new law, a *lex nova*—on Mount Sinai (Ex. 20:8–11).

### **The Importance of the Sabbath**

- It had a humanitarian purpose—a day of rest.
- It had a covenant purpose—Israel is a theocracy (Ex. 31:16).
- It had a spiritual purpose—to remind Israel that Yahweh is the God who delivered them (Deut. 5:15).
- It had a salvific purpose—it foreshadowed the rest that the Messiah would give them (Heb. 4:1–13).

**The Abuse of the Sabbath** - Tragically Israel lost sight of the purpose of the Sabbath and turned it into a legalistic nightmare. By the time of Jesus, the Jewish lawyers had developed thirty-nine classifications of work forbidden on the Sabbath. There were more than fifteen hundred laws to follow for the Sabbath. The Sabbath became a horrible burden for Israel.

**Christ and the Sabbath** - Is it any wonder that Jesus clashed with the Pharisees over the Sabbath so often? Jesus wasn't diminishing the Sabbath; rather, He was moving it back to its original intent. Let's summarize what Jesus did in regard to the Sabbath.

- He protested the idolatry of the Sabbath.
- He proclaimed the true function of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1–14; Mark 2:23–27; Luke 13:10–17).
- He declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28).
- By His death and resurrection, He changed the Sabbath into the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10).

### **The New Testament Christian and the Sabbath**

Does this commandment have any relevance or application for us today? Some would say no, pointing out that the other nine are commanded in the New Testament, but this one is not. In fact, Colossians 2:16–18 says we are not under the Sabbath law.

You have to remember that there were three kinds of laws in Israel.

- **The Ceremonial Law** (Col. 2:13–17; Heb. 10:1). The ceremonial law is no longer in effect, because it was a foreshadow of Christ, who has fulfilled them all.

- **The Civil Law**

It consisted of those laws that governed Israel as a nation. Israel was a theocracy. We do not live in a theocracy, so the Sabbath as a civil law doesn't apply.

- **The Moral Law**

It consists of those laws that govern our moral conduct. It is the righteous and eternal standard for our relationship with God and with others. It is the spirit of the law. Is there a universal principle that applies to the believer even today? I believe there is. We are not under the law but under grace, which means we can live out the law as God intended it.

1. **We engage in hard, productive work six days.**

Many people see work as part of the curse. Sin certainly cursed our work, but work is not a curse. The fourth commandment dignifies and celebrates productive labor. It commends and applauds hard work. It elevates the work ethic. See your work as an act of worship to God.

## 2. **We set aside one day for the Lord.**

God says that the Sabbath is “to the Lord.” It is something that we are to give to Him. How do we give a day to the Lord? What do we do?

a. **We rest.** We have become so addicted to activity that we don’t know how to stop anymore. If our bodies stop, our minds are racing, and if our minds stop, our bodies are fidgeting. Hurry Sickness is the disease of the twenty-first century. All those things created to free up time have only made us busier. This addiction to speed comes with horrendous consequences.

It has been said that you will get your rest in one of three places—your bed, the hospital, or the grave. We have totally misunderstood the Sabbath command. It is not God trying to put a crimp on our lifestyle; it is God bringing sanity to our lives.

b. **We reflect.** The Sabbath is also a call to reflect on God and life. In verse 11 God says to reflect on God and what He has done. One of the tragic consequences of our hurried lifestyle is that people don’t have time for God. They can’t slow down long enough.

Let me give some practical reflections from our text to help us regain the idea of the fourth command.

i. **God is our Creator.** In our busyness, we have forgotten who made us. He knows what is best for us.

ii. **God is our Provider.** Setting aside a day to the Lord requires us to trust God.

iii. **God is our Sovereign.** Taking that day when everything else is screaming for our attention declares who is our Lord.

iv. **God is our Redeemer.** It is a time to remember that God is our Savior.

c. **We revere.** We spend time in worship with God’s people. Corporate worship needs to be an important part of keeping the spirit of this command. Jesus thought so (Luke 4:16).

Now, we could stop right here, but there is more than meets the eye in this command. There is a deeper application of this command.

## 3. **We enter into the Sabbath rest of Christ** (Col. 2:16–17; Heb. 4:1–11).

Aren’t you tired of the striving? The turmoil? The chaos? When billionaire Bill Gates was asked why he didn’t believe in God, he said, “Just in terms of allocation of time resources, religion is not very efficient. There’s a lot more I could be doing on a Sunday morning.” Bill missed it.

Don’t *you* miss it!