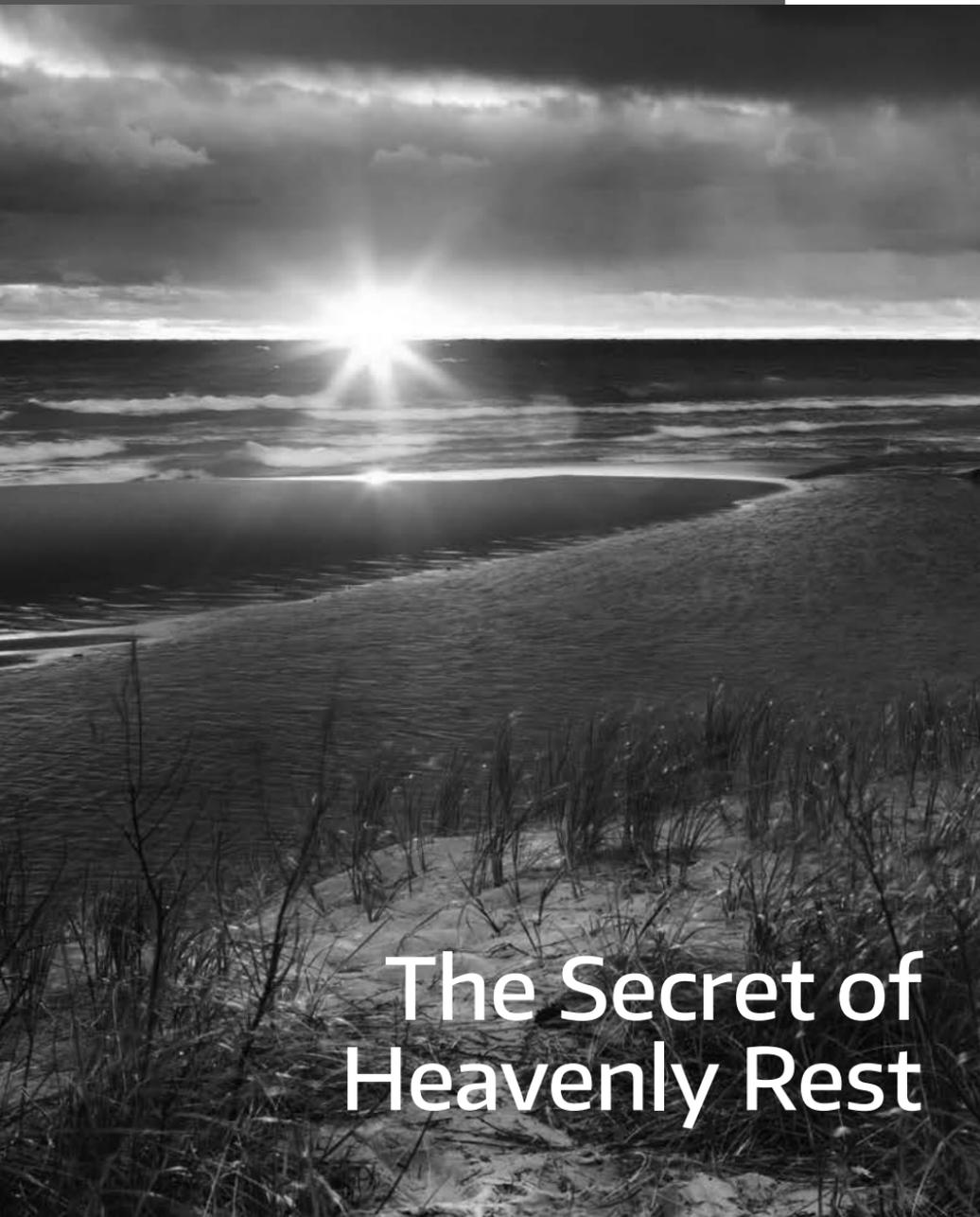


DISCOVER

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

16



The Secret of Heavenly Rest



JUST A FEW decades ago, sociologists were predicting that we would shortly have more leisure time than we'd know what to do with. We laugh at the idea today, but testimony before a United States Senate subcommittee in 1967 maintained that people would soon be working just 22 hours a week!

There were good reasons for those confident predictions. Computers were crunching through month-long tasks in fractions of a second. And robots had begun to handle many of the grueling jobs of heavy industry.

But today—with a world of knowledge and communication literally available at our fingertips 24/7—we're more out of breath than ever. As a Manhattan architect put it: "Technology is increasing the heartbeat."

Instead of reducing our workloads, we just try to do more with the time saved, and now the expectation is that our tasks will be completed immediately. A letter sent via "snail mail" used to take several days to cross the country; today our text message arrives

on the other side of the world right after we hit “send.” Instant delivery has shaped our output expectations.

Unfortunately, it appears the 1967 Senate subcommittee was wrong. Statisticians tell us that leisure time is shrinking and second jobs and overtime hours are commonplace.

Priorities are upside down. Families are out of time and out of touch. How can we slow down enough to get in touch again?

1 | The Remedy for High-Tension Living

Jesus understands the problems of families under stress, and He wants us to grasp this fact first of all: spiritual rest is part of the quality of life.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28, 29).

The Bible suggests we experience this kind of rest in two ways: coming to Christ on a daily basis as well as on a weekly basis.

2 | A Daily Link With Jesus

Jesus should have run out of time all the time. Crowds constantly clamored for His attention. In a brief period of three-and-a-half years, He had to carry out a spiritual revolution that would change life on planet Earth forever. He was also constantly dodging the Pharisees’ spies and plots.

Yet Christ communicated a peaceful demeanor to everyone around Him. How? He invested time each day into communing

with His Heavenly Father. He depended on His Father continually for the resources to meet life's challenges.

"As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me" (John 6:57).

Our Savior depended on the Father. If we are to live the serene, steady life that Jesus did, we must "feed" ourselves daily—allow His Word (the Bible) and His Spirit to fill us and shape us. The best way to counter the forces burning us out as individuals and tearing us apart as families is to invest high-quality time with Christ. He tells us:

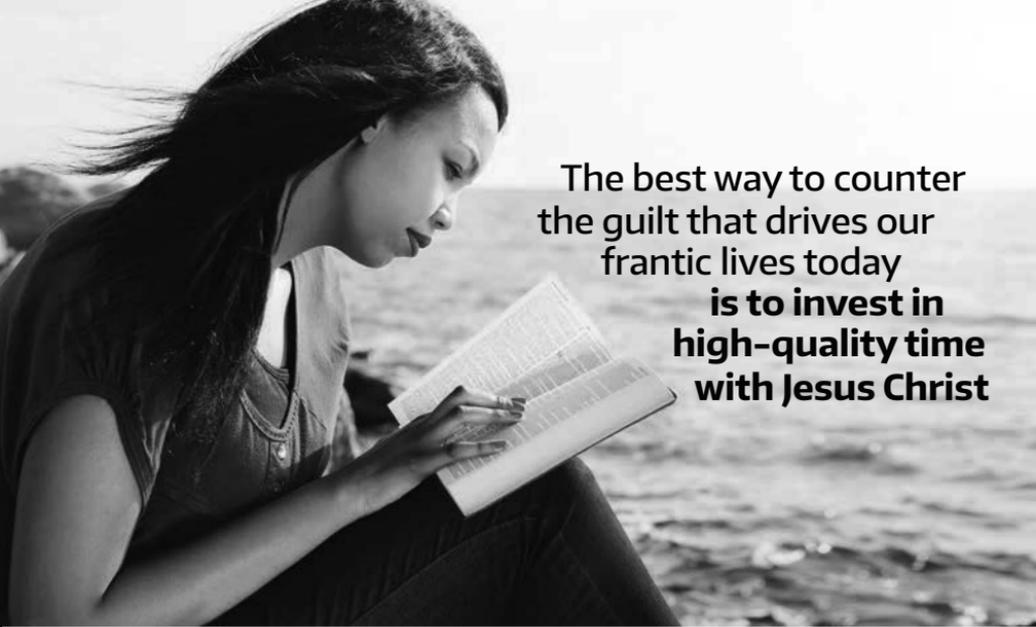
"Abide in Me, and I in you. . . . Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:4, 5).

One of the greatest needs of our time is for people to tap into the spiritual resources available through forming a day-by-day relationship with Jesus. This is accomplished through daily prayer and Bible study.

One very important point that needs to be emphasized about our relationship with Christ is what was accomplished for us on the cross. True rest and real security can exist only because of the great accomplishment Jesus referred to when He cried out as He was dying: "It is finished!" (John 19:30). In other words, His work of redemption was completed.

"But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. . . . By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:10, 14).



The best way to counter
the guilt that drives our
frantic lives today
**is to invest in
high-quality time
with Jesus Christ**

When Jesus died, He paid the penalty of our sins. The devil can no longer hold our sins against us, because our Substitute made full provision at Calvary for forgiveness. Since Jesus “has perfected forever those who are being sanctified,” Satan can no longer hold our failures and inadequacies against us.

That’s why it is said that the believer who has confessed his or her sins can rest in the finished work of Christ. We’re accepted by God. Guilt is the force that drives most compulsive behavior. Guilt lies behind much of the frantic pace of our lives today.

However, Jesus solved the guilt problem once and for all at the cross. Jesus’ cry, “It is finished!” sealed His promise of “I will give you rest” as an established fact. Christ completed the work of redeeming us at Calvary (Titus 2:14), then rested in the tomb over the Sabbath, and rose from the grave Sunday morning as the Victor over sin and death. The Christian can have no greater assurance than to rest in the finished work of Christ.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. . . . Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And

let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works” (Hebrews 10:22-24).

Because “He who promised is faithful,” we can enter into the salvation rest Jesus has promised. The stability, peace, and rest we experience in Jesus every day is a result not of anything we do, but of what He did on our behalf. Jesus lived a perfect life to cover our imperfect lives, and then paid the penalty for our sins by dying on the cross.

We can rest in Christ because our salvation is assured. That assurance creates a response of loving obedience, which we saw in Guide 15. And it motivates us to spend time with Christ each day, studying His Word and communicating with Him through prayer. Spending time with Jesus helps us turn a stressed-out lifestyle into a peaceful and purposeful life.

3 | A Weekly Link With Jesus

After Christ created the world in six days (Colossians 1:16, 17), He provided Sabbath rest, which is a wonderful *weekly* opportunity for us to cultivate our connection with Him.

“God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 1:31–2:3).

As their Creator, Jesus “rested” on the first Sabbath with Adam and Eve. He “blessed” that day and “sanctified” it, or made it holy.

God established a seven-day weekly cycle—not for His own benefit, but for Adam and Eve and for us today. Because He cared so much for the two people He had made, He planned that every seventh day throughout their lives should be dedicated to seeking His presence. Each Sabbath, as He called it, was to be for them a day of both physical rest and spiritual refreshment.

The entrance of sin into our world only made the need for Sabbath rest more necessary. The same Savior who promised Adam and Eve “rest” also gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) approximately 2,000 years later. Jesus chose to place the Sabbath rest commandment at the very heart of the Ten Commandments. The fourth commandment reads:

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).

God established the seventh-day Sabbath as a day to “remember” the Lord who “made the heavens and the earth.” Sabbath rest each week links us with the Creator who blessed this day and set it apart.

When Jesus lived on earth, He took advantage of every opportunity to sustain His union with the Father. He benefitted from Sabbath rest by worshipping on the Sabbath, as Luke tells us:

“He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day” (Luke 4:16).



If the divine-human Jesus needed to rest in His Father's presence on the Sabbath day, we human beings certainly need it more. When Jesus swept aside the legal restrictions the Jews had placed on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-13), He pointed out that God had made it to benefit people:

"He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27, 28).

Jesus highlighted the importance of the Sabbath even in His death. He died on Friday, the preparation day, as the Sabbath drew near (Luke 23:54). At that very moment He declared, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), that is, His work of coming to this world and dying as the Substitute for the human race was complete. The great work of redemption had been accomplished. Then, as if to celebrate His finished mission, Jesus rested in the tomb over the

Our Savior wanted His disciples and their converts to experience both salvation rest and Sabbath rest

Sabbath. Just as Christ completed His work of creation on the sixth day and then rested on the seventh day, so through dying on the cross He completed His redemptive work on the sixth day, and then rested on the seventh.

On Sunday morning, Jesus came out from the tomb a victorious Savior (Luke 24:1-7). He had already asked His followers to observe the Sabbath after His resurrection. Speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place nearly 40 years after His death, He told them:

“Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath” (Matthew 24:20).

Our Savior wanted His disciples and their converts to continue the practices He had taught them. He wanted them to experience both salvation rest and Sabbath rest. They did not disappoint Him. The disciples continued to observe the Sabbath after Christ’s death (see Luke 23:54-56; Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2; 18:1-4).

The beloved Apostle John kept up his weekly link with Christ on the Sabbath day. In his later years, he wrote, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10). According to Jesus, “the Lord’s Day” is the Sabbath: “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8).

On the Sabbath, we celebrate the Lord’s two greatest accomplishments on our behalf: creating us and saving us. This Sabbath experience will continue in the new earth:

“As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the Lord. . . . ‘From one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me’” (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

God originally established the Sabbath as a memorial of creation, so it’s fitting that His last-day message should call men and women back to worshipping their Creator through obeying His commandments (Revelation 14:7, 12). This message from the last book in the Bible includes observing the Sabbath commandment as a memorial to the Creator.



**God originally established the Sabbath
as a memorial of creation**

4 | The Benefits of Sabbath Rest

God gives those who delight in the Sabbath a great promise:

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father” (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

This passage suggests the Sabbath is a doorway through which we can experience the best things in life. People today are exhausting themselves in the rush to “have it all.” Individuals are burning out, and families are falling apart under the strain.

Lately, many sociologists have been pointing out how work has become all-important in our modern culture. Some have even called it our “god.” Work dominates our existence until there is little time for us and our families. The Sabbath is God’s answer to this problem. It lets us step back and fulfill our human need for rest—physical, mental, and spiritual. Sabbath rest protects us from overwork and the alienation from friends and family that is so prevalent today.

God offers us a holy day of rest each week. Let’s look at some of the specific benefits of Sabbath rest:

1. The Sabbath is a memorial of creation, and by keeping it holy, we erect a memorial to our Creator.

Its sacred hours offer a wonderful opportunity to get in touch with God through the world He created. When was the last time

you or your family took time to really soak in the quiet beauty of a forest path or a rocky stream? It's harder to really hear or see nature these days; there's so much drowning out its peaceful sounds and sights. The Sabbath gives us a space in which to catch glimpses of God again in the midst of the wonders He has made for us.

2. On the Sabbath, we experience the joy of worship and fellowship with other Christians. The Sabbath points us heavenward. We desperately need this weekly perspective adjustment, and we need to look up together. There's a benefit from praising God with others as a group of worshippers, and that benefit simply doesn't come any other way. We need to express our faith publicly and socially, as well as in the privacy of our hearts. The Sabbath gives us that special time of coming together as a church body to recharge our spiritual batteries.

Isaiah understood the joy of Sabbath worship:

"Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath. . . . And holds fast My covenant—even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. . . . For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:2, 6, 7).

3. The Sabbath provides occasions to perform thoughtful acts of kindness. Has a neighbor been sick during the week when you had no time to visit? When a friend needed a sympathetic ear after her husband's death, did the pressure of daily living deprive her of your loving attention? Our natural inclination is to keep postponing these things. The Sabbath provides an opportunity to meet these needs. As Jesus advised, "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12).

4. The Sabbath is a day to strengthen family ties.

When Christ commanded, “In it [the Sabbath] you shall do no work” (Exodus 20:10), He couldn’t have given a better prescription to stressed-out dads and moms. The Sabbath is a giant STOP sign for families. Stop rushing past each other; stop letting the most urgent things crowd out the most important things. The Sabbath is one day when we can replace entertainment with interaction, pressure with prayer, labor with laughter, and busy schedules with quiet reflection. Sabbath rest provides the entire family with an opportunity to spend personal time with God.

5. The Sabbath is a time when Jesus comes especially near. Every relationship needs quality time, and our relationship with Christ is no exception. Devoting a whole day to Christ each week is a great way to keep our friendship with Him fresh and exciting. The Sabbath gives us extra time for Bible study and prayer—extra time to simply be alone with Christ in a quiet place and listen.

Jesus “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” with the promise of His presence (Genesis 2:3). You can understand why it is important to observe Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the Sabbath, because it is the day Christ set apart at creation to communicate with us in a special way.

When Jesus created the Sabbath, it almost seems that He had our generation in mind. It’s exactly what we need in our stress-filled, media-saturated environment: a day that is truly a break—a complete

SATURDAY? SUNDAY?

You may be wondering: Who changed the Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day of the week? When was the change made? Did God authorize the change? These questions will be answered in Guide 21.

break from the normal routine of life. It's a day to worship God, spend time in His creation, and concentrate on relationships instead of things. The Sabbath is a breath of fresh air in today's smoggy, nonstop freeway of life.

5 | A Foretaste of Heavenly Rest

We can summarize the benefits of connecting with Jesus through a *daily* and a *weekly* encounter in one word—*rest*. The word *Sabbath* comes from a Hebrew word that means “rest,” so it's not surprising that Scripture calls the seventh day “a Sabbath of . . . rest” (Leviticus 23:3). It serves as a foretaste of the perfect rest we'll experience in heaven.

“He [God] has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: ‘And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.’ . . . There remains therefore a [Sabbath] rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His [God's] rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:4, 9-11).

Experiencing Sabbath rest gives us a weekly hint of the joy we will experience in the eternal rest of heaven. This rest isn't just inactivity; it refers to the sense of security, peace, and well-being that lie at the root of the truly abundant life. This kind of spiritual rest can be appreciated only through experience, and the testimony of those who have experienced salvation rest and Sabbath rest is universal: If you enter into the rest of Jesus through a daily and weekly connection with Him, you will discover the greatest joy in life.

Our Lord Himself gave us the Sabbath at creation. It was not given to the Jews but to the entire human race 2,000 years before

Continued on page 16

WordSearch

If you want to go deeper into this study topic, complete this section.

1. How did Jesus indicate to His disciples that they should still be keeping the seventh-day Sabbath when Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans some 40 years after His death and resurrection? (Matthew 24:1, 2, 20)

2. Did Jesus' disciples continue to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath after His death? (Acts 13:14; 16:13; 17:2; 18:1-4)

3. What day has God given us as a sign of His power to save us? (Ezekiel 20:12)

4. On what day of the week was Jesus raised from the dead? (Mark 16:1-6)

5. How can we be sure that we truly know and love God? (1 John 2:3-6)



there was a Jewish people. Jesus “blessed” and “sanctified” the Sabbath. It is a special day set aside by God for renewing our spiritual life. It is part of His Ten Commandment law. God said, “Remember the Sabbath day,” but most of the world has forgotten.

Would you like to thank Jesus for His gift of rest? Would you like to tell Him you desire to keep His Sabbath each week? Would you like to say, “Yes, Lord! I want to find delight in the day You have established”? Why not make that commitment right now?

My Decision

- I accept God’s invitation to find rest in Jesus. I want to experience the heavenly rest Jesus has promised by keeping His seventh-day Sabbath holy each week.
- Please pray for me as I continue to study this topic on the Sabbath.

My Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for the promise of salvation rest each day to meet the challenges of life and for the promise of Sabbath rest each week to cement my relationship with You. I thank You for the promise of power from above to change my heart. Help me to always welcome the opportunity of experiencing the rest that You provide. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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