

The Invitation to Rest



SABBATH—AUGUST 21

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 1:1–31; Exodus 20:8–11; Exodus 16:14–31; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Psalm 92.

MEMORY VERSE: “God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. He blessed it because on that day he rested from all the work he had done” (Genesis 2:3, NIV).



God wants us to celebrate His gifts of grass, air, animals, water, and people.

CAN YOU MAKE A PICTURE IN YOUR MIND of God making the earth and the sky? Try, if you can, to see the light starting to shine where there was only dark. Or the first birds flying into the sky. Or Adam breathing his first breath. Or Eve coming alive after God makes her from a bone. Wow! We cannot begin to understand how God made all these things!

What does God do next? At first, the thing God does may not be as exciting to our eyes as whales that leap in the sea or birds with bright feathers. God simply makes a day, the seventh day. Then God makes it special. Before people have busy lives or know what stress is, God makes a day to help us remember to rest. God wants this day to be a time for us to stop and enjoy life. God wants us to celebrate His gifts of grass, air, animals, water, and people. Most of all, God wants us to enjoy time with Jesus. Jesus is the Maker of every good gift.

The Sabbath is an invitation to rest. This invitation does not end when Adam and Eve fall into sin. Long after Adam and Eve leave Eden, God continues to invite people to rest each Sabbath. That is why God made the Sabbath a part of every week. The Sabbath is a part of time itself. This week, we will study the invitation from God to rest, again and again, every seventh day.

**THE FIRST SIX DAYS BEFORE THERE WAS REST
(Genesis 1:1–31)**

God is there from the start of life on earth. His words make things appear and come alive from nothing. First, God separates day from night. Next, His words make sky and water appear on the second day. On the third day, God makes dry land and plants. So, God starts time and makes dry land appear in the first three days. Then God spends the next three days after that filling the earth. On day four, God makes the sun to shine in the day and the moon at night. Most people during Bible times believed that the sun and moon were gods. But the Bible shows that the sun and moon are not gods. The sun and moon are under the command of God.

Moses tells us what happens during days 5 and 6 (Genesis 1:20–31). He writes in beautiful language. Birds, fish, and land animals fill the space that God makes.

What does God say about His work each day? For the answer, read Genesis 1:1–31.

God makes the earth perfect. The earth is filled with animals. After each day, God says that everything He makes is “good.”

How are humans different from everything else God makes? For the answer, read Genesis 1:26, 27 and Genesis 2:7, 21–24.

God bends down and starts to shape mud. He makes the mud into a man. God makes the man look the same as Himself. This act shows us how much God loves us and wants to be close to us. God breathes into the nose of Adam. Then Adam comes alive. Next, God makes Eve from a rib bone from Adam. God makes her in a special way to show us how close married people should be. A husband and wife should be together in heart, mind, and body. God gave humans marriage as a gift.

When God is done, He looks at everything He made. “And he saw that everything was very good” (Genesis 1:31, ERV).

The Bible story about how life on earth started is very different from what most people today believe. What should this tell us about how much we need to depend upon the Bible to show us truth?



God bends down and starts to shape mud. He makes the mud into a man.

THE COMMAND TO REST (Exodus 20:8–11)



The Israelites were slaves. The Egyptians made the Israelites feel they were not worth anything.

The earth and sky may be “very good” (Genesis 1:31, ERV). But the work of God is not finished yet. His work ends with rest and a special blessing. God blesses the seventh-day Sabbath. “God blessed the seventh day and made it a holy day. He made it special because on that day he rested from all the work he did while creating [making] the world [the sky and earth]” (Genesis 2:3, ERV).

The Sabbath is part of everything God made. God made the Sabbath a “place” where people can stop working and meet. Then, people can rest with the God who made them.

It is sad that sin came and changed everything about life on earth. We can no longer see God. Sin made our lives hard. Women suffer awful pain when their children are born. Work is hard. Our friendships are often messy. Even so, the Sabbath continues to be an everlasting promise. The Sabbath shows us who made us. The Sabbath promises us God will make us new again. If people needed the Sabbath before sin, how much more do we need it now!

Many years after Adam and Eve sin, God frees His children from slavery in Egypt. Then He tells His people again about the seventh-day Sabbath.

Read Exodus 20:8–11. What does this commandment teach us about the Sabbath and why it is so important? What does the Sabbath show us about how and when we were made?

In Exodus 20:8–11, God asks us to remember He made us. Many people today believe we were made by chance and natural forces that do not care about us. But the Bible shows us God made us. God wants to be our Friend. The Israelites must have been surprised to learn this news. They were slaves. The Egyptians made the Israelites feel they were not worth anything. But God did not care what the Egyptians thought. He loved His children anyway. Every Sabbath, God asked His children to remember He made them.

“The Sabbath shows us the work God did to make this earth. So, the Sabbath is a sign or word picture. This sign shows us the love and power of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 281, adapted.

Why is it important for us to remember who made us?

NEW AND EXCITING CHANGES (Exodus 16:14–31)

After 40 years, all the old Israelites have finally died. Their children now stop wandering in the desert. The children are different from their parents. The children saw the mistakes their parents made. The children saw their parents had no faith. So, the children wandered in the desert with their parents until their parents died.

The new group of Israelites sees God bless them in many ways. The children have the Holy Tent of Worship in the center of their camp. They also see the cloud every day where God is hidden inside and watches over them. When the cloud moves, the Israelites know it is time to pack up camp and follow the cloud. The cloud gives the Israelites shade during the day. At night, the cloud shines bright. Then the cloud gives them light and heat. The cloud helps them remember always that God loves and cares for them.

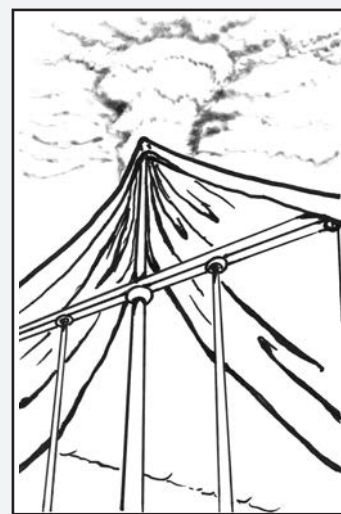
What other example does God give the Israelites to help them remember to rest on the Sabbath? For the answer, read Exodus 16:14–31.

Do you see how these verses show that the seventh-day Sabbath was kept holy before God gave the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai?

So, what is happening in Exodus 16:14–31 anyway?

God gives His people special food in the desert. This food is named manna. God gives His people manna every day. The manna helps the people remember daily that He cares for them. In a very real way, the miracle of the manna shows the Israelites that God takes care of their needs. Every day, the manna falls from the sky. Then when the sun comes out, the manna melts. Any time someone tries to collect and save manna for the next day, what happens? The manna rots and stinks. But on Friday something wonderful happens. God gives His people enough manna for Friday and Saturday. The leftover manna from Friday stays fresh on Sabbath!

At this time, Israel already has the laws for worship that are written in Leviticus and Numbers. But Moses wants the people to remember who they are and why God chose them. Moses does not want the people to make the same mistakes their parents made. So, Moses calls everyone to come together. He tells them again their history. He also tells them the laws God gave them (read Deuteronomy 5:6–22).



The cloud helps the Israelites remember always that God loves and cares for them.

ANOTHER REASON TO REST (Deuteronomy 5:12–15)

The Sabbath commandment helps the children to remember that God freed them and their parents.

The Israelites camp on the eastern side of the Jordan River. The Israelites won the lands that belonged to the king of Bashan and two kings of the Amorites. Moses talks to the Israelites after these mighty wars. Moses tells the Israelites to remember the agreement God made with their parents at Sinai. This agreement is not just for their parents. This agreement is for them, too. Then Moses says the Ten Commandments again.

What do Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15 show us about the Sabbath commandment? In what ways are Exodus 20:8–11 and Deuteronomy 5:12–15 different from each other?

In Exodus 20:8, the commandment starts with the word “remember” (NirV; NLV). Deuteronomy 5:12 starts with the word “keep” (NirV). In Exodus 20:8, God tells the Israelites to remember they had been slaves. This new group of Israelites spent 40 years in the desert. They grew up free. But that is only because God saved their parents from slavery. The Sabbath commandment helps the children to remember that God saved them and their parents: “ ‘The LORD your God brought you out of Egypt with his great [mighty] power and made you free’ ” (Deuteronomy 5:15, ERV).

Now the people of Israel stand for a second time on the border of the Promised Land. This group of Israelites is also helpless and weak as their parents were 40 years before. These new Israelites need God to help them just as much as their parents needed help.

The Sabbath helps the Israelites remember that the God who freed them from slavery can help them win their land. But first, God wants His people to remember the Sabbath day because the Sabbath shows that God made His people free (Deuteronomy 5:15). Of course, the Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy 5 shows people that God made them, too. In many ways, God made the people of Israel new when He freed them from Egypt (read Isaiah 43:15 for more on this idea).

The story of the Exodus is a word picture for freedom from sin. We can see that the Sabbath is a word picture that shows us the work Jesus did to make us and save us. So, the Sabbath really shows us Jesus.

Read John 1:1–13. What do these verses teach us about Jesus, who made us and saves us?

KEEPING THE SABBATH (Psalm 92)

God commands His people to keep the Sabbath day holy.

What should we do to keep the Sabbath holy? For the answer, read Psalm 92 and Isaiah 58:13.

When we keep the Sabbath, we celebrate the work God did to make this earth and us. We also celebrate the work of God as our Savior. So, the Sabbath should be a joyful time. We should be happy in the Lord. The Sabbath should not be a time of gloom and dark thoughts.

What else does remembering the Sabbath mean? We do not start remembering the Sabbath on the seventh day. We should remember the Sabbath day all week long. We should get ready for it all week, too. We must plan ahead so that we can stop working on time. Then we can keep the Sabbath holy when it comes. We also must get ready for the Sabbath on Friday (Mark 15:42). Then we will enjoy the Sabbath more.

What important idea about Sabbath keeping does Leviticus 19:3 show us?

Sabbath is a time for family. So, Sabbath keeping also means we spend time with our families and friends. The Sabbath also includes rest for the people who work with and for us and even our work animals (read Exodus 20:8–11). Sabbath and family belong together.

Sabbath keeping also means worshiping God together with our church family. Jesus worshiped God with people while He was on this earth. Jesus also led out in worship, too. (For more information about this topic, read Leviticus 23:3; Luke 4:16; and Hebrews 10:25).

During the week, we often feel rushed and so busy. Our life can feel as if it is moving very fast. But deep in our hearts, we have a wish for real Sabbath rest. We want to spend time with Jesus. So, we need to remember to stop all our business ahead of time and plan to spend time with God. Our friendship with God will grow strong. Then we can enter into real Sabbath rest with God.

What has been your own experience with Sabbath rest and the blessings that come from keeping the Sabbath?



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ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “God gave to people the Sabbath to help them remember that He made the sky and the earth. God made the Sabbath to help us see Him in everything He made. The Sabbath is an invitation. The Sabbath invites us to see the glory of God in nature. . . . On the holy rest day, more than on any other day, we should study the messages that God writes for us in nature. . . . As we come close to the heart of nature, Jesus shows us that He is real. Jesus talks to our hearts about His peace and love.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pages 25, 26, adapted.



“As we come close to the heart of nature, Jesus shows us that He is real.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Some Christians believe that God made the earth and the sky many billions of years ago. Then God let all the plant and animal life that we see today happen on its own by slow changes over many long ages of time. It is sad that even some Adventists accept this explanation about how life started. How does the Sabbath show us that this false idea never can agree with Seventh-day Adventist teachings? The Bible shows us that God made the Sabbath after He made the earth in six real days, right? So, why should we even bother keeping a 24-hour, real seventh-day Sabbath holy if the Sabbath really is only celebrating the start of life after billions and billions of years?
- ② Some people argue that God does not care about the day we keep holy. They say, “All that matters is that we keep one day of rest a week, right?” What will you say to this person? Other people say that Jesus Himself is our Sabbath rest. “So, we do not need to keep any day as a day of rest.” What answer will you give this person?
- ③ How can keeping the Sabbath holy help us to remember that God frees us from sin? At the same time, how can we avoid making the Sabbath only about the things we can and cannot do?
- ④ Think about these two different reasons for keeping the Sabbath. (1) Some people say that keeping the Seventh-day Sabbath is really about trying to work our way to heaven by our good behavior. (2) Other people say that when we rest on the seventh day, we show that we cannot save ourselves at all. We trust in Jesus to save us. Why is the first idea false?

THE POWER OF A SMILE

The Chinle SDA Church is not located in the best neighborhood on the Navajo reservation in Arizona.

My name is Dale Wolcott, and I am the pastor for the Chinle church. I live in a movable house next to the church building. Several neighbors also live nearby in movable houses. These neighbors are good citizens. But one house in the neighborhood is known as the local “drug house.” Many people visit the house to buy drugs and alcohol.

The church leaders and I have talked about how best to help our neighbors in the drug house. We have prayed for them and with them. When we visit, we often share booklets about Jesus with them and invite them to our church. Sometimes the owners of the house send their daughters to our church. But nothing seemed to change.

Then COVID-19 happened. The church closed. So, we started to hold our public meetings on the telephone.

Soon, a church member came to see me. Her name was Catherine. Catherine had a big smile on her face. She explained why she missed prayer meeting. She and her husband took their two daughters, Katelyn, 11, and Kallie, 9, to a nearby creek for worship.

“And we took the neighbor kids with us,” Catherine added.

“Which kids?” I asked her.

“The ones who live right next door to the church.” Catherine pointed to the famous “drug house.”

I was surprised! I asked Catherine how she got the children from the drug house to come with her and her family.

Catherine smiled. “The kids from that house have a big sister. The big sister saw that my daughters look very happy every day when they walk by her house on the way to the church.”

The daughters of Catherine lived at Holbrook Seventh-day Adventist Indian School, 90 minutes away. But the girls were sent home because of COVID-19. Catherine did not have internet in her house. Her daughters needed internet to do their homework. So, they came to the church to use the internet.

Catherine said, “The big sister wanted to know why Katelyn and Kallie smile and sing all the time. The girl wanted to know why my daughters are not sad the same as her sisters. So, I invited the girl and her sisters to come to evening worship.”

“How did it go?” I asked.

“When we finished, the neighbor girls said they wanted to join us the next day. God has blessed the lives of my daughters, and the neighbor girls can see that.”

Part of the 13th Sabbath Offering for this quarter will help Holbrook Indian School. Thank you for your offering.

INSIDE
Story
by DALE WOLCOTT



When we visit the drug house, we often share booklets about Jesus with the people living there and invite them to our church.

