

FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

ANCIENT ANSWERS TO MODERN QUESTIONS

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The Sabbath - A Prophecy of Eternal Life

Bill Fowler

When I was in my early teens, my dad gave me some advice that I have remembered over the years, although I have not always followed it as I should have. He said, "If you want to be happy and effective in life with it's continuing problems, then you need to apply this principle."

It's basic, it's simple and it works. Here is the simple but wise counsel he gave me:

"When you have a decision to make, if you are not positive it's the right thing to do, put it off for now and come back to it later, if the thought stays with you. You will make fewer mistakes in life if you are confident that your decisions are correct. Don't make hasty decisions, get the facts first."

How could anything be simpler? Yet, it is not a way of life with so many in our "buy now-pay later" society. It feels good, I've got to have it! Now! We have learned over time that the things in life that are really worthwhile are worth planning for and waiting for. All good decisions are based on proper knowledge and proper timing.

Two statements in Proverbs certainly support this principle of not rushing into important decisions:

"The plans of the diligent lead

surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty" (Proverbs 21:5, NKJV).

"Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him" (Proverbs 29:20, NKJV).

I really came to understand this principle in 1966 when I was first exposed to the Sabbath day and the commitment required to respond to the calling of God.

I grew up in the Methodist church. We had many good friends and were involved in Sunday School class, youth activities, men's prayer group and all the holidays. We were having a good time, it was family. My brother and his family had not been to services for a couple of weeks, so I called him to see if someone was sick. He said, "No, we don't go to church on Sunday anymore, we go on Saturday, the Sabbath of the Bible." "You WHAT?," I said. I didn't have a clue what he was talking about.

It didn't make sense to me, but I wondered if he was going to convert to Judaism. The weeks passed into months. One day I was driving by a park area on my way to see a customer, and I saw my

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By Editorial Staff

To Contact the Churches of
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us at: Information@cgom.org

Fellowship on The Sabbath



Lawrence Gregory

One of the greatest blessings God has given mankind is His holy Sabbath day. Every seventh day has been set apart, sanctified and made Holy from creation (Genesis 2:2-3).

This is a special time reserved each week by God for man's spiritual and physical welfare.

Man is a unique social being needing the companionship of others as he goes through life. We are born and reared in a social environment - our lives intertwine with many others.

"For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself" (Romans 14:7).

God realized this when He created Adam, for He observed, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). So He created woman, for the man's companionship, and sanctified the Sabbath as their day of rest (Mark 2:27).

Solomon understood this fact when he wrote, "Two are better than one; because they

have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat; but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a three-fold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

Our lives were intended to be a balance of give and take, mutual help, encouragement, strength and protection.

The opportunities to speak words of cheer (Malachi 3:16), to delight in going to a church meeting (Psalm 122:1), praising God on His Sabbath together with family and friends (Colossians 3:16), are precious. The preaching ser-

vice, prayer and Bible studies give us a spiritual uplift that cannot be obtained in any other type of meeting.

David, who God called "a man after mine own heart" (Acts 13:22), eagerly looked forward to the times he could be with others before God in worship (Psalm 111:1; Psalm 122:1). Paul as his manner was (Acts 17:2; 6-13) regularly sought to be with others on the Sabbath.

Throughout the ages, two signs have been given to identify the true people of God; (1) the Sabbath day (Exodus 31:16,17) and (2) love (John 13:35).

We know love is keeping God's Commandments and "he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk [live], even as he walked [lived]" (1 John 2:6).

Christ kept God's Sabbath. If we withdraw ourselves and become "closet" Christians, avoiding other believers, we lose great opportunities to express the love of God that dwells in us. In fact, it is risky to try to dwell alone without Christian fellowship. The sheepfold provides special protection for the flock from the

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wolves and elements of danger a lone sheep is exposed to. Webster's Dictionary describes a sheepfold as: a pen or enclosure for sheep or similar animals, a flock of

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sheep; a church or its congregation; any group having common goals, values and beliefs.

The Shulamite maiden in the Song of Solomon, chapter 1:7, asks the shepherd whom she loves to "Tell me where thou *feedest*, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that *turns aside* by [departs from] the flocks of thy companions?"

We can ask the same questions of Christ, whom we love. Where will we find Him and those whom He has called and separated from the "heat" of the day? Where do they "feed" and "rest" together? Why should I be like others who depart from their fellowship?

The shepherd's (Christ's) answer in verse 8 is very interesting, informative and gently corrective; "if you know not - and we should know - O *you fairest among women* [individual], go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock (church), and feed (give and serve) thy kids (children, family, friends) beside the shepherd's (minister's) tents (congregation)."

If we desire to fellowship more closely with Christ, we can do so by going where He is each Sabbath day - "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

This does not mean we cannot have fellowship alone, privately, with God, but that a special blessing of His divine presence is manifested in the Sabbath assembly.

Jesus left us an example of

going to church services *regularly* (Luke 4:16) on the Sabbath day. He ate with (Luke 14:1), taught (Mark 6:2), healed (Luke 6:6-11), and did good (Luke 6:9) for others on the Sabbath day. Certainly at times He was alone on the Sabbath, but his "custom" was to spend part of the day in a public church service.

His whole life was dedicated to doing as Caiaphas, the high priest, prophesied: "That also he *should gather together in one* the children of

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God that were *scattered abroad*" (John 11:52).

It has not been left up to us to rationalize about the Sabbath day. We have been given a specific command: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: *But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God*: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy

stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed The Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11, Matthew 12:12).

It is (1) a holy commanded assembly (convocation) and (2) to be kept in our homes (dwellings) (Leviticus 23:3).

Doing neither when it is possible to do it is breaking the Fourth Commandment, disobeying God and cheating ourselves.

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good work: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

And *"Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do" (I Thessalonians 5:11).*

Isaiah said in chapter 58:13-14: "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, and holy of the Lord, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the

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brother and his family having a picnic. I wondered why he was doing this on a weekday. Why wasn't he at work? I stopped my "cool" '29 Ford Model A coupe, honked at him and waved him over to where I was parked. "What's going on," I asked. He said he was observing the Days of Unleavened Bread. I thought he had gone over the deep end. I knew my brother was intelligent; he was

"What's going on," I asked. He said he was observing the Days of Unleavened Bread. I thought he had gone over the deep end. I knew my brother was intelligent; he was an aeronautical engineer with a master's degree. Why was he doing all this Jewish stuff?

It was time to get serious and show him how he was wrong. . .

an aeronautical engineer with a master's degree. Why was he doing all this Jewish stuff?

It was time to get serious and show him how he was wrong in rejecting Christian traditions. Dad's advice came to my mind, I knew I had to approach this in a logical way. Don't make hasty judgments, do some logical research to prove him wrong. I knew this was going to be an easy job; the majority of all churches observe Sunday, the Lord's day. Yes sir, I won't be hasty, I'll have the facts to show him. This wouldn't take long at all.

After about six months of intense study and research at the library and at home, sometimes until several hours after midnight, I knew I had a problem. I could not prove my brother wrong. It wasn't only the Sabbath and the Holy days, it was Xmas, Easter, Val-

entine's Day, Halloween, all ten of the commandments. It would mean a major change of lifestyle. I was overwhelmed.

We started attending Sabbath services. It was quite different than what we were used to, going to church on Saturday, but the warmth of the people was so helpful, we were treated like longtime friends. Pass-over was coming up in a few months and we were not baptized yet.

My wife was pregnant with our fourth child. Many of the women then were having "natural childbirth." I told her, maybe "WE" should have this fourth child by natural childbirth. She thought I was crazy! I was pushing her. What I had learned in the last 6 months was so exciting and invigorating that I forgot my dad's advice about not rushing into a decision. I knew we had entered into a new way of life, but I didn't realize then how much change was to come into our lives and the

trials of overcoming that would test us greatly. With some wise counsel given by the local pastor, I slowed down, eased off on my wife, and she chose to have a natural delivery. This birth of our last child was the easiest of all, and I was able to see our daughter enter this life.

We have been blessed so much since that time 34 years ago, and it all started by trying to prove the Sabbath was not the day that our Heavenly Father had set apart for us to be with Him and our Savior. We entered into a rest that has changed our lives, like many others, and the end result will be eternal love, joy and peace.

As the months turned into years, with new tests and trials to strengthen us, our understanding of the reality of the Sabbath day has become our motive of striving to walk in His way. The Sabbath has been a

The Sabbath has been a major factor in our understanding that the very purpose of life is to be at rest as sons and daughters of the Eternal, forever. The purpose for mankind is revealed in the "beginning" book of the Bible. . .

major factor in our understanding that the very purpose of life is to be at rest as sons and daughters of the Eternal, forever. The purpose for mankind is revealed in the "beginning" book of the Bible:

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion

over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping

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*thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his **own image**, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27).*

After creating mankind in their image and to be like them in character, the Sabbath was made for mankind. Jesus made that clear when He made this statement:

"And he said unto them, the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

The Sabbath was intended to show man the ultimate rest of being born again, resurrected into the very Family of God.

Mankind has not learned this principle because of continual rejection of God's laws of love, the Ten Commandments. It takes time and the experience of living to grasp the magnitude of creation, and the Sabbath rest that follows.

Several years ago I heard a "saying" that I'll never forget and that has helped me to better understand God's creation of mankind, to be like Him:

"Think about your life as if it were a bank account.

Yesterday is a canceled check, you can never spend it again.

Tomorrow is a promissory note, you can't receive its value yet.

Today is cash, spend it

wisely and it will pay great dividends."

Our bankers want us to make wise decisions to make sure our account is balanced, with plenty of reserve to sustain us in times of uncertainty and the possibility of depression. Our Heavenly Father also wants us to "balance" our account with him, with a

. . . Our Heavenly Father also wants us to "balance" our account with him, with a reserve of faith to carry us through the times of trial that He permits for our strengthening. A major factor He gave to mankind, to help us stay "balanced" in life, is the Holy Sabbath day.

reserve of faith to carry us through the times of trial that He permits for our strengthening. A major factor He gave to mankind, to help us stay "balanced" in life, is the Holy Sabbath day.

Our Spiritual Bank Account

"A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight" (Proverbs 11:1).

"Divers weights are an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance is not good" (Proverbs 20:23).

*"Jesus Christ the same **yesterday**, and **today**, and **for***

ever" (tomorrow) (Hebrews 13:8).

Yesterday (history)

"And Jesus said unto him, `No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

Today (overcoming)

"Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end; While it is said Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Hebrews 3:14, 15).

Tomorrow (Kingdom of God)

"Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof" (Matthew 6:34).

"And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19: 16 -17).

"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25).

"And this is life eternal, that

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Lord hath spoken it."

Now let's consider several reasons for our Sabbath fellowship:

(1) *It encourages others* when they see they are not alone in this way. (2) We in turn are encouraged. (3) It is a *public witness* to our neighbors, friends and relatives each week that we are following Christ. (4) It enables the *social and spiritual* function of the local church group to *develop* and operate more effectively. (5) We are inspired, taught and corrected through public preaching and worship. (6) We rehearse each week the spiritual type of living together in harmony during the millennium.

Perhaps some will say, "I don't need to attend church. I keep the Sabbath, I love the truth, I have His Spirit, I fellowship alone with Christ and the Father, or I listen to sermon tapes each week at home."

Granted this may be true, but

why not *share* this day with others? Why not "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven"? (Matthew 5:16).

Are there any legitimate reasons for not regularly attending the Sabbath service?

Let's consider a few: (1) ill-

ness, (2) distance (i.e., transportation costs, etc.), (3) occasional outings, family visits, out-of-town trips, etc., (4) an unexpected "ox in the ditch" situation, (5) special times of retreat for private devotional periods.

What other reasons can you think of? What is the difference between a reason and an excuse? That which is allowed to repeatedly and voluntarily dominate and control our Sabbath time is an excuse - for example, habitually allowing things we could do on other days or on an occasional Sabbath

to interfere with our regular attendance in the service. *Perhaps we have not considered Sabbath service attendance as being as important for ourselves and others as it is.*

If you would like to share in the Sabbath blessing of being with others "like-minded," please write our Information Center in Tulsa, OK, for the address of the congregation nearest you. Why miss out on one of the greatest blessings God has provided for you? Fellowship on the Sabbath - this week!

What is the difference between a reason and an excuse? That which is allowed to repeatedly and voluntarily dominate and control our Sabbath time is an excuse - that is, when we habitually allow other things we could do on other days or on an occasional Sabbath to interfere with our regular attendance in the service.

2001 HOLY DAY CALENDAR

Passover* Apr 7

Feast of Unleavened Bread Apr 8-14

Pentecost May 27

Feast of Trumpets Sep 18

Day of Atonement Sep 27

Feast of Tabernacles . . . Oct 2-8

Last Great Day Oct 9

*observed previous evening, after sunset

"So then, there Remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for Whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest . . ."
Heb 4:9-11 (RSV)

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they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:12-13).

Let's look at the Sabbath command from the book of Deuteronomy:

"Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee? Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deut 5:12-15).

We see from the Scriptures that we are to cease from our

labors, the carnal works of mankind. This ceasing from our labors and doing the works of God is what the Sabbath is about, for eternity.

God's people were slaves, in bondage to a people that did not know God. Just as He took them out of physical bondage, He is calling His creation to cease from the works of unrighteousness and do His works, with Him and

God's people were slaves, in bondage to a people that did not know God. Just as He took them out of physical bondage, He is calling His creation to cease from the works of unrighteousness and do His works, with Him and Jesus for eternity. No more works of men; instead, His born-again children doing His will in love, joy and peace.

Jesus for eternity. No more works of men; instead, His born-again children doing His will in love, joy and peace.

The universe will see the results of the "Sabbath rest" for eternity. Just like the prodigal son, His children have come home, wanting to do His will.

"And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and

am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry" (Luke 15:21-24).

"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:4-8).

As we think on Verse 8, we know that "these things" will be a part of the Sabbath rest now and forever. The Sabbath is a "shadow" of great things to come!

<p>Bill Fowler Dedicated Servant of God</p> <p>APRIL 09 1931 — OCTOBER 26 2000</p>	
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Psalm 77 Verse 12

"I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings."

There is much talk these days about separation of church and state. President Bush's faith based initiatives have caused many to be concerned; they argue that this is the state supporting religion. While the news media cover this controversy in great detail, events are taking place in the State of Ohio that have far greater implications for Americans today.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio on March 8 filed a federal lawsuit saying that a poster of the Ten Commandments in a local county courthouse violates the First Amendment mandate of separation between church and state.

We have heard of such cases before, this is not a new thing. The ACLU and others have presented similar cases in other states. But regardless of how many times they win or lose, as a nation we are facing a fundamental problem, one that we are seemingly unwilling to address. With the removal of faith and Christian religion from our public and private lives there is a direct correlation between the increase in lawlessness, crime and, for fear of crime, a lack of freedom.

There are many arguments we could make both for and against the displaying of the Ten Commandments in a courthouse. We could pull out the Constitution and the Federalist Papers. We could re-examine the Bill of Rights or even go back to the Magna-Carta and debate religion and the power of the state. However, those arguments are all set at nothing when we look to the Fountain of Life, Jesus Christ who can give us ancient answers to our modern ques-

tions. It was Jesus who inspired the Old Testament author of Proverbs to write:

"My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man." (Proverbs 3:1-4)

If we keep the law of God ever before us, whether it be through posters of the Ten Commandments or by reading the Bible and seeking out its ancient truths, we will add unto ourselves long life and peace and will find favor in the sight of God and man. In short, we find freedom, because in the keeping of God's commandments there is protection of rights, there is power to overcome oppressors, there are blessings of obedience. But just as there are blessings for keeping the commandments, there are also curses for breaking them. When we see children armed to the teeth shooting and killing one another in schools, when we see an increase of murder, theft and rape, is it because we are keeping God's law as a people? Or is it because we are removing all traces of His wisdom and direction? What the ACLU and others forget is that the freedoms we enjoy in this land were not won by us, they were not forged by us, they were not codified by us. No! They were made before the foundations of the Earth and were set in place long before man drew breath.

The law of God gives us the freedoms we enjoy and it is only through this law we can find peace. So as the law of God seems to be diminishing in the presence of our nation and His laws are being removed from our people's eyes what are we to do? How can we remain free and at peace individually? The Apostle James gives us hope: *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."* (James 1:25)

Until next time, let us meditate also of all His work, and talk of His doings!

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Editors:

Matthew Steel
Ron Willhoite

Assistant Editors:

Jan Miller
Renee Steel
Patrick Dennis
CGOM Evangelistic Committee
Martin Maynard

Staff Writers

Patrick Dennis
Lawrence Gregory
Maynard Kappel
Matthew Steel
Renee Steel
Ron Willhoite

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The Churches of God
Outreach Ministries
PO Box 54621
Tulsa, Oklahoma
USA 74155-0621
or call toll-free:
1-800-611-8080

Churches of
God, UK
PO Box 2525
LINCOLN
LN5 7BR
England,
Great Britain

Churches of
God, Canada
PO Box 476,
Don Mills Station
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