

BIBLE BREAKTHROUGH

PROGRAM 20 A SPECIAL TIME TO SPEND WITH GOD

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A SPECIAL TIME TO SPEND WITH GOD

Sharing

1. There are people that each of us likes to spend time with. Who is that person in your life? _____
2. If you arranged a special date for that person would you expect them to show up? ___Yes ___No
3. How would you feel if the person you love brought you a box of candy and a valentine on February 28th and explained that they didn't think it mattered what day they celebrated Valentine's Day so long as you received a valentine and a gift. Explain: _____

Studying

4. Celebrations of important calendar dates like Valentine's Day help us maintain the important loving relationships in our lives. Since we make time for people who are important to us, neglect of this special day would indicate to our spouse that they weren't especially important to us.
5. There's another day neglected by many people and it's far more important than Valentine's Day. It is the day created by God and set aside so that God can spend time with the people He created.
6. Genesis 2:2 tells us that on the seventh day of creation week God rested—after creating the world, everything in the world, and from creating Adam and Eve. Then he rested on the seventh day. Read Genesis 2:2, last part: "Then God blessed the _____ day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which _____ had created and made."
7. So, without question, God, Himself, made the seventh day blessed, holy and sanctified. 2,500 years later, when God wrote the Ten Commandment law on Mt. Sinai, He wrote, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all they work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord, thy God." Exodus 20:8
8. God created the Sabbath on the last day of creation week. Then, at Mt. Sinai, after Moses had led the Israelites out of Egypt, God wrote down the Ten Commandments. What happened to the observance of the Seventh day Sabbath in the 2,500 years between the Garden of Eden and the presentation of the written law to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai?
 - The patriarchs like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all kept God's law, that included the seventh day Sabbath, prior to the Israelites sojourn into Egypt and subsequently becoming slaves. During their slavery they lost site of the Sabbath as a day of rest as they were forcibly made to work seven days each week.
 - From Exodus 16 we learn that, even before God re-issued the Ten Commandments, by writing them with His finger on stone, He fed the Israelites in the wilderness by raining manna from heaven all around their camp. They were to go outside their tents and collect manna for the day. None could be stored. However, on the sixth day they were to collect enough for that day as well as the next day, Sabbath, because God would not send manna on His seventh day Sabbath. In this way, God demonstrated the importance of the seventh day being a holy day of rest. (See Lesson 12, # 20)
 - The lesson of the manna demonstrates that the sixth day is the preparation day for the Sabbath. We prepare by organizing our clothing, preparing our Sabbath food, and so forth, so that we can avoid unnecessary work and have time to enjoy our families and spend the day with God.

9. It is interesting to note in Exodus 16:27 that “. . .some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, (manna) but they found none.” Have you noticed that many people do what *they* want to do rather than what God directs them to do?
10. People fail to see God’s Ten Commandments as a law of love. Consider that the first four commandments tells us how to love God and the last six commandments tell us how to love our fellow man.
 - Without the Ten Commandments there would be no standard by which to judge love because there would be no yardstick of morality to indicate right or wrong. Our positive relationships stem from the Ten Commandment law and the Sabbath commandment is at the center of the law.
11. Would God create our world, command that mankind keep the seventh day as a holy day of rest, put that command into His moral law (the Ten Commandments) and then change His mind at some point in history?
 - Hebrews 13:8 “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and forever.”
 - Psalm 89:34 “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.”
 - Matthew 5:17-19 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”
12. Orthodox Jews have worshiped on the seventh day since the Exodus, more than 3,500 years ago. Wherever they are in the world they still recognize Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the day to be spent with God. Jesus also kept the Sabbath. Luke 4:16 “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the _____ day and stood up to read.”
13. There is no Biblical record of the Sabbath ever being changed. So, we will have to turn to history to discover how God’s Sabbath got changed to the first day of the week! Daniel 7:25 predicted that a power would arise that would intend to change times and laws. The Sabbath commandment is the only one of the Ten Commandments that deals with time and history will show the accuracy of Daniel’s astounding prophecy!
14. To understand the causes for this gradual change from God’s created Sabbath to Sunday, we need to consider briefly the relationship between the Roman Empire and the Jews during this time.
 - Remember that in AD 70 the Romans completely destroyed Jerusalem and carried away all their temple treasures and killed over one million Jews who failed to flee the city before the Roman invasion. So, the Jews were no fans of the Romans.
 - In AD 132-135 Bar-Kokkba led a Jewish revolt against Rome and Roman Emperor Hadrian crushed them. Outraged by this Jewish rebellion, Emperor Hadrian banned the practice of the Jewish religion throughout the empire, condemning especially Sabbath observance—the distinct mark of the Jewish religion.” (Bacchiocchi, ‘Divine Rest for Human Restlessness.’ p. 237.)
 - Many Gentile Christians, not wanting to be identified with the Bar-Kokkba Jewish revolt, nor be mistaken for a Jew and suffer persecution, began to minimize their Sabbath-keeping. These Gentile converts to Christianity, living in the capital city of the Roman Empire, at the center of this hostility, felt the effects of the Roman contempt for Sabbath-keeping.
 - These Christians, recently converted from paganism, were not as well established in Sabbath-keeping as were Jewish Christians who had always kept the seventh day Sabbath.
15. But why was Sunday chosen rather than some other day of the week?
 - The pagans in the Roman Empire had been sun worshipers for hundreds of years celebrating the first day of the week as their ‘sun day.’ Their male sun god: Sol Invictus; female: Mithras. Even the Roman Emperors represented themselves as sun gods, stamping the emblem of the sun on their coins and demanding that they be worshiped as ‘sun gods.’

- The Christian church gradually began to compromise with the pagan culture around them. By adopting a few of their customs, the pagans, they believed, would more easily convert to Christianity.
16. The church of Christ, from Jesus and the apostles was a pure church. And it was pure for about the first 100 years after the last apostles' death.
- In '*Apostolic Constitutions*,' Book 7, Chapter 23, we read: "The erosion of the purity of the Apostolic church stood firm and pure, but when the second and third generation Christians came along we see evidence of compromise and apostasy."
 - Dr. W. D. Killen wrote in '*The Ancient Church*,' p. 15, 16: "Between the days of the apostles and the conversion of Emperor Constantine . . . Rites and ceremonies of which neither Paul nor Peter ever heard, crept silently into use, and then claimed the rank of Divine institutions."
17. It was Emperor Constantine, while still a pagan, who legislated the first civil Sunday law: "On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in the cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits. (*History of the Christian Church*, 102 ed. Vol. 3, p. 380.)
- The next two steps in making Sunday-keeping an integral part of Christianity was taken by the Council of Laodicea:
 - ◇ In 325 AD, at the council of Laodicea, Sylvester, Bishop of Rome changed the title of the first day, calling it the Lord's day. (*Historia Ecclesiastica*, p. 739)
 - ◇ In 364 AD, at another Council of Laodicea, the first religious Sunday-keeping law was made: Canon 29: "Christians shall not Judaize (keep Sabbath) and be idle on Saturday . . .but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall if possible, do no work on that day. If however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out . . from Christ." (*A History of the Councils of the Church*,' Vol. 2 p. 316).
 - People were obviously still keeping the seventh-day Sabbath in the 6th century because Pope Gregory denounced "as the prophets of Antichrist those who maintained that work ought not to be done on the seventh day." (he Law of Sunday,' *From Sabbath to Sunday*, C.B. Haynes, p. 43).
18. Because Martin Luther declared that he must follow the Bible only, he challenged many of the institutions of the Church of Rome that were based solely on tradition. In order to decide exactly what position the Church should take on tradition and its relationship to the Bible, the Council of Trent was convened.
- At the Council of Trent, Archbishop of Reggio stated, on January 18, 1562, that tradition stood above Scripture and that the authority of the church could therefore not be bound to the authority of the Scriptures, because the Church had changed . . . The Sabbath into Sunday, not by command of Christ, but by its own authority." (*Cannon and Tradition*, H.H. Holtzman, p. 263)
19. Other statements:
- "It as the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians in honor of the resurrection." (*Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, Karl Keating, 1988, p. 38)
 - Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change that the church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday...not from any directions noted in the scriptures, but from the Church's sense of its own power...People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority should logically become Seventh-day Adventist and keep Saturday holy." (*Saint Catherine Catholic Church Sentinel*, May 21, 1995.)

- “The Church...after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, to the first, made the third commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord’s Day.” (*The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol. 4, p. 153.) Review question 13 of this lesson regarding the prophecy in Daniel 7:25.
 - Today, after centuries of Christians compromising the true Sabbath by keeping Sunday, it has become an ingrained tradition. As far back as many can remember their parents, grand parents and great grand parents kept Sunday. Many believe that their traditional Sunday-keeping couldn’t possibly be wrong. But Jesus said in Matthew 15:9 “In vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of _____.”
20. Is keeping the seventh day Sabbath holy **really** so important? Doesn’t Paul say in Romans 6:14 that Christians are not ‘under law but under grace’ (verse 14).
- Romans 6:14 “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under _____.” Some have interpreted this to mean that before the Cross we were saved by obedience to the law, but after the Cross we are under grace and have no obligation to keep God’s law.
 - The solution to Romans 6:14 is provided in romans 8:1-4 “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the _____ who gives life has set you _____ from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
 - God’s grace has set us free from the condemnation of the law. We now live so that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us—not to be saved, but in love and gratitude **that we have been saved**.
 - This means that under the new covenant, keeping God’s Ten Commandment law, especially the seventh day Sabbath, is the Biblical symbol of new covenant grace!
21. God expects obedience to all 10 of His commandments. Read James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking _____ of them.”
22. What proof do we have from the Word of God that Jesus didn’t abolish the seventh day Sabbath?
- Matthew 5:17-19 “Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to _____. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these _____, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”
23. Jesus kept the Ten Commandments perfectly. We keep them to the best of our ability, but because we are imperfect, we keep His commandments imperfectly. Jesus, however, through His death on the cross, covers us with His robe of righteousness and counts us perfect.
24. There is no doubt about it: God’s Word makes it very clear that the seventh day is the Sabbath created by God as a special gift to enhance man’s physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social happiness. Keeping the seventh day Sabbath holy is a declaration of faith and a day of celebrating the gift of salvation.
25. God wants all of His people to enter the 24-hour period of rest each week. If you are a member of a church that worships on another day of the week, we invite you to earnestly study the Bible and compare it to history and tradition to be sure that you are ready to stand before our awesome God on the day of judgment.
26. For the 8 times the first day of the week is mentioned in the Bible see the Appendix at the end of the lesson.

Applying this lesson

27. From this lesson I have learned that the eternal principles of God's government are embodied in His Ten Commandment law and that it is impossible for God to change.
- The Ten Commandments are still 'binding' and 'in effect' today and if I break one of them, I am guilty of breaking them all.
 - ____A check mark at left indicates that I believe this to be true.
28. I have learned, from the history presented in this study, that tradition has replaced God's fourth commandment which is why so many people today observe the first day of the week as the Sabbath.
- Jesus condemned keeping traditions in place of His law.
 - ____A check mark at left indicates that I understand the role tradition has played in obliterating God's Sabbath commandment from the minds of men.
29. It is impossible to Love God and NOT keep His commandments, because the Bible says, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome," 1 John 5:3.
- By the grace of God and with the help of the Holy Spirit I will take my stand to keep all ten of God's commandments as outlined in Scripture.
 - ____A check mark at left indicates my decision to begin observing the seventh day Sabbath.

Appendix

The eight text in the Bible that mention the first day of the week:

- Mark 16:9 Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.
- Mark 16:1,2; Matthew 28:1; Luke 23:54-56; 24:1 These verses tell of the women coming to the tomb early on the first day of the week.
- John 20:1 Mary Magdalene came to the tomb before sunrise on the first day of the week.
- John 20:19 Jesus appeared the evening of the same day to convince His disciples that he had risen from the dead.
- John 20:26-28 Jesus appeared to His disciples to convince Thomas of His resurrection.
- 1 Cor. 16:1,2 Paul asks people to lay aside, at home, on the first of each week something to give to the poor at Jerusalem.
- Acts 20:7 A record of a farewell meeting that Paul held with the Christians at Troas.
- In eight different places, from thirteen to twenty-three years after Christ's resurrection, the book of Acts plainly refers to the seventh day as the Sabbath day. Acts 13:14, 27, 42,44; 15:21; 16:13;17:1-3; 18:4. The book of Acts would not have done this these eight times if the first day of the week had replaced the seventh day as God's holy Sabbath day.