



CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

7401 UNIVERSITY AVE., CEDAR FALLS, IOWA 50613
(319) 277-0924

INFO@CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG
WWW.CHRISTIANCRUSADERS.ORG

Honoring God with Our Time, Part 1

Deuteronomy 5:12-15

“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

We're calling this series *The Laws of Love* because these principles that God gave us, these commandments that God gave us, we have said, come to us out of His core essence, of His heart, out of love.

He created the world, gave us life, put us into existence. And then He didn't have to, but He gave us guidance and instructions.

The first guidance and instruction He gave us was found in Genesis, when, after He created the first man, He gave him the first law, and it was a verbal law. He told him that he was not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Why are we aware of evil? Because we rebelled against God. Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and all of a sudden, the reality of evil became known to us. And so, we now have not only the knowledge of good, but we have the knowledge of evil.

And so later, many centuries later, God, in His grace and His love, called a man named Moses up onto a mountain known as Horeb. And while he was up there, He passed by, and He inscribed on tablets of stone—the Bible says with His finger—these instructions for us.

God could have backed up from the earth, but He has kept involving Himself with us here in this broken earth, this broken humanity, because He cares and He loves us, and He wants us to know the pathway into redemption and the fullness of life.

And so, when we consider the Ten Commandments, we're looking at God's gift to us about how He designed us to live in the fullness of the way He created us to live.

Recently, I was watching a little news broadcast, and a gentleman named Bill Maher—you may have heard of him; he's pretty well known in our culture. They were discussing, on a panel, the use of the Ten Commandments as sort of a normal teaching about human history, as it being a part of human history.

They were discussing this, and Bill Maher said he thinks it's stupid. He thinks it's stupid. And then he went on to say this: he went on to say human beings could have figured out the basic morality revealed in the Ten Commandments without them. “They're common sense,” he said.

And then he said this: “If you look at the Ten Commandments, the first four are egocentric of God. They're egocentric of God.”

I listened to him expound on these things while we're in this series, and I was deeply saddened because here's what I knew. Listening to his voice, I knew, number one, he doesn't understand, really, the nature of human beings. He doesn't understand the propensity that human beings have from their very first breath toward selfishness, self-indulgence, and ultimately then leading to great, sickening acts of evil.

He doesn't understand that. He thinks human beings could have found out a morality for themselves.

He also doesn't understand not only human nature, but he doesn't understand the nature of God. To say that the first four commandments are egocentric of God is to simply say, “I don't understand God. I really don't know Him. I don't know what He's like. I don't know who He is.”

Because if you understand the nature of God, if you've walked with God for some time, you start to realize, yes, these are very God-centric commands. They are focused on God.

But that's because God knows what's best. That's because the very core of God, as revealed to us in the scriptures, is love.

And for God to say, “You should put no other gods before Me,” is not egocentric. He is inviting us to come experience the very core longing of our heart fulfilled in His love. He is inviting us to come experience the peace that transcends all understanding. He is inviting us to come experience in Him joy, everlasting pleasures forevermore, power, and strength.

He is inviting us to come experience—in a word—the life that is truly life, that is found only in Him. For God to say, “Go look elsewhere,” would be evil of Him.

For Him to say, “Come to Me first”—that is very loving of God.

He could have let us go our own way and try and figure it out. But God, in mercy and love and grace, came to us and said, “You should have no other gods before Me.”

And then He further said, “You actually shouldn't give allegiance to any created thing, for created things can't bring you the life that I designed for you to have.”

And then, in the third instruction—yeah, you could see it as egocentric if you don't understand the nature of God—but God has simply said, in the third instruction, “If you're going to use My name and seek Me and claim My name, don't do it meaninglessly. Don't do it in vain. Take it seriously. I am not a God to be messed with.”

When you come to God, we come to the mountain that cannot be shaken, the writer of Hebrews said.

And now we come to this fourth instruction, which I just want to say again: God could have left us on our own. He could have not taught us these things, and we would be stumbling around wondering, “Where is life found?” But God has clearly told us in the revelation of His Word. It's found in Him, and we can seek Him with our whole heart and find the fullness of life in Him.

And so, in the fourth instruction, I want you to notice a little transition. In this instruction, God has gone from restricting things—restricting us from putting other things before Him, restricting us from bowing down to things, restricting us from taking His name in a careless and casual way—to now He gives us an instruction of initiative, an instruction of taking action.

He has said, “Have no other gods before Me.” “Don't bow down to anything else.” “Don't take My name in vain.”

And now He says, “Do this. Do this.”

And the instruction is very simply worded in Deuteronomy chapter five, verse twelve, where He says, “Observe the Sabbath day. Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.”

Proactive. If you want to know life, do this.

So what does it mean to observe? To observe? One definition of observe is to look out the window and observe that it's blue skies and the breeze is blowing a little bit—and just observe what's happening somewhere.

Another definition of observe is to practice something—to conform one's actions to something—to acknowledge, celebrate, or solemnize something in a customary way.

I can tell you this: when my family decides to observe my birthday, I appreciate it. Today happens to be my son's birthday, and he happens to be out of town. So we've strategized to observe his birthday, celebrated in a customary way, at a different time.

But we observe a lot of things in our world. We will observe here numerous holidays throughout the year with a sort of traditional ceremony that we have. We'll observe Easter, we'll observe Advent season, we'll observe Christmas.

And what God is saying to us is, once a week, He's saying, observe, celebrate, solemnize in a customary way the Sabbath.

Okay—the Sabbath. It's not a common word that we use in our culture today, but it comes from the Hebrew word *Shabbat*, which means to cease, or to rest, or to stop.

What God is instructing of His people in the fullness of life here on a broken earth, in an earth that is cursed with sin, where we have pain and suffering and striving to carve out our living—He's saying, in the midst of the sludge of life, take time to rest, to cease, to unhook, to stop.

Why? It's a weekly time set aside by our Creator in honor of His rhythm in creation. We are to celebrate the Sabbath and keep it holy, as if there's something different about one in seven days in the history of humankind.

This comes from Genesis chapter two, where it says, “Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished after God did all the work of creating in six days, and they were finished, all the host of them. And on the seventh day, God finished His work that He had done, and He rested from all His work.”

So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it He rested.

So, in honor of the holiness of our God and His designating a seventh day in creation as a day of rest, He encourages us to do the same. Old Testament covenant law encouraging His people in the larger concept—we have this idea that God is commissioning us to cease from our strivings, our pursuing, the fulfilling of our longings for our own spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical renewal and refreshment.

And why? Very simply, from what I told the children—because He loves us. He loves us. He knows that we are but dust.

In this world we have this effort and angst and pain, and there's resistance in the world. And as we push to make our living and build our families and build our communities, He wants us to know, “Hey, just—great work! Six days you shall work.”

Now, we've kind of missed that too. It's a whole different sermon. Six days you shall labor. But on the seventh, hit the pause button. Pull up your chair at the table of relative humility.

God's saying to us, admit that you're not Me—and rest.

And I think God is saying to His people, if you take a break and you rest and you pause, it's okay. I'm still on the throne. God's saying, you're not going to miss out. You're not going to fall behind.

And because I love you, I just—I want you to have a rhythm of rest so that you can know the fullness of life.

And I think at the root of this, God knows that we get tired. We get tired.

It was General Patton who first made this statement to his troops when he was encouraging them to rest before going into another day of battle. He said, “Fatigue makes cowards of us all.”

And so he commissioned his soldiers to rest.

And I think God knows this—that when we get tired and worn out and we're striving too much, we're not optimal. We're not living in the fullness of life that He wants us to live.

And so, because He loves us, He commissions us to get in a rhythm of rest that works for us—because He loves us.

But it's deeper than that. Not only is He saying pause, but He's saying observe.

You see, to cease is the Sabbath. But then, what does He want us to do on the Sabbath? Keep it holy.

Which is to say, when we rest, we're setting it apart for something different than the strivings of this world. We're pulling out of the streams of the activities of the temporal nature of this world so that we can enter into something spiritual, something holy, something transcendent—so we can connect with, grow closer to Him.

And this is why, on a Sabbath, God gives us some just sort of basic structure—to meet with one another, to encourage each other, to listen to His Word, to draw near Him in worship and praise and honor of who He is.

Because somehow, as we pull out of the streams of this world and we tap into the streams of eternity, something supernatural happens inside of us.

And we're not only refreshed physically, friends—we're not refreshed just emotionally and mentally—but something deep within us, as we connect with the Spirit of God, is renewed and refreshed.

Our spirit starts to soar with the Spirit of God, and the life that is truly life comes into us. And we can be, like Jesus said, those with rivers of living water flowing through us, and we'll tap into eternity now.

Oh, He wanted more than just rest. He wants us to—because He loves us—yes, to pause, but then to draw near to Him, to find the life that is truly life that He's wanting for us.

You see this? James said it this way: “If we draw near to God, He will draw near to us.”

And there's nothing better. There is nothing better than experiencing the presence of God.