

ADVENTIST
Review

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The
Sabbath
is for
Joy!

A
SPECIAL
ISSUE



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From the Editors: Welcome to the Joy

When God created the world, He gave His newly created human beings a wonderful gift. He gave them the Sabbath—a weekly day to visit with Him, a day to rest or to explore His creation, a day of joy. And God declared it holy.

Since that seventh day of Creation, God has never changed the nature of the weekly Sabbath, nor its holiness. He still invites everyone to enjoy His Sabbath—in many ways an antidote to our fast-paced world, where eternal realities are often forgotten. This special issue of the *Adventist Review* highlights the meaning of God's Sabbath and invites us to enter into the joy of God on this special day.

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A Time to Meet Jesus

When I was in college I saw the Sabbath as a good day to take a long nap. It was my only day to break free from the constant worry of tests and term papers.

But now, after I've worked three years in a tough, competitive business that's hard to break into, the Sabbath hours mean so much more to me. In fact, the Sabbath is a reason I've kept my Christian faith in a secular work environment.

Years ago, after months and months of searching, applying, and waiting, I got my first job offer in news. But there was one hitch—I would have to work after sundown Friday nights. I needed the job, but I couldn't take it. Throwing away the Sabbath would be throwing away my religion. I told the news director no, then retreated to my room and sobbed.

After taking that stand, I began reevaluating my Christian life and what role God would play in it. I figured that if I was willing to make sacrifices and even lose opportunities in a career I so desperately wanted, I'd better know why.

I've found out why. I love Jesus, and the Sabbath keeps my eyes focused on Him. It gives my life proper balance. I know that I'm not just another overly ambitious reporter fighting to get the story at any cost. The Sabbath gives my life more meaning than the newsroom. It reminds me that I have higher priorities than my career goals—which can so often be self-centered.

As the sun sets on Friday, I enter God's rest . . . away from the constant news deadlines that dictate my life during the week. And I thank Him for the wonderful Sabbath rest and peace that only He can give me. ■



TOM EMDE

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A Time to Stop Doing

Motion dominates my life. For 30 years I've worked as a migratory beekeeper, moving hives between North Dakota and Florida. Sometimes my wife, Karen, and I feel like nomads—always packing or unpacking.

Our objective? To produce different types of honey. In February I move my bees into central Florida's orange groves. In April I move them to north Florida's wooded areas for gum trees and palmetto and gallberry bushes. In late May it's up to North Dakota for clover and alfalfa. Then in October it's back to Florida to begin the cycle again.

You might say I have a bad case of "motion sickness"—the symptoms being stress, a feeling of instability, stress, unfinished projects, and more stress. But I've found an antidote for my "motion sickness," a formula for peace in my not-so-peaceful world.

The Sabbath.

Surely God didn't need to rest after His six-day work of creation, but He must have known that I would. And I do. I need to rest. I need to stop. For me, that's the beauty of the Sabbath—it's a time to "stop doing."

After six days of work and activity, I'm more than ready for the wonderful blessing of the Sabbath. I close my business doors; I shut down my machinery; I park my truck. (My bees continue to work, but that's their choice.)

I look forward to the Sabbath not so much as a day of sleeping, but as a break from the anxieties of the work week: moving bees out of the orange groves, repairing uncooperative honey-extracting equipment, warding off bears.

Every seventh day I can forget about all these things and instead allow my body to enjoy the physical rest—and my mind the spiritual rest—that only Jesus and His Sabbath provide.

It just doesn't get any sweeter than that. ■



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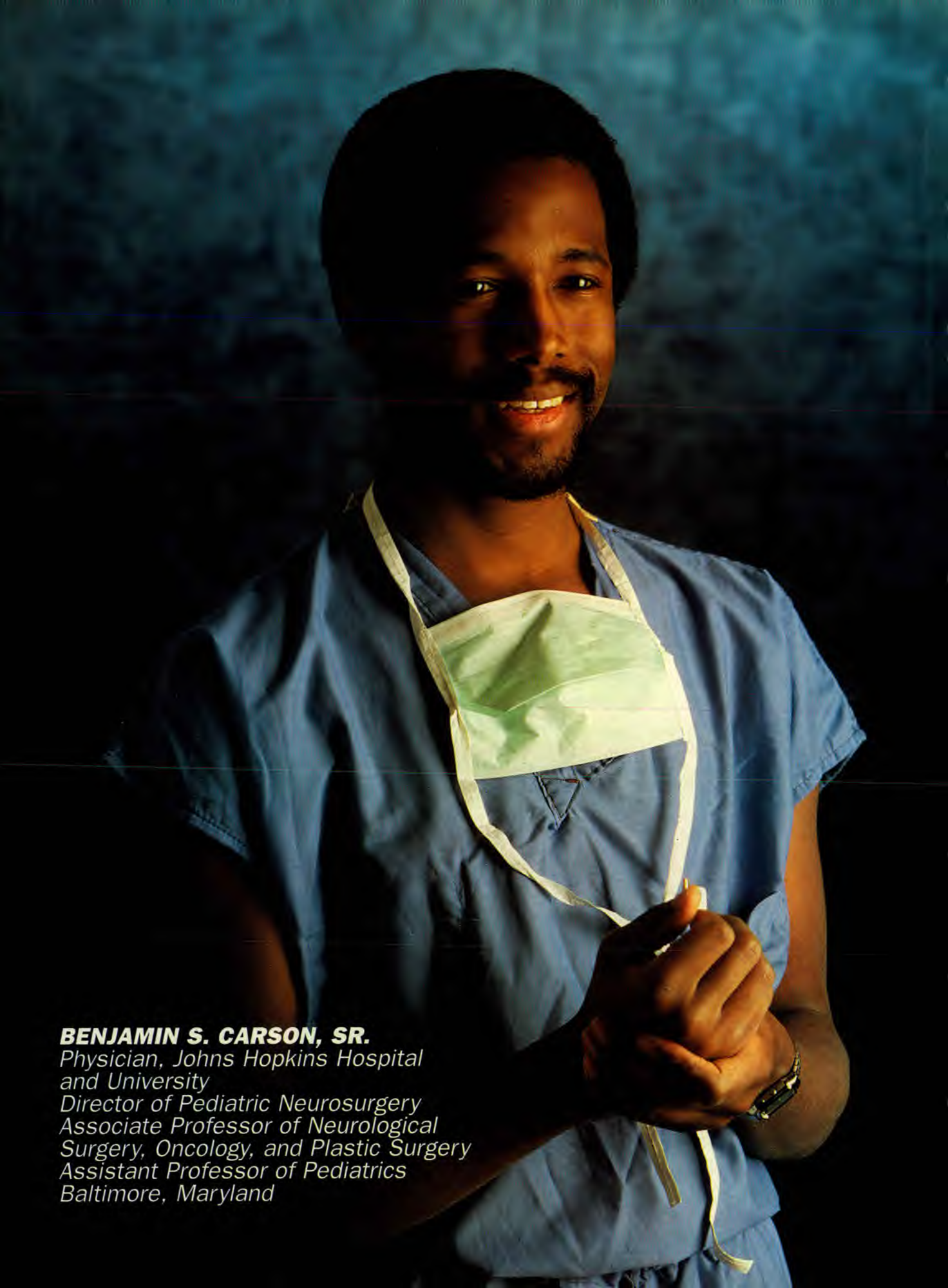
A Time to Get Reacquainted

When I was a kid it seemed as if my family was never apart. If we weren't inside eating Mom's fried tofu or singing along to Dad's eight-track tapes, then we were outside having a picnic or splashing around in our big plastic pool—you know, the kind that everyone had.

These days, though, it seems as if my family is never together. My older sister, Joana, lives in the residence hall at Loma Linda University. My dad's medical work often takes him out of town. Mom and I are usually home, but between gardening and cooking and studying, we keep plenty busy too. With all of us doing our "own thing," we just don't have much family time together.

That's why I'm especially thankful for the Sabbath. Once a week I set aside all the hassles and spend a few quality hours with the people I love the most. Normally we don't make any extravagant plans. We just come home from church and eat lunch and sprawl in the living room and get to know each other again. We talk about school, work, or whatever the "big news" is for that week. I can almost feel our relationship being strengthened when we spend Sabbath together.

With college beginning this fall, I know my life is going to get even busier yet. But it's comforting to know that God has given me one full day a week to reconnect with Him and with the family He has given me. ■



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A Time for Lifesaving

The Sabbath is a lifesaver for me. My hectic professional schedule includes approximately 10 operations a week, as well as lectures, research endeavors, administrative tasks, and teaching. If I did not have the rest associated with the Sabbath, my capacity to be effective would diminish.

Furthermore, the Sabbath is when my entire family gathers to engage in philosophical discussions and planning for the future. We also discuss the basis of our faith and how to build and strengthen that faith. Strength is received by each member of our family, not only by sharing our experiences, but by hearing those of the other family members. This time *together* develops strong family bonds—bonds that make the children less likely to yield to peer pressure. If I have to be away on the Sabbath, I take my family with me.

An added Sabbath bonus is Sabbath worship with fellow Christians. In my Sabbath school class we all have become close friends and share one another's triumphs and problems. The class is an open forum where no one is put down and ideas can be expressed freely.

Over the years it has provided me with a great deal of strength and ideas for conducting my life and interacting with others.

We also get together outside of church at least once a month for meals and other activities. Some of my closest friends have come to me through my Sabbath school class.


The Sabbath has had a tremendous effect on my life, and I thank God that He loved us enough to give it to us. ■



DENISE SMALL CONCHA

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A Time to Get Together

ne of my favorite things about Sabbath is the fellowship that comes with it. In college I appreciated the “good excuse” to forget about books and grades for a day. Instead I kept busy with children’s church, trips to the lake, and Singing Men tours (I was the pianist—not a bad gig).

Soon I married and moved to Las Vegas, where suddenly I became a pastor’s wife. Spanish church one week; English church the next. Fellowship was not only mandatory—it was *intense*.

When we decided to have a baby, I was in great health and working for a major accounting firm. During my pregnancy, however, I became seriously ill. I took a leave of absence from work, though I continued to attend church and even play the piano. Still, I grew visibly weaker and felt my life slipping away, always measured from one Sabbath to the next.

Eventually diagnosed with lupus, I became less and less able to worship and fellowship with others because of fatigue and pain. For years I felt vaguely guilty about not attending church. Then it dawned on me that God not only understood but also was still with me.

I would get to church more often now if I could go and be ignored, but my church is simply too friendly. I just don’t have the energy for worship and then visiting.

Recently, though, I rediscovered the magic of Sabbath fellowship—through CompuServe’s Adventists On-line Forum. Suddenly I’m able to talk without running out of air or becoming too weak to move. I’m back on equal footing with others, and it’s wonderful. I hadn’t realized how much I missed people.

Sabbaths are no longer lonely for me. My fellowship comes through my laptop computer and “talking” with my fingers. And I’m glad for a God who is with me in a special way on Sabbath—no matter where I am. ■

Gracious Gift of a Loving God

A temple in time, the Sabbath means more to us today than ever.

BY WILLIAM G. JOHNSON

Ever wonder why the week has seven days, instead of six or eight? What would it be like to structure our life on, say, a 10-day cycle instead of seven?

Well, that idea has already been tried. The leaders of the French Revolution, caught up in a heady spirit of overthrowing the past, decreed that the week of the new society would be 10 days. But they soon abandoned the experiment—the horses began to die off!

Historians probe the origins of the week as we know it and come up with a blank. As far back as they can trace human history, the seven-day cycle is there, part of human society, seemingly built into the pattern of life.

The Bible explains why: God, who created the heaven and the earth, instituted the seven-day week. After completing His work of creation in six days, God rested on the seventh. “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:3).*

That’s where and how the Sabbath began, as the gracious gift of a loving God. Everything God does is perfect; every gift from His hand is good. God first created a beautiful home for humanity, then He created a temple in time.

Today the earth is marred—we have fouled the waters, polluted the atmosphere, raped the environment. While nature still has power to take our breath away, it is a far cry from its pristine state. But God’s temple in time remains unspoiled. It lies beyond the reach of our dirty fingers, inviolate. We can neglect it, refuse it, abandon it, or reject it, but we cannot mar it.

God blessed the seventh day, and that blessing remains.

God set apart the seventh day, making it holy time. To make holy or unholy isn’t our prerogative—only God’s. The Sabbath, the seventh day, is holy and always will be, no matter how I or anyone else may regard it.

Today most people have no inkling of what the Sabbath means. They go their own way and do their own thing every seventh day, caught up in shopping, play, or business, heedless of God, who set the cycle in place long ago. By their adherence to the weekly pattern they tacitly acknowledge God—but they do so unwittingly, ignorantly.

And thereby they fail to receive the gracious gift of a loving God. The blessing is theirs, waiting for them—it arrives with the setting of the sun every Friday evening—and all they have to do is accept it.

Think of that first Sabbath described in the book of Genesis. Our first parents had just been created, and before they began any work or other activities, God gave them His rest. They weren’t weary from a heavy week at the office or on the farm—they were young and fresh, filled with vigor. They didn’t need physical rest, but God gave them a better gift—Himself. He invited them to share the joy of His presence before they did anything else. He gave them a temple in time in which they might focus on Him as their dearest friend.

Notice: we find no hint of earning merit with God in this very first account of the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath was “natural” in the best sense of the word—it was a response of love to a gift of love. No list of burdensome rules here. No



sense of being put in a straitjacket. Only the joy and laughter and singing of hearts that hear God speak and answer back to Him.

That's the way the world began. That's the way the Sabbath began.

Tragedy struck. Into a perfect world slunk an intruder—evil. Paradise was lost. A blight fell over the face of nature. Humanity became alienated from God, alienated from one another,

descendants of Abraham clustered together as the 12 Hebrew tribes, now foreigners in Egypt, and oppressed. And God raised up another key figure, one of the great leaders of ancient times. By the hand of Moses, God snatched His special people away from under the iron hand and led them to the Promised Land.

That act of deliverance brought a nation into being; it was like a

but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and

alienated from their true selves, alienated from nature. The Sabbath—on humanity's part, but not God's—seemed swept aside by a tide of wickedness.

Then God intervened: He called a nation out of the world as His special people. He selected Abram, changed his name to Abraham, and told him to leave his home in Ur of the Chaldees and go to a new land. At length the

creation. And once again God reminded them of the ancient gift—the Sabbath. He proclaimed the great principles that undergird all religious and moral life, not only speaking them but also writing them in stone—the Ten Commandments—and in their heart He placed the Sabbath.

"Remember the sabbath day by keeping it holy," He said. "Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

made it holy" (Ex. 20:8-11).

That word took Israel back to the beginning, to the origin of the Sabbath in Creation itself. But it came with new and living force, for the very first words of the Ten Commandments declare: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (verse 2). So now the Sabbath takes on a new dimension: it is the gracious gift of the loving God who

not only made us but also saved us.

This new aspect—Sabbath-keeping as our grateful acknowledgment of God as Redeemer—is emphasized in the book of Deuteronomy, where the Ten Commandments are again spelled out (Deut. 5:6-21). Here the Sabbath word closes with: “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your

We also find another word often associated with the Sabbath—covenant. This biblical term has similarities with the way we use it—meaning contract—but it shows major differences also. When we sign a covenant with someone else, both parties are equal and negotiate the terms, but when God makes a covenant, He comes as Creator and Redeemer, and He establishes the

a covenant with them (Ex. 19:5, 6). He gives them the Ten Commandments, which describe the sort of people He desires them to be—a special people, a people set apart by God, not because they are better, but because of His gracious choice.

Thus the Sabbath had particular meaning for the Israelites. It was not only the gift of their Creator and Saviour, it was the sign of His special relation to them, the covenant people. “The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested” (Ex. 31:16, 17).

In the centuries that followed Sinai, the Hebrews often forgot who they were. They remembered neither their Creator and Saviour nor His covenant and Sabbath gift. At last, after repeated warnings, God permitted the invading Babylonians to carry them off as captives.

But God didn’t forsake them, even in exile. Through the agency of the Persian king Cyrus He restored them to the Promised Land. And Israel had learned the hard lesson. Since before exile they had been careless about God’s law, now they would keep it to the letter. To ensure strict obedience they built up a “hedge” around the law—multiplied regulations that attempted to specify every jot and tittle of life.

They singled out the Sabbath for particular attention. Hundreds of rules told you how far you could journey on the Sabbath, what to do if you discovered a scorpion on the Sabbath, and on and on with hairsplitting discrimination as to what was permissible and what not.

And then—Jesus came.

He who created the universe, whose fingers flung the celestial dust and formed a billion stars, who made sunrise and sunset and springtime and

The Sabbath When the World Ends

As the Sabbath was anciently a sign of loyalty among God’s people, Seventh-day Adventists believe that it will come to prominence once again in the last days of earth’s history.

The book of Revelation graphically portrays the struggle between the forces of good and evil, with Christ as leader of one side and Satan head of the other (Rev. 12-14). Just before the second coming of Christ, the struggle escalates to a climax. On one hand, the followers of the Lamb find themselves torn between their allegiance to Christ and the decrees of the state. The followers of the beast either yield their lives to, or formally comply with, the confederacy of evil. But the return of Christ will resolve the struggle and bring deliverance to God’s people.

In this end-time scenario, the gospel is proclaimed worldwide, with a call to worship the Creator of heaven and earth (Rev. 14:6, 7). The followers of the Lamb are described as those “who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” (verse 12, NIV; see also Rev. 12:17).

God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day” (verse 15).

We cannot read far in the Old Testament without realizing that the Sabbath is *the* day. We meet it at the very beginning, and we meet it all through the story of Israel, God’s chosen people.

terms. The covenant is God’s handshake, His adoption of a practice common in society to give His people confidence that He means what He says.

So when God chooses Abraham and calls him to be His servant, He makes a covenant with him (Gen. 12:1-3). And when He calls Hebrew tribes and melds them into a nation, He again confirms the idea by making

Sunday's Coming!

Eye-opening evidence
that these are
THE VERY LAST DAYS
G. Edward Reid

Startling evidence that we are living in the last days

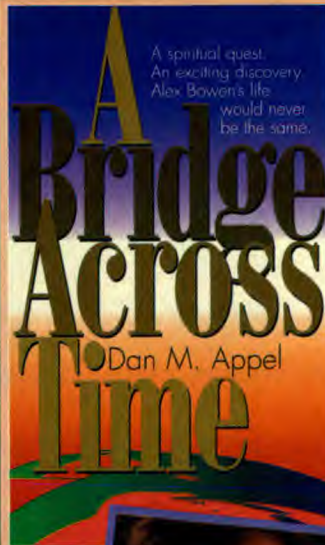
Sunday's Coming! is a startling update on how current events are rapidly fulfilling Bible prophecy for the end-time. Pope John Paul II writes that "the year 2000 will be celebrated as the Great Jubilee"—part of a grand ecumenical coming together. Both Evangelical and Catholic action groups see a golden age of political cooperation ahead.

Reality check time, according to Ed Reid. We are into the wrap-up scenes of a detailed prophetic outline. Soon, very soon, you'll be asked,

maybe required, to disobey God.

Ed Reid is a keen observer of world events, U.S.-Vatican activities, and the work of the Christian Coalition, the Catholic Alliance, and the Catholic Campaign for America. Join him as he presents proof from prophecy and current events that *Sunday's coming!*

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by Mark Finley,
speaker/director of *It Is Written*

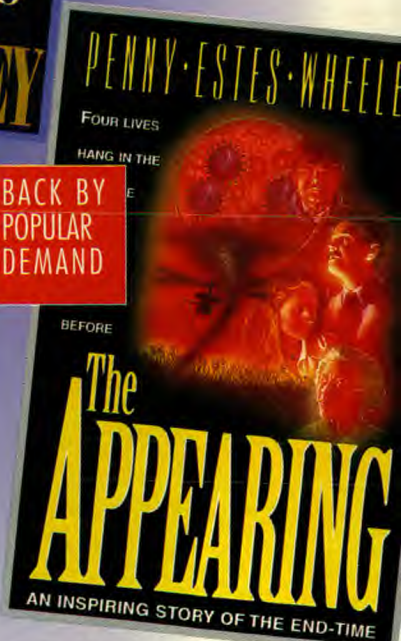
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autumn—He came. He came, not with pomp and circumstance, but with the plaintive cry of a newborn baby. He came, one with us, to walk in our moccasins, to suffer hunger, thirst, pain, loss, temptation, and disappointment along with us. He came to die at last on a Roman cross, taking our guilt and disease upon Himself, taking our place, our Saviour.

He who created us died to save us.

Jesus showed us what God is like, and what we might be. He demonstrated the perfect life, the life modeled after God's character, the life of gentle and loving deeds, of unselfish service, of healing, of continuous giving.

In Jesus God's law was lived out. The ancient prophet had predicted: "He will magnify the law, and make it honourable" (Isa. 42:21, KJV), and Jesus did. He taught and showed that the Godlike life breaks out of any written code, embracing thoughts, motives and feelings, impelled by the Holy Spirit, who works by love.

Jesus went out of His way to show us the true meaning of the Sabbath. He kept the Sabbath, but not according to the rigid, rule-bound manner of the religious teachers of His day. He frequently healed people on the Sabbath, knowing that the miracles would arouse curiosity and opposition.

One Sabbath He noticed a woman in church, bent over, unable to stand up straight. He called her to Him and healed her. The ruler of the synagogue, angry at what he considered a breach of the Sabbath, began to hector the people: "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." But Jesus looked around in anger and replied: "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" (Luke 13:15, 16).

That is what the Sabbath is really about—freedom, healing, wholeness, rest, peace. After another Sabbath

dispute with the authorities, Jesus summed up its meaning: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

In Jesus' day we find no question as to which day is the Sabbath, only what the purpose of the Sabbath is and how it should be kept. And Jesus expected His followers to be observing the Sabbath long after His death. Looking down to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, He counseled them: "Pray that your flight [out of Jerusalem] will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath" (Matt. 24:20).

The early Christians kept the Sabbath. In the book of Acts and the other writings that reach to almost the end of the first century, we find no hint of argument over Sabbath observance. We find disputes as to whether converts from the Gentile world should be circumcised and problems about the reluctance of Jewish Christians to eat together with Gentile Christians, but no question about the Sabbath. Only in later years did some Christians begin to worship on the first day of the week instead of on the Sabbath.

Once again the covenant idea surfaces. Through the indwelling presence of Jesus—the Holy Spirit—God renews the covenant. Now, instead of His law being written on tablets of stone, it is written in the heart (Heb. 8:8-12). So Paul can affirm: "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4).

For Christians, the Sabbath glows with light—the light of the glory of the gospel in Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. He who made us, who has watched over us all the days of our lives, who gave Himself to rescue us from sin, who accepts us and calls us not only sons and daughters

but also His friends—He gives us this temple in time. And we, in loving, joyful response, accept the gift as evidence and sign of His claim on us.

Jesus promises: "Come unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). We come and we find rest—we come home, back to where we belong. And the Sabbath encapsulates that rest: the book of Hebrews says that our rest in Christ is a Sabbath-like rest, a *sabbatismos* (Heb. 4:9). The Sabbath comes to us as both assurance and promise; assurance of our present status as sons and daughters of the living God, and promise of our future, eternal rest in His presence.

Today, more than ever, we need the Sabbath.

We need its break from the tyranny of work.

We need its statement that nothing is more important than God.

We need its reminder that we aren't self-sufficient, that we were made by and for God, and only in Him do we find our true selves.

We need its challenge to appreciate and safeguard the environment, that we are not to be marauders and plunderers, but sharers in the world made by God.

We need its call to social justice, that rich and poor, master and servant, mighty and lowly are free before God, and must be freed to enjoy the rest provided by a kind, heavenly Father.

We need its promise and hope that this brief life isn't the sum total of existence and meaning, that at last time will collapse into eternity and we shall enjoy endless Sabbaths face-to-face with our Creator, Saviour, and Lord.

Today, more than ever, we need this gracious gift of a loving God. ■

* Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages cited in this article are from the New International Version.

William G. Johnsson is editor of the *Adventist Review*.



A Sabbath Rest for the Whole Earth

*It's not only for people but for animals,
the soil, and the entire environment.*

BY NIELS-ERIK ANDREASEN

Nineteenth-century Adventists first learned about the Sabbath from a Seventh Day Baptist woman, Rachel Oakes. She taught us to understand the fourth commandment as a specific reference to the seventh day, not just to any day of rest.

Since that time Seventh-day Adventists, true to our name, have devoted much time and energy to understanding and learning to observe the Sabbath.

For example, we believe that the law of God really does call us to obey the seventh day for all time,¹ that the prophet promised great blessing to those who honor it,² and that Jesus showed by example what a good day the Sabbath is for all who “labour and are heavy laden.”³

Meanwhile, we have tended to overlook the fact that the very first reference to the Sabbath in all of Scripture connects the day of rest to God’s creative work. What, then, does the Sabbath have to say about God’s good earth—the environment in which we live?

Creation and the Environment

Writer Ellen White opened that subject by affirming: “God designs that the Sabbath shall direct the minds of men [meaning all people] to the contemplation of His created works.”⁴ These works, God’s creation, that ought to come to our attention every Sabbath include heaven and earth, the sea and dry land, plants and animals, along with human life, the family, and the larger community.

According to Psalm 104, a beautiful hymn about Creation, all the parts of Creation are related. For example: the dry land

and seas have their proper place⁵; the springs nurture plants and animals⁶; vegetation gives shelter to birds and beasts⁷; plants are suitable for food and may be cultivated⁸; each geographical zone provides a fitting home for some species⁹; day and night separate hunting animals from people¹⁰; and the sea sports a life of its own.¹¹

All these, coexisting in a fitting relationship with each other, are what we mean by the natural environment that God has provided for us, and the Sabbath is the day for contemplating it.

The Animals and the Land Need Rest

But that is not all. Scripture makes an even stronger connection between the Sabbath and the environment. For example, the fourth commandment itself in Exodus 20:8-11 includes domesticated animals along with their drivers (manservant and maidservant) as deserving recipients of the Sabbath blessing.¹²

And the seventh year, called a “Sabbath of solemn rest,” “a Sabbath to the Lord,”¹³ while not a seventh-day Sabbath, most likely represents a secondary derivation from the Sabbath—a restful Sabbath year for the benefit of the cultivated land, which has been worked hard during the previous six years by the agriculturist.

So important is this concept of a yearlong Sabbath rest for the cultivated land that 2 Chronicles explains Israel’s captivity in Babylon and the 70-year exile as an opportunity for the land to enjoy its agricultural Sabbaths of which it had been deprived for 490 long years of neglect.¹⁴

Evidently the Creator cared a great deal for His whole creation—not only for us humans, but for all the things He



made, and not only before we sinned and made a mess of things, but also afterward. Even the violent and destructive forces sometimes displayed in nature do not detract from its divine origin.

God created it all. God still cares for it, and so should we, in fulfillment of the injunction God placed on our first parents in the Garden of Eden "to till it and keep it."¹⁵

Creation at Risk

Let us now return to the Sabbath day itself, on which we are admonished to contemplate all God's created works. This surely is an invitation to take advantage of the free time the day of rest provides to wander into nature and look at it, perhaps, to enjoy its open spaces, to observe its many colors and shapes, to wonder at its variety and mystery, to drink its clean water and to breathe its fresh air. All of this still represents one of the best forms of Sabbath activity for families, friends, and individuals.

But it cannot be taken for granted anymore. Nature has been put at risk by our reckless abuse of it. Some of the water is polluted; many plants and animals are poisoned; the air is often impure; and in many places rubbish is

left to mar the natural beauty of land and sea.

We have ended up with environmental legislation, pollution control, regulations for clean water and air, and international environmental conferences, all designed to reduce the risk to the environment. Meanwhile, somewhere over the horizon stands Chernobyl as a silent, deadly warning to us all of what can happen to nature when we are careless with it.

Suddenly our Sabbath contemplation of the works of God takes on a new meaning, even urgency. What have we done to God's created world—turning it into a life-threatening place?

Perhaps we are tempted simply to give up on this earth and merely to wait for the re-creation of a new heaven and a new earth in the end of time.¹⁶ But is that the kind of contemplation God had in mind for us on this holy day, the seventh, which was instituted after His creating the world in six days and making everything very good?¹⁷

Is it really possible to contemplate God's lovely works of creation while throwing rubbish in the meadows, uprooting without replanting, and fouling water and air? Would that not displease our Creator? Surely Sabbath

contemplation upon the works of God invites us to think about them differently—as our living environment, our present home, not perfect, but wonderfully able to support our life here on earth.

A Lesson From the Manna Story

Consider the first reference in Scripture to actual Sabbath observance, and the contemplation upon God's created works that it invites. Found in the story of the manna,¹⁸ it provides a fascinating lesson in Sabbathkeeping.

At first we learn that the people of Israel were running out of food in the Sinai wilderness. A desert, so different from the fertile Nile delta region in Egypt, it supported only sparse vegetation. So in response to their hunger, God sent the manna (bread from heaven) in adequate amount during the first five working days. Some tried to hoard extra manna, perhaps for sale or barter, but it did not keep.

On the sixth working day they were told to collect a double ration. "What shall we do with it all?" some asked Moses. "This bread spoils overnight."

"Not tonight," replied Moses, "for tomorrow is Sabbath. Tonight the food will keep and tomorrow you will eat."

It is instructive to note that this bread came in adequate amount. No one was able to hoard it by scraping from the land more than was needed, for business or wealth, or greed. And then on one day each week everyone learned to live by faith, believing that on this day God would provide more food without any effort by the worker, and what they stored would not spoil.

In this way the people of Israel were instructed by the Sabbath to maintain a certain harmonious relationship with God's world, to take from it what they needed, *but not more*. They learned to trust God to provide even when they did not work, and found that adequate provisions would be available from the hand of the Creator.

By asking us to stop our work every seventh day, after we have put in a good effort during the previous six days, God invites us still today to establish a healthy

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relationship with His good earth. We are to use it and to use it well, employing all the work tools and skills at our disposal. But we are never to use it relentlessly without stopping.

And that is not only for our sake, but also for the sake of the earth itself. Yes, a personal rhythm of work and rest surely is part of Sabbathkeeping, as God has taught us,¹⁹ but that is not all. Complete Sabbath observance also calls upon us to leave off work for the sake of the *earth itself*. We must give the land, water, and air a pause that they too might be replenished. By doing so, we learn to trust in God's provisions.

After all, the Creator instructed our first parents not only "to till" the earth, but also to "keep" it.²⁰ That is, we are not only to use our God-given resources in the earth, but also to guard them from abuse and, what is worse, destruction.

Nature's Clock

Whenever we contemplate God's work of creation during the Sabbath hours, we look back to the creation of heaven and earth. The Sabbath memorializes this perfect creation. The first Sabbath was celebrated by God to mark the completion of this divine work.²¹ This set in motion a pattern for all human beings and for all of life, a sequence of work and rest, from that time on and forever. All life needs such a rhythm of energy spent and energy restored. It is part of God's design for both spiritual and physical life.

The Sabbath thus is a "world day" of rest, not limited to any historical time period or location, or to any nation, but belonging to everyone everywhere.

Originally the creation of Sabbath was not viewed in Scripture as controversial in any way. This is in contrast to other parts of the Creation account, which seem to indicate a polemic against other then-current Near Eastern views of the world's origin.

For example, some ancient people believed that the work of creation involved conflict or required great effort by the Creator. Scripture vigorously refutes both of these concepts. It makes very clear that

Creation was both peaceful and easy: God decided to make a world, and spoke it into existence.

The case of the Sabbath is different. No parallel for it is found in the ancient world. The Sabbath remains unique, and its importance is neither debated nor argued. In Scripture it is introduced without polemic as a simple, natural arrangement for the ongoing support and protection of all life.

The Sabbath is nature's clock: a natural arrangement of work and rest. Only later, following the coming of sin and the consequent degradation of life, does the Sabbath require enforcement. As a result we have the great dialogue of Sabbath laws and Sabbath promises that have caused so much unnecessary misunderstanding. The Sabbath laws were introduced to protect the worker from exploitation, especially the defenseless, the young, the aliens, who like servants had no inalienable rights, and those who might be exploited during the busiest times of the year.²²

The Sabbath promises, on the other hand, hold out a time of everlasting peace and prosperity to all those who seek rest in God.²³ But at their heart, both the Sabbath laws and the Sabbath promises simply call us back to that rhythm of work and rest that God implanted in the created world and that enables it to support life.

Preparing for Eternity

Finally, it is worth thinking about the way Scripture portrays that coming time of everlasting peace and prosperity in the earth made new. God will once again bring rest to those who have labored²⁴ and will create a new environment for them—a new heaven, and a new earth.²⁵

It is important to notice that Sabbathkeepers who stop working and turn away from material things to focus upon the things of the spirit on this one day each week are not idle dreamers, but sober people. They expect a very real, material, physical, eternal life with God in a new heaven and a new earth, complete with rivers, trees, fruits, houses, work. Why?

Every week on the Sabbath, as we contemplate God's created works, we do not turn *away* from the real material world, but *toward* it. We affirm this as our God-given environment, where life is nurtured, sustained, provided for, and made secure.

The eternal Sabbath rest, for which every Sabbath observer longs, also occurs in a real, natural, and material environment. There are trees, water, fresh air, and open space in this new environment. Evidently it too will be tilled and kept, just like the first creation.

Surely the best preparation for life in such an eternal environment includes a caring attitude for our present environment. Yes, it has been marred by sin and violence, but not so badly that we cannot see clearly within it the handiwork of our Creator. As Sabbathkeepers now, let us remember our Creator once every week by contemplating God's creative works, and by caring for them as God does. ■

¹ Ex. 20:8-11; 34:21.

² Isa. 58:13, 14.

³ Matt. 11:28-12:14.

⁴ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 48.

⁵ Ps. 104:9.

⁶ Verses 10, 11.

⁷ Verses 12, 13, 17.

⁸ Verses 14, 15.

⁹ Verse 18.

¹⁰ Verses 21-23.

¹¹ Verses 24-26.

¹² Ex. 20:10; 23:12.

¹³ Lev. 25:4, RSV.

¹⁴ 2 Chron. 36:21.

¹⁵ Gen. 2:15.

¹⁶ Rev. 21:1.

¹⁷ Gen. 1:31-2:3.

¹⁸ Ex. 16.

¹⁹ Ex. 31:17.

²⁰ Gen. 2:15.

²¹ Verses 1-3.

²² Ex. 20:9, 10; 23:12; 34:21; Deut. 5:13-15.

²³ Isa. 56:1-8; 58:13; Heb. 4:9.

²⁴ Rev. 14:13.

²⁵ Rev. 21:1-5.

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How Shall I “Keep” the Sabbath Holy?

*The Bible gives us some clear principles
on how to enjoy God’s holy day.*

BY GREGORY J. ALLEN

I know that watching TV programs on Sabbath isn’t good, but would it be all right if I watch a religious program like *The Ten Commandments*?”

“I want to visit my parents for Christmas, and the only time I can fly is on Saturday morning. Would it be OK to travel on Sabbath just this once?”

“Some of the members of my church go out to eat at a restaurant after church. Does that violate the Sabbath?”

As a pastor and teacher, I have been asked such questions many times. They all have one basic concern: What activities can and cannot be done on the Sabbath? Although appropriate Sabbath behavior is an important issue, these questions, and the uncritical answers they evoke, make me uneasy, because they miss something. Before appropriate Sabbath *behavior* can be addressed, we must answer the more basic question: On what basis can Christians determine appropriate behavior in *any* situation?

The answer lies in examining biblical principles of moral decision-making. Then these principles can be applied to the more specific question of Sabbath observance.

Biblical Principles for Moral Decision-making

The letters of Paul yield at least six principles¹ that can guide Christians in making decisions about appropriate action or correct behavior.

Principle 1. Is the deed in question a vice? (See Rom. 1:24-32; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 2 Cor. 12:19-21; Gal. 5:19-21.)

The apostle Paul, like other moral teachers in Greco-Roman

society, employs rhetorical devices to persuade his audience. He utilizes vice lists to mark off the boundaries between appropriate and inappropriate behavior. For instance, in Galatians 5:19-21 Paul reminds Christians that unacceptable actions are “fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like” (RSV).

Although his vice lists are not exhaustive, Paul maintains that believers do not have to wonder if these behaviors are appropriate; such actions are wrong and should not be practiced by the person who is in Christ.

The vice lists indicate those things that are inherently destructive of the image of God and its restoration in the believer, marking off the farthest limits of acceptable behavior.

Principle 2. Is the action appropriate to our measure of faith? (See Rom. 12:3; cf. Rom. 4:20; 1 Cor. 12:9; Rom. 12:6.)

Paul uses the term *faith* in two ways. Most of us may be familiar with seeing faith as trusting God to fulfill God’s promises (Rom. 4:21; cf. Gen. 15:6).

With reference to this principle, however, Paul is using the *second* meaning of faith. Paul suggests that every believer is given a measure of faith by God, and that a Christian’s actions must be in proportion to that measure of faith.

Paul suggests that a life of faith is a continuum along which Christians may be found, ranging from babes in faith to those reaching toward full maturity. In all cases Christians are expected to grow in their faith experience.

Christians must constantly reassess their actions as faith increases and doubts shrink. Behavior that might have been appropriate or inappropriate at an early stage of the Christian

experience must be reconsidered in the light of the growth that has occurred. "Self-testing and self-evaluation are fundamental to the life in Christ."²

Principle 3. Do we as individuals have doubts about its appropriateness? (See Rom. 14:14, 23.) Conscience functions to warn Christians that the action being considered is not appropriate. Doubts also function to indicate the limits of a Christian's personal measure of faith. If warned by conscience or doubt, the believer should consider refraining from the contemplated action.

Principle 4. Are we as individuals fully convinced that an action is proper for us? (See Rom. 14:5, 14; cf. Phil. 1:25.) With this principle Paul indicates that if doubt does not arise with regard to a particular action, Christ's followers should be able to proceed with full conviction that the action is appropriate. Paul stresses the notion that the believer should be "fully convinced" of the propriety of an action before engaging in it (Rom. 4:20, 21).

Thus far two general moral tests have been presented: first, principle 1 indicates that the action must not be one of the vices, i.e., immoral; second, principles 2-4 suggest that the projected deed must be evaluated in terms of its

bearing on the individual believer—it must be appropriate to the believer's faith experience.

But these two tests, while necessary, are not sufficient. The contemplated action must be evaluated in terms of its bearing on others in the community of faith. It must work love toward others.

Principle 5. Does the behavior give expression to love for the others within the community? (See 2 Cor. 5:14; cf. 1 Cor. 8:1.)

If the projected action builds up, edifies, or demonstrates love to others in the community, it is appropriate. For example, some Christians in Corinth felt that eating meat that had been offered to idols reconnected them with the pagan gods they had rejected when they became Christians. Other Christians were convinced that it was appropriate to eat such meat, because they knew that there was only one true God. Paul admonished these Christians that their correct knowledge was not enough; actions must be evaluated as to whether love is demonstrated to others in the community (1 Cor. 10:23, 24).

Principle 6. Does the action glorify God in Christ, give thanks, and anticipate Christ's second coming? (See 1 Cor. 10:31-33; Rom. 1:21; 15:5, 6.)

For Paul, this is the preeminent moral test. The action contemplated must glorify God, give thanks to God, and indicate that the believer is living in anticipation of the second coming of Christ. Thus one commends oneself not only to God but also to those in the world who observe appropriate living.

In summary, four movements are involved in the process of moral reasoning. The first movement, determining whether or not the action is one of the vices, simply indicates the rightness or wrongness of what is being considered. This level of evaluation can be called minimalist morality. The emphasis is on the minimum requirements for acceptable behavior.

The second movement ascertains the appropriateness of the projected action as it bears on the personal faith experience of the believer. The third movement is focused on others, asking if the contemplated behavior gives expression to love for the community.

Finally, the fourth movement involves the ultimate consideration: Does the action give glory to God?

The last three movements therefore reach beyond the minimal requirement to emphasize what is *best*, not merely what is right or wrong. The final three movements are representative of what can be called restorative morality, showing progressive development in moral behavior in response to the love of God in Christ.

These six principles for moral decision-making are applicable to the full range of Christian experience. Now we can apply this process to the specific issue of Sabbath "keeping."

The Sabbath: Its Meaning and Practice

Sabbath practice must be informed by a correct understanding of God's intent for the Sabbath and its meaning for Christians. We can address the intent and meaning of the Sabbath in three areas: Sabbath as a sign of God's Creation, redemption, and eternity.³

God's Creation

That God created a day of rest after completing the Creation signifies more

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than a mandatory day of human rest. The true significance is that the pinnacle of God's Creation was the establishment of relationship—a relationship based on love that gives to humans a sense of meaning and purpose beyond the apparent chaos of the fallen world. The Sabbath, as a time set aside, is both a reminder that God created us to be in perfect relationship with Divinity and a way for us to accept God's gift of fellowship. The Sabbath is God's choosing of time over space as a vehicle to lead humans to the *world of the spirit* over the *world of things*.

A true understanding of the Sabbath as sacred time to be spent with the Creator should prompt us to greater human fellowship as well as social equality that encompasses gender, race, and class. A lack of true fellowship and equality signifies a lack of Sabbath understanding (Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:8-11; Col. 1:15).

"As we come together in worship on the Sabbath day, it should remind us of our creaturely status before God and the fellowship that God desires among us. Not only on the Sabbath should we observe the spirit of oneness, but throughout the week as well."⁴

The Christian's life should fully demonstrate the meaning of fellowship and equality implied in the Sabbath.

God's Redemption

The Sabbath also points to the relationship God established with humans through Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Thus Sabbath is about God's sovereignty—God as the only provider of salvation. We cannot earn salvation by doing anything, including observing the Sabbath. Keeping the Sabbath is first and foremost about what God has done for us that we cannot do for ourselves. It is a sign of how God has delivered God's people in the past and of how God will provide absolute deliverance in the future; our keeping the Sabbath is a sign of our obedience to God based on the relationship that God has established with us.

While God, in God's wisdom, has made a way for humans to return to a perfect relationship, we have the

responsibility of accepting this offer and living our lives as changed and continually changing people. Our redemption in Christ should lead us to helping those who are yet in bondage; keeping the Sabbath implies aiding the oppressed (Deut. 5:12-15; Eze. 20:12; Col. 1:16, 20; Heb. 1:1-3).

God's Eternity

What we possess in this world, even with the redemption of Christ, is only a partial fulfillment of all that the Sabbath symbolizes. Complete realization of a perfect relationship between the Creator and the created is yet to come. While keeping the Sabbath is an act of obedience, it is also a gift of great joy—not just joy in this world, but *the ultimate joy* of the "unending jubilee," heaven, that is to come (Isa. 66:22, 23; Heb. 9:9, 10).

Knowing that the Sabbath is a sign of God's love for us prompts us to ask the question: How might our understanding of the meaning of the Sabbath impact our practice?

Beyond Minimalism, Toward Restorative Living

Sabbath "keeping" must go beyond minimal moral thinking and behavior, with its emphasis on the legal question of right and wrong. Ellen White wrote, "We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life."⁵ Emphasis on the legal question is important as an elementary matter, but if this paradigm is the basis for one's Sabbath experience, Sabbath becomes "duty" and therefore a burden. And the "edges" are never maintained with joy.

A restorative approach to Sabbath observance must be understood in light of the person of Christ.

"We must view the Sabbath in all its facets as they are centered in Jesus Christ. He is not only Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer, and therefore the Initiator of those events connected with the Sabbath; He is Lord of the Sabbath, and furthermore, He is what the Sabbath is all about. Not only is He the object of

worship, adoration, and meditation on that day, and the subject of Creation, rest, fellowship, redemption, holiness, deliverance, and sanctification, but He exemplifies that day. For as the Sabbath was the day the Creator was present with [humans], so Jesus Christ in a special sense came to be present with [us]. Though sin interrupted the face-to-face fellowship, its restoration began with the Incarnation when He dwelt among us and became Immanuel, 'God with us.' While His stay among [humans] was short, the reconciliation that He achieved by His death assured the complete fulfillment of the meaning of the Sabbath, the perfect fellowship of God and [human beings] in the new earth."⁶

A relationship with Christ provides the only authentic motivation for keeping the Sabbath holy. Thus a restorative understanding of the Sabbath:

- ✓ flows from a growing faith in God, the God of the Sabbath, whose sovereign activity from Creation to consummation is for the benefit of humankind.

- ✓ recognizes Sabbath as special time to share the new life in Christ received through the Holy Spirit in acts of love and service, not only to one's own family and congregation, but also to strangers, orphans, those persons marginalized, and those who find themselves in bondage, whether physically or spiritually.

- ✓ experiences Sabbath as a sign in response to God's glory revealed in what God has done, will do, and is doing in Christ, who is our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). ■

¹ Adapted from J. Paul Sampley, *Walking Between the Times: Paul's Moral Reasoning* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

² *Ibid.*, p. 60.

³ Adapted from Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man: A Theology of the Sabbath and Second Advent* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1978).

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 353.

⁶ Kubo, p. 8.

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Sabbath Is for Kids

*Practical ideas on how to make the Sabbath
a delight for our children*

BY NOELENE JOHNSON

Growing up in a Sabbathkeeping family, I didn't always appreciate God's wonderful gift, the Sabbath. I treasured Friday afternoon aromas of cooking and housecleaning, Friday night worships, meals, songs, stories, and sleeping with fresh bed linens. I loved Sabbath worship services and especially the fellowship at church and later around the dinner table.

Sabbath was truly a delight for us kids. But when the Sabbath dinner dishes were put away, most of the adults in our world collapsed into Sabbath rest. It's appropriate on a rest day, I guess. But if you ask those under age 16, they will tell you that the words "rest" and "day" do not belong together. They can't get excited about a day with so much inactivity.

So if the Sabbath is to become a delight for our children, we must reconcile our children's need for activity with the adults' need for rest. We must make Sabbath a day of the week that our kids will anticipate as much as their own birthdays.

That reconciliation and joy can happen, I believe, when families recognize that Sabbath is a gift.

Seeing the Sabbath as a Gift

In the beginning, God loved families so much that He gave them Sabbath. A day for family and friends, a day for fellowship with believers, a day of relief from stress, physical labor, and guilt. A really truly,

just-what-everyone-needs gift of quality time with God.

But Sabbath is also a genuine, from the heart, the best-I-can-afford gift from me and my family to God. This 24-hour block of real time is what Proverbs 18:16 calls a "gift [that] opens the way for the giver [me] and ushers [me] into the presence of the great" (NIV).

Selecting gifts for someone great isn't easy. What do you give to someone who has it all, such as Queen Mary of England? Guests to her intimate tea parties brought her gifts. But the queen mother, after opening and admiring the gifts, always asked each guest to choose one to take home.

When we come with our gifts for God, He sends us away with something too. The more we bring, the more He seems to give. According to Luke 6:38, God takes the cup with which we measured out our gift, and He overflows it with blessings for us. The more we empty ourselves and make the Sabbath a delight, the more God is able to fill our lives and our families with His blessing.

Counting the Blessings

God's blessings aren't just material. He gives things that all the money in the world cannot buy—joy, fulfillment, peace, and much more.

So how can our family bring new life to Sabbath? I suggest the family work together to make three lists. Use a separate sheet of paper for each. Title the first page "God's Gifts," the second "Sabbath Values," and the third "Sabbath Activities."





1. God's Gifts. As a family, write down all of God's gifts that each one is thankful for. Begin with things that don't cost money, such as love, grace, freedom from guilt, answers to prayer. Then add material blessings. Be as specific as you like.

2. Sabbath Values. When working on this list, pray that God will open your mind to listen to what He wants to tell you. Then read some Sabbath Bible references: Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:11-14; Matthew 12:1-14; Mark 2:27; Hebrews 4:9-11.

Look for principles, values, and messages either stated or implied in the texts. Your creative list might include items such as these: God wants to spend time with me; Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath; I need the Sabbath; God wants me to enjoy Sabbath; Sabbath was made for busy people—and kids.

3. Sabbath Activities. Before beginning this third list, read aloud the first list. Then tell each other how you feel about God in the light of the list.

While love and appreciation for God are bubbling within, try to visualize your personal ideal of the perfect Sabbath. What would it look like, feel like, taste like, and sound like? Mention activities that you would do and when you would do them. Let your imagination discover great ways to express your appreciation for God.

Then, while each person in the family takes a turn describing his/her special Sabbath, the family scribe

should write on the third sheet each specific food, place, and activity mentioned.

Armed with the three lists, you can begin planning early for next Sabbath. Each family member takes turns choosing an activity from list 3 to fit into your family schedule. Another week, everyone can work together to re-create one family member's ideal Sabbath.

Remember to check your Sabbath plans against the principles and values in your second list. Are you visualizing a Sabbath that celebrates those values? Star any values or ideas

Resources for Sabbath Activities

Great resources include Christian bookstores full of wonderful Bible storybooks. Such books fill the Sabbath hours with pleasure and deepen children's understanding of the Bible.

Forever Stories, a wonderful set that explains the story of redemption through Christ to kids

A Child's Steps to Jesus, a series of terrific books for ages 8 and younger that explains how to live as a Christian

Puppet Plays With a Point
Daniel in the Lions' Den, a Play Mask Book

Paper Bag Puppets
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52 Sabbath Activities

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that have not been included, and figure out how to include them next Sabbath.

As you evaluate your family's Sabbaths, ask yourself: Are we concentrating on do's and don'ts, or are we celebrating our love for God and His love for us? If we go by the rules, we aren't celebrating. So having planned for the Sabbath, put away the lists and focus on God. Enjoy His day together.

The gifts I have most enjoyed giving are those in which I invested the most thought and time. Similarly, my most enjoyable Sabbaths have been those I best prepared for. Consider the following ideas to make Sabbath a joy for children.

Friday Night Is for Kids

Celebrate Friday evening—the beginning of the Sabbath—with your all-time family favorites. Easy-to-fix foods are sure winners. Our family used



to be big on potato soup and cinnamon rolls. It would not have been Friday night with anything else. Some people like haystacks,* a truly Adventist meal if ever there was one! Another favorite is waffles with egg gravy, blueberries, raspberries, and/or peanut butter with applesauce. Heap a different topping on each segment of the waffle.

Our family tends to linger long over Friday night supper, enjoying the candlelight and company. Sometimes we share the meal with neighbors. One Friday night a Catholic guest commented, "Thanks for the renewal." Another friend went home vowing to begin her own Friday night tradition. Nobody else has anything quite like Friday night—probably because Sabbath is holy time, blessed by God.

The magic for kids, however, doesn't last long around the table. They want to be off and *doing*. Here are some of our favorite Friday night activities for children: Sabbath puzzles, singing around the piano, reading together around the fire, and drawing and painting pictures at the kitchen table.

For great results, provide a stack of artist-quality paper, brushes, and transparent watercolor paints, as well as markers or colored pencils.

Sabbath Afternoons Are for Kids

Sabbaths are extra-special when shared with others. Guests put everybody on their best behavior. And sharing the food preparation with another family makes for an easy meal. Food—whether eaten at the park, on the patio, or around a table set with the best dishes—is always a hit with kids.

With or without guests, plan something special for downtime after lunch. While the adults chat or rest, the kids can plan closing Sabbath worship, with accompanying posters, poetry, special music, and Bible charades. Or the kids can plan and practice an elaborate charade with costumes. The adults might even snatch 40 winks between the charades.

Making a Promise Box

If you'd like to make a box full of promises, here's what to do.

Write or type promises from the Bible (such as John 3:16 and Ps. 91:1) on typing paper and cut them into strips. The strips are rolled and stored in a small box, basket, or baby food jar. Begin with a small container and graduate to something larger as the number of promises grows.

Write out the promises as the family discovers them in personal devotions, Bible study, and devotional books. Decorate the "promise box" and keep it in the room where you usually close the Sabbath.

A great way to preempt downtime is to go straight from lunch to an outdoor hike, a nature treasure hunt, or a walk in the neighborhood. Better yet, plan to walk in the zoo or work on an activity that requires collecting, displaying, and naming specimens. As a change of pace, try visiting a nursing home, making and delivering peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches for a homeless shelter, writing to a missionary, or visiting a shut-in. You might even adopt a Sabbath grandparent—someone in your church who has no family to come visiting.

Young children can color a picture or make a collage, using yarn, scraps of cloth, and stickers. When the pictures are done, accompany the child as he or she gives them to a neighbor. As children grow older they can write a verse about God's love on their pictures. Encourage the children to ask if they may pray before they leave the neighbor.

Sabbath Puppets

As children are old enough, try starting a family puppet ministry. Share

favorite Bible stories with neighborhood children by manipulating the puppets and speaking the parts. Kids can practice their stories and songs, write invitations, prepare refreshments, and invite the neighborhood children. Their presentation might include a Bible story, singing, and a nature game or quiz, followed by prayer and refreshments.

This activity turns Sabbath into a positive family outreach. And kids do all the work; adults just offer encouragement and direction.

Puppets can be made from paper bags or cloth, or purchased from an Adventist Book Center. (Kids value most the puppets they make themselves.) Today's kids can also make their own nature and Bible story videos. The activities work best when kids choose an activity that appeals to them as their way to honor God.

Closing Sabbath

Children like knowing in advance the time Sabbath begins and ends each week. They feel a sense of closure and completeness after closing Sabbath with a short, sweet worship. Again, the kids can lead, especially if they plan the worship earlier.

The basic worship can consist of a favorite Bible passage, some songs, and prayer. The scripture can be chosen and read by one person, or every person present can recite a favorite verse. If you have a promise box (see sidebar), the children can select a promise to read.

Yes, the Sabbath is for kids. Will it be a delight? a joy? It's up to us. ■

* Haystacks are made by layering on your plate, from the bottom, according to taste: corn chips, beans, grated cheese, shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes, onions, and sour cream or guacamole.

Noelene Johnsson is children's ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America.



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The Sabbath Song

Embedded in the Sabbath are fresh insights on what we are meant to be and what we can become.

BY KENDRA HALOVIK

Throughout the ages people have been singing God's song in a strange land. In Israel's tradition God's song was, in the words of Walter Brueggemann, both a song of hurt and a song of hope.¹ It was a song that acknowledged painful present realities. And it was a song of hope celebrating an alternative future.

The song of God began as a groan. Intense hurt made words impossible. Enslaved in Egypt, Israel knew hurt and groaned to God. The groans were a response to Egypt's system—its rigid hierarchy, its forced labor, its murdering of Hebrew children.

Israel could not endure passively—she cried out. And the moment Israel groaned, Egypt's system was called into question. The moment Israel groaned, the claims of the Egyptian empire began to unravel; for God heard the groans:

"Then the Lord said, 'I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians'" (Ex. 3:7, 8).*

Deliverance! Freedom! Equality! Justice! The horror that was Egypt became the celebration of the Exodus. The groaning, the song of hurt, becomes the song of hope:

"Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: 'I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my might, and he has become my salvation'" (Ex. 15:1, 2).

Israel's groaning became a vision of an alternative future. And the vision led to a new way of living, and to a movement. To emphasize the movement, Israel physically moved from Egypt toward Canaan; and the movement took them toward Mount Sinai.

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou 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, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, 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" (Ex. 20:8-11, KJV).

What Does Sabbath Mean?

My earliest recollection of that Sabbath commandment is as a memory verse in kindergarten Sabbath school. As youngsters we had to memorize only "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Later, in grade school, we had to memorize the *whole* commandment. So I practiced it again and again with my classmates, trying to get it down to a word formula so we could recite it and get out to recess.

As teenagers we never had to recite Exodus 20:8-11, but we debated what it meant. I should say, we debated the part that says "Thou shalt not do any work." Did that mean no swimming? What about bike riding? What about *calmly* playing catch? What about eating out on Sabbaths? working in a health-care profession during the Sabbath hours? Then



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as we became busy college students: is homework from religion class OK to do on Sabbath?

But we didn't read the whole text. We stopped at the "work" part instead of the "people" part. We totally neglected the part about *who* it is that does not work: you, your children, your servants (both male and female), animals, strangers.

Why should servants not have to work? Why would the commandment require animals to rest? Who is the "stranger"? The New Revised Standard Version calls this last category of person "the alien resident in your towns." That is, those people in our communities who work around the clock just trying to survive. They are supposed to rest on Sabbath too.

We often forget that it was freed slaves who journeyed from Egypt to Sinai. And God gave them the Sabbath. They knew what it meant to be a slave seven days a week. They knew what it meant to be a resident alien. They knew powerlessness firsthand. To a bunch of just-freed slaves, God gave the Sabbath. And on *that* day, like no other, they celebrated their equal status before God! Everyone rested!

New Alternatives

As a Seventh-day Adventist I am so grateful to be part of a faith tradition that values the Sabbath. We truly do have something to share with people.² On the Sabbath arbitrary human labels such as "master" and "slave" are destroyed. Society's distinction between "citizen" and "illegal immigrant" is obliterated.

In the community of Israel the Sabbath became an ongoing challenge to injustice. Israel was to live in a new reality, different from the system of Egypt. Sabbath imagines another way, God's way. In the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Sabbath is "participation in the spirit that unites what is below and what is above."³

What is the reason God gives for this alternative way of living?

According to the Exodus account,

Israel is to keep the Sabbath because of Creation, "for in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth."

The Sabbath looks back to Creation. To the way things were meant to be. Before one brother said of another "Am I his keeper?" Before we had to learn that the answer is yes. Before Egypt. The Sabbath invites Israel back into true humanness; wholeness. The Sabbath teaches that people are not to be defined by what they owe or by whom they are owned.

According to the Deuteronomy account of the Sabbath commandment, Israel is to keep the seventh day holy because of redemption—in celebration of God's actions to free them from slavery.

"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" (Deut. 5:15).

How many of us are introduced to the Sabbath commandment from the standpoint of redemption? I remember the first time the idea was shared with me as an earliteen. A friend said, "On the sixth day humanity was created and, before doing any work, was invited into rest with God. Then, thousands of years later, on another Friday, humanity was re-created as God died on a cross. Then, before doing any work, people were invited into rest with God."

Because of Creation and because of redemption, Israel was to keep the Sabbath. And "keeping it" is not merely about how one defines "work" in order to abstain from it. "Keeping it" is about the people who rest on that day—all people, every single person redeemed by God for a new way of living! In Israel's case, they were freed from the bonds of Egypt and walked toward the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey, justice and equality.

But sometimes their vision grew dim. Sometimes hope faded. At times

they forgot their groans of hurt in Egypt, their song of hope during the Exodus, their spirit-filled imagination of a just world.

And so God gave Israel the Sabbath: a day each week to remember . . . as God had led in the past, so God would lead in the future. The Sabbath was the music that took the groans of hurt and the words of hope and created a song.

But the Sabbath song not only remembers Creation and the way we were meant to be. It is not only a song that remembers salvation and the way God redeemed humanity from slavery.

It is also a song of inclusiveness, a song that affirms the place of every person in God's family—the resident alien, the immigrant mother, the Korean family that lives next door, the Latino teenager, the man dying of AIDS, the women of all races who know domestic violence, all of society's marginalized. The Sabbath is a sanctuary for the alien; a sanctuary where there is always room for another person, because it is a place in time, not space.

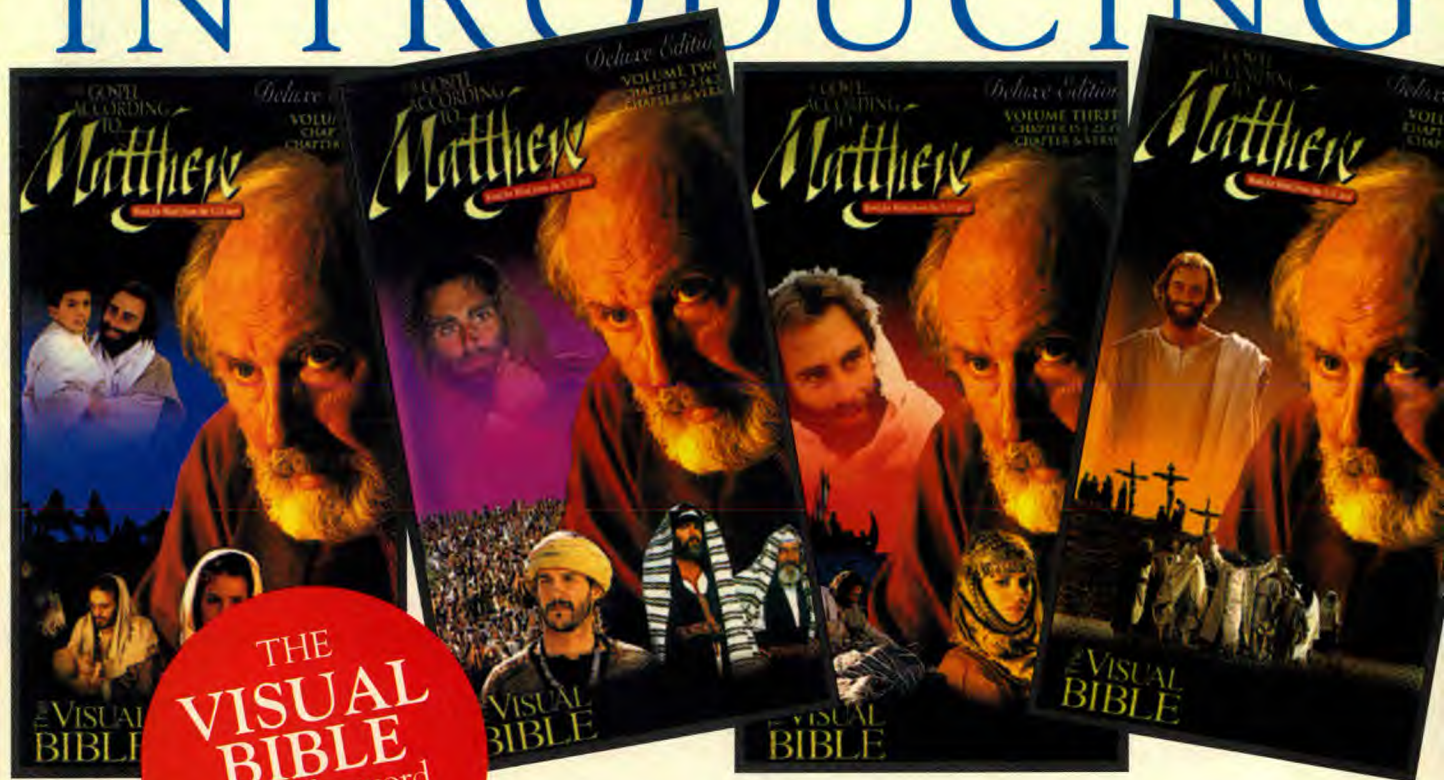
The Forgotten Song

Eventually, as Israel turned aside from God, there followed injustice, particularly toward society's powerless. When Israel left God, Israel forgot what it meant to keep the Sabbath. The focus became the "work" part of the commandment instead of the "people" part. Debates centered on what it meant to "not do any work" instead of on the amazing reality that on the Sabbath every person is to rest. When Israel left God, they lost the Sabbath song.⁴

In the New Testament, Luke records a scene with a group of people who thought they were keeping the Sabbath, but who had forgotten the Sabbath song:

"Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight.

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When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.' But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?' When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing" (Luke 13:10-17).

A descendant of the freed Israelite slaves, this bent-over woman entered the synagogue that Sabbath. She knew what it was like to live under a burden. Like the slaves in Egypt, she was unable to walk straight and tall, or to look slave masters in the eye. She was bound by her body and by the injustice in society that went with being a woman—a bent-over woman.

But God had a new alternative for her! *This* Sabbath she would meet the Lord of the Sabbath song. *This* Sabbath would be a day of deliverance from all that dehumanized her. The moment of equality that comes in the Sabbath became, in the person of Jesus, a lifetime of living justly and treating people with dignity, with equality.

Jesus said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." The practice of the Sabbath critiques and overcomes distinctions of power. It is a radically different ordering of heaven and earth. It is God's ideal. It is the way of Jesus.

Of all the Christian communities, Seventh-day Adventists—those who embrace the Sabbath—should be

serious about uplifting society's marginalized. We should be serious about justice. Because of the Sabbath we should be serious about equality. The gospel speaks to society. The gospel is about challenging the powers that silence bent-over men, women, and children. It is about singing God's song. It is about singing the Sabbath song.

A Global Song

I remember meeting Pastor Pardon Mwanza, past president of the Zambia Union, when he participated in a Sabbath school discussion. A class member asked him, "Pastor Mwanza, what brought you into the Adventist Church?" He responded, "I became an Adventist because of the way Adventists in Zambia sing on the Sabbath."⁵

Will you join in singing the song of God in a strange land? It begins with groaning, but it has great hope in an alternative future.

Singing the song of God may be an affront to established social powers.⁶ When the marginalized find hope, the powerful become afraid. But the singing continues. And it is a Sabbath song. It is a song by people who once were slaves, but who are now free. A song of hope envisioning an alternative future that begins today. It is a song anticipating a new earth, where injustice is removed forever by the very presence of God. A new land where food is distributed plentifully to all, and where hunger, violence, and greed are no more.

Sabbath is a happy day, because Sabbath is a day of amazingly good news: before God and before one another we are equal.

"When we risk in the name of healing for the broken, we sing God's song.

When we commit strongly against racism, sexism, and classism, we sing God's song.

When we enact mission of empowerment, we sing God's song."⁷

As Jesus taught us by His response to the bent-over woman: when we keep the Sabbath we sing God's song. ■

* Unless otherwise noted, Bible passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

¹ Walter Brueggemann, "The Rhetoric of Hurt and Hope: Ethics Odd and Crucial," in *Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).

² People of various faith traditions see the Sabbath as a call to equality and spiritual wholeness. See, for example, Michael D. Guinan, "Keep Holy the Sabbath," in *To Be Human Before God: Insights in Biblical Spirituality* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994).

³ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath* (New York: Noonday Press, 1951), p. 32.

⁴ See the powerful rebuke of the prophet Amos in chapter 8.

⁵ Pastor Mwanza is currently serving at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as the associate director of the Stewardship Department.

⁶ Brueggemann, p. 61.

⁷ Marta and Charles Teel, "Singing God's Song in a Strange Land: A Liturgy on Finding Our First Love—and Finding Ourselves."

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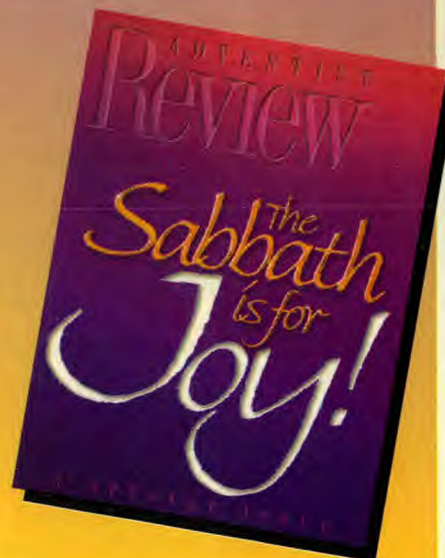
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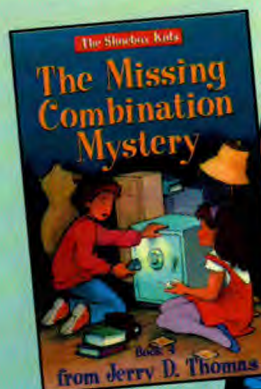


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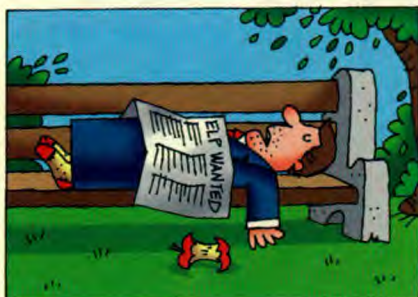


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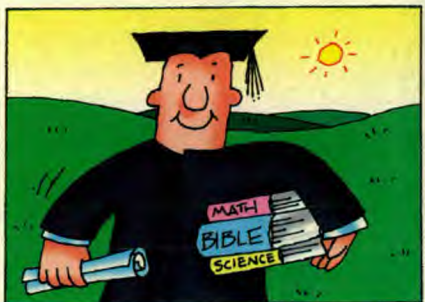
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