

Fourth Word: Reconnect (The Ten Words)

Reconnect – July 25, 2010

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Text: Exodus 20:1-2, 8-11; Matthew 11:25-30

Key Thought: Sabbath is God's way of sharing His life with us in the middle of our own.

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy. Exodus 20:1-2, 8-11, NLT

Intro: Visiting hours



Q: Where would you see signs for "Visiting Hours"? What does that mean?

****Conrad Black, hospital, funeral homes, jail, seniors homes, even just someone who is housebound with kids or whatever reason – places where life is impaired or bleak, for whatever reason – there are restrictions on a person, what they can and can't do, and their life is not the normal one they have – and the visitor brings the life they have with them, in with them, to share it for awhile, before they have to go, and the person in the facility has to go back to their current reality**

- Early Christians were known for "visiting hours" – the time they gave to the sick, the imprisoned, those on the outside of society, even when it came at a high price
- Today there are always all kinds of reasons not to visit someone – don't want to be a bother, doesn't fit the schedule, uncomfortable in the context

- But when you're able to visit someone – you can change everything about their day and their outlook, because you bring your life with you, to them – what you're doing, and then your compassion, your listening, your LIFE – it's with you and they can feed off of that for just a little while – the change, however brief, is what it's all about
- Why am I talking about visiting hours? Wait and see...

“Sabbath”



Q: Subject change: let's talk Sabbath – what do you think of when you hear the word? (discuss - + or - ?)

When you were a kid, how did Sabbath affect you, if at all? (sports, shopping, etc.?)

- Seen as out of touch – something along the lines of the Amish, or socks with sandals
- Or, as a luxury most people can't afford, talked about by ministers who consistently fail to take a day off and practice what they preach...!
- It seems in many ways to be the toughest one to keep
- But this is the longest commandment – it's also the first positive one – and it's even the start of a whole new paragraph, according to ancient interpreters of the Hebrew Bible
- It deserves to be given a second look:

Read Text: Exodus 20:1-2, 8-11

Then God gave the people all these instructions:

“I am the LORD your God, who rescued you from the land of Egypt, the place of your slavery.

Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God. On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. That is why the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.”

It's about work:

- ****to a nation of slaves, freedom was revolutionary – and the pendulum was ready to swing: what do you do if work is all you've ever known? You either work and work like you always have, or you stop working and you never want to start again**

- The nation that God is building is going to need people to work – that’s the way life is, and even though they will be working for themselves now instead of the Pharaoh and their Egyptian overlords, sometimes the connections are still hard to break and make – so, you need to still work
- HOWEVER – you’re not going to be working seven days anymore – there will be lots of stuff to do – your occupation, work around the house, other work you want to do – BUT – you will be taking a break from that every seventh day, just like your God did when He created the heavens and the earth – God didn’t take a break because He was tired – He took a break because it’s what He knew was right to do, and you and I are to follow His example
- “you are to labour [slave] six days” – you’re to work just as hard as you used to, but now it’s for yourselves (like switching from communist to free market), and it’s only for six days, not seven
- Work is noble – it’s godly – he created us to work – Adam and Eve are in paradise, but they are given work to do, a role a job a purpose – the curse meant that work lost some of its meaning, and that it was made more difficult – but still, when we do good work, when we work hard and accomplish things, we are in the image of God, imitating God
- Abraham Heschel: “The duty to work for six days is just as much a part of God’s covenant with man as the duty to abstain from work on the seventh day” – quoted in Mark Rooker’s The Ten Commandments, p.100

It’s about a break:

- Sabbath – *shabat* – means “to cease”, to take a break, to stop
- Nothing like it in the nations around them – unique to the Hebrews at this time
- **the Sabbath is such a big deal to God that he makes it the sign of the covenant that he has with Moses – it’s the contractual obligation, the evidence to all other interested parties that this deal is ON, that it’s continuing – an entire nation, where for one day a week, all you hear is the sound of children playing and people talking – no work – revolutionary in that society, especially when they were only a step or two away from hunting and gathering still, no technology to make the work “go quicker” – everything done by hand or makeshift tools, no industry, no machinery, no automation – Amish city...
- Sabbath was meant for the entire society – not just men, not just women, but servants, animals, everything – can you imagine? Maybe most of us can still remember when there was no Sunday shopping – life is so different now – the only difference about a Sunday when it comes to retail is that stores close at 5 or 6, instead of midnight (well, at least some of them), and if you’re anything like me, you get annoyed that they’re not open until 10pm so you can finish your Sunday afternoon project
- The idea of shabat redefines their entire calendar – the rhythms of their lives - every seventh day was a break for something different, every seventh year was a break for the land (no planting, letting it lie fallow) – every 50th year (seven sevens of years) was a break for the entire society – debts written off, land returned – a massive “Reset” – although it’s not clear if it was ever done, God’s good Land was meant to have Sabbath, just like God’s people were

It's about God:

- “remember” the Sabbath – in Hebrew thought, to remember something wasn't just to mentally recall it – it was more, it was action-based – it meant that something from your past, if “remembered”, would continue to affect your present and future actions – it was the act of remembering – of “doing remembrance”
- “dedicated to the Lord” – made different, treated differently, made holy, set apart for God and for His use, not just our own
- Meant to be like a “date night” with God – something you don't let anything else get in the way of – something you keep your schedule clear for
- Eugene Peterson says it's about more than a day off in his book for pastors called Working The Angles – he says it's for prayer, to get back in sync with God and His rhythms – you create a God-space with Sabbath
- Sabbath keeping can be an act of faith – that God will provide money, that things won't completely fall apart if you turn off your cell phone or unplug your internet connection – that God will continue to keep the world while you take a break (Kit-kat)
- “The fourth commandment teaches that for six days you will engage in work to provide for your needs, but on the Sabbath all work should be brought to an end as the seventh day is set apart for the Lord. The commandment teaches that the Lord should be sovereign over our time, and in ceasing to work one day a week, we show our faith and offer our praise to the One who is the true ruler of time” (Rooker p.100)
- Do we trust God to run things for a day without Him letting them fall apart? Is He just a replacement worker, like “the new guy”, looking after the office while you take a holiday, but leaving him your cell phone number just in case there's a crisis? Not likely...!
- Sabbath – for Jewish people it's Saturday – the seventh day of the week – Sunday was the first day of the week, the day Jesus rose from the dead – the early Christians still celebrated Saturday Sabbath AND they worshiped on Sunday together – over hundreds of years it shifted, to the blending of Sabbath and Sunday, because of the focus on Jesus – but Sabbath isn't about the day (Paul said that – whether you want to make one day holy or another) – it's about the act of in faith, giving one day to God for his purposes, not your own – for his good, for his advancement, not your own pockets, or finances, or accomplishments

Key Thought:

TAKE IT HOME:

Sabbath is God's way of sharing His life with us in the middle of our own.

At that time Jesus prayed this prayer: "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike.

Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way! My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light." **Matthew 11:25-30, NLT**



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Conclusion: how to "remember it"? (discussion)

- **How do we get it WRONG? (more tired than before – too spiritual – not spiritual enough – boring)**
- Not work, but not vegging either?
- In relationship – with God, with each other?
- Not busy, not pressed – intentionally laying things aside for the next day?
- Doing something you love WITH God, not without Him – nothing in it to leave Him behind over
- Not the "fun" of our society, where you're more tired after you're done than before
- God-talk, not just chit-chat (!)
- **Jesus – it ticked him off that the Sabbath had been lost – people were too concerned about the minutiae of it, and not concerned enough with the break dedicated to God – so people wouldn't do good on the Sabbath, Jesus took heat for healing on the Sabbath because it was seen as work, but people would go out of
- their way to stretch the rules so they could do what they wanted – but Jesus said **"the Sabbath was made for humanity, not humanity for the Sabbath"** – key application... but we have to use it – in His wisdom, God takes a break on day 7 (and has a Kit-Kat) for our own sake, not for Himself – He is modelling for us how we should do it, not how He needs to do it

“The *change* the Sabbath brings about in one’s routine makes it a refreshing day rather than the absence of activity therein. Indeed, one whose weekly work was essentially sedentary (a “desk job”) might be more active physically on the Sabbath than at any other time and still completely fulfill its obligations regarding the cessation of “labour”. This does not mean that any activity on the Sabbath, as long as it would not be one’s regular “work” activity, would be “holy”. But if one were physically active in pursuit of service to God and/or godly service to others, it would be entirely consistent with the Sabbath law to work hard at such sorts of activities and be reasonably worn out by them at the end of the day. To love God is not to have a lazy day one day a week; rather it is to focus on doing his will specially on one day a week – to worship, learn, study, care, and strengthen the spirit” (Stuart, Exodus p460)