



CELL GUIDE

TOPIC	The Fourth Commandment	SPEAKER	Elder Leon Oei
THEME	Cultivating our Inner Life	DATE	19 & 20 July 2025

MESSAGE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Is the Sabbath a day of rest, all about sleeping in, or fancy way to say Sunday? Elder Leon Oei digs in deeper to the meaning of the Sabbath: what it is (a call to cease), why it's important (because it's a command of God), and how we keep it (through Christ alone).

WHAT IS THE SABBATH?

"Sabbath" is a transliterated and untranslated word, like "hallelujah" and "selah". The Hebrew, "Sabbat", means "to cease, to rest, to desist". It shows up early in the Bible, even before the 10 commandments, like tithing (it is a pre-law). It is first mentioned in Hebrew in Gen 2:2 (God rested on the seventh day) and in English in Exo 16:23 (tomorrow is a day of Sabbath rest).

It is an instituted, mandatory, regular rest.

- This can take the form of weekly days of rest, but also yearly (Lev 23:7,21,36 - Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) and periodic (Lev 25 - every 7th year, and 50th or year of Jubilee).
- Jews celebrate the Sabbath from sundown on Friday until Saturday sundown, to mirror the start and end of the days mentioned in Gen 1. It involves spending time with family, especially over meals, and hearing the Torah being read at the synagogue.
- It is more important *that* we keep the Sabbath, than *when* we keep it. The Sabbath does not have to be on any specific day of the week (Rom 14:5).
- It is for anyone you are responsible for; including children, employees, and even the land.

It is an opportunity to watch God provide.

- The heart of the Sabbath is faith, that God will provide enough even when you rest from work. Exo 16:22

The Sabbath is a call to cease - from our cares, concerns, worries, and to look to God.

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT THE SABBATH?

It is important to God.

- It's one of the 10 commandments.
- It comes with a death penalty for breaking it - your soul will be cut off from your people (Exo 31:14). This is of a similar gravity to other sins in the Old Testament like murder, idolatry, incest and adultery. We need to make sure that we treat it seriously.

It's good for us to keep the Sabbath.

- It's good for our spirit, soul and body to rest (we are a triune being - 1 Thes 5:23)
- It's good to rest communally, then we are better able to share Christ with others.
- Less is more - paradoxically setting aside time for God can lead to better time management. This is a similar concept to tithing and our financial resources (Lev 23:22).

HOW TO HONOUR THE SABBATH?

Remember (Exo 20:8) and keep (Deut 5:12) the Sabbath by intentionally setting it apart. It must be part of your regular routine. It is a day for the Lord, kept empty and holy for Him, perhaps by not working or studying on that day.

Beware two pitfalls - avoid ritual and rebellion.

- Do not let it be a meaningless ritual, just going through the motions (Isa 1:13)
- Do not rebel by ignoring the Sabbath. (Isa 58:13)
- Do not rebel by quickly returning to sin (Amos 8:5)

True Sabbaths rest the whole person, body, soul and spirit. This depth of rest can only happen in Christ. "Restedness" for the soul comes from God - addressing the emptiness within.

What does Jesus say about the Sabbath? Do not be legalistic about it (Matt 12:5) but instead keep it authentic, simple, pure, and holy. The Sabbath was made for people to rest, and not a complicated law to follow (Mark 2:27). God, who does not need rest, rested on the 7th day to set an example for us who do need rest (John 5:16-17).

Some tips for how to keep the Sabbath:

- Ensure regularity for recalibration (daily, weekly, monthly or with periods like Advent, Lent, and the 40 days season)
- Remember the rest of your household - your family and employees

CONCLUSION

There is no formula to keeping the Sabbath. What we must do is to rest in Christ, as He bids us do, falling into neither meaningless ritual nor mutinous rebellion.

Go and do nothing - but a Christ-centered nothing. For only when we are empty can we be filled, like an empty wine cup, waiting to hear what God has to say.

Find your rest in Christ, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light, and He bids all who are weary and heavy laden to come to Him. (Matt 11:28-30)

QUESTIONS

1. When was the last time you felt truly rested—physically, emotionally, or spiritually? What made it so restful?

2. What does real biblical Sabbath rest look like, compared to either going through the motions or ignoring rest altogether?

3. What's one area in your life where God may be calling you to cease striving? How can you take a step toward resting in Him this week?