



2020 4Q Education: Lesson 12

Sabbath: Experiencing and Living the Character of God

by Tim Jennings (announcements last page)

SABBATH

What do you think of the title?

What does the Sabbath tell you about the character of God?

Does the law lens one has as one considers the Sabbath have any impact on how one understands God's character?

Did the Pharisees in Christ's day have the wrong day of the week as the Sabbath? Did they recognize Jesus as God? Why not if they had the Sabbath?

What are the lessons we must learn from their history?

- Having the right Sabbath doesn't mean one has the right God
- If one has the right Sabbath but the wrong understanding of law one has the wrong god
- God's laws are design laws and via the law of worship—by beholding we are changed—if one has the human imposed law construct, believes God's laws function as imposed rules and justice is God keeping records of sins, and punishing sinners, then one will become like that God and will ultimately reject the Lord of the Sabbath

So, back to the question—what does the Sabbath tell us about God's character and how does it help us grow to be more like God in our character?

It first starts with design law understanding, which is always rooted in God's character of love—the three big principles or laws are: love, truth and freedom.

So, what does the Sabbath have to say or reveal about God's love?

- The Sabbath is a gift to humankind given for our blessing—and gifts are evidence of love.
 - But what kind of a gift is it?
 - Is it a law we have to keep, a rule we have to obey, a restriction of freedom one day in seven? Can love be commanded? Then if the Sabbath reveals God's love is it some rule we are required to obey? What kind of gift would that be? Do you see that if we try and present the Sabbath through the lens of imposed law we immediately misrepresent the character of God!
 - So, how is it a gift to us? It is some aspect of reality that God built into time, into our very existence, that is intended to benefit us—how?



- A memorial of Creation—which is an evidence of God’s design laws and the design laws all evidence love—the law of love itself, which is the law of giving that life is built upon and all the others.
- A memorial to Christ’s sacrifice on the cross: Jesus after giving the most supreme evidence of God’s character of love rested in the tomb over Sabbath. Thus the Sabbath reminds us of the truth about God’s character of love, not just the law of love, but God Himself sacrifices Himself for His creatures—just the opposite of Satan.
- **It is a tool, an aide, a resource, a TIME**, for us to exercise our power of choice to participate with God in trust, based on all the evidence the Sabbath represents, for the healing of our characters.

What does the Sabbath have to do with truth or what truth does the Sabbath reveal?

- It is a memorial to creation thus reminds us of the truth God is the Creator and His laws are design laws
- Given at the end of creation week its existence is evidence of God’s methods of rulership—truth was presented in love while leaving His intelligent beings free to think. If God were the kind of being Satan alleges the Sabbath wouldn’t exist—its existence is proof Satan lied.
- A memorial of God’s deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt—which reminds us of the truth that God is the one who delivers us from slavery to sin.
- A memorial of Christ’s sacrifice to provide the remedy to sin and give us eternal life
- An evidence of the freedom we have in God’s kingdom operating under God’s design laws

What does the Sabbath have to do with liberty or freedom?

- The Sabbath was created at the end of creation week of this planet and Satan’s war against God was already under way in heaven. And what did God do on that first Sabbath? He stopped using power! All week long God, as Creator, had been using immense power to create a new planet, life of all kinds, then Adam and Eve. But on the Sabbath God rested—not ceased the expenditure of any energy that sustains the life and operations of the entire universe, but God rested from creating and **made the Sabbath**. Why? In the face of Satan’s allegations that God abuses His power, that God runs His universe on imposed rules and forces people into line with threats and punishment, God created Earth and then said, “Universe, you have heard the allegations, you have seen the evidence given, now take 24 hours aside and think for yourself, no pressure, come to your own conclusion. I rest my case!” What does it say about God that instead of using power to force every knee to bend to Him, He instead created a day for freedom to think?
- When we experience restoration to holiness as God designs, we are set free from sin, free from fear, free from condemnation and guilt and shame. And the Sabbath is a gift, a sign, an evidence and a weekly promise and opportunity from God that when we trust Him He will set us free from all of the damage of sin and restore us to eternal life.

Do you see why Satan hates the weekly Sabbath? And thus he attacks it in various ways:

- He alleges there is no God, therefore there is no Sabbath



- He makes the Sabbath the biggest party day of the week so even if people do believe in God they forget the Sabbath and all the truth it reveals, and therefore don't accept this gift from God nor use it for their healing as God designed
- He teaches that the Sabbath was changed to a different day, thus again the purpose of the Sabbath, what it reveals about God is lost and the lie about God's law infects Christianity.
- He gets people to accept the imposed law lie and thus even if they believe the truth about which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath, they still teach it through the false law lens as an arbitrary test of obedience from an arbitrary and punishing god. Thus rather than being a gift that we experience in our sanctification, the Sabbath is perverted and is used to harden hearts against God, just like the Pharisees in Christ's day.
- Through the imposed law lie the penal/legal theologians argue over which day of the week is the Bible Sabbath and lose site of the fact it is NOT about the day of the week but about the **Lord** of the Sabbath. Thus, Satan wins by having both sides of the "day" argument worshipping an imperial dictator who will punish you in fire for not keeping the "right day."
- Through the imposed law lie the Sabbath is taught in ways that perverts God's character and rather than teaching love, truth, and liberty it now teaches that:
 - God is no longer love, but a schizophrenic god who is "not only loving but just" and will use his power to torture and kill those who don't obey the right day
 - God is the source of death rather than life as God must kill the Sabbath breakers
 - We don't really have freedom as God uses power to force and coerce by inflicting death on those who won't obey
 - God's law is arbitrary just a test of obedience and thus God is arbitrary

So, if one has the right day of the week but teaches the Sabbath through the imposed law lie, then one will pervert everything about the Sabbath and the Sabbath becomes a tool for Satan to harden hearts and corrupt character.

What is the point? **That the Sabbath is only a blessing and only teaches the truth about God when we first recover the truth about God's design law and understand His character of love.** Then the Sabbath is a blessing to us. Otherwise, it becomes a day of enslavement and rule-keeping just like the Jews in Christ's day.

Read the story in Sabbath's lesson starting in first paragraph, "Jodie was the only Seventh-day Adventist..."

Thoughts? Did you like this story? Did it have the ring of truth to it, or did some part of you go, "Wait a minute, something isn't quite right here?"

Did it feel like they took puzzle pieces and forced them together in ways that don't quite fit? In other words, the pieces by themselves are fine, but the connections they are making don't quite fit. Does it seem like they are trying to make a point that isn't quite true?



Consider this, if Jodie had been off every Wednesday night and had been asked by her coworker, whose husband was out of town for six weeks, to come over on Wednesday evening and they had dinner together, studied the Bible, shared their Christian experience, and grew closer as friends, what might have happened on the fifth week when Gayle was out shopping on *Wednesday* afternoon and looked down at her watch and realized it was almost time for Jodie to come over? Might she have said to herself, “Oh, good, Jodie will be coming over soon!”

Why did Gayle have such a positive experience with those four Friday evenings? Was it something magical about those hours, minutes, seconds, or was it the love and friendship and truth she experienced with Jodie as they studied God’s Word together?

Let’s be clear, I am not undermining the weekly Sabbath, its sacredness, its purpose as a gift from God. What I have a problem with is making connection that are not inherent. We see this all through the lesson and almost every time people present the Sabbath and such arguments actually undermine our case to people who realize we are forcing connections that are not inherent. Our goal is to present the Sabbath in its true light and promote the principles and facts that set it apart from other days.

SUNDAY

Sunday’s lesson is entitled “Time to Be Astonished” and it certainly is true that the Sabbath, as the authors say, “was a God-created time for them to focus on their Creator and the created.” I agree this is true—but are humans restricted from focusing on God and creation the other six days of the week? Are we only astonished by God as our Creator or by creation on the Sabbath day?

Are the truths we experience about God as our Creator or some aspect of creation limited to the Sabbath?

Another example—God spent the first Sabbath with them and spends time with us on Sabbath and this is a reason that make the Sabbath special. It is, if course true that God did spend time with them that first Sabbath and does spend time with us on Sabbath via His Holy Spirit. But does that mean God did not spend time with Adam and Eve in the cool of every day, and that He does not spend time with us on any other day? So is it a good argument for Sabbath holiness to say it is holy because God will spend time with us on this day?

Do you see how truths can create a false narrative, or a false idea? And these types of arguments in favor of the Sabbath—the ones that are *not* unique to the Sabbath end up undermining the value, significance, importance of the Sabbath and will reduce its sense of holiness in people’s minds because they will come to think that we view it as magical or superstitious attributing to it value it wasn’t intended to possess.

How we might view someone who believes a certain objects are holy, crucifixes, pictures, images, or a set of bricks or stones and only certain people can approach them and then only if they take off their shoes or bow or cover their head?



So if you were to talk with someone who doesn't appreciate the gift of the Sabbath, what might you tell them that would differentiate the Sabbath from any other day of the week? What makes it unique, special, a blessing?

The Sabbath was created as a gift for humanity, to be a blessing for human beings. Human beings were not created as a gift for the Sabbath. Understand this clearly, the Son of Man doesn't serve the Sabbath, it serves him." Mark 2:27,28, from *The Remedy*

What does it mean the Sabbath was made for man? How is the Sabbath a gift for man?

The Commandment says to remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Genesis and Exodus tell us the Sabbath is holy – which day of the week has more “worldly” activity, partying, etc.? Could it be the Sabbath—Friday night and Saturday? Does all the wickedness done by humans make the Sabbath less holy?

Can anything we do make the Sabbath less holy? Can we do anything to make the Sabbath more holy? Then what does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? Are we keeping the Sabbath holy, or are we keeping ourselves holy?

And, can you keep yourself holy only one day a week, or, to be holy one must be holy every day of the week?

Read first paragraph **Friday's** lesson:

No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. **But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ.** DA 283

Can those who have a legal religion, who claim the blood of Jesus as a legal payment to pay for their sins, the robe of Christ's righteousness to cover over their corrupt character so the Father can't see it, and yet they haven't been renewed in heart, but they keep the Sabbath, have many rules and are very fastidious about it—are they actually keeping the Sabbath holy?

In other words, is the Sabbath about the Sabbath or about the Lord of the Sabbath and His relationship with His people to restore in them His righteousness?

So, then what is the purpose of the Sabbath and what does it mean to “keep it holy”?

What does it mean to be holy and we talked about this a few weeks ago?



Here are a couple of historic quotes:

It is not enough for us to know and respect the words of the Scriptures. We must enter into the **understanding of them**, studying them earnestly. . . . Christians will reveal the degree to which they do this by the **healthiness of their spiritual character**. We must know the **practical application of the Word to our own individual character-building**. We are to be **holy temples, in which God can live and walk and work**. {LHU 105.5}

Holiness is not rapture: it is an entire surrender of the will to God; it is living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God; **it is doing the will of our heavenly Father**; **it is trusting God in trial**, in darkness as well as in the light; it is walking by faith and not by sight; **it is relying on God with unquestioning confidence, and resting in His love**. {AA 51.2}

True holiness is wholeness in the service of God. This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. **He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength**. [Why does Christ demand this? Because it is His right? Because He has paid the price? Because He is Creator? Because He is Sovereign? No, He demands this because He is the source of life, health, happiness, and only in a surrendered relationship with Him can we have life and health and happiness. It is for our good, not His need. Anything else and we cut ourselves off from life.] Self is not to be cherished. **He who lives to himself is not a Christian**. {COL 48.4}

Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation... {COL 49.1}

This is the religion of Christ. Anything short of it is a deception. **No mere theory of truth or profession of discipleship will save any soul**. [no mere legal accounting or worshipping on the right day of the week to be sure one is legally compliant will work.] We do not belong to Christ unless we are His wholly. It is by halfheartedness in the Christian life that men become feeble in purpose and changeable in desire. The effort to serve both self and Christ makes one a stony-ground hearer, and he will not endure when the test comes upon him. {COL 50.1}

Here is another historic quote:

In presenting the binding claims of the law, many have failed to portray the infinite love of Christ. [Why would this be? Because they present the law through imposed law lens as rules the rule-giver must enforce with punishments and not as design law. When the law is presented as design law one cannot help but present the infinite love of Christ, it is inherent and we understand how the law has binding claims—like the law of respiration.]



Those who have so great truths, so weighty reforms to present to the people, have not had a realization of the value of the **atonement Sacrifice as an expression of God's great love to man. Love for Jesus, and Jesus' love for sinners**, have been dropped out of the religious experience of those who have been commissioned to preach the gospel, and self has been exalted instead of the Redeemer of mankind. The **law** is to be presented to its transgressors, **not as something apart from God, but rather as an exponent of His mind and character. As the sunlight cannot be separated from the sun, so God's law cannot be rightly presented to man apart from the divine Author.** [Which is closer to the sun/sunlight analogy, Imposed law – God making up rules, or Design law, God creating reality to operate in harmony with Him and He is the constant source of life energy that sustains it all? So when we present imposed law constructs we separate the law from God's character of love.] The messenger should be able to say, "**In the law is God's will**; come, see for yourselves that the law is what Paul declared it to be--'holy, and just, and good.' "It reproves sin, it condemns the sinner, but it shows him his need of Christ, with whom is plenteous mercy and goodness and truth. **Though the law cannot remit the penalty for sin, but charges the sinner with all his debt**, Christ has promised abundant pardon to all who repent, and believe in His mercy. [Why can the law not remit the penalty of sin? Why can the law of health not remit the penalty of drinking poison? What can remit the penalty of drinking poison? What does "charge the sinner with all his debt" mean? It means diagnosis him accurately with all his defectiveness and deviations from God's design—a terminal condition. And the abundant pardon, what does it mean? It is to those who repent, they receive transformation and renewal to be restored to God's design, thus the cancer of sin remits, the character remits back to God's original intent.] The love of God is extended in abundance to the repenting, believing soul. **The brand of sin upon the soul can be effaced only through the blood of the atoning Sacrifice.** [What does this mean? What is a brand? It is a scar, a mark, a searing—sin is fear and selfishness and our hearts, minds, characters, souls have been seared with fear and selfishness and choices to act selfishly. The blood is a metaphor for what? What does the Bible say is in the blood? The life, and in this case the blood represents whose life? Jesus' and thus it is the life of Jesus that effaces the brand of sin upon the soul. Sin marred or branded our characters to look like Satan, selfish and fearful. Jesus, as a human being, was tempted in every way just like we are but without sin, and in His humanity He destroyed the infection of fear and selfishness and perfectly restored God's character into the human species, thus only through Christ's life, of which we are privileged to partake by trust, do we experience rebirth, with new heart motives of love and trust—the brand of sin is effaced or erased or replaced with the character of Christ!] **No less an offering was required than the sacrifice of Him who was equal with the Father.** [And to whom is this offering given? To whom did Jesus give His life? "For God so loved the world that" what? He gave His only begotten Son to Himself? No, He gave His only begotten Son to us and to the onlooking universe! Jesus was given to humanity as our Savior, to be the stairway, the connecting link, the way back, the cure, the remedy to fix and heal the sin condition give us eternal life! And this evidence, the truth about God and how God saves us is what angels long to look into. Why was an offer of one equal with the Father necessary? Why couldn't an angel's life suffice? Because the lies of Satan was not about angels, the lies were about God Himself. Our trust



is not to be placed in angels, our trust is to be placed in God. Our Creator is not an angel, our Creator is God Himself. Thus, only One equal with God could be our Savior, reveal the truth to dispel the lies and eradicate the infection of sin from humanity.] **The work of Christ--His life, humiliation, death, and intercession for lost man--magnifies the law, and makes it honorable.** [How? By showing that the law of love is the law of life, once it was restored perfectly into His humanity what was the result? Life—He rose again as the inevitable result of His perfect life. This is how Jesus could tell His disciples repeatedly that He would die and rise again, yet EGW could write that He could not see through the portals of the tomb. Jesus didn't tell His disciples that He would rise again because He was given a vision of the future or saw the future in prophetic dream. No, He was able to tell them this because He understood God's law and what He was sent here to accomplish and that was to destroy death and bring life and immortality to light!] {1SM 371.1}

What binds us to God? Love, and the law rightly understood is an expression of God's love, and is the protocol upon which all life is built

MONDAY

The title is "Time for Rediscovery" again, this is true, we can rediscover God, truths that God has revealed during the Sabbath hours—but are we restricted to discovering truth during the Sabbath? Will people who attend prayer meeting on Wednesday nights be unable to rediscover truth? If they do rediscover truth on Wednesday should they then conclude, "I rediscovered truth on Wednesday, Wednesday is holy!"

So—what makes the Sabbath holy? Is it an arbitrary decree or inherent?

How did Sabbath come into existence? It was created as a day of rest! After God revealed truth in love, creating a world operating upon the law of love, ecosystems in which everything is like a wheel within a wheel all interdependent giving for the benefit of another, God rested! God didn't use power to force His way.

Thus the Sabbath was created as a day invested with God's character—truth, presented in love, leaving others free. It was built, created, made, formed, designed *as a day to rest, reflect, examine truth*, grow closer to God. It is holy inherently. Thus, the Sabbath was created as a Time-Flag, a Signal, a Sign, a Pennant, which God in His infinite wisdom built into the weekly cycle like a recurring flare or a shooting star that we can experience every seven days.

Every seven days since this world was created the Sabbath has occurred and every living being passes through these hours. They are given opportunity after opportunity to see the Time-Flag to consider its importance, to appreciate the Creator God who is love and never coerces and participate in the freedoms our God of love provides.



Sunday as a day of rest and worship, however, – was legislated, declared to be holy by an act of arbitrary power of human beings – thus Sunday represents how created beings rule, by imposed law. It becomes a **mark** or evidence of imperialism and coercion and is exactly how the Dark Ages Church operated.

So, understand, the final battle is not about two days of worship, but two systems of governing—design law—truth, love freedom, versus imposed law—lies, selfishness, coercion.

The final conflict is between our Creator, who is a Ruler who sacrificed Himself to give and build up His creatures, and Satan, who uses power to rise up and rule over all others exploiting for his own advancement.

And notice the contrast of the two kingdoms of which the two days are signs:

- In God's kingdom the powerful use their power to uplift the weak, the first are those who go last, the greatest are those who are the servants of the least.
- In Satan's kingdom the powerful form governments in which the elite dominate the weak, the first ensure they stay first and keep the last, last; and the greatest are those who have the most power to enrich themselves by exploiting and taking from others.

Understanding all this, the Sabbath itself exists as a weekly evidence of God's kingdom of love but **the Sabbath is not the kingdom of love**. These days, Sabbath and Sunday are merely markers, signs, pennants—they are like flags. The US flag signifies the US government, but it is not the US government and neither is a day of the week the government of God.

A person can wear, wave, fly a US flag and be an enemy of the US government and so too can a person worship on the weekly Sabbath and crucify the Lord of the Sabbath.

Sabbath is a gift to humankind a day of liberty, a sign of freedom and an evidence of God's kingdom of love. Sunday is a day of legislation, a day which represents coercion, which takes away liberty and an evidence of the power systems of this world—Satan's kingdom.

We must mature beyond the day to the love and worship the Lord of the day and live in harmony with His methods such that we are holy beings as He is holy and only then we will keep the Sabbath holy all week long. Because all week long we will Remember the Sabbath and what it signifies and practice the methods of God in our character all week long!

TUESDAY

The title: Time for Learning Priorities

Again, learning priorities is not restricted to the Sabbath, however the Sabbath is an evidence that stands unique and rightly understood there are lessons that the Sabbath teaches, not just cognitively, but experientially, that are not fully learned until the Sabbath truth and practice is embraced.



Given what we have said today, what are some of those truths that help one prioritize?

Trusting God with one's heart, values, riches, success, the outcome of one's life, resting from work, such as working to get ahead, and trusting God to provide the way forward. In other words, God and His kingdom is a priority over our own success, over our earthly life.

Would this include prioritizing advancing God's kingdom over human government restrictions? Even COVID restrictions?

WEDNESDAY

Read the first paragraph, "Jesus respected and upheld the law of God..." Have you ever struggled with where to draw the line on law keeping? On Sabbath activities?

Where is the balance between adding rules and regulations and God's law?

For instance:

- animal sacrifices—original law of God or added?
- circumcision—original law of God or added?
- sanctuary services and their regulations—original law of God or added?
- 10 Commandments—original law of God or added?

Consider this quote from *Patriarchs and Prophets*:

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, **there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision.** And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have **kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses.** PP 364.2

Paul writing to the Galatians said that the law was added, what law, ceremonial or moral law of 10 Commandments or both?

One of the founders of the SDA church was asked this question and she wrote:

I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ?
I answer: **Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.** 1SM 233.1



Why were the 10 Commandments added? Because of sin, because of our sickness, and for what purpose? As a diagnostic instrument and protective hedge, just like parents add all kinds of rules for their children until the children grow up.

Even the lesson points out in the third paragraph, that the Sabbath “was ‘made’ (created) as a unique opportunity for people to learn of the character of God who made the Sabbath, and to learn experientially by valuing His creation.” If the Sabbath was made or created for man, then it wasn’t always in existence, which is true. Then the 10 Commandments, which contain the Sabbath Commandment didn’t exist in eternity past either. This is obvious as sin didn’t exist in eternity past and the Commandments describe how sin pass down from one generation to another.

But what did exist in eternity past is God’s design laws upon which life was created to operate, the core being truth, love and freedom.

So what is the balance between God’s design laws and the added rules and regulations?

Was the rule or regulation that the showbread was only to be eaten by the priests in the Holy Place in the presence of the High Priest on Sabbath part of God’s original law in heaven, or in Eden, or was it added sometime later? It was added.

Why wasn’t David punished for breaking this law? Because the law he broke was part of the theater, the learning lesson and he broke it in a way that was in harmony with the truths the theater was designed to teach.

Symbolically, the showbread represents Jesus, the Bread of Life, of which the priesthood of believers, as sinners on earth, are to partake. It is in partaking of Jesus that sinners are healed (saved) from sin and death and receive righteousness and life. And the priests are to take the bread of life to others and bring them into the church. So David represents people finding Jesus and partaking of Him and this brings life.

THURSDAY

A Time for Community—again, while the Sabbath can be a great time for community, do we have community only on the Sabbath? Can we have community on other days of the week?

Does our concept of community and how we interact and socialize change based upon the way we understand the Sabbath—either through design or imposed law? How?



ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Healing the Mind in a Broken World: videos, mp3s, podcasts, and slides are all now available on our website!

SHARING campaign: December - *The Remedy New Testament*

BE SURE TO USE OUR WEBSITE STORE TO PLACE YOUR ORDER—DON'T SEND AN EMAIL.

Australia—if you are in Australia be sure to check out the Come and Reason Australia Facebook page where there is unique content and local events.