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Remember the Sabbath and Keep It Holy

EXODUS 20:8-11



GOAL

Children hear the story of the Ten Commandments and discover ways to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy.

- A** Art
- AM** Active/Movement
- C** Conversation
- D** Drama
- F** Food
- G** Game
- M** Music
- NS** Nature/Science
- QC** Quiet/Contemplative
- S** Service
- T** Technology
- X** Extra Prep

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for the gift of Sabbath time. May I help the children in my care learn what it means to set time apart to spend with you, and may I practice that myself. Amen.

THIS SESSION

This session focuses on the fourth commandment, instructing God's people to observe and honor the Sabbath. Humans attempt to make places and spaces holy. God made time holy. God set the Sabbath apart to be a holy encounter with God. How we discern ways to keep Sabbath holy is a challenge. By definition, *holy* means to consecrate or dedicate to a sacred purpose, to set apart, to make special. It calls for activities that honor God and God's redemptive and creative work in the world.

THE BIBLE STORY

The Ten Commandments were given as the way for God's people to live as God's people and to live in community with one another. The fourth commandment is the culmination of the first three commandments about how we love and honor God by spending time with God. It is a commandment that hearkens back to the creation story in Genesis, to pause from work and busyness, resting in God's presence. One way of showing love for God is by keeping Sabbath time and setting it apart for its special purpose.

CONNECTIONS WITH CHILDREN

For many children, if they have heard of the word, *Sabbath* is Sunday and involves worship and other church-related events. At one time, Sabbath, or Sunday in American Christian culture, was a time for religious activities. Stores were closed. Sporting events and practices were not scheduled. It was a time set apart from the rest of the week, whether it was time spent in church, with family or friends, or by oneself. Today's children, and probably their parents/caregivers, do not know of that experience. Help children understand the concepts of *Sabbath* and *holy*, a day or time set apart to spend with God.

SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- "The Jewish Sabbath" (p. 10): Obtain *Fridays Are Special* by Chris Barash (PJ Publishing, 2020) and *Saturdays Are Special* by Chris Barash (PJ Publishing, 2019) or use the YouTube videos "Animated Read Aloud: Fridays Are Special" (bit.ly/FMFridaysAreSpecial, 2:13) and "Animated Read Aloud: Saturdays Are Special" (bit.ly/FMSaturdaysAreSpecial, 2:18). There is a reading guide for *Saturdays Are Special* at bit.ly/FMSaturdayReadingGuide if you would like to see more information and activities about Sabbath rest.
- "Sunday, a Day of Worship" (p. 11): Invite a musician with accompaniment to lead in singing hymns chosen by the children or use an internet-connected device.



GETTING STARTED

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- Four sheets of newsprint
 - Markers
 - Tape

WHAT ARE THE RULES? C

Tape four sheets of newsprint around the room and write the following headings, one on each sheet: Game Rules, Family Rules, School Rules, Any Other Rules. Greet the children as they arrive. Invite them to talk together about rules. Have them write any rules they know that fit the categories on the displayed sheets of newsprint. Encourage children to assist one another with writing as necessary.

Once all the children have arrived, ask them to share some of the rules they thought of and which category they fit in. Wonder if they can think of any other rules to add to the newsprint sheets. Keep the newsprint sheets displayed for “Talking about Rules” (below).

WELCOMING SABBATH QC

Gather the children in a circle and tell them that you will say the words of a verse from the Bible, Psalm 46:10, aloud: “Be still, and know that I am God.” Explain that the person to your right will repeat the verse emphasizing the first word. Then the next person will repeat the verse emphasizing the second word, and so on. You may need to say the verse with each person until it is familiar. If there are more than eight people in your group, have the next person emphasize the first word again and continue on in the same manner.

After all have spoken this verse, wonder what it means to be still.



INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

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- Newsprint sheets from “What Are the Rules?” (above)

TALKING ABOUT RULES C

Draw the children’s attention to the newsprint sheets with the rules they recorded when they arrived. Wonder together what a rule is. Have the group come up with a definition.

Invite the children to take turns choosing a rule from any of the lists and share it with the group. Have them explain what this rule is about and why they think this is a rule. Invite the group to discuss whether or not they think this rule is an important one to have and why. Allow each child to have two or three turns, depending on the size of your group.

Continue to engage the children in conversation about rules using the following questions:

- ✦ Are some rules more important than others? Why or why not?
- ✦ What are some examples of very important rules versus rules that aren’t so important?
- ✦ Who makes the rules?
- ✦ Why do you think we have rules in general?

Have the children return to one or two of the rules they shared and say how that rule helps people. Comment, if necessary, that rules are an

important part of living in community and getting along with others. If the Ten Commandments have not been brought up as rules, ask the children if a commandment is like a rule. Comment that God gave Moses commandments to help God's people have a way to love and honor God and live together in community. Explain that we often call these commandments rules, ways to live that will help us. Tell the children that, today, they will hear about one particular commandment about how to spend time.



FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

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Display a sheet of newsprint and title it *Work*. Ask the children to name different kinds of work they do and write down their responses on the newsprint. Encourage them to think about school work, chores, and other activities that require work. Then ask them what kind of work they would like to do as they grow up and write down their responses on the newsprint. This may be when they are a teenager, a young adult, or an adult.

Display another sheet of newsprint and title it *Rest*. Ask the children to name different ways that they and others rest. Write down their responses on the newsprint. Tell the children that they are going to hear about what God said about work and rest.

Provide Bibles, pairing children who would like assistance with reading with confident readers. Wonder where the children might find the stories of God's people when they were slaves in Egypt, in the Old or New Testament. If they need some help, have them find the Table of Contents in the front of their Bibles. Pose the question again, asking the children where they might find the story of the exodus from Egypt, emphasizing *exodus*. Point out, if necessary, that the book of Exodus is in the Old Testament and is the second book of the Bible.

Have the children find chapter 20 in Exodus. Invite a volunteer to read aloud verse 1. Then tell the children that the next verses through verse 7 are the first three commandments that we call the Ten Commandments. Explain that these three commandments are about our relationship with God. Summarize them for the children:

- 1st Commandment: "You shall have no other gods before me" means that you should love God before anything else.
- 2nd Commandment: "You shall not make for yourself an idol" means that you shouldn't make anything more important than God.
- 3rd Commandment: "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God" means that you should always use God's name with love and respect.

Invite a volunteer to read aloud verses 8–11. Explain that this is the fourth commandment and the last of the commandments about our relationship with God. Comment that the rest of the commandments are about how people should live together in community. If the children seem interested, you can summarize them for the children, but the focus is on the fourth commandment. Engage the children in conversation about the fourth commandment using the following questions:

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- Newsprint, marker
 - Bibles
 - Dictionary or internet-connected device, such as a smartphone or tablet

- ✦ What do you think God is telling the people to do in this commandment?
- ✦ What does *holy* mean? (*Provide a dictionary, smartphone, or tablet and have a volunteer look up the definition and read it aloud.*)
- ✦ What other words can you think of that mean holy?
- ✦ How do you think you might make something holy?
- ✦ Why would God want the people to remember the Sabbath?

Tell the children that the word *Sabbath* is from the Hebrew word *Shabbat*, which means to cease, to end, or to rest. Invite the children to look at the list of rest activities on the sheet of newsprint. Ask the following questions:

- ✦ Which of the listed activities would be considered Sabbath time with God? (*Circle those activities.*)
- ✦ Why might some activities be Sabbath time while other rest activities might not be?
- ✦ What other ways are there to experience rest now that you have read about the fourth commandment?

Encourage the children to think about what it means to spend time with God. Add their suggestions to the list. Keep the “Rest” list for use in “Sabbath Time Spinner” (session 2, p. 22).



FINDING THE PRACTICE ALL AROUND US

Choose one or both options.

- *Fridays Are Special* by Chris Barash (PJ Publishing, 2020) and *Saturdays Are Special* by Chris Barash (PJ Publishing, 2019) or internet-connected device

THE JEWISH SABBATH



Tell the children that many of the stories in the Bible are part of our Jewish friends’ and neighbors’ faith and tradition. Remind the children that Sabbath as a time of rest is from the very first story about creation, and that Jesus and his first followers were all Jewish and knew these stories too. Comment that we celebrate the Sabbath sometimes in similar ways and sometimes in different ways than our Jewish friends and neighbors. Tell the children that they are going to hear two stories about how a Jewish family celebrates the Sabbath, which for them begins on Friday evening and goes through the day on Saturday.

Read aloud *Fridays Are Special* by Chris Barash or show the YouTube video “Animated Read Aloud: Fridays Are Special” (bit.ly/FMFridaysAreSpecial, 2:13). Explain that the word *tzedakah* that they heard about Grandpa’s coins is a word for an offering and *Sh’ma* is the *Shema*, the most important Jewish prayer that is said every morning and night: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (Deuteronomy 6:4). Wonder together:

- ✦ What did you like about what this family did on their Sabbath evening?
- ✦ What is similar about this family’s celebration of Sabbath on Friday evening and what your family does on Sunday? What is different?

Then read aloud *Saturdays Are Special* by Chris Barash or show the YouTube video “Animated Read Aloud: Saturdays Are Special” (bit.ly/FMSaturdaysAreSpecial, 2:18). Explain that the words *Ima* and *Abba* that

they heard are Hebrew words for “mom” and “dad,” *Havdalah* is both the blessing said and the candle lit to mark the end of the Sabbath, and *shavua tov* means “good week.” Wonder together:

- What did you like that this family did on their Sabbath?
- What is similar about what this family does on their Sabbath and what your family does on Sunday, or a time of Sabbath rest? What is different?
- What might be something that your family could do to make Sabbath rest time different from other days of the week?
- How might having Sabbath rest time get you ready for your week?

BLUE LAWS IN AMERICA



Tell the children that there was a time in American history when laws were made that restricted many activities on Sunday because that day was considered the Lord’s Day, a day of rest, by many. Distribute copies of Resource Page 1. Have the children work in pairs or triads, making sure that children who need assistance with reading are in a pair or a group with a confident reader. Invite volunteers in the pairs or triads to take turns reading the story and then the questions. Have two pairs or triads combine, or work as one group, for conversation about the questions.

Provide coloring supplies and invite the children to add a story and a picture about what they would like to do to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Children may work on their own or in their pairs or triads again. Assist with writing as necessary.

Invite children to share insights from their conversations about the Blue Laws and their stories and pictures about the Sabbath with the large group.



Muslims do not observe a Sabbath like Christians and Jewish people. They are called to prayer five times every day. The Friday prayers, or *Youm Al Jumu’ah*, are like our day of communal worship.

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- Copies of Resource Page 1
 - Markers, crayons, colored pencils



PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or both options.

SUNDAY, A DAY OF WORSHIP



Ask the children if they know why Christians celebrate the Sabbath day on Sunday rather than Friday evening and Saturday like their Jewish friends. Explain that, in the year 321 CE, Emperor Constantine declared that Sunday, the first day of the week, would be the official day of worship and rest. Comment that Constantine didn’t change the Sabbath but confirmed what followers of Jesus already had been doing for many years.

Have volunteers look up the following Bible verses and take turns reading them aloud to the group: Acts 20:7a; Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1. Tell the children that Sunday is the day that followers of Jesus started worshiping and praising God because Jesus rose on the first day of the week, a Sunday. Comment that one way of thinking about Sundays is that they are like little Easters each and every week!

Tell the children that music and singing is often an important part of Sabbath time, whether it is time alone with God or time shared in the community of faith. Distribute hymnals and have the children find the section with *gathering* hymns. Most hymnals are organized thematically, possibly by church year or order of worship. Often there are subject designations in the upper corner of the pages. In the *Glory to God* hymnal, the gathering songs are found from #385 to #414. Invite the children to take turns choosing a hymn to sing.

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- Bibles
 - Hymnals
 - Musician and accompaniment or internet-connected device



Another option is to have the children choose Easter hymns as a way of remembering the Sabbath as a “little Easter.” You could also allow the children to choose any songs from the hymnal to sing. The idea is to sing songs that would be sung during communal worship during Sabbath time and consider their connection to Sabbath.

- Scenarios cut apart from Resource Page 2

If you have a musician with accompaniment, introduce them and invite them to lead the children in singing the first verse of the hymns they choose. Otherwise, you can use an internet-connected device. Go to www.hymnary.org and enter the name of the tune in the search bar. Click on an audio link to hear the tune while you sing.

Read aloud the words to the first verse after singing it so everyone hears them again. Ask the children what those words tell them about Sabbath time.

ADVICE ABOUT SABBATH KEEPING

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Wonder together why it might be difficult to remember the Sabbath and keep it holy. Tell the children that they are going to give advice to some friends about keeping or honoring the Sabbath. Form three groups, or work together as one group. Give each group one of the scenarios cut apart from Resource Page 2. Invite the groups to have a volunteer read the scenario aloud to their group and then discuss the situation together and possible advice they can give these friends. Tell each group to create a skit to share with the whole group that explains their situation and the advice they would give and why they would give that advice. Since it would be easy to just have a person talk in the skit and give advice, encourage the children to think about each scene in which their skit takes place, such as the football games, the vacation, and the birthday party.

After the groups have performed their skits, wonder how the children might use some of the advice they gave or heard in their own lives.



FOLLOWING JESUS

- Copies of Resource Page 3
- Internet-connected device



Keep copies of Resource Page 3 for use in sessions 2, 3, and 4.

THIS IS THE DAY

M T

Gather the children in a circle and hand out copies of Resource Page 3. Tell the children that, today, they will sing the words with an accompanying tune to praise God for the Sabbath using the “Sing” box on Resource Page 3. Play the YouTube video “Oh For a Thousand Tongues to Sing [Azmon]” (bit.ly/FMAzmonTune, 0:42) and have the children listen to the tune as it is played through twice on a trumpet. Then play the video again and invite the children to sing the song twice. Rejoice!

Blue Laws in America

Did you know that there was a time in our country's history that laws were made to prohibit many activities on Sunday? The laws were called Blue Laws, also known as Sunday Laws. (One theory is they were called Blue Laws because they were originally written on blue paper.)

Some of the people who founded this country believed it was important for everyone to attend worship and focus on holy things on Sunday. Laws were made that restricted or banned certain activities and the sale of certain items on Sundays. The laws encouraged the observance of a day of rest.

Some of the activities that were not allowed were sports activities and going to the movie theater. For a long time, restaurants could not be open until after 1:00 p.m. so that everyone could go to church. In some states, clothing stores were not allowed to open, and grocery stores could open only after noon.

Blue Laws are still enforced in some parts of the United States and Canada as well as some European countries, such as Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and Norway. Some states still restrict Sunday hours for department stores, grocery stores, pharmacies, and gas stations. In some southern states, there are still restrictions about what can be sold. Bathing suits and jewelry, as well as alcoholic beverages, are not allowed to be sold on Sunday. Even today, many states do not permit selling cars on Sunday.

- ➔ What do you think about these laws?
- ➔ Why do you think they passed these laws?
- ➔ Which ones would be easy for you to obey?
- ➔ Which ones would you have the most trouble with?



scenario 1

A coach for the little league football team came to Jeremy's school to talk to the students about playing football. Jeremy thinks playing football would be fun, and many of his friends are going to sign up to play too. Then Jeremy learns that the games are all on Sunday morning, so he would have to miss church and Sunday school if he plays.

- What advice would you give Jeremy? What options does he have? Should he sign up to play on the team?



Mykalea's parents are planning a long weekend vacation at the beach. But if they go, they'll miss church on Sunday because they will still be on vacation. Mykalea's dad says that it's OK to miss church this once because they can read a Bible story and take a walk on the beach and enjoy God's creation on Sunday morning. But Mykalea's parents want to know what she thinks.

- What advice would you give to Mykalea? What options does she have? Should the family go on vacation?

scenario 2

scenario 3

Daniela's best friend, Jin, has invited her to his birthday party. The party is going to be at the local laser tag place. Daniela loves to play laser tag, and she and Jin have been best friends since preschool. But the party is on Sunday morning at 11:00, the same time as worship at Daniela's church. Daniela sings in the children's choir, and they are singing at worship that morning.

- What advice would you give to Daniela? What options does she have? Should she go to the birthday party?



Sing!

This is the day the Lord has made;
the hours are all God's own.
Let heaven rejoice; let earth be glad,
and praise surround the throne.

Speak!

Group 1: This is the day
Group 2: the Lord has made;
All: the hours are all God's own.
Group 1: Let heaven rejoice;
Group 2: let earth be glad,
All: And praise surround the throne.

Clap! Stomp!

This is the day (*clap, stomp*)
the Lord has made (*clap, stomp*);
the hours (*clap, clap*)
are all (*stomp, stomp*)
God's own (*clap, clap, stomp, stomp*).
Let heaven rejoice (*clap, stomp*);
let earth be glad (*clap, stomp*),
and (*clap*) praise (*clap*)
sur- (*clap*) round (*clap*)
the (*clap*) throne (*clap, clap, stomp, stomp*).

Move! or Dance!

This is the day the Lord has made;
the hours are all God's own.
Let heaven rejoice; let earth be glad,
and praise surround the throne.

