

Sabbath rest? Study notes

Matthew 11: 28 – 12:14

1. What words do you associate with the word Sabbath? Categorise them into positive and negative. Which are biblical, which are cultural?
2. Reflect on the identification of Sunday as the Christian equivalent to the Jewish Sabbath. In what ways has this been positive? (almost inevitable). In what ways has it become unhelpful?
3. If we conclude Sunday is not the Christian Sabbath – how do we keep the third commandment?
4. An old hymn goes like this 'seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee.' If we begin to think not of one day in seven for God and six for us, but of seven days for God of which he gifts one back to us for rest – what are the implications?
5. Think a little about burdens.
 - See what Jesus says in Matthew 11:28-30.
 - Note these words read at a Jewish Shabbat meal 'carry no burdens on this Sabbath day, take time to let all the stress and worry and responsibility slip from our shoulders. Welcome the day, receive the gift, remember the Sabbath and keep it. It is made for you, your freedom, your joy, your healing.'
 - how do we react to the suggestion that if our burdens overwhelm us, they have not come from Jesus, they have been imposed by self or others? (Jesus says his burdens are light!) Can we see exceptions to this rule when Jesus will shoulder our externally imposed burdens?
6. What does the imagery of the yoke say to us? How do we exchange a yoke of slavery for Jesus' yoke?
7. On Sunday we considered the burden of Sabbath observance, the burden of over commitment and the burden of busyness. Reflect on these. What other categories of burden can we identify?
8. How can we encourage one another in this area? See e.g. Galatians 6:2

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