

# The Forgotten COMMANDMENT *By Rich Kopp*



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**“R**emember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord our God” (Exodus 20:8-10).

Ask a hundred Christians if the Ten Commandments are just as valid today as they were when Moses delivered them from the mountain of

smoke and fire, and I’ll guarantee you that all one hundred will say “yes!” Then ask those same one hundred Christians what it means to keep the Sabbath holy. Most will say it’s about going to church on Sunday, and most will be clueless when you ask about the “keeping it holy” part.

Is the fourth commandment still valid today? I find it amazing that none question the fact that New Testament grace does not allow us to ignore the other commandments like lying, stealing, or murder; yet we seem to believe the fourth commandment is no longer valid. Did God intend that some of the commandments would disappear after Christ came, while the others would remain in force? Absolutely not. In fact, Jesus Himself said, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18).

What does “keep it holy” mean? God intended the Sabbath day to be different, set apart. People were to rest, like God rested after creating our universe and everything in it. They were given six days to work and earn a living, but on the Sabbath they were to refrain from earning a living or engaging in activities that robbed them from resting their bodies, minds, and spirits, and celebrating God’s providence. “We’re

to depend on God and trust God to provide,” wrote Doug Pagitt in “The Consumer Trap”.<sup>1</sup> “While other nations worked seven days a week, Israel was to work six and trust God for the seventh.”

We know, for example, that the Israelites gathered manna every day of the week but the Sabbath.

When they tried to store manna, it rotted – with

one exception. When they gathered more than a day’s worth on the day before the Sabbath, it was still good to eat the next day. When we work on the Sabbath we declare our lack of faith in God to provide our needs. Eric Liddell refused to run in a heat in the 1912 Olympics because it was held on Sunday. The movie *Chariots of Fire* chronicles Eric’s faith under fire.

I like these words from Wayne Muller in his book,

*Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest.*

“Sabbath is a time to stop, to refrain from being seduced by our desires. To stop working, stop making money, stop spending money. Do you really need more than this?”<sup>2</sup>

Does your Sabbath have to be on Saturday? How about Sunday or maybe Monday? The intent of the Sabbath Commandment is to set aside a day for rest. Which day is less important. Your job may give you different days off. Set one aside to rest and celebrate. The book, *Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest*, by Lynn Babb, will help those who want to do more research and investigate ways to “keep the Sabbath day holy.”<sup>3</sup>

The letter to the Hebrews states, “There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest” Hebrews 4:9-11.

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<sup>1</sup>Pagitt, Doug. “The Consumer Trap,” *Leadership Journal*, Fall 2002.

<sup>2</sup>Muller, Wayne. *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*, New York: Bantam Books, 1999.

<sup>3</sup>Babb, Lynn. *Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest*, Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2005.

