

### Observing the Sabbath

This week, I observed the Jewish Sabbath for the first time. Although I am not Jewish, the Sabbath was very rewarding for me because it set time aside for me to spend with God. I'm Christian, and I know that some Christians celebrate the Sabbath, but it was never something that I had done. I'm glad I gave it a try, because I took away a lot of good ideas that could really improve my relationship with God. I also enjoyed it because it was very relaxing. I felt very peaceful and content throughout the Sabbath, which was a nice break from the way that I usually feel. Most of the time I feel busy and rushed so having some time where I'm actually not supposed to be working was very enjoyable for me.

In the Jewish religion, the Sabbath is every Friday from sundown until Saturday evening when three stars appear in the sky. The Sabbath is a day of rest. It stems from the story of Creation where God rested on the seventh day. "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11). I believe in this, but usually I would celebrate on Sunday, and my definition of making the day holy is usually as relaxed as just going to church because I have so much work to get done before Monday. During the Sabbath, working is not permitted.

There are a lot of things that are prohibited on the Sabbath. I read the list of things, and was most shocked by no electronics (because they imply fire), and no cooking. I found it difficult to live without my electronics, even for this short amount of time. It surprised me how much I rely on them every day. In a way, however, it was good to have a break from those too. The rule about no cooking, although I followed it for the Sabbath, didn't make a big difference in the way I felt during the Sabbath. I don't mind cooking. In fact, I find it enjoyable and I can prepare a meal fairly quickly. Because I was not allowed to cook, I had to find a recipe for a slow cooker so I would have food prepared for the Sabbath. It gave me more free time, but it meant I really had to rush around before the Sabbath began.

To prepare for the Sabbath, I was on fast forward all Friday afternoon. I managed to clean my entire apartment, cook food for the Sabbath, turn off all my electronics, print off the Jewish prayers, and open all the windows in two short hours, just in time for sunset. I made some soup in a slow cooker, so I wouldn't have to do anything for food during the Sabbath. I also had to do all my research before sunset, so I printed off a lot of instructions for the Sabbath so that I could have them handy for this experience.

I read that to start the Sabbath, you are supposed to light two candles, so that's what I did a little while before the sun set. I like the candles, and what they represent. I know that usually Jewish families would attend an evening service, but I was not able to, so I spent time studying my Bible and talking with God. I ate dinner, complete with Kiddush beforehand, just to see what it was like. Afterwards, I recited the grace after meals, which was an entirely new idea for me. I usually say a prayer before dinner, but I had never thought about reciting grace after meals. The concept makes a lot of sense to me, however. I went to bed feeling very peaceful, knowing everything was taken care of.

On the day of the Sabbath, I spent at least five full hours reading my Bible which was really a change for me, as I don't typically have the time to read the Bible for an extended period of time. It really is important though, and I wish I did this more often. I also went for a walk, had another meal like Friday night's, took a nap, and spent time talking with my friends until three stars appeared in the sky.

Saturday felt like an especially long day, which was very agreeable. Usually time flies on a Saturday, but this Saturday it definitely didn't. It was great because it didn't really drag either. It was just nice to have time. It truly was a day of rest. It required more work than I would usually do on a Friday, but the end result was worth it. It gave me a sense of peace in my usually hectic life, which was a nice relief.

I think that this experience would have been more fun if I had some family around. Observing the Sabbath is probably very beneficial for family relationships because it provides time to pray together and talk with each other. It's also nice to have family traditions, especially if it can happen every week. In the future, I might take some of the ideas from the Sabbath and apply it to my family when I have kids.

Some of the ideas that I have taken away from my experience with the Sabbath are the idea of having an extended prayer before meals, the idea of praying after the meal as well, and the idea of working really hard in order to have a day of rest and prayer. I usually say a prayer before dinner, but usually it's short and to the point. I think it would be beneficial to me to have a weekly dinner where in addition to the regular prayer, I could also read out loud from the Bible. Also, it would be nice to give thanks for an enjoyable meal after the dinner. I hadn't really considered that before, but it would be good to conclude the meal with God. I also will take away the idea of working really hard to have a day of rest and prepare the next day. However, I will do the preparations on Saturday, and rest on Sunday because that is the way

that I was raised to do things. Before this experience the most I would do for God's holy day was go to church, but now I will be sure to take things more seriously on that day. It will be great to have more time to spend with God and also to feel relaxed and peaceful.