**Fourth Commandment Discussion Guide**

**Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15**

**\* Sermon Overview**

At Fegenbush, Pastor Dithson will encourage us to rest in the finished work of Christ. His outline will be the following: remember God, rest from work, and rest in Christ.

At East, Pastor Blake’s main idea will be: We enter and abide in God’s rest by knowing and following Jesus. The structure of his sermon will be: (1) What is the Sabbath? (2) Do I need to keep the Sabbath? (3) How does the Sabbath relate to me?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to cover all that is found within these questions in your community group. These questions will give you a grasp of what the text says and means so that we can think through how to apply the text to our lives.

**1. What is the context and meaning of the 4th Commandment?**

*For Israel, the Sabbath is an observance of a day of the week; for us, the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ so that He calls us to rest in Him. In Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, God through the pen of Moses gives the fourth commandment. He commands the Israelite to remember/observe the Sabbath day and to keep it holy by everyone abstaining from work on the seventh day just as God rested on the seventh day and in remembrance of God redeeming you from slavery. In the old covenant, God expected His people to obey His Word, lest He bring the curses to bear upon their disobedience (see Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28; Numbers 15:32-36; Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-22; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Ezekiel 20:12-24). In the new covenant (which is inaugurated in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ), the Sabbath command is fulfilled in Christ so that followers of Jesus Christ are called to rest in Jesus Christ, not to remember/observe a specific day.*

*Note the following observations about the fourth commandment: (1) The fourth commandment deals with a specific day, a way in which the people of God are to honor God with their time; (2) The fourth commandment applies to everyone and everything. In Exodus 20:9-10 and Deuteronomy 5:13-14 the prohibition against work on the seventh day applies to the following persons/categories: masters/slaves, men/women, native/foreigner, and animals. (3) Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 give different motivations/reasons for Sabbath keeping. In Exodus 20:11, the motivation for Sabbath keeping is God’s example of resting on the seventh day in the creation account (see Genesis 2:1-3). In Deuteronomy 5:15, the reason for Sabbath keeping is God’s act of redeeming Israel from slavery.*

*As you look at this commandment, ask yourself the following questions: Why does the Lord give the fourth commandment? How will the fourth commandment display a trust/rest in the Lord and demonstrate the uniqueness/holiness of the Lord’s people from the nations around them? What are believers to do with the fourth commandment? How are the first four commandments connected or tied together?*

*For the passages related to the Sabbath commandment, see Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 16:22-26; 20:8-11; 31:12-18; 35:3; Leviticus 23:3; Numbers 15:32-36; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-22; Isaiah 56:2, 6; 58:13-14; Jeremiah 17:19-27; Ezekiel 20:12-24; Matthew 11:25-30; 12:1-14; Mark 2:27-28; Luke 4:16-21; 13:10-17; Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Colossians 2:16-17, 20-23; Hebrews 3:7-4:13.*

*Philip Ryken writes, “This is the longest commandment, and it comes in three parts (in Exodus 20:8-11). Verse 8 tells [Israel] what to do, verses 9-10 specify how [Israel was] to do it, and verse 11 explains why.”*

*Albert Mohler writes, “Thus, the most important issue of Sabbath rest in the New Testament is that we rest in Christ and we rest from our labors—from all efforts to be saved by our works.”*

*J. I. Packer writes, “Concerning the first four commandments, Packer notes that “the underlying principle is clear—namely, that we must honor God not only by our loyalty (first commandment) and thought-life (second commandment) and words (third commandment), but also by our use of time, in a rhythm of toil and rest—six days for work crowned by one day for worship.”*

*ESV Study Bible: “Every aspect of Israel’s life is to reflect that the people belong to the Lord and are sustained by his hand.”*

**2. What does the 4th Commandment teach us about the character of God?**

*In this command, we are reminded about three of God’s attributes/actions:*

*1- God is Provider/Sustainer—In obedience to this command, Israel is displaying a trust in God to be their provider/sustainer. It is a recognition on behalf of Israel that they are dependent creatures upon God. It is a display of trust in God that their provision and protection comes from His hand.*

*2- God is Creator—In Exodus 20:11, God instructs them to follow the pattern He set in creation of six days of work and one day of rest. By using His example from creation, God is reminding Israel that He is the Creator, and as the Creator, He has the authority to instruct His creatures how best to live/structure their lives.*

*3- God is Redeemer—In Deuteronomy 5:15, God motivates His people to observe the Sabbath day and to keep it holy because He delivered them from slavery with an outstretched arm and a mighty hand. In observing the Sabbath, Israel is reminded that it is not by their work that they are saved, but it is through His arm and mighty hand that they are saved.*

*Think over these questions: What other actions/attributes of God does this fourth commandment remind us about? Why do you think there is a difference of motivation for Sabbath keeping in Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:15?*

**3. How does the 4th Commandment reveal our sinfulness and need for Christ?**

The fourth commandment reveals our pride, displayed in disobedient, idolatrous, and covetous hearts. When Israel disobeyed the fourth commandment, they did so from a position of thinking they knew better than God, from a position of wanting more than God provided, from a position of craving control of their own lives. Due to their sinful, disobedient hearts, Israel experienced the curses of the covenant. Since Israel was unable to fulfill the old covenant, “God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). Christ fulfilled the Sabbath command, and He encourages us to find rest in Him (see Matthew 11:25-30; Hebrews 3:7-4:13). No longer do we observe the Sabbath day, but rather we remember and rest in all that Christ has done for us (see Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Colossians 2:16-17). For followers of Christ, the Sabbath has been done away with and Christ calls us to love, honor, and worship Him with all of our lives.

For passages related to the Sabbath in the New Testament, see Matthew 11:25-30; 12:1-14; Mark 2:27-28; Luke 13:10-17; Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Colossians 2:16-23; Hebrews 3:7-4:13.

As you think about this commandment, what sins does this commandment reveal (think about gods of work, money, power, control)? What does it look like for believers to rest in Christ?

**4. How might the 4th Commandment apply to our lives today?**

When it comes to applying the fourth commandment, there can be much confusion. According to some, the Sabbath commandment is now to be applied on the Lord’s Day (Sunday rather than Saturday). However, Christ has fulfilled the Sabbath commandment so that it is no longer in effect for followers of Jesus Christ (see Romans 14:5-6; Galatians 4:10-11; Colossians 2:16-17). Thus, the way that we apply the fourth commandment is directly tied to the words of Matthew 11:25-30 and Hebrews 3:7-4:13 where we are encouraged to come to Christ, to enter/find rest in Christ (note: this rest has an already-not yet character to it so that it is speaking of the rest we can have now in Christ, yet it is also speaking of the ultimate rest that we will have in Christ in the future). Practically, this encouragement to rest in Christ applies to the outer man and to the inner man:

1- Rest in Christ Related to the Outer Man—Biblical wisdom instructs us that it is wise and good for us to rest physically. In learning to rest physically, we are reminded that we are creatures dependent upon God’s goodness, provision, and strength. Now, this rest physically may look different from person to person—for example, some people find rest in working out, playing golf, working in the yard, etc.

2- Rest in Christ Related to the Inner Man—For the believer, this aspect of rest is most important (see 1 Timothy 4:7-8). This aspect of rest in Christ will involve such things as remembering/reading God’s Word, rejoicing/resting in Christ’s work, relying upon the Spirit’s power to walk in holiness. What are some practices/disciplines that help us to rest in Christ related to our inner man?

As you think about practical application, what does it look like for us to rest in Christ? What are concrete/practical examples of resting in Christ (see John 15)?

Note the following observations: (1) God’s pattern of resting on the seventh day is instructive for us in that it is wise for us to rest, remembering that we are finite creatures who are dependent on God. (2) The Lord’s Day is not the Christian Sabbath. It is right and good for us to worship together on the Lord’s Day, but it is nowhere commanded in the New Testament that we are to abstain from all work on Sunday. However, it is commanded that we (believers) not neglect the meeting together with the body of Christ (see Hebrews 10:23-25). Let us always be careful to distinguish between biblical commands and biblical wisdom.

For pattern of worshiping on the Lord’s Day (on Sunday), see John 20:19; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10.

Is the Lord’s Day a Christian Sabbath? In response to this question, Albert Mohler writes, “The problem is that there is no text that makes this transfer, and there is, I would argue, no clear New Testament warrant whatsoever (see Romans 14:5-6; Colossians 2:16-17, 20-23).”

Thomas Schreiner writes, “It is wise naturally for believers to rest, and hence one principle that could be derived from the Sabbath is that believers should regularly rest. But the New Testament does not specify when that rest should take place, nor does it set forth a period of time when that rest should occur. We must remember that the early Christians were required to work on Sundays. They worshiped the Lord on the Lord’s Day, the day of Jesus’ resurrection, but the early Christians did not believe the Lord’s Day fulfilled or replaced the Sabbath. The Sabbath pointed toward eschatological rest in Christ, which believers enjoy in part now and will enjoy fully on the Last Day.”

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions in your community group. Also, please feel freedom to adapt the question or to create a question that will best help your community group “be doers of the Word” (James 1:22), for you know the stage and situation of your group members.

1. What is the meaning of this commandment? How are the first four commandments connected or tied together? Why is it that God commands His people to remember/observe the Sabbath day and to keep it holy? How does obedience to this commandment shape God’s people and bear witness to God’s name?

2. What does this commandment teach us about God—His actions and attributes? How have you seen these actions/attributes of God at work in your life this week?

3. When you think of the fourth commandment, what comes to mind? How has the sermon reshaped how you and I ought to think about the fourth commandment?

4. How does the fourth commandment reveal Israel’s sinfulness (and our own sinful hearts)?

5. How does Christ fulfill this commandment? In light of the person and work of Christ, does the fourth commandment apply to believers today? If so, how so? If not, why not?

6. How do we apply the concept of resting in Christ? How does the encouragement to rest in Christ apply to the outer man (specifically with regards to our body, our physical rest)? How does the encouragement to rest in Christ apply to the inner man (specifically with regards to our heart, our cultivating a heart that rests in Christ)?

7. If you are struggling to facilitate conversation in your group or if you are looking to start conversation in your group, here are some questions to prompt conversation:

A. Question of Impression—What stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Why did it stand out to you?

B. Question of Application—How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

C. Question of Clarity—If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

D. Question of Reflection—How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week?

E. Question of Mission—How will you pass on what you have heard, learned, and applied this week to another believer this week so that they may know and follow Jesus? How will what you heard, learned, and applied this week equip you to share Jesus with an unbeliever this week where you live, work, and play?

8. In his book, *Asking the Right Questions,* Matthew Harmon gives the following questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like)

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing)

c. Look for God’s concerns (what thing/events/people he is concerned about)

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image

b. Look for the fallen condition

c. Look for how God’s people should live

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for

b. Look for sin to confess and repent

c. Look for promises and truths to believe

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others

B. Applying the Bible

a. What does God want me to think/understand?

b. What does God want me to believe?

c. What does God want me to desire?

d. What does God want me to do?

**\* Sermon Take Away**

Rest in Christ.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—Revelation 12; Isaiah 42

2. Tuesday—Revelation 13; Isaiah 43

3. Wednesday—Revelation 14; Isaiah 44

4. Thursday—Revelation 15; Isaiah 45

5. Friday—Revelation 16; Isaiah 46

6. Saturday—Revelation 17; Isaiah 47

7. Sunday—Revelation 18; Isaiah 48

* **Ten Commandments Series**

1 July 8th—5th Commandment

2 July 15th—6th Commandment

3 July 22nd—7th Commandment

4. July 29th—8th Commandment

5. August 5th—9th Commandment

6. August 12th—10th Commandment

* **Vision Series/Journey of Discipleship Series**

1. August 19th—TBD

2. August 26th—TBD

3. September 2nd—TBD

* **Gospel of Mark Series**

1. September 9th—Mark 1

2. September 16th—Mark 2

3. September 23rd—Mark 3

4. September 30th—Mark 4

5. October 7th—Mark 5

6. October 14th—Mark 6

7. October 21st—Mark 7

8. October 28th—Mark 8

9. November 4th—Mark 9

10. November 11th—Mark 10

11. November 18th—Mark 11

12. November 25th—Mark 12

13. December 2nd—Mark 13

14. December 9th—Mark 14

15. December 16th—Mark 15

16. December 30th—Mark 16

* **Stand Alone Sermons**

1. December 23rd—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

2. December 24th—Christmas Message (Passage TBD)

1. For the discussion guide, I used the following resources: Douglas Stuart, *Exodus*; R. Alan Cole, *Exodus*; John Currid, *Exodus*;J. A. Thompson, *Deuteronomy*; John Currid, *Deuteronomy*; Peter Craigie, *The Book of Deuteronomy*; Eugene Merrill, *Deuteronomy*; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesus in Exodus*; Al Mohler, *Words from the Fire*; Alistair Begg, *Pathway to Freedom*; Edmund Clowney, *How Jesus Transforms the Ten Commandments*; J. I. Packer, *Keeping the Ten Commandments*; Philip Ryken, *Written in Stone*; Thomas Watson, *The Ten Commandments*; Mark Rooker, *The Ten Commandments*; *ESV Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)