"The key to successful leadership is influence, not authority."
--Kenneth Blanchard

Contemporary Comments

"Lord of the Sabbath" | February 18, 2012 | Order Info


The list of Sabbath rules found in the Dead Sea Scrolls provide us with quite an insight into the mindset of the people who wrote them. They seemed to be obsessed with keeping a long list of prohibitions, rather than seeking a relationship with the One who created the day. For instance, consider these:

A man may not carry anything outside his house, nor should he carry anything in. If he is in a temporary shelter, he should not take anything out of it or bring anything in.

A man may walk behind an animal to graze it outside his city up to two thousand cubits. One may not raise his hand to hit it with a fist. If it is uncooperative, he should leave it inside.

If he was on a journey and went down to bathe, he may drink where he stands, but he may not draw water into any vessel.

No one should carry medicine on his person, either going out or coming in, on the Sabbath. No caregiver should carry a baby on the Sabbath, either going out or coming in.

No one should help an animal give birth on the Sabbath; and if it falls into a well or a pit, he may not lift it out on the Sabbath.

Any living human who falls into a body of water or a cistern shall not be helped out with ladder, rope, or other instrument.¹

Today the pendulum seems to have swung the other way with Sabbath keeping. In his contribution to the book, Festival of the Sabbath, Dr. John Brunt discusses the pluralism and diversity among Sabbath "rules." He writes, "It would be tempting to argue for a new emphasis on rules for governing Sabbath observance. As tempting as it might be, however, our argument here is that we cannot accomplish the task of preserving the sanctity of Sabbath by simply getting out the old rulebook and reestablishing these rules."

He then offers this suggestion: "There must be commitment to Jesus. Sabbath keeping cannot merely be a matter of rules, because such an approach would detract from the real center of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ. How we observe the Sabbath must flow from our relationship with Jesus. Sabbath is an invitation to spend special time with Him and receive the healing that He took the initiative to offer on Sabbath.²"

This week’s lesson demonstrates how the Sabbath has always been about relationships—with God and with each other. Genesis points to God as the One who created Sabbath as a gift to us. Exodus and Deuteronomy add the dimension of human equality to Sabbath keeping. In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrates how to truly keep the Sabbath as He heals. And even after death, Jesus rests in the grave on Sabbath, after redeeming the world. From Creation to the Cross, the Sabbath has never been only about the rules. It has been primarily about the relationships.

~ nc

1. Theologia
2. SDA Net
How to Order Sharing Scripture

1. Order this week’s Sharing Scripture study guide for $1.49, click here.
2. Order the entire electronic 1st Quarter Sharing Scripture for $8.75, click here.