

Guidelines for Sabbath Observance

Purpose and Perspective

The main objective of this document on Sabbath observance is to provide counsel or guidelines to church members desiring a richer, more meaningful experience in Sabbath keeping. It is hoped that this will provide an impetus toward a real reform in Sabbath keeping on a worldwide basis.

Conscious of the fact that the worldwide worshipping community encounters numerous problems in Sabbath observance arising from within a given cultural and ideological context, an attempt has been made to take these difficulties into consideration. It is not the intent of this document to address every question pertaining to Sabbath keeping, but rather to present Biblical principles and Spirit of Prophecy guidelines that will assist the church members as they endeavor to follow the leading of the Lord.

It is hoped that the counsel given in the document will be helpful. Ultimately, however, decisions made under critical circumstances must be motivated by one's personal faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sabbath - A Safeguard of Our Relationship With God

The Sabbath encompasses our entire relationship with God. It is an indication of God's action on our behalf in the past, present, and future. The Sabbath protects man's friendship with God and provides the time essential for the development of that relationship. The Sabbath clarifies the relationship between God and the human family, for it points to God as Creator at a time when human beings would like to usurp God's position in the universe.

In this age of materialism, the Sabbath points men and women to the spiritual and to the personal. The consequences for forgetting the Sabbath day to keep it holy are serious. It will lead to the distortion and eventual destruction of a person's relationship with God.

When the Sabbath is kept, it is a witness to the rest that comes from trusting God alone as our sustainer, as the basis of our salvation, and as the ground of our hope in the future. As such, the Sabbath is a delight because we have entered God's rest and have accepted the invitation to fellowship with Him.

When God asks us to remember the Sabbath day He does so because He wants us to remember Him.

Principles and Theology of Sabbath Observance

1) *Nature and Purpose of the Sabbath.* The origin of the Sabbath lies in Creation when God rested from His work on the seventh day (Gen 1-3). The Sabbath has significance as a perpetual sign of the everlasting covenant between God and His people in order that they might know who it is that created them (Ex 31-17) and sanctifies them (Ex 31:13; Ezek 20:12), and that they might recognize Him as the Lord their God (Ezek 20:20).

2) *Uniqueness of the Sabbath.* The Sabbath is a special occasion for worshipping God as Creator and Redeemer and as the Lord of Life with whom the human family will be reunited at the second advent. The Sabbath commandment forms the center of the moral law as the seal of God's authority. Since it is a symbol of God's love relationship with His earthly children, human beings are obliged to respect this gift in the sense that they will do everything in their power to promote and engage in activities that will help establish and enhance a lasting relationship with God. Thus His people will engage only in those activities that are directed toward God and their fellowmen and not in those that lean toward self-gratification or self-interest.

3) *Universality of the Sabbath.* The universality of the Sabbath is rooted in Creation. Thus its privileges and obligations are binding in all nations, sectors, or classes. (See Ex 20:11; 23:12; Dent 5:13; Isa 56:1-8.) Sabbath observance pertains to all members of the household including children and extends even "to the stranger that is within thy gates" (Ex 20:10).

4) *Time Frame of the Sabbath.* Biblical Data: The Sabbath starts at the end of the sixth day of the week and lasts one day, from evening to evening (Gen 1; Mark 1:32). This time coincides with the time of sunset. Wherever a clear delineation of the time of sunset is difficult to ascertain, the Sabbath keeper will begin the Sabbath at the end of the day as marked by the diminishing light.

5) *Principles Guiding Sabbath Observance.* Although the Bible does not deal directly with many of the specific questions we may have regarding Sabbath observance in our day, it does provide us with general principles that are applicable today. (See Ex 16:29; 20:8-11; 34:21; Isa 58:13; Neh 13:15-22.)

"The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds."--The Desire of Ages, p 207

This concept, however, is not supportive of total inactivity. Both the Old and New Testaments invite us to care for the needs and alleviate the sufferings of others, for the Sabbath is a good day for all, particularly the lowly and the oppressed (Ex 23:12; Matt 12:10-13; Mark 2:27; Luke 13:11-17; John 9:1-21).

Yet even good works on the Sabbath must not obscure the chief Biblical characteristic of Sabbath observance, namely, rest (Gen 2:1-3). This includes both physical (Ex 23:12) and spiritual rest in God (Matt 11:28). The latter leads the Sabbath observer to seek the presence of, and communion with God in worship (Isa 48:13), both in quiet meditation (Matt 12:1-8) and in public worship (Jer 23:32, 2 Kings 4:23; 11:4-12; 1 Chron 23:30 ff; Isa 56:1-8). Its object is to recognize God as Creator and Redeemer (Gen 2:1-3; Dent 5:12-15), and it is to be shared by the individual family and the larger community (Isa 56:1-8).

6) *Sabbath and the Authority of God's Word.* Ellen White points out that the Sabbath commandment is unique, for it contains the seal of God's law. It alone "brings to view both the name and title of the Lawgiver. It declares Him to be the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and thus shows His claim to reverence and worship above all others. Aside from this precept, there is nothing in the Decalogue to show by whose authority the law is given."--The Great Controversy, p 452.

The Sabbath as a sign of the Creator points to His ownership and authority. Meaningful Sabbath observance, therefore, indicates the acceptance of God as Creator and Owner and acknowledges His authority over all creation, including oneself. Sabbath observance is based on the authority of God's Word. There is no other logical reason for it.

Human beings have the freedom to enter into a relationship with the Creator of the universe as with a personal friend.

Sabbath keepers may have to face resistance at times because of their commitment to God to keep the Sabbath holy. To those who do not recognize God as their Creator, it seems arbitrary or inexplicable for someone to cease from all work on the Sabbath day for merely religious reasons. Meaningful Sabbath observance testifies to the fact that we have chosen to obey God's commandment. We thus recognize that our life is now lived in obedience to God's Word. The Sabbath will be a special test in the end time. The believer will have to make a choice either to give allegiance to God's Word or to human authority (Rev 14:7, 12).

Home and Family Life as Related to the Sabbath

1) *Introduction.* Home life is the cornerstone of proper Sabbath observance. Only when individuals keep the Sabbath conscientiously in the home and assume their assigned responsibilities as members of the family will the Church as a whole reveal to the world the joys and privileges of God's holy day.

2) *Different Kinds of Homes.* In the twentieth century there are various kinds of homes, for example, the home in which there is a husband, wife, and children; the home in which there is husband and wife and no children; the home in which there is a single parent and children (where because of death or divorce one parent must function in both maternal and paternal roles); the home in which a person has never married or where death or divorce has left one single, and no children are involved; or the home in which one parent only is a member of the Church. In addressing the needs and problems of these categories, it should be understood that some of the principles and suggestions enunciated will apply to all groups and some will be more specialized.

3) *Two Sacred Institutions--The Home and the Sabbath.* "In the beginning" God placed a man and a woman in the Garden of Eden as their home. Also, "in the beginning" God gave to human beings the Sabbath. These two institutions, the home and the Sabbath, belong together. Both are gifts from God. Therefore both are sacred, the latter strengthening and enriching in its unique manner the bond of the former.

Close fellowship is an important element of the home. Close fellowship with other human beings also is an important element of the Sabbath. It binds families closer to God and binds the individual members closer to one another. Viewed from this perspective, the importance of the Sabbath to the home cannot be overestimated.

4) *Responsibilities of Adults as Teachers.* In choosing Abraham as the father of the chosen people, God said, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him" (Gen 18:19). It seems clear, then, that an enormous responsibility has been given to adults in the home for the spiritual-welfare of their children. By both precept and example, they must provide the kind of structure and atmosphere that will make the Sabbath a delight and such a vital part of Christian living that, long after leaving the home, the children will continue the customs they were taught in childhood.

In harmony with the injunction, "Thou shalt teach them (God's commandments) diligently unto thy children" (cf Dent 6:4-9), the adult members of the family should teach their children to love God and keep His commandments. They should teach them to be loyal to God and to follow His directives.

From earliest infancy, children should be taught to participate in family worship so that worship in the house of God will become an extension of a family custom. Also from infancy, children should be taught the importance of church attendance, that true Sabbath observance involves going to God's house for worship and Bible study. Adults in the family should set the example by attending services on Sabbath, providing a pattern that will be seen as important when their children make decisions on what is of value in life. Through discussions, as the children grow older and more mature, and through Bible study, the children should be taught the meaning of the Sabbath, its relationship to Christian living, and the enduring quality of the Sabbath.

5) *Preparation for the Sabbath.* If the Sabbath is to be observed properly, the entire week should be programmed in such a way that every member will be ready to welcome God's holy day when it arrives. This means that the adult family members will plan so that all household tasks--the buying and preparing of food, the readying of clothes, and all the other necessities of everyday life--will be completed before sundown Friday. The day of rest should become the pivot around which the wheel of the entire week turns. When Friday night approaches and sundown is near, adults and children will be able to greet the Sabbath with tranquility of mind, with all preparation finished, and with the home in readiness to spend the next 24 hours with God and with one another. Children can help achieve this by carrying Sabbath

preparation responsibilities commensurate with their maturity. The way the family approaches the beginning of the Sabbath at sundown on Friday night and the way Friday night is spent will set the stage for receiving the blessings that the Lord has in store for the entire day which follows.

6) *Proper Sabbath Dress.* Where there are children in the home, on Sabbath morning as the family dresses for church, adults may, by precept and example, teach children that one way to honor God is to appear in His house in clean, representative clothing appropriate to the culture in which they live.

7) *Importance of Bible Study Hour.* Where children do not have the advantage of attending Adventist schools, the Sabbath School becomes the most important means of religious instruction outside the home. The value of this Bible study hour cannot be overestimated. Therefore, parents should attend Sabbath morning services and do everything possible to take their children with them.

8) *Family Activities on the Sabbath.* In most cultures the Sabbath noon meal, when the family gathers around the dinner table in the home, is a high point of the week. The spirit of sacred joy and fellowship, begun upon arising and continued through the worship services at church, is intensified. Free from the distractions of a secular atmosphere, the family can converse on themes of mutual interest and maintain the spiritual mood of the day.

When the sacred nature of the Sabbath is understood, and a loving relationship exists between parents and children, all will seek to prevent intrusions into the holy hours by secular music, radio, and video and television programs, and by newspapers, books, and magazines.

Sabbath afternoons, as far as possible, will be spent in family activities--exploring nature; making missionary visits to shut-ins, the sick, or others in need of encouragement; and attending meetings in the church. As the children grow older, activities will enlarge to encompass other members of their age group in the church, with the question always in mind, "Does this activity cause me to understand better the true nature and sacredness of the Sabbath?" Thus proper Sabbath observance in the home will have a lasting influence for time and eternity.

Sabbath Observance and Recreational Activities

1) *Introduction.* Sabbath observance includes both worship and fellowship. The invitation to enjoy both is open and generous. Sabbath worship directed toward God usually takes place in a community of believers. The same community provides fellowship. Both worship and fellowship offer unlimited potential to praise God and to enrich the lives of Christians. When either Sabbath worship or fellowship is distorted or abused, both praise to God and personal enrichment are threatened. As God's gift of Himself to us, the Sabbath brings real joy in the Lord. It is an opportunity for believers to recognize and reach their God-given potential. Thus, to the believer the Sabbath is a delight.

2) *Alien Factors to Sabbath Observance.* The Sabbath can be intruded upon easily by elements alien to its spirit. In the experience of worship and fellowship the believer must ever be alert to alien factors which are detrimental to one's realization of Sabbath sacredness. The sense of Sabbath holiness is threatened particularly by the wrong kinds of fellowship and activities. By contrast, the sacredness of the Sabbath is upheld when the Creator remains the center of that holy day.

3) *Culturally Conditioned Phenomena in Sabbath Observance.* It is important to understand that Christians render obedience to God and thus observe the Sabbath at the place in history and culture where they live. It is possible that both history and culture may falsely condition us and distort our values. By appealing to culture we may be guilty of giving ourselves license or excuse to indulge in sports and recreational activities that are incompatible with Sabbath holiness. For example, intensive physical exertion and various forms of tourism are out of harmony with true Sabbath observance.

Any attempt to regulate Sabbath observance beyond Biblical principles by developing lists of Sabbath prohibitions will be counterproductive to a sound spiritual experience. The Christian will test his Sabbath experience by principle. He knows that it is the main purpose of the Sabbath to strengthen the bond of union between himself and God. Thus one's activities guided by Biblical principles and contributing toward such a strengthening are acceptable.

Inasmuch as no one can evaluate rightly the personal motives of others, a Christian must be very careful not to criticize his brethren living in cultural contexts other than his own who engage in Sabbath recreational activities of which they approve.

While traveling, Adventist tourists should make every effort to observe the Sabbath with their fellow believers in any given area. Respecting the sacredness of the seventh day, it is recommended that Adventists avoid using the day for a holiday set aside for sightseeing and secular activity.

Churches and Church Institutions

In establishing specific guidelines and policies for the corporate Church and Church institutions, the Church is setting an example of Sabbath keeping for the membership at large. It is the responsibility of the members to apply true Sabbath keeping principles in their own lives. The Church can assist by providing Sabbath keeping principles as found in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, but it cannot be conscience for the members.

1) *Churches--Role of Church and Family in Sabbath Afternoon Activities.* The pastor and the local church leaders are entrusted with the responsibility of providing carefully planned Sabbath activities for children, youth, adults, and the elderly, and for families and singles, emphasizing the importance of making the Sabbath a day of joy, worship, and rest. Church activities should complement rather than replace family and home activities.

2) *Churches--Sabbath Music.* Music has a powerful impact on a person's moods and emotions. Church leaders will select music and musicians that will enhance the worshipful atmosphere of the Sabbath rest and the person's relationship with God. Sabbath choir rehearsals should be avoided during regularly scheduled Sabbath meetings.

3) *Churches--Community Outreach.* Although Christians may participate in certain types of social work for students, youth, and the poor in inner cities or in suburbs, they still will exert an exemplary influence of consistent Sabbath keeping. When engaged in an extension school or special school for children and youth, they will select subjects and classes that are different from the ordinary secular subjects or classes for the week, including activities that contribute to spiritual culture. Nature or neighborhood walks may replace recesses; nature walks or field trips of minimal effort can replace secular subjects and classes.

4) *Churches--Ingathering.* The general practice of Seventh-day Adventist churches is to do Ingathering on days other than the Sabbath. Where there is a practice to do Ingathering on Sabbath, the plan should be implemented so as to bring spiritual benefits to all participants.

5) *Churches--Fundraising on the Sabbath.* The doctrine of Christian stewardship is found throughout the Scriptures. The act of giving has a definite place in the worship services. When appeals for funds are made, they should be conducted in such a manner as to uphold the sacredness of the service as well as of the Sabbath.

6) *Churches--Sabbath Weddings.* The marriage service is sacred and would not in itself be out of harmony with the spirit of Sabbath keeping. However, most weddings involve considerable work and almost inevitably a secular atmosphere develops in preparing for them and in holding receptions. In order that the spirit of the Sabbath not be lost, the holding of weddings on the Sabbath should be discouraged.

7) *Churches--Sabbath Funerals.* In general, Adventists should try to avoid Sabbath funerals. In some climates and under certain conditions, however, it may be necessary to conduct funerals without delay, the Sabbath notwithstanding. In such cases arrangements should be made in advance with morticians and cemetery employees to perform their routine tasks for the deceased in advance of the Sabbath day, thus reducing the labor and commotion on the Sabbath. In some instances a memorial service could be held on the Sabbath, and interment take place later.

8) *Seventh-day Adventist Health-care Institutions.* Adventist health care institutions provide the only contact many people have with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventist hospitals are to be more than merely health-care delivery systems. They have a unique opportunity to bear a Christian witness 24 hours a day to the communities they serve. In addition, they have the privilege of presenting the Sabbath message by example every week. In healing the sick and loosing the bonds of the physically infirm, even on the Sabbath, Christ set an example that we look to as the basis for establishing and operating Adventist health-care institutions. Therefore, an institution offering medical care to the public must be prepared to minister to the needs of the sick and suffering without regard to hours or days.

This places a great responsibility on each institution to develop and implement policies that reflect the example of Christ and apply the principles of Sabbath observance as found in the Scriptures and taught by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Administrators have a special responsibility to see that all departments maintain the true spirit of Sabbath keeping by instituting appropriate Sabbath procedures and by guarding against laxity in its observance.

The following applications of Sabbath observance principles are recommended:

- a. Provide emergency medical care willingly and cheerfully whenever needed with high levels of excellence. However, neither Adventist institutions nor physicians and dentists should provide the same office or clinic services on the Sabbath as they do on weekdays.
- b. Discontinue all routine activities that could be postponed. Usually this means a complete closing of those facilities and departments not immediately related to patient care, and the maintenance of a minimum number of qualified people in other departments to handle emergencies.
- c. Postpone elective diagnostic and therapeutic services. Decisions as to what is necessary or of an emergency nature should be made by the attending physician. If this privilege is abused, it should be dealt with by the hospital administration. Non-administrative institutional employees should not become involved in making these decisions nor should they be obliged to confront the attending physicians. Misunderstandings may be avoided by making it clear in medical staff bylaws that only surgical, diagnostic, or therapeutic procedures which are not postponable because of the condition of the patient, will be done. A clear understanding with all who are appointed to staff membership, at the time of appointment, will do much to avoid misunderstandings and abuses.

Convenience and elective surgery should be discouraged or limited on Fridays. Procedures thus scheduled allow the patient to be in the hospital over the weekend and hence lose fewer days at work. However, this places the first post-operative day, usually with the most intensive nursing care, on the Sabbath.

- d. Close administrative and business offices to routine business. Although it may be necessary to admit or discharge patients on the Sabbath, it is recommended that the rendering of bills and the collection of money be avoided. Never should the keeping of the Sabbath be a source of irritation to those we seek to serve and to save, but rather a hallmark of "the children of light" (Eph 5:8; *Acts of the Apostles*, p 260).
- e. Make the Sabbath a special day for patients, providing a memory of Christian witnessing never to be forgotten. Meaningful Sabbath-keeping is much easier to achieve in an institution that employs a predominantly Adventist staff. Presenting the Sabbath in a proper light can be accomplished by the

believing workers employed in patient care, and may well be a convicting influence in the lives of those not of our faith.

f. The direct care of the sick is a seven-day-a-week activity. Illness knows no calendar. Nevertheless, when scheduling all personnel, health-care institutions should take into consideration the sincere religious beliefs, observances, and practices of each employee and prospective employee. The institution should make reasonable accommodation for such religious beliefs unless it is demonstrated that such accommodation would place an undue hardship on its operation. It is recognized that the consciences of individuals vary in regard to the propriety of Sabbath employment. Neither the Church nor its institutions can act as the conscience for its employees. Rather, reasonable accommodation should be made for individual conscience.

g. Resist pressures for relaxing Seventh-day Adventist standards. Some institutions have been pressured by the communities, the medical staffs, and/or employees (where a majority is comprised of non-Adventists), to abandon or weaken Sabbath keeping principles and practices so that the Sabbath would be treated as any other day. In some cases, pressure has been applied to maintain full services on the Sabbath and reduce them on Sunday instead. Such action should be vigorously resisted. Compliance would cause serious reexamination of the relationship of such an institution to the Church.

h. Educate employees who are not Seventh-day Adventist concerning Sabbath keeping principles practiced by the institution. Every non-Adventist, at the time of employment at an Adventist health care institution, should be made aware of Seventh-day Adventist principles, especially institutional policies regarding the observance of the Sabbath. Though non-Adventists may not believe as we do, they should know from the very beginning how they are expected to fit into the institutional program to help it reach its objectives.

i. Foster an attitude for continuing Christian witnessing by Adventist employees. The only contact that many non-Adventist workers ever may have with Seventh-day Adventists may be in the institution employing them. Every relationship should be friendly, kind, and expressive of the love that exemplified the life and work of the Great Physician. Compassion for the sick, unselfish regard for our fellowman, an eagerness to serve, and unstinted loyalty to God and the Church may well prove to be a savor of life unto life. The keeping of the Sabbath is a privilege and an honor as well as a duty. It should never become burdensome or obnoxious to those who keep it or to those about us.

9) *Sabbath Work in Non-Adventist Hospitals.* While it is essential in medical institutions that a minimum of labor be performed at all times in order to maintain the welfare and comfort of the patients, Seventh-day Adventists employed in non-denominational institutions where Sabbath hours bring no relief from routine duties are under obligation to remember the principles that regulate all Sabbath activities. In order to avoid situations where our church members may be faced with problems of Sabbath keeping in non-Adventist institutions, it is recommended that:

a. When Seventh-day Adventists accept employment in non-Seventh-day Adventist hospitals, they make known their Sabbath keeping principles and request a work schedule that will exempt them from Sabbath duties.

b. Where work schedules or other factors make this impossible, Adventists should clearly identify the duties, if any, they can conscientiously perform on the Sabbath and the frequency thereof.

c. Where the above accommodations cannot be arranged, members should make loyalty to God's requirements paramount and abstain from routine work.

10) *Seventh-day Adventist Educational Institutions.* Seventh-day Adventist secondary boarding schools leave a major role in shaping the Sabbath observance habits of future generations of members of the Church, and Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities do much to mold the thinking of the

Church's clergy and professional class. It is important, therefore, that both the theory and practice of how to maximize the joyful blessings of the Sabbath be as close as possible to the ideal in these institutions.

Applications of this principle should include:

- a. Adequate preparation for the Sabbath.
 - b. Demarcation of the beginning and ending of the Sabbath hours.
 - c. Appropriate school-home activities: worships, prayer bands, witness, etc.
 - d. Keeping necessary duties to a minimum, preferably entrusting them to people who volunteer their service rather than to those who do the same work for pay during the week.
 - e. Inspiring worship services, preferably modeling what is expected to characterize such services in the churches of the school's constituency.
 - f. Adequate and varied activities on Sabbath afternoon.
 - g. Structuring of the weekly program so that the Sabbath will be a lingering joy and the climax of the week, rather than a prelude to contrasting activities on Saturday night.
1. *Cafeteria Sales.* School cafeterias are designed to serve students and their visiting parents and bona fide guests; they should not be open to the public on the Sabbath. To avoid unnecessary business transactions during sacred time, each institution should make provision for payment outside of the Sabbath hours.
 2. *Attendance of Faculty at Professional Meetings.* In some countries, Seventh-day Adventists are privileged to attend professional meetings in order to keep abreast of current developments in their given field of specialization. It may be tempting to justify attendance at these meetings on the Sabbath. However, it is recommended that academic personnel join fellow members in worship rather than fellow professionals at work.
 3. *Radio Stations.* College radio stations can be a blessing to their communities. To maximize the blessings, programming during the Sabbath hours should reflect the philosophy of the Church. If fund-raising appeals are made on the Sabbath, they should be conducted in such a way as to uphold the sacredness of that day.
 4. *Promotional Trips.* In order to maintain the worshipful nature of the Sabbath, promotional tours should be planned in such a way as to minimize travel on the Sabbath and to provide maximum time for worship with fellow believers. The Sabbath hours should not be used for travel to provide a Saturday night program.
 5. *Sabbath Observance in Education for the Ministry.* Pastors have a large responsibility for shaping the spiritual life of the Church by their personal example. Therefore institutions training ministers and their spouses need to help their trainees form a sound philosophy of Sabbath observance. Proper guidance received at school can be instrumental in the experience of a genuine renewal of the Sabbath joys in their own life as well as in the life of their church.
 6. *Sabbath Examinations.* Seventh-day Adventists who face required examinations given on the Sabbath in non-Adventist schools or for certification by professional governing boards face special problems. In dealing with such situations we recommend that they arrange for administration of the examinations on hours other than the Sabbath. The Church should encourage its members in careful

Sabbath observance and where possible intercede with the appropriate authorities to provide for both reverence for God's day and access to the examinations.

Secular Employment and Trade as Related to the Sabbath

1) *Statement of Principle.* The Biblical view of the Sabbath includes both a divine and a human dimension (Matt 12:7). From the divine perspective the Sabbath invites the believer to renew his commitment to God by desisting from the daily work in order to worship God more freely and more fully (Ex 20:8-10; 31:15,16; Isa 58:13,14). From the human perspective, the Sabbath summons the believer to celebrate God's creative and redemptive love by showing mercy and concern toward others (Dent 5:12-15; Matt 12:12; Luke 13:12; John 5:17). Thus the Sabbath encompasses both cessation from secular work for the purpose of honoring God and performing deeds of love and kindness toward fellow beings.

2) *Essential and Emergency Work.* In order to uphold the sanctity of the Sabbath, Seventh-day Adventists must make wise choices in matters of employment, guided by a conscience enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Experience has shown that there are hazards in choosing vocations which will not allow them to worship their Creator on the Sabbath day free from involvement in secular labor. This means that they will avoid types of employment which, although essential for the function of a technologically advanced society, may offer problems in Sabbath observance.

The Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy are explicit about our duties as Christians to our fellowman, even on the Sabbath day. In the modern context, many employed in occupations involved with the saving of life and property are called upon to deal with emergencies. Arranging for regular weekend work requiring the use of the Sabbath hours for gainful emergency employment or accepting work only on weekends in emergency occupations to augment the family budget is out of harmony with Sabbath keeping principles given by Christ. Responding to emergency situations where life and safety are at stake is quite different from earning one's livelihood by routinely engaging in such occupations on the Sabbath which are often accompanied by commercial, secular, or routine activities. (See Christ's comments on rescuing oxen or sheep from ditches and helping people in need. Matt 12:11; Luke 13:16.) Absenting one's self from God's house and being denied fellowship with the believers on the Sabbath can have a chilling effect on one's spiritual life.

Many employers in so-called essential service areas willingly make accommodations for Sabbath keepers. Where such is not granted, members should review carefully Biblical principles of Sabbath keeping and in that light examine the type of activity, environment, requirements of the job, and personal motives before committing themselves to working on the Sabbath. They should ask of the Lord as did Paul on the Damascus road, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" When this attitude of faith prevails, we are persuaded that the Lord will lead the believer to discern His will and supply strength and wisdom to follow it.

3) *Moral Decision Regarding Sabbath Observance.* Sabbath privileges are sometimes curtailed or denied by military, educational, political, or other organizations. To prevent and/or alleviate these regrettable situations, the following suggestions should be considered:

A competent church official, preferably the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty director, should be appointed to keep abreast of developments that could undermine freedom of worship on the Sabbath. When necessary, this official will approach responsible authorities to intercede when an adverse impact upon Seventh-day Adventists is present in any contemplated measure or legislation. This course of action may prevent enactment of laws that could curtail or deny Sabbath privileges.

Adventist members should be encouraged to stand by faith for the principle of Sabbath keeping regardless of circumstances, resting in the assurance that God will honor their commitment to Him.

Church members should offer spiritual, moral, and, if needed temporal help to other members experiencing Sabbath problems. Such support will serve to strengthen the commitment to the Lord not only of the individual member facing Sabbath problems but also of the Church as a whole.

4) *Purchase of Goods and Services on the Sabbath.*

a. The Sabbath is designed to provide spiritual freedom and joy for every person (Ex 20:8-11). As Christians, we must be supportive of this basic human right granted to each individual by the Creator. As a general rule, the purchasing of goods, eating out in restaurants, and paying for services to be provided by others ought to be avoided because they are out of harmony with the principle and practice of Sabbath keeping.

b. Furthermore, the above-mentioned commercial activities will turn the mind away from the sacredness of the Sabbath. (See Neh 10:31; 13:15 ff.) With proper planning adequate provisions can be made in advance for foreseeable Sabbath needs.

5) *Sabbath Travel.* While Sabbath travel may be necessary for engaging in Sabbath activities, one should not allow Sabbath travel to become a secular function; therefore, preparation should be made in advance. Automobile fuel and other needs should be cared for before the Sabbath begins. Travel on commercial carriers for personal or business reasons should be avoided.

6) *Treating a Specific Employment Problem.* When a member of the Church finds it necessary to resign from a position, or loses his job because of Sabbath problems, and is reemployed by the denomination in similar work, and where the new job, because of its essential nature, requires the member to work on the Sabbath, the following suggestions are recommended:

a. A careful explanation of the essential nature of the work will be given to the member.

b. All efforts should be made by the organization to ascertain that only the essential aspects of the new job will be performed on the Sabbath. Administrators should also explain to the new employee the religious purposes and basic objectives of the employing organization.

c. A rotation schedule will be adopted in order that the member who can conscientiously accept such work on the Sabbath may frequently be able to enter into a fuller celebration of the Sabbath day.

7) *Shift work.* When a Seventh-day Adventist works for an employer where Shift work is the rule, he may be requested to work on the Sabbath or a portion thereof. Under such circumstances the member involved is encouraged to consider the following:

a. The member should strive to be the best possible worker, a valuable employee whom the employer cannot afford to lose.

b. If a problem develops, the member should seek to resolve it by appealing to the employer personally for an accommodation based on goodwill and fairness.

c. The member should assist the employer by suggesting such accommodations as:

1. Working a flexible schedule;

2. Taking a less desirable shift;

3. Trading shifts with another employee; or

4. Working on holidays.

8) If the employer resists an accommodation, the member should immediately seek assistance from the pastor and from the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department in countries where they are involved in such activities.

The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Executive Committee at the General Conference Session in Indianapolis, Indiana, on July 9, 1990, voted to acknowledge receipt of the above document on Sabbath observance.

Copyright © 2007, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

www.adventist.org