CIVIL GOVERNMENT LIFE TRUTH # 4 REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY BY KEEPING IT HOLY

The first four of the Ten Commandments teach us how to love God. The last six of the commandments teach us how to love others. Jesus says in Matthew 22:37-40 (NIV) ³⁷ Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

The first three commandments begin with "you shall not." But the fourth commandment begins with "remember". Remember that God rested from His labor at creation, thereby establishing a rule for all of humanity to obey. He says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

From the very beginning, God's design was for man to work six days and then rest from his labors on the seventh. Jesus reminds us of God's plan in the New Testament. Mark 2:27 (NIV) ²⁷ Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." God established the Sabbath for our benefit. It is medically proven that we need to rest. Productivity levels increase when we rest on the seventh day.

Several countries have tried to alter God's work plan. France tried to move away from God's plan by establishing a 10 day work week. Their new plan failed miserably. The Soviet Union tried different ways to break the fourth commandment as well. They tried seven days of work and then a day of rest. They tried eight work days and then a day of rest. To their surprise, but not to God's, these new plans didn't work. They finally returned to the Biblical pattern of six work days and then a day of rest.

Rest from work is for our benefit. We need to thank God and show Him that we love Him by obeying this command. Jesus said in John 14:15 (NIV) 15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. We can trust God. We know that He desires to bless us and provide for us. Keeping the Sabbath holy is a command He gave to help us.

Ways to honor the Sabbath have been debated for generations. People have had a variety of views on how to keep the Sabbath holy; or even whether to keep it

holy at all. The Bible tells us in the New Testament that the Ten Commandments are laws that still need to be obeyed today. Satan is always at work trying to deceive us. He wants us to disobey God's commands. He knows that if we do, things will not go well for us.

The founders of America were very committed to obeying ALL of the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Christ. In 1846, S.A. Benjamin broke the command to keep the Sabbath holy. The South Carolina Supreme Court ruled, "The Lord's day, the day of the resurrection, is to us, who are called Christians, the day of rest after finishing a new creation. It is the first visible triumph over death, hell, and the grave!...On that day we rest, and to us it is the Sabbath of the Lord – its decent observance, in a Christian community, is that which ought to be expected."

From 1846 until today, this country has dramatically changed. Society has continued to move further away from God's law. Our disobedience to the Sabbath command has had a great deal to do with the condition we are in. It bears repeating that we must return to this command, both individually and as a nation, in order to begin a healing. There are civil lessons, plus God's perfect design for man, in this command. It is a safeguard for us to repeat God's truth. Look at what Paul said in *Philippians 3:1 (NIV)* Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

The founders of America were a Biblically-based group. The Bible was the only book they needed to help build this nation. Providence was a word they used often; meaning God's guidance and care. No church or government was ever going to rule them again. The Bible was their source of strength. They knew that if they obeyed the laws of God, He would bless them and guide them.

It is not a mystery why God blessed America. He blesses a nation that puts Him and His laws first. The founders were not blessed because they wrote the Constitution. They were blessed because they obeyed the commands of God. Our commitment to obedience is not the same today. This country is in desperate need of healing and restoration. We need to put Him and His commands first once again.

Are we missing something that the founders understood? I believe that we have forgotten to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Our generation says it is okay to work, cause others to work, purchase things, go to sporting events, and pretty much do whatever we want on the Sabbath. Many Christians routinely

break the Sabbath commandment. Christian speakers and leaders travel on Sundays, sell books on Sundays, and eat out on Sundays. There isn't one founder of America who would have agreed to this kind of desecration on the Lord's Day.

I mentioned earlier about the case between S.A. Benjamin and the South Carolina Supreme Court. In 1801, Charleston passed a law stating that nothing should be sold on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath. S. A. Benjamin sold one pair of gloves on the Christian Sabbath and was found guilty and fined by the South Carolina Supreme Court. By 1846, the South Carolina Supreme Court arrested and prosecuted all offenders of the fourth commandment. The laws in this country were also written to keep businesses closed in honor of the Lord's Day until the 1980s.

Some people today think that you can choose your own Sabbath. Why were the founders so committed to the Christian Sabbath being on Sunday? In the commandment, the word "day" is singular not plural. It does not say remember the Sabbath days and keep them holy. It does not give us the option, as a people or a nation, to choose our own day. It says we work six days and then we rest on the seventh. The command is not for each of us to choose which day to rest. One of the main purposes of the day is corporate worship. This fact was clearly understood both in the Old and New Testament.

The command does not say that Saturday is the Sabbath. It says, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God." This was intentional by God. He knew the day would change from Saturday to Sunday, as the apostles exampled for us, in the New Testament. But what about other religions? Will Jesus accept people that do not believe that He is God? John 8:23-25 (NIV) ²³ But he continued, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. ²⁴ I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins." ²⁵ "Who are you?" they asked. "Just what I have been claiming all along," Jesus replied.

Who did Jesus claim to be? He says in John 14:9 (NIV) Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. Jesus claimed to be the one and only true God. Therefore, we must obey Him and submit to His authority. Christians recognize the Sabbath as Sunday. Therefore, we are to keep Sundays holy. We need to follow the example of our founding fathers and return to obeying this commandment the way it is written.

Should a nation seek to enforce the Sabbath law? Yes. A nation should seek to enforce moral standards by teaching its people how to be holy. Did God enforce His laws upon the nation of Israel? Were there specific consequences for breaking God's laws? Yes! We have God's laws to protect morality in this world. The Sabbath is just one of the ten moral laws that God instructed us to live by. This nation used to encourage the memorization of Scripture and the teachings of the Ten Commandments. Today, we like to memorize cliff notes and decide for ourselves what the command means. The Sabbath commandment is the longest of all the Ten Commandments. It is very specific about how we are to obey it.

Exodus 20:8-11 (NIV) ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ 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.

Our generation justifies working and doing things that cause others to work on the Sabbath. We embrace activities on the Sabbath. These actions cause many to turn their devotion and love away from God. Businesses should close. Breaking this commandment by causing others to work, or working ourselves, desecrates His special day.

Just think about Super Bowl Sunday. Its popularity grows every year. In 2014, ITI.5 million people watched the Super Bowl. Thousands work to make it happen. Many people worship teams instead of God. It's a huge draw for gambling, prostitution, drunkenness, and other evils. Often the commercials are filled with lust and covetousness. The half-time shows are far from wholesome family entertainment. Not one of our founders would have supported an event like this on the Lord's Day. In fact, they would have sought strict legislation to stop the breaking of God's law.

It's no coincidence that things like the Super Bowl are on a Sunday. Satan is always at work tempting us to break God's commands. My old nature would love to watch the Super Bowl and to be entertained on the Lord's Day. But my new nature listens to the Spirit of God and seeks to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. This means to keep the whole day holy. It does not mean to attend church for an hour and then do as you please for the rest of the day. What does holy mean to you? Are you keeping the whole day holy?

Timothy Dwight was an American educator and author. He was president of Yale when it was a Biblically-based university from 1795-1817. He delivered a speech on July 4, 1798, entitled, The Duty of Americans, at the Present Crisis. He said, "To destroy us therefore, in this dreadful sense, our enemies must first destroy our Sabbath and seduce us from the house of God." Timothy Dwight was explaining how Voltaire's atheism inspired the French Revolution's Reign of Terror where 40,000 people were beheaded. He went on to say, "If our religion were gone, our state of society would perish with it and nothing would be left which would be worth defending."

When we remove religion and morality from society; society will destroy itself. The founders understood this. We need to return to our Christian roots and follow the example our founders laid out for us. They spoke often about God's providence. Baker's Encyclopedia says this about providence: God's activity throughout history in providing for the needs of human beings, especially those who follow him in faith.

God's Word promises blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. When we obey the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Christ, we will be blessed. If we disobey the commands, we will be cursed. This is why the founders wrote laws that helped people obey the laws of God. They wanted God's providence. A pastor during the founding era, John Prince, wrote, "May a sense of the dangers which hang over us lead us to repentance, and fervent prayer, that God may turn from us these tokens of His anger, and cause us more highly to esteem and improve, in future, His spiritual and temporal blessings."

Can you see the dangers which hang over us? Are you willing to deny yourself the pleasures of this world and love God by obeying the first four commandments? Deuteronomy 28:1-3 (NIV) ¹ If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. ² All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: ³ You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

In Numbers, Chapter 11, the Israelites were complaining about food and being left out in the desert. God told Moses to tell the people that He was going to give them meat to eat. Moses questioned God because they were in the desert and said, "even if they slaughtered all the animals that wouldn't be enough to feed them all." I love God's answer in Numbers 11:23 (NIV) ²³ The LORD answered Moses, "Is the LORD's arm too short? You will now see whether or not what I say will come true for you."

God sent a mighty wind that brought three feet of quail all around the Israelites. Three feet of quail! Was the Lord's arm too short? No! God can do what God wants to do. He blesses nations that carefully obey His commands. The founders got it! They fought hard to make sure that all the commandments were obeyed; just as they were written.

One of the foundational pillars to the success of our free nation is to keep the Sabbath holy. It is a day for corporate worship, instruction, and accountability; so that we will not stray from God's commands. The Sabbath is the glue that keeps the church and the nation together. Families, churches, and nations will be blessed by keeping the day holy.

By obeying this commandment, we set ourselves apart from an increasingly secular society. It is an opportunity for us to be an example to the world; a testimony to reveal that Jesus is our Lord. It is a commandment that preachers need to be preaching today.

Let's break the commandment down.

I. Keep the Sabbath holy - "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy."

Every week we are to remember that God's day is to be kept holy. This means that we are to refrain from all secular duties that can be done the day before or the day after. The founders refrained from amusements, traveling, business, and even idle talk. They committed themselves to being devoted to the duties of public and private worship. Our generation would accuse them of being boring, but they cried out like David in *Psalm 122:1 (NIV) I rejoiced with those who said to me*, "Let us go to the house of the LORD." Which would you rather do? Attend a prayer and praise meeting on a Sunday night for corporate worship or watch the Super Bowl? Perhaps the question should be rephrased. Which should you do? What do you think the founders would have chosen? What do you think Jesus would choose?

The Lord's Day is like Jesus' birthday party. Everyone is invited. He is so awesome that He deserves a party every week! (Every day for that matter!) We come to bring Him gifts and celebrate who He is. If we miss church, it is like

saying to Jesus, "We had something better to do than come and celebrate who you are."

Work six days - "Six days you shall labor and do all your work" This is the first time we learn from the commandments that God expects us to work. In the Self-Government Life Truth #10, we learned that we are created to work. God expects his creations to work and be productive in society. When we are not working and being productive in society, we are breaking a stipulation in the fourth commandment. I Thessalonians 4:11-12 (NIV) 11 Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.

We also know that all of the work is to be done in six days. We must make preparations for the Sabbath so that we do not work on God's holy day. We need to make our travel arrangements, buy our food, get our gas, or whatever else needs to be done, so that we can keep the Sabbath holy. What if it's cold and you need a pair of gloves on the Sabbath? Ask the South Carolina Supreme Court of 1864. Emergencies are the only reason a person needs to work on the Sabbath.

2. Lead your family – "but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals"

In the second commandment, we learn that children are punished for the sins of the fathers to the third and the fourth generations. The Sabbath commandment calls for fathers to lead in the homes. The word Sabbath means to cease or desist. We are told to cease from any work on the Lord's Day. Not only are we to example a day where all secular business is not performed, but fathers are called to lead their families in this day as well. The command gives this authority to the fathers. Fathers are to set the example and lead their families to obey the command. If the father does not keep the Sabbath holy, his family will follow right after him.

The Sabbath is a day to remember who God is. It is designed to honor and worship Him, not only publically, but also privately. The Sabbath is a day for families to attend church together. In earlier times, families worshiped, ate lunch, and spent Sabbath days together. Many would stay for an evening prayer service as well.

This generation needs fathers to lead their families by honoring the Sabbath the way God intended. The condition of the family is directly tied to the disobedience of this command. Remember, God made this command for our benefit. We need a day of rest. We need a day for worship and family fellowship.

Remembering the Sabbath Brings a Harvest of Righteousness.

The Sabbath is a time to sow a seed for righteousness. This is the same principle as planting a seed in the ground and waiting for God to produce a plant or a flower. However, there is a difference between the plant seed and the Sabbath seed. A plant seed produces a flower or a plant; the Sabbath seed produces a harvest of righteousness.

Exodus 31:12-17 (NIV) ¹² Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹³ "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that **I** am the LORD, who makes you holy. ¹⁴ "'Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. ¹⁵ For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. ¹⁶ The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷ It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested."

We plant the seed of righteousness when we keep the whole day holy. God promises to make us holy for our obedience. We plant it with joy; longing to be changed. The Sabbath command is similar to the first two commandments in that we must love God more than anything in this world. Are we willing to turn away from all of the secular pulls of the world for one whole day a week?

I John 2:15-17 (NIV) ¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For everything in the world–the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does–comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

The ones who obey God's commandments will live forever. We know that obeying God's commands does not save us; but it is the evidence that we are

saved. Romans 2:13 (NIV) ¹³ For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

Sow the seed of righteousness and obey the Sabbath command. Watch the harvest come forth in our nation as we return to loving God more than anything in this world. Plant the seed of joy for the Lord and His Sabbath. It is a seed that produces a harvest of righteousness and joy. As Isaiah 58 says, "if we call the Sabbath a delight." We will not receive a harvest if we sow the seed as though God's command is a burden. The Bible says in 1 John 5:3 (NIV) ³ This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome.

3. Lead your community and nation - "nor the alien within your gates."

The word *alien* refers to someone who is not an Israelite. It is a foreigner who lives in a nation or community. We are called to lead those who are not Christians and are living in our land. We must never cause them to break the command. We are to lead them to obey the laws of God.

The term gate means within the community. It symbolizes a town enclosed by gates for protection. The nation of Israel was to make sure that those who entered into their community obeyed the laws of God. If you were a foreigner living in an Israelite community, and you decided to get up on the Sabbath to do work, the nation would stop you. "Nor the alien within your gate... shall do any work." This is why they ruled as they did in Charleston SC. S. A. Benjamin's defense was that he honored the Jewish Sabbath and not the Christian Sabbath. Since Benjamin chose to reside in a Christian nation, he needed to honor the Christian Sabbath. How would you rule today? Would you stand upon the commands of God? Would you believe the lie that tells us we no longer have to obey? Would you accept the lie that says we need to tolerate all beliefs? We need to say, "You are welcome to live in our land, but you need to obey our laws. Our future blessings are dependent upon our obedience to God's commands."

4. Follow the Lord's example - Exodus 20:11 (NIV) 11 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.

God has no need of rest. It does not benefit Him at all to take a break. He has absolutely no weaknesses. He rested only for our benefit. He was setting an example for us. God never asks us to do anything that He would not do himself. He is a good God, a loving God, and a kind God. Satan lies. He tries to tell us that the Sabbath is boring or that the Sabbath commandment no longer applies to us today. He wants us to believe that we are free to do whatever we want on the Sabbath.

God's command says different, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Keep the day free from all of the secular amusements you can attend during the week. Keep the day free from all of the business you may conduct during the week. Keep the day holy by attending public worship services. Keep the day holy by spending it with your family. Keep the day holy by resting so you can be ready to work productively for the next six days.

5. God created you to be free - "neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals."

In this command, we learn that God desired for man to be free. He created us to be free. We are free to own our own property. This is what He desires for us: your animal, your employee, your stuff. It is brought out again in the last command. Exodus 20:17 (NIV) ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor." God created us to be stewards and to be responsible for our own property.

In the Declaration of Independence it says that all men are created with unalienable rights. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The founders used the phrase "pursuit of happiness" to include our ability to own property. This is a God-given right.

Issues that arise with our property have to do with our obedience to God. If we obey God, we remain free to own our own property and keep certain freedoms. But if we disobey God, we lose our freedoms and our property. The judgment for disobeying God's commands is a loss of our property and a return to slavery. We can see this pattern all throughout the Old Testament.

Look at this passage in Judges 2:8-19 (NIV) ⁸ Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ⁹ And they buried him in the land of **his inheritance**, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.

¹⁰ After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel. 11 Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the LORD and served the Baals. 12 They forsook the LORD, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the LORD to anger because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. 14 In his anger against Israel the LORD handed them over to raiders who plundered them. He sold them to their enemies all around, whom they were no longer able to resist. 15 Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the LORD was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them. They were in great distress. ¹⁶ Then the LORD raised up judges, who saved them out of the hands of these raiders. ¹⁷ Yet they would not listen to their judges but prostituted themselves to other gods and worshiped them. Unlike their fathers, they quickly turned from the way in which their fathers had walked, the way of obedience to the LORD's commands. 18 Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for them, he was with the judge and saved them out of the hands of their enemies as long as the judge lived; for the LORD had compassion on them as they groaned under those who oppressed and afflicted them. ¹⁹ But when the judge died, the people returned to ways even more corrupt than those of their fathers, following other gods and serving and worshiping them. They refused to give up their evil practices and stubborn ways.

What will be written about America? Will people write that it started out well but then a generation grew up who knew neither the Lord or what He had done for America? That they quickly turned from the way in which their founders had walked, the way of obedience to the Lord's commands. You can be sure of this, unless we repent and turn back to the commands of God, we will continue to go into slavery and eventually be overcome by another. We will continue to lose our property and our freedoms. Can you see the enslavement growing in our nation? God created us to be free and to own our own property. But when we turn away from His commands, we lose our freedoms and become enslaved by another. Are we gaining freedom in our nation or being oppressed by another? I am convinced that the founders had it right. We need to return to their example.

We have a choice about the Sabbath in this generation. Will you repent and begin to remember the Sabbath by keeping it holy? Or will you continue to go along with the ways of the world and desecrate God's day?

My church and family know where I stand. We agree with Joshua in Joshua 24:14-15 (NIV) 14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the

gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.

15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

WORKSHEET FOR CIVIL GOVERNMENT LIFE TRUTH # 4 REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY BY KEEPING IT HOLY

Question: What does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy?

Answer: We are to keep the day holy by not doing any work or causing others

to work.

Exodus 20:8-11 (NIV) ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ 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.

Write out the Life Truth, question, and answer on one side of an index card and the verse on the other side. Keep it in your Bible for the week. Work on it every day individually and as a family. Have it memorized by next week.

Why do you think the Lord rested on the seventh day?

Read Mark 2:27. What do you think it means when Jesus says the Sabbath was made for man?

What does it show God when we keep the whole day holy?

Read Acts 20:7 What are the differences between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath?

The French atheist Voltaire said, "To overthrow Christianity we must overthrow the Christian Sabbath." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

How has Sunday observance changed, if at all, in your lifetime?

Have the changes brought about positive or negative changes? (blessings or curses)

Read Exodus 31:12-18 We must observe God's Sabbath. What does He promise to do if we will keep it holy?

Are we seeing our nation become more holy?

Could it be tied to our keeping the Sabbath holy? Why? Why not?

The Super Bowl is played on the Christian Sabbath every year. Is there anything about this event that would be breaking the Sabbath command?

If there is something that breaks the command should Christians participate in it? Why? Why not?

What does Jesus think about how our generation treats the fourth commandment?

Based on this LIFE TRUTH how can you do a better job of remembering the Sabbath day by keeping it holy? How can you help others to obey this command?