

## Fundamentals of Belief #12C: Proper Sabbath Observance

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This afternoon, brethren, we are going to continue, as promised, with the final piece of Fundamental of Belief number twelve which concerns the weekly Sabbath. This is probably the one that many of you have been waiting with bated breath to hear. It is the one in which I intend to go through a lot of the more technical do's and don'ts of how to keep the Sabbath.

This is something I decided to do because of the number of questions we get periodically from members within the Church who really have legitimate questions about what is appropriate and what is not appropriate on the Sabbath day. In going through this series on the Fundamentals, I decided a long time ago that, when I got to this fundamental number twelve on the weekly Sabbath, I wanted to preserve one sermon where I actually went through a list of those do's and don'ts. I wanted to go through the principles and concepts to help each one of us make better decisions about how to spend our time and make decisions in keeping the Sabbath day.

We have already been through now the main overview of Sabbath-keeping and the commands of God. In the last two sermons I gave, we went through the principles of the fact that it is a hallowed day—the seventh day of the week. God is the One who set it aside. He is the One who created it from the very beginning. It was by His own personal example in Sabbath-keeping that He created, hallowed, and set it as a standard. The Sabbath does exist, and it is a requirement for all mankind. He made it holy and hallowed it by His own personal example.

We also looked at the fact that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people—not that it doesn't apply to all humankind, because it does, but the only ones who will be legitimately keeping the Sabbath are those with whom God has developed a close personal relationship. Human beings, in and of themselves, reject everything God has established as holy.

Therefore, the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people because it is only His true people who will be giving enough respect to that living God to hallow the things He has hallowed. So when you look out upon the world and you find individuals who are truly keeping the Sabbath—not just claiming they have an affinity for the seventh day as their day of worship, but truly keeping the Sabbath day holy—then you are finding the individuals who have the mark of the living God as His chosen people and His children.

The Sabbath is commanded, and we looked at all of the overview principles that show it is incumbent upon Christians today. Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath and said what He was doing was an example for us; as did the Apostle Paul and the other servants of God, who showed in the New Testament that the Sabbath was applicable to Christians. It wasn't done away whatsoever.

Just in quick rehearsal, I will read fundamental number twelve for you again:

We believe that from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. On this day we must rest from our labors following the commands and example of the Apostle Paul, the New Testament Church, and Jesus.

I think we have covered comprehensively, although synoptically, the key elements you need to understand for why we hallow the Sabbath day, why we think it is important, and why we believe it has not been done away.

Now today, to finish up this topic, we want to focus on the part of our fundamental that says, "On this day we must rest from our labors following the commands and example . . ." This is where we get into the nitty-gritty for those who might say, "Ok, you have convinced me that the Sabbath has not been done away. It is important; we need to keep it; but how do I appropriately keep it?"

We want to talk about the specifics of appropriate Sabbath-keeping. How do we properly keep God's hallowed, weekly Sabbath day? Mankind will easily and

automatically pervert everything God has given. So much more deceptive are those who claim to respect the Sabbath, yet who use their own personalized methods to determine what is acceptable and what is not.

It is not enough, brethren, to just lay claim to respecting the Sabbath. We have to also take instruction on the proper ways to observe it as God requires us. We can pollute the Sabbath, either through a bent toward liberalism or, just as much, by adding to the commands God laid down. As we are going to see, that is exactly what the Pharisees were guilty of.

They were not ones who liberalized and watered down the significance of the Sabbath so they could do their own pleasure. No, they went to the opposite extreme—in that other ditch on the other side of the road—which is just as bad. It is just as much of a pollution to add to God's law as it is to take away from it. Those are the things we want to talk about today.

Let's start in Mark 2:23. Here is an example that Christ immediately ran into with the Pharisees, in this issue of what is appropriate and not appropriate on the Sabbath. It is the difference between the orientation of men who had added to the law, and what Christ Himself instructed. We will notice some interesting things here.

Mark 2:23–28:

And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful?

The Pharisees automatically made the assertion that Christ's disciples were breaking the Sabbath.

And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath [a very important principle we are going to keep in mind as we go through the details today]: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Now, when you read this, the natural thought might come to mind, *Wait a minute. It seems that Jesus made a jump in logic somehow to another topic. What relation does this statement, that He is Lord of the Sabbath, have to do with what we just read concerning the issues of what is acceptable and that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath?* "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." How do we reconcile that, and what is He really saying?

If we turn over to Matthew 12:5, we see the parallel account. It is going to fill in the gaps and tell you the expansion of what was being asked, what Christ was saying, and why this statement.

The first four verses repeat the account we just saw about them walking through the cornfield and the Pharisees accosting Jesus over His disciples. Then, we have an expansion in verse 5. This is what Christ further said to these Pharisees.

Matthew 12:5:

Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

He is saying that even the work of the priest—which still has to be carried out every day of the week, because those sacrifices were required seven days a week and special sacrifices were required on the Sabbath and the Holy Days—that is a lot of work, but when you are talking about the work of the priest, which includes the work of the ministry, then there are obviously exceptions.

. . . how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.

Here is the key point. ". . . in this place is one greater than the temple." What was He saying? He was referring to His own authority. "Who is it," Jesus Christ was asking, "who decides what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in keeping the Sabbath day? Is it not the one who has authority, who actually created it?"

Who was the Spirit Being who actually brought that Sabbath into being? Was it not this very same Being? Was He not the God of the Old Testament, even though He stood there in the flesh and spoke to these men who challenged Him about His disciples in the keeping of the Sabbath? Christ was emphasizing that there was one

greater than the temple who was standing right in their midst. He was the very Being who initiated the Sabbath; He was the One who kept the first Sabbath—the seventh day of creation—after the re-creation of the earth. It was that very Being who stood before them.

Who better to know the rules for keeping the Sabbath? Christ was asserting His own authority because of who He was as that God.

. . . in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

He is saying, "If you really understood the spiritual intent of the Sabbath and the principles involved in appropriately keeping it, you would not have accused the disciples for pulling a few grains of the corn stock in the field." That was a misapplication of the laws governing the Sabbath.

For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

Now you understand how He got to that point of logic and the connection that was made. He was asserting that He was the One who was greater than the temple. He was the One who was authorized to teach what is appropriate and inappropriate on the Sabbath day.

Jesus Christ, brethren, is the One who determines what is permissible, and what is not, on the Sabbath. How does that apply to us? How did we receive the knowledge of the Sabbath? Was it not by the preaching and teaching of authorized servants who were acting in the very name of that Christ? Therefore, are we going to be willing to be taught, even by the continuation of Christ's ministry, even though it is through the foolishness of preaching?

If you know where God's legitimate servants are—those who have not corrupted His doctrines whatsoever, who are holding on faithfully, teaching, proclaiming, and living it in their own lives—then you can have confidence also in receiving instruction on the appropriate ways to keep the Sabbath.

Men take everything to extremes. I have used that analogy over and over again. It is like a road that has a ditch on the left and on the right. We have to be able to walk that narrow road. Falling into the liberal ditch on the left or the orthodox,

conservative, Pharisaical ditch on the right—either one of them will get us off track. There is a pit and a trap on each side, no matter which way we go.

The first thing I want to emphasize then, before getting into the details on Sabbath-keeping, is that each one of us, you and me both by nature, has a natural proclivity. We either have a natural proclivity toward liberalizing, trying to water down laws to make it easier, or else, we might be ones who have a natural tendency to want to add to the law.

The first thing I challenge you to do is to think honestly within your own mind and identify which you are. You and I each have a proclivity, one way or the other, to pollute the Sabbath—either by going to the over-extreme, like the Pharisees did, or to water down. It is very helpful if we are honest with ourselves and will admit which camp we fall into.

If we have the right orientation and are truly willing to be taught, then we don't have to give into those proclivities to either Pharisee or liberalize. We can effectively keep the Sabbath as God commanded and never become guilty of polluting His Sabbaths in concept. So what are those fundamental principles on Sabbath-keeping that we want to cover today?

First of all, brethren, point number one: the Sabbath is a commanded assembly. I am putting that first, highest on the list, as the thing I want to emphasize today, because we are going to get into a lot of the other technicalities and a whole range of other items before this is over this afternoon; but first, I want to focus on the fact that the Sabbath is a commanded assembly. It is a holy convocation.

There is no Sabbath-keeping without fulfilling the requirement to convoke before God in the place where He has chosen to place His name. Let's notice Leviticus 23:2–3:

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the [Eternal] [not the feasts of Moses, not the feasts of any other man—God's feasts], which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the [Eternal] in all your dwellings.

Two principles are right there in that command. It is a day of rest. We are going to talk about what those elements are, but first, it is a holy convocation. That word from the Hebrew translated as "convocation" is *miqra*. *Miqra* means something called out, a public meeting, an assembly.

What God is telling us through the inspiration of His holy servants who penned these books is that the Sabbath is a holy convocation; it is a public assembly. The keeping of the Sabbath day requires a public assembly in the name of God. You and I cannot convoke—we cannot fulfill that command to assemble and convoke before God—by staying at home. That is just the simple truth.

Sabbath-keeping doesn't occur at home. Sabbath-keeping occurs by coming and convoking before God in a place where He has placed His name—much to the chagrin of those who think they can keep the Sabbath by themselves. *It's just you and me, Lord. We don't need any minister. We don't need any congregation. We don't need to put up with all of the negative aspects of human nature by getting involved with other people. No, we will just come out here in the woods somewhere, and we will sit off by ourselves. I will hallow your Sabbath day; I won't work; and you will be on my side, God, because I am keeping the Sabbath.*

No, brethren, that is not the way it works. If that is the way God set it up, I would certainly be glad to preach it, but that is not what He said. He said the Sabbath is a holy convocation. That means we assemble and come together, which makes it incumbent upon every single one who claims to be a Christian to know where God has placed His name and where He is present. We can't go just anywhere and be acceptable before Him.

There are all kinds of people out there with their convocations, their solemn meetings that they are offering in the name of God. They have their hymns, just as we sang, their special music, just as we had this afternoon, and their ministers who are preaching. We have been through this, and I am not going to get into that today, but Isaiah 1—you can read it yourself—shows you there is someone convoking and having a solemn assembly, and God says He hates what they are doing.

Coming to admit the fact that God requires us to convoke puts upon us the responsibility next of saying, "Where?" Many, many people of our former affiliation have rejected having to choose by saying, "God doesn't really require me to convoke before Him. I can keep the Sabbath in my home. God is everywhere, so He is with

me in my house." No, brethren, if you want to obey God's command and you want to keep the Sabbath, then you have to convoke in a place where He has placed His name.

We are a small and scattered remnant around this earth, and there are many who live too far away from the closest opportunity to fellowship with others. God understands that, so we do the best we can. When we cannot, because we live too far away to be able to go to a regular Sabbath service, then there is nothing we can do about that.

Mr. Cole went through this principle when he gave an extended, nine-tape series about ten years ago on how to keep the Sabbath. That is where I got a lot of the material for this series I have given you, although condensed. The concept he emphasized over and over again, which is what I want to do also, is that we can keep from breaking the Sabbath in our homes when we do not have the ability to meet in a convocation, but we cannot really keep it. You can keep from breaking it, but you cannot legitimately keep it unless you are at one of those convocations where God has placed His name.

If you are in an area where you are isolated and cannot meet, then you can avoid breaking the Sabbath by doing everything else, but it is still not really keeping the Sabbath. Not even having a sermon tape in your house by yourself covers up the fact of not being in the place where God says His special presence would be, through Jesus Christ, at those assemblies.

The principle is, brethren, we cannot convoke by staying at home. This wasn't just an issue in the last-day Church. Obviously, the very same issue came up in the New Testament Church because Paul had to address it just as much. Yet, those words were written for us upon whom the ends of the world are come. So the very same challenges were going on within the Church at that time, and those who were Christians had a difficulty with the command to assemble, otherwise Paul wouldn't have written it. Let's notice what it was.

Hebrews 10:23–32:

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is . . .



Paul was dealing with it too. There were some at this time who were also laying claim to the philosophy of, *I can be separate. I don't have to come to church every Sabbath, even though it is within reach for me to do so even at some sacrifice. I am good with God by myself. You and me, Lord. I don't need the assembly of your people to appropriately keep the Sabbath or to be ok in your eyes.* Paul was reemphasizing that assembly is absolutely required.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

So it says, even as the day of the return of Jesus Christ gets closer, we should have that much more emphasis upon not forsaking that assembly. The requirement to convoke before God does not get less over time, brethren; it becomes even more compelling for those who want to live, obey, and uphold the truths of God.

It is those assemblies—the opportunity to come together, to hallow His name and Sabbath day, and to fellowship together—that are the source by which we gain strength, even to face the trials and difficulties in our lives. We need each other that much more, brethren, in that Spirit of unity and oneness. Sabbath-keeping and convoking on the Sabbath are incredibly critical parts of that process.

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

What does this have to do with Sabbath-keeping, assembling, and convoking? The same spirit that leads an individual to deny the requirement to convoke in an assembly with a minister is the very same spirit that separates us from Jesus Christ altogether. It is those, brethren, who are kicking over the traces, who will not come under any authority of a church—of an assembled body or congregation—who absolutely have separated themselves from Christ. No matter how long and loud they cry and claim they are good with God, it is just not true, brethren.

For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. But call to remembrance the former days [We are still talking about assembling, brethren. We are still talking about convoking.], in which, after ye were illuminated . . .

That was the time when you first came to the knowledge and understanding of the truth, the time when you heard that voice which changed your life. Or, you read that article or magazine, received that tape, or something that changed your life; and you understood and had your mind opened to the truth for the first time. That was the point of your illumination. Think back on that time as we read this.

. . . call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

When you first gained an understanding of the truth, when you were called and you had that initial first love and zeal for the truth, what were you willing to do—to sacrifice—to pursue that way of life and to learn more about God's truth and what He required of us? One of the greatest common sacrifices that people made in changing their lives was that they began to attend Sabbath services. In some cases, they drove hundreds of miles in order to be at God's holy convocations.

Didn't some of you experience that? Weren't some of you willing, years ago, to do that? Couldn't you tell your own stories about how far you were willing to drive and what sacrifices you made in order to be with God's people? You couldn't get enough of that learning, education, and truth, because you valued it so much. It had changed your life, and you couldn't be the same again.

Sabbath and Holy Day keeping, brethren, was one of the key things which facilitated that education and training. We were willing to sacrifice greatly in order to assemble. But as time goes on, human beings get tired and it becomes old hat. Before you know it, we're in a rut. Things are old; they are not new anymore. It becomes harder to get up off of the couch or out of the recliner. *Oh, I really don't feel like going to church today. I think I will just obey the Sabbath by resting here in my home. It is an awful long way to drive.*

That is what happens to us over time, and much more so as the Church has gradually aged. More of us are older, experiencing more health problems and difficulties which make it that much more of a challenge. God understands those things. If we are sick, if we are truly unable to be here, then He understands that. That is a judgment for each one of us, brethren, in our own lives. It is never to point at someone else and say, "Hmm, hmm, someone is not here today." Or, "I don't think they are doing everything they should be doing, because I was here when I had this. Why can't they be here?"

God is not going to accept that whatsoever. We are talking about self-analysis here. We are to apply those principles to ourselves and to ourselves only—not to anyone else. We all have to make those decisions. We are all going to bear our own burdens.

". . . after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions . . ." Yes, many of you did. You enjoyed the fellowship of those who thought like you did and who valued the truth as you did—the things your family members didn't understand. Yes, fight of afflictions within families, when you changed and you were no longer going to keep the holidays of the world. You weren't going to be there with them at birthday parties, and you weren't going to be doing this or that. You were going to use your spare time and vacation, not to go and visit your friends and family members, but to keep the Feast of Tabernacles and the other Holy Days.

What fight of afflictions did you encounter because of your commitment to the truth, when you made that choice? Yet, you were willing to do it because you loved it and valued it as a pearl of great price. Your sacrifices were worthwhile then. You valued all of those miles you traveled in order to convoke before God on His Sabbath days, because you were with those people who shared that unity of Spirit and that love for the truth.

Do we still have that same value, that level of commitment? Do we still value our fellowship one with another enough that we want to be together, even if it takes miles of travel and sacrifice?

My wife and I had the opportunity to be challenged in those ways in past years because of my work and living in different areas of the country. When I had a choice of moving somewhere, I never made a choice to move somewhere where I could not get together with another member of the body. I would receive calls from headhunters who wanted to hire me for a position here or there. The job sounded

great, a wonderful opportunity with a lot of money, but the first question I asked was, "Where is it?" Then, I would get out the map and say, "How far away is the nearest Church member?" If it wasn't near enough that I could make a trip, driving a few hundred miles, to convoke at least every other week or every third week, then I immediately wrote off the opportunity. I wasn't going to consider it.

I physically did not make the choice to move somewhere where I would not be able to convoke. That is just a personal rule I use for myself. We had an opportunity—probably the farthest we drove—when we lived in San Antonio, Texas. The nearest brethren were two and one-half hours north, and a little bit farther north were brethren that were three and one-half hours away. First then, we had to think about the fact that it was an awful long way to go. I'll tell you, we never became more blessed and more rewarded than when we made the decision to make the drive every other Sabbath. We would stay over night and have that fellowship. We strengthened our bonds with those brethren, and they are still incredibly close.

We would not have had the relationship we do now with those brethren in Texas had it not been for the willingness to sacrifice and to convoke on the Sabbath and Holy Days. It was the willingness to obey that command and put that first which led to the extra benefits. Now, we don't think about the sacrifices that were involved. We were young; we had no excuses not to do it.

I know, brethren, not all of you are capable of doing that. You have to have a good vehicle you can trust, and you have to have the health and the ability to do it. I know that many of you have made incredible sacrifices, even still today, because of your love and commitment for that way.

Mr. Armstrong told a story a long, long time ago that I remember, about a man, way, way back, who only attended Sabbath services every once in a while. This was back when Mr. Armstrong was still preaching, but had other ministers, before the start of Ambassador College, who were coming in and preaching on a rotational basis to these congregations. They weren't strictly Mr. Armstrong's congregations at the time.

This man would only come and meet when Mr. Armstrong was preaching because he didn't think he got as much out of the other preachers. What was Mr. Armstrong's answer to that? He told him, one, God requires the convocation every Sabbath; that is part of keeping it. Secondly, our responsibility before God is to sacrifice ourselves and to serve others.

The Sabbath day, a holy convocation, and a Sabbath service is not entertainment. It is not like picking up your Sunday paper, looking at the movie section and thinking, *Hmm, I wonder if there is something I want to go and see.* We don't pick and choose what we want and decide to go or not to go based upon whether it interests us.

Our responsibility as Christians, brethren, is to sacrifice ourselves to serve others and to convoke before God to show respect for Him. We must show that we fear Him and love Him. That means we don't make our decisions whether to show up based upon whether we think the program for the day is going to titillate our senses. We come because it is commanded. We show that respect and that fear for God, and we come to serve others.

Mr. Armstrong always put it in a very simplistic form; it is the way of give and the way of get. How much simpler can it be? Coming and convoking before Him on the Sabbath day is not just to get. It is to offer yourselves, as well, to your brothers and sisters of the common faith, to uplift them by your conversation and your participation. If we recognize that, brethren, as part of our Christian duty, it may really change our orientation to the decisions we make about convoking. At least, I hope it will.

All right, what about some of the specific do's and don'ts for convoking on the Sabbath? Let's begin with that. First of all, brethren, the overriding principle you want to keep in mind: if you have a question like, *Hmm, I wonder if this is appropriate or not,* concerning Sabbath services, behavior, and doing things, recognize that we are coming into the presence of God. He is the One who has promised to be with us here in this convocation. Therefore, you are coming into the presence of the Supreme God who made heaven and earth, who rules from His heavenly throne. That Royal King is here in Spirit in those places where He has placed His name, and you are coming into His presence.

That should be the overriding factor which guides every decision we make individually about what we are going to allow and what we are not going to allow. Let's focus on the Sabbath service itself. A lot of questions have come up that we have been asked, so I spent a lot of time talking with Mr. Cole and comparing notes with him before I put together all of these details. I wanted to make absolutely sure that we were on the same page.

He is the one with all of the years of experience—more than 50 years in the ministry—who has addressed probably every conceivable question that may have come up. So obviously, I defer to him. He is the one who taught me. He is the one who guided me to know, and then I became teachable, through his ministry, on how to keep the Sabbath. So I used him as a very strong resource.

First of all, Leviticus 19:30: "Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the [Eternal]." You will find that very exact statement made also in Leviticus 26:2. Obviously, it is important to God that we reverence His sanctuary and that we come before Him on the Sabbath day in the convocation He has called. We are to reverence His sanctuary, and the decisions we make should be reflective of that.

What are some specifics? What about conversation on the Sabbath and at Sabbath services? We should take into consideration that God is present with us, that this is His holy and hallowed day. Our conversations should be uplifting and inspiring one to another. It is not a time to discuss business or spend a lot of time on secular things. Now, the one thing I don't want to do is get so specific that we all walk into Sabbath services and we are all afraid we can't open our mouths because we are not sure what we can and can't say. That would be going overboard. That is not the intent.

Our conversation and fellowship should be inspiring and uplifting one with another. We don't conduct business on the Sabbath, so you wouldn't discuss business items whatsoever. You can talk appropriately about your work or past week, but it should be in context of the trials you are experiencing, or trials that maybe your family members are experiencing, or the blessings you have received. You can put mundane things in the context of the spiritual. If you apply them that way, so that they are not a distraction away from what we are supposed to be doing in hallowing the Sabbath, then it can be part of an inspirational, uplifting celebration.

Those are the overall guidelines. I am not going to give you a lot of do's and don'ts on various specifics in that regard. We all need to keep in mind the overall principles that guide: hallow the day; make sure it is God's day and not our own; it is not a time to conduct business; but it is a time to fellowship, to exchange ideas, and to be inspiring and uplifting one to another. We should avoid anything that would distract from the meaning and significance of the Sabbath. Avoid anything that would distract and pull someone's mind away from the significance of the Sabbath.

OK, what about dress for coming to Sabbath services? I am not going to give you a whole lot of do's and don'ts on this topic either. I am not going to talk about women's hemlines. The principle Mr. Armstrong taught is that when it comes to how we dress to come to church, recognize that we are coming before the King, in the presence of God—that Ruler in heaven. If you were to appear before any other dignitary of state, if you were invited to the White House to appear before the President of the United States or any other dignitary, how would you dress?

You would wear your best, wouldn't you? That is what Mr. Armstrong always said. You wear your best, because you are coming before God. Now, what does that mean? Well, for some, their best might be different than your best. This is also another issue where you do not look across the aisle and judge what someone else is wearing. This is for you to apply to yourself and me to apply to myself.

Mr. Cole tells the story of a man, years ago down in Texas, who was very poor, and he did not have any dress clothes whatsoever. The best he had was a pair of overalls. He came to services in his overalls, but they were neatly washed and pressed. It was the best he had. That is what he wore, and that was respected. Now, most of us can do better than that.

For men, typical dress which is considered formal, is a coat and tie. Is that absolutely required? I am not going to say that. A coat and tie is a cultural thing that has to do with today and this world we live in. There is not a scripture in the Bible that says, "You shall wear a coat and a tie," because the styles have changed over hundreds and thousands of years. They obviously weren't wearing ties and suit jackets back at the time of Jesus Christ.

Use the guideline. Understand the principles—the significance of what we are doing when we are coming before God, the most Supreme Dignitary of all. Are we dressing any differently in coming to services on the Sabbath day than we would if we were going to the White House? If we are, then we might want to think twice about what we choose to wear.

There is a funny story I heard, and I won't tell who told me, but one who has experience, years ago in the Church, was accosted about a hemline. What I was told is the old standard in the Church among some members was that the skirt should always come below the knee, and the way they tested you was to have you get down on your knees. When you got down on your knees, your dress should touch the ground. If it didn't, your skirt was too short.

We are not going to lay out those kinds of rules—neither Mr. Cole or myself—but I can tell you that God wants women and men to be dressed appropriately and discreetly. We do not follow the fads or styles of the time just because everyone else is doing it. If we take into account what God requires and what is appropriate and respectful, then both men and women should be making some important decisions about how they appear before Him. Once again, it is not for any one of us to judge anyone else in that regard. It is for us to apply these principles to ourselves.

What about children? Children should also be dressed appropriately for church. They should have—within your financial means—special clothes for the Sabbath. Now, is it required for children to dress like adults? Well, I remember the old child-rearing booklet that specifically rejected the idea that young children should be dressed up like adults in suits and ties.

I have trained my sons to wear suits and ties to get them used to the idea, because I didn't wear a tie until I was thirteen. My parents started making me wear a tie to go to church from the time I was about thirteen or fourteen. It was the first time I ever wore one, and I didn't like it. It is hard to get used to. So I thought I would try to make it a little easier on my boys, and I would get them used to the idea of dressing up. Some days, you will see them in a tie with a jacket. Other Sabbath services, I am a little more flexible on that, but it should be nice, special clothes that are designed to represent coming before God. As they get older, when they become young teenagers, I do recommend they should start using the same rules as adults, as far as for dressing.

Since we are talking about children, what about children's conduct on the Sabbath and in Sabbath services? I think I have mentioned this to you before, but the principle I have used for my sons is to make the Sabbath distinct and different. They should know there are rules on the Sabbath for their behavior that make it different from every other day of the week. One of the rules that applies all day on the Sabbath—not just at church, but especially at church—is no running. We don't run, frolic, and do all of this gregarious behavior in the same way we do on other days of the week, or even when we are in our homes. No, we respect the assembly—coming before God at His Sabbath services—so we act appropriately.

There is no running or roughhousing, and children should be taught to sit in services. I was taught to sit in services growing up in the Church; I didn't like it, but I got used to it. I wasn't allowed to get up in church and go out of the room, either for



excuses like getting a drink of water or going to the bathroom. I did it every once in a while, but things should be prepared for. Children should use the facilities before services, like adults should. We should get our drink of water before services. There should not be a lot of activity coming in and out of the hall.

Now, there are always exceptions to the rule. If there is an exception and you face one of those, then you need to do what you need to do. The trick is to focus on preparing as much as possible, so that we come, assemble, and during a solemn service that opens and closes with a prayer, we are here, assembled in a hall together as a body.

We do provide as much as possible for our larger congregations—both for the Sabbath services here and at the Feast of Tabernacles—a room for mothers with small children. Obviously, babies and small children are a special consideration. It takes time to train children. We had that with ours, but training children for Sabbath services does not happen at Sabbath services. That is the other thing Mr. Armstrong always taught. If you think you are going to bring your children to the church service and train them to sit quietly, that is a big mistake. It is not going to happen.

Coming to Sabbath services should be the final result of the training they get at home. Now, we had the great blessing and benefit of my wife being able to stay at home and not work. We had a routine with our boys to teach them with special blankets when they were really little. We used a special blanket for church for each one of them, and they came to recognize it as the "church blanket." During the week, every day, we would lay that blanket down in the living room, and there were special toys that went with it. What we taught them was that when the blanket comes out, you sit quietly on the blanket; you don't get off of the blanket; you play quietly with the toys that are there; and you are more than approved to lie down and take a nap at that time. That is the thing we enjoy the most. Make it so that they take their nap during church; then Mom and Dad feel really good.

That took time. Obviously, my wife was taking our sons out during Sabbaths and Holy Days, and there were some Feasts where she didn't get to hear many of the sermons. That is just a natural part of it. If we are using those principles and training as much as we can at home—preparing our children to sit and behave correctly during church—then it is ultimately going to happen. It does take effort.

I also realize it is a whole lot more difficult on a one-parent family. When your child has to be in a daycare every day with someone who is not going to be giving

them that training, then you have a lot more limited time with your child to do that training, and it is a lot more difficult. I am not discounting that whatsoever. However, if we keep those principles in mind, then we can still find every opportunity to instill those things so that our children will learn to behave appropriately.

OK, what else about the Sabbath? The Sabbath is a feast day. We already read that in Leviticus 23. The weekly Sabbath is one of God's feast days. It is not a fast day. Mr. Armstrong said that the weekly Sabbath is not the time to schedule your fast. It is not the time to say, "Well, I work every other day of the week, so the only time I have to fast is on the Sabbath."

As we have already discussed in the last sermons, the Sabbath represents the coming Millennium, the rule of Jesus Christ, and the fulfillment of that world-ruling government and all of its benefits. It is a glorious time that is to be celebrated. We picture that every single week when we keep the Sabbath. So the Sabbath is a day to rejoice. It is not a day to mourn, and it is not a day to fast. That is not when we get our fasting in.

Mr. Armstrong also said that if you had an extended fast—let's say for like four days; I don't know how many of us are doing four-day fasts—that you could encompass the Sabbath. However, you certainly, as a unique item, would not pick out the Sabbath day to be your fast day. It is a feast day.

The fact that it is a feast day also means that it does not come with any kind of limitations or requirements to have a certain number of meals. Depending on the time of year and how early or late the sun goes down, you may eat three meals or you may eat two meals. Those of us who have services in the afternoon very often eat a very late breakfast, and then, after services, we have our second meal of the day. There is nothing wrong with that at all; there is no ultimate or detailed requirement that you eat a certain number of meals. Just keep in mind, the overall requirement is that it is a feast, a joyous time.

It should be a special time for families. If you have ever thought of your family having a special day, make it the Sabbath. Obviously, we are talking about a family with two converted individuals and children, so that you have an opportunity collectively to keep these principles in your household. Many do not have that capability, but as a principle, it is good to understand. We can use the Sabbath as an opportunity to teach our children the value of it. It doesn't just have to be the day that

all the things they want to do are restricted and taken away. No, if we do it correctly, brethren, we can teach our children to love and value the Sabbath as well.

Yes, it is different, and yes, there is always going to be a certain amount of reaction. "I can't do this, and I can't do that," but there are a lot of things we can do as parents to make sure that the Sabbath day is something which has joy and special benefits. If a family in the Church has a special night that they have a special meal, it should be the Sabbath. Maybe Friday night is your special meal night—the one your children look forward to—not another mundane day of the week, but on the Sabbath. That is when we are supposed to be joyously feasting, taking the opportunity to spend quality time with our children and to teach them. Do it on the feast day; do it on that Sabbath.

Another major requirement, brethren: the Sabbath has a preparation day. If we violate the preparation day, we automatically are going to violate the Sabbath. Mr. Armstrong always said there is just as much, or more, violation of the preparation day than there ever is of the Sabbath. If you don't prepare properly to keep the Sabbath, you automatically are forced to break it.

Let's notice the example in Exodus 16:22. God, in reminding Israel and re-instituting the principles of the Sabbath day, used the gift of manna from heaven to teach them about the preparation day.

Exodus 16:22–26:

"And it came to pass, that on the sixth day . . ." That is Friday—the preparation day. ". . . they gathered twice as much bread . . ." Why? God said He was going to give extra abundance so they could gather more—enough to hold them over on the Sabbath—because there was not going to be any manna on the Sabbath. They would have to gather twice as much on the preparation day so they would have enough to tide them over.

And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the [Eternal] hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the [Eternal]: bake that which ye will bake to day [Our baking or heavy cooking is not done on the Sabbath; it is done on the preparation day.], and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for

you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein.

Remember, any other day that they tried to put aside extra, it never would last until the next day; it would be full of worms. Except on the preparation day, the Israelites gathered twice as much; and on the Sabbath day, it was still good and fresh. God used that physical example to show that there is a preparation day.

And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the [Eternal]: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

So brethren, when we are speaking about preparation and what we should be doing on Fridays, the main thing that usually generates the most questions is food preparation. Food preparation is that which primarily comes to mind. First, let's look and see what restriction is not incumbent upon Sabbath-keepers and God's people.

Exodus 35:2—here is a misunderstanding that has caused some to believe you are not supposed to heat food, light a fire on your stove, turn on your lights, or even have heat in your house. It is a misunderstanding of what the principle is.

Exodus 35:2–3:

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the [Eternal]: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.

Of course, at that time, fire was what they used in order to cook. They cooked over an open fire and also used it for light. So people have interpreted that as: if we are going to correctly keep the Sabbath, all we can do is cook our food ahead of time on Friday, and then, we have to eat cold food on the Sabbath. No, that is not what it is saying at all.

The intention here, and what we were always taught in the Church, is that the fires referred to here are fires used for work. It was a prohibition against those who thought that, because they were doing God's work in building the tabernacle, it was ok to work on the Sabbath. Here, the Israelites were commanded to build the tabernacle and to create and form with metallurgy all of the instruments that were

going to be used in temple worship. The idea sprang up that, *Hmm, we are doing the work of the Lord, so it is ok for us to work on the Sabbath, as long as we are working on the tabernacle.*

This prohibition was to emphasize the fact that it is not the fire we are talking about. We are talking about the work fires that were used in metallurgy, blacksmith, and smelting. The emphasis was that, no matter what the work is—even if it is work on the tabernacle—we are not going to break the Sabbath by doing that kind of work on God's holy and hallowed day. We are going to rest from our labors.

It is not just because you are doing some work that you think is for the benefit of the Church or the Body, which makes an exception to the rule. That is what this is addressing. It is not saying that we are not going to heat our food on the Sabbath day. It is not saying that we are not going to turn lights on or that we are not going to heat our homes—not at all. Remember, brethren, the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.

Our goal for the Sabbath is to make it a joy; it is a feast. It is not a burden; it is not an obligation that takes away our ability to rejoice. Eating cold food is certainly something that would take away an element of joy.

What is required on the preparation day? Our heavy cooking—baking, broiling, stewing. All of those things that come under the category of heavy cooking should be done on Friday before sundown. Then, what we should be doing as much as possible is just heating up those meals on the Sabbath day.

What else is ok, as far as cooking, on the Sabbath day? There is some limited cooking that is allowed on the Sabbath. In the series that Mr. Cole did, he referred to it as "light cooking," like breakfast. Cooking an egg, a piece of toast, or typically what we call breakfast food would be considered light cooking. Given that, as much as we possibly can, we prepare everything the day before, there are certain things that are very hard to prepare and wouldn't taste good if you tried to cook them ahead of time and hold them over. Eggs are one of those things that you wouldn't want to try to do the day before and reheat them. It just wouldn't work very well.

It was always allowed in the Church, and Mr. Armstrong taught that it was always appropriate to do light cooking. I know some in the Church who have become very creative about doing as much preparation as possible so that they can hold it over. Some have recipes for pancake or waffle batter that you can mix up

ahead of time and put in the refrigerator. That way, you don't have to do that mixing, if you are cooking from scratch which is always the best thing to do. Then, all you have to do is put it on the griddle Sabbath morning. We were always taught in the Church that those things are fine.

Still, I want to leave a certain amount of latitude, because you each are going to have to make your decisions. I know that, after this sermon, there are probably going to be more questions than there are answers, but I want to give you the guidelines so that you have a blueprint and a framework to go by.

So, light cooking is ok. Included in that is making a fruit or vegetable salad. If you do those too far in advance, they are not nearly as good. If it can be a fruit salad you make up ahead of time, then fine. Certain fresh vegetables and fruits are better if you cut them up right before you use them. That is permissible, but avoid anything that is considered heavy cooking, which is time consuming and will violate the principles of preparing.

We don't do anything that could have been done on the preparation day. If it is something that could have been done the day before and you chose instead to wait until the Sabbath day to do it, then you probably broke the principle.

What about cleaning dishes on the Sabbath? God is a God of cleanliness, not of chaos or filth. It is appropriate to clean up after ourselves, to clean up our dishes. Now, it is not appropriate to hold our dishes over from Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and then do them on the Sabbath. That is part of preparation. You do your cleaning and have that completed on Friday before the sun goes down, so that your home is in good shape for the keeping of the Sabbath. Is it permissible, after breakfast, to clean up your breakfast dishes? Absolutely.

Next principle: the Sabbath day is a rest day. We have already seen those commands in Leviticus 23 and Exodus 35. There is no work to be done; it is a rest day. Repeating Exodus 35:2:

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the [Eternal]: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.

Rest is one of the blessings and the benefits God gave to us. It is good for our health—not only physically and mentally, but also spiritually—to fulfill God's

command to rest on the Sabbath day. He made our bodies to function well when we rest, and the body requires rest to be healthy. People who drive themselves seven days a week, working, are hurting their health. God built in our systems a requirement for rest. Having that day when we rest from our labors, putting those things aside, is something God made for us. The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Rest is one of those key elements that proves it.

Brethren, it is not just enough to not go to work. You have your job; you go to the office, job site, or wherever. It is not enough just not to go to work. Rest is just as much mental as it is physical. We rest our minds from focusing on the mundane things that occupy us the other six days of the week. That takes some control. Resting means that we must be able to shut those things out. If you find yourself thinking about a problem or dwelling on it on the Sabbath day, get it out of there. Get on your knees and pray about it if you have to. Say, "God give me the capacity, the will to have the peace and control of the mind—to focus instead on hallowing your day. This is your special day, not mine; let me appropriately keep it."

We rest both our minds and bodies from labor. The exceptions include, as I have already mentioned, the work of the ministry. I have found that, from the time I was ordained, the Sabbath is not the same kind of rest day I used to have. When I stand on Sabbaths to give sermons, it requires preparation. There is a certain amount of physical, and obviously mental, work to do that. Yet, God has made provisions so that we are incredibly rewarded for doing the work of the ministry.

Another exception which Christ also provided in His confrontation with the Pharisees (we don't have time to turn to it) was circumcision. He chided with them for their extra laws and commands that they added to Sabbath-keeping, when, in fact, they were willing to uphold the law of Moses by performing circumcision, which is required after the eighth day. If it fell on the weekly Sabbath, you still fulfilled that law.

Obviously, there is probably no more demanding work than childbirth, is there? A baby is going to come when a baby is going to come, and there are certain times when that might fall on a weekly Sabbath day or Holy Day. That mother definitely is going to be doing a lot of work; and yet, that is not a violation of the Sabbath either.

Another major principle in keeping the Sabbath is that we do not do our own pleasure. It is not just a requirement that we keep it as a feast day, that we convoke,

that we prepare and rest; we also must avoid doing our own pleasure on the Sabbath. Notice Isaiah 58:13–14:

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the [Eternal], honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the [Eternal]; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the [Eternal] hath spoken it.

Yes, brethren, it is not just a matter of physical, technical obedience to avoid going to our place of work. We also resist doing the other mundane things that God considers our own pleasures, our own speaking, our own words, and our own ways. It is hallowed time, and we focus on spiritual things to honor God. It is a time, brethren, for praying. The Sabbath is a time for studying. It is a time for meditating and discussing spiritual things and a time for teaching our children.

Very often it is asked, "How do I fill up the Sabbath day? It can get to be really long and hard." I don't think there is any one of us who couldn't spend more time praying, studying, and applying ourselves to spiritual development. I know it is harder on those who are isolated and don't have others to meet with, even though you would love to. Being isolated can make it seem like much more of a burden. That is another reason why I encourage you, whenever possible, to take advantage of the opportunity to fellowship and convoke, even if it requires sacrifice.

Ask God for the help. Ask Him for the love of the Sabbath day, to give guidance to spend that time correctly, to have the desire and will to spend that time praying, studying, meditating and thinking on appropriate things that He is pleased with.

There are also, brethren, legitimate emergencies that do warrant exceptions on the Sabbath. Notice Luke 14:3–5:

And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took him, and healed him, and let him go; And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?



The lawyers and Pharisees of this time had many rules and requirements concerning people. They were criticizing Christ for healing on the Sabbath, saying it was an infraction. He used the very example of their hypocrisy by the fact that they recognized the requirement to care for their livestock. "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?"

An emergency comes up, something unforeseen; is it wrong to take care of that? Not at all. Is it ok to assist a neighbor if they have a house fire? Yes. I wouldn't think twice about it. If my neighbor's house was on fire on a Sabbath morning and I looked outside and saw smoke, I would run over there and do everything I could to help them.

What if there is a medical emergency and a neighbor wants to be taken to the hospital? Not getting into the choices we would make; but if someone needs your help and it is an emergency situation, yes, it would be appropriate, and in fact required, for you to help.

What if you come upon a car accident when you are driving home from church on the Sabbath, and someone needs assistance? Certainly, you would stop and help. I have an additional requirement with the medical training I went through for the National Ski Patrol as a first responder. I was taught that, if I am the first one at the scene of an accident, the law requires me to stop. I could get in a lot of trouble if I didn't. I wouldn't think twice about stopping and giving assistance on the Sabbath day.

We don't have time to turn to it, but you can look at Mark 3 where Christ asked the question, in performing a healing, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath?" Yes, it is. We don't use the concept of "doing good" as an excuse to do things we could have done on other days of the week but intentionally hold them to do on the Sabbath. No, that is a wrong principle. When an emergency comes up and a special need arises, you need not be concerned about taking care of that, even if it is on the Sabbath day.

OK, the long list now of appropriate and inappropriate activities on the Sabbath day. Remember the overriding principle. You are going to have to use your own judgment because we are not going to be able to cover all of these. I did try to collect as many as I possibly could. Not only did I take notes from the sermons Mr. Cole did about ten years ago, but I also asked for certain individuals' input on questions they

had. A number of individuals in the office gave me assistance with things they had questions about or would like answers to. So I compared notes with Mr. Cole and tried to provide some answers.

More than anything, what you are going to find is that these are guidelines. If you can apply the same logic used in making decisions on these, it will also help you make decisions that are not specifically addressed.

Overriding is that Isaiah 58 scripture we read before, ". . . nor finding thine own pleasure . . ." Keep that in mind and apply that as the yardstick when you ask yourself, *Is this right or is this not? Is this something that is ok and still allows me to hallow the Sabbath, or is this really seeking my own pleasure?*

What about television—watching the television on the Sabbath day? For the most part, no. Is it all right to watch a thirty-minute world news report? Yes. It has never been wrong to keep up with the news. Today though, with cable television, CNN, and all these others, you could watch news twenty-four hours a day if you wanted to. Would that be an appropriate use of the Sabbath day? Absolutely not. We are talking about moderation and using good judgment in just about everything. Is a thirty-minute world news report wrong? No.

I find more advantages in using the Internet these days, for those who have a computer, because you can go to a news site, condense it and get your news more quickly that way. You don't have to sit through all the commercials and advertisements that have no relevance. It is not wrong to watch a thirty-minute news report or a special event. A special event like the presidential inauguration would be ok to watch on the Sabbath. To turn the TV on and watch the swearing-in ceremony for a new president would be appropriate. There is no problem with that.

However, they had three or four hours of coverage. Would it be appropriate to turn it on when it started at 7:00 AM Pacific Time and watch it for four hours? No. You could turn it on for thirty minutes leading up to the time of the swearing-in ceremony. Something significant that has to do with world events is ok. That is an event which has to do, not with an election by the people, but with God placing that president in office, whether men recognize it or not. That is not a problem.

Here is a good one. What about programming your VCR ahead of time for a program that is going to be aired on the Sabbath day? Now this is an example I used on myself. I had to be willing to be taught. The reason I am where I am, doing what

I am today, and not running into spiritual problems myself is because I have always been willing to be taught by God's chosen ministry. I had a philosophical discussion on this topic about ten years ago with another member. I had never actually recorded a program on the VCR ahead of time, but we had this philosophical debate on whether that would be all right or not.

My initial reaction was that I didn't see a problem with it. I could set my VCR a week ahead of time, and it can record it. I don't even think about it, but the program is there; and later, I can watch it. However, after that, I had an opportunity to ask Mr. Cole what he thought about it. He said, "No, I don't like the principle." He said for that, he would use the very same principle as he would for watching a program. If it were a program that would be appropriate on the Sabbath, it wouldn't be wrong to record it so you could watch it later if it were going to be during the time you were at Sabbath services. If it were not a program that would be appropriate for you to watch, then it would also not be one that would be appropriate to record, even if your VCR is doing the work.

What about the radio? The same rules apply as for the television. An appropriate news program or some special event would be fine. However, I would not match together 30 minutes of TV, 30 minutes of radio, an hour of newspaper reading, and all of these others things to fill up half of your day on the Sabbath. All of these things should be done in moderation. Again, think about the overall principle. Are we hallowing the Sabbath day and honoring God in what we are doing, or are we looking for excuses to fill up our time to make the Sabbath go by faster?

So yes, a limited amount of newspaper reading is ok, but not sitting down and reading the entire paper cover to cover, and certainly not mundane things. I would avoid the comic strips, the crossword puzzles and all of those things.

What about books? Obviously, we are not going to spend our time reading novels. All of the things you do on the other six days of the week should not be done on the Sabbath day. Bible study and maybe certain other books—although I am not thinking off hand what might be allowable in that regard—would be fine. It should be unique, special, and should not violate the principle of keeping the Sabbath.

What about games? We have certain games we use with our children on the Sabbath day. Bible games, like a Bible trivia game, are appropriate. From the time they were small, we have allowed them certain special things they played with mainly

on the Sabbath, which made it special for them. Let's say, a jigsaw puzzle of Noah's ark or things like that. It is not wrong to allow your children to play—subdued play—but they should understand the difference between the Sabbath and other days of the week.

Someone asked me about computer games on the Sabbath. This is a question that has only come up in the last few years, because the Church never had to deal with it before the days of personal computers. I do not allow my children to play computer games on the Sabbath. It is just another opportunity I have to distinguish and make the Sabbath different and distinct from the other days of the week.

What about music? Music we play in our homes on the Sabbath should be inspirational. It should, again, be a glory to God. That dictates more classical music, but not everything in the category of classical music is appropriate either. There is a lot of inappropriate classical music that is not inspirational, uplifting, or any more of a glory to God than anything else you might listen to. You have to be very selective and keep those things in mind.

What about sports activities, swimming, and recreation? No. Those things have never been allowed or considered ok on the Sabbath day. That is a classic definition of seeking our own pleasure. Doing all of those things we want to do physically has nothing to do with hallowing God's Sabbath or honoring Him in any way. So we absolutely avoid those things on the Sabbath day.

What about taking a walk on the Sabbath? Taking a stroll on the Sabbath is not a problem. It should not be a long walk for the sake of exercise. If you are on an exercise program, Saturday is not the day to continue your exercise program. That would be wrong in principle; it is a rest day. It is not wrong, however, to take a leisurely stroll if you want to get some fresh air, look at the beautiful trees, the turning of the seasons, or whatever may be available. That is not a wrong principle whatsoever.

This also begs the point that you should not be judging someone else. If you drive through a neighborhood on Sabbath morning and you see a church member out walking, don't assume they are exercising. Assume they are strolling; don't presume they are breaking the Sabbath. All of these principles are to be applied to ourselves, not to anyone else.

What about driving? A short drive on the Sabbath, for the sake of seeing the scenery, is not a problem. Some people may be in a household that makes it difficult for them to keep the Sabbath. You might have an unconverted mate, which would make getting out and finding a place to have some quiet time a benefit—just to do some meditation and, again, focusing on the glory of God and your relationship with Him. That would not be a problem, but don't drive 100 miles. We can take anything to an extreme. Everything has to be within moderation, which brings up the next topic.

What about travel? Is there any limitation on how far it would be appropriate to drive to get to a Sabbath service? Most of the time, no. Even if you have 100 or 200 miles to travel in order to convoke before God, it would still be appropriate to do that on the Sabbath. That would still be pleasing in His eyes.

Would you do that for any other reason than to convoke in a place where God has placed His name? No. You would not start a long journey for your family vacation on the Sabbath. We have had the question, "What if I just get an early start—let's say like an hour before the sun goes down—so I can get a jump on things to get me down the road? I would only be driving an hour on the Sabbath." No, I wouldn't do it. You can wait until after the sun goes down to start a trip like that.

What about camping on the Sabbath? Generally, no, you do not plan a camping trip for the weekend to include a Sabbath day. Now, what about if you are on an extended trip? Would it be wrong to be on a week-long hunting or camping trip somewhere that would include a Sabbath day? No, not at all. If you were on an extended trip for several days, it would not be wrong to be out on the Sabbath.

The principle of Sabbath-keeping and convoking does not restrict us to never go anywhere or leave our homes. You can make a trip somewhere. If you are away from home on the Sabbath day and not in a place where you can convoke, you cannot officially keep the Sabbath in its fullness, but you can avoid breaking it. So if you were on an extended camping trip, that would be permissible. On the day of the Sabbath, you would just make sure you restricted your activities and did the best you could to not violate any other principles of the Sabbath.

It is not a requirement that we can never take a long trip as a family, that we are stuck at home because we always have to be home before the Sabbath in order to be able to go to church services. On an exceptional basis, plan a family trip, go somewhere. That is not a problem, but you do not use the Sabbath as your focal point for your time off.

Let's say you are going to have a three-day weekend with Monday off, so you want to go on a three-day camping trip. You might think, *Oh boy, I have the Sabbath, Sunday and Monday.* No, that would be inappropriate to plan a trip like that. You are using the Sabbath as a way to fulfill your pleasure, to leverage your time to get more camping in. That would be an inappropriate use.

What about marital relations on the Sabbath? Mr. Armstrong always asked the question, "Is it wrong to love on the Sabbath?" No, it is not.

What about attending occasions like weddings? We were always allowed to attend weddings, but in the old days, it used to be a religious service. Nowadays, I question it more because couples write their own vows which have nothing to do with God, let alone respecting His laws of marriage. As an overall principle, though, it is not wrong to attend a wedding.

How about the reception? No, you don't attend a reception. It is appropriate to go to the wedding if it is a family member or close friend. Go attend the wedding ceremony, and then leave as quickly as you can. Would you attend a wedding if it conflicted with Sabbath services? No. If you have to make a choice between appearing before God at His commanded assemblies or going to an event like a wedding, you would not go to the wedding. Tie always goes to God and His holy convocations.

What about funerals? Funerals for our family members within the Church should not be planned on the Sabbath. I know family members, in a very distraught situation, can run into problems and difficulties. It can be very difficult to make arrangements, especially if you are dealing with funeral directors who don't like to do them on Sundays. I know there are problems that can come up, but generally, the rule is you would not plan a funeral on the Sabbath and you would not attend a funeral on the Sabbath day.

Now, there might be certain very rare exceptions because of the individuals involved. That, I would suggest you talk to the ministry about. Generally, as a rule, you would not attend a funeral, graduation ceremony, or any other school functions, like a high school reunion or something like that. Those are not appropriate things that justify taking you away from the Sabbath.

What about visiting the sick? It is not wrong to visit the sick on the Sabbath day, but I have known people who have used the Sabbath as an excuse to do their

"good works." They would go to visit people in nursing homes and things like that. They would do that instead of going to church services or spending their time in any way that God requires of us to hallow His Sabbath day. So again, there are limitations. We certainly would not plan to visit the sick on the Sabbath when we could fit it in on other days of the week.

The Sabbath day is not to be used as a dumping ground for all of the activities we can't get done in our own time. Do you understand what I am saying? It is not appropriate to save things for the Sabbath because you do not have time to get them done at other times. If you can't find the time on your six days of the week to go and visit someone in a nursing home, don't default and just do it on the Sabbath day. That would be inappropriate.

What about entertaining guests? Well, over the years, we all probably have had an experience where unexpected family members drop in, come in from out of town, or stay over on the Sabbath day, when you're not prepared for it. It is not a problem to have family or guests in your home on the Sabbath day. It is always better for them to know ahead of time that you do keep the Sabbath, that it is not a normal day, and that you do go to church services, if you are in an area where you can. You should not avoid going to Sabbath services just because you have guests from out of town.

Is it wrong to pick someone up from the airport on the Sabbath? No. If family members make their flight schedules and are coming into town to visit, it is not wrong to go and pick them up at the airport or train station, or to drop them off.

What happens if you are not prepared? What about eating out on the Sabbath? Eating out on the Sabbath is wrong. It is a violation of the Sabbath and the preparation day. We do not go out and pay for food at a restaurant on the weekly Sabbath day when we had the opportunity to prepare ahead of time. Now, that is different from the Holy Days, especially when we are at the Feast of Tabernacles. We are away from home; we don't bring all of our groceries with us, and it is not a requirement that we do so. It is appropriate, and has always been approved by Mr. Armstrong from the very beginning, that we eat out at restaurants on the Holy Days when we are at the Feast of Tabernacles or a great distance from home.

However, when we are in our normal home location under normal circumstances, you do not choose to go and eat at a restaurant. Now, if you have sudden, unexpected guests from out of town and you are not prepared to have them

there, then yes, it would be appropriate in that case to take them out to a restaurant to eat. It would have to be an exception, though—only because you did not have enough, and you were caught off guard and were unable to prepare to have them in your home.

What about telephone calls? The use of the telephone should also be limited. It is appropriate to call, fellowship, and talk, especially if you are doing it as a service and a value to those in the Body who are lonesome and alone, who need encouragement, help, and support. Making a telephone call to fellowship over the phone on the Sabbath is very appropriate. I know some of you do that because you know it is easier to find someone when they are at home on the Sabbath day than it might be during the week.

What about letter writing? Letter writing is ok as well, but, again, writing personal letters should not be something you forego doing during the week and just push off until the Sabbath. It is not wrong to write a personal letter on the Sabbath, but don't save and hold your entire personal letter writing and do it on the Sabbath.

What about reading your mail? A personal letter that comes in is fine, but don't open your bills and don't do your business or promotional offers. You can take them out of the mailbox, but I wouldn't sort through and handle all of your mail. If it is a personal letter from someone, no problem—open it and read your letter.

Caring for livestock. Obviously, God wants us to take care of our livestock. Jesus Christ gave it as an example. You would not only take them out to water on the Sabbath, but you would also milk your cows or goats. Is it advisable to have a big dairy operation that is going to require you to do a whole lot of work? If you are a member of the Church, it is probably not a good idea. It is not wrong to milk your farm animals on a limited scale, as long as it doesn't force you into violating the real principles of keeping the Sabbath and being able to rest.

Those are just a few of the overview principles, brethren. If we understand the decision-making process that is required in evaluating our responsibilities before God, then we can make these decisions. We can be sure that we are keeping the Sabbath—not the way men do, by either liberalizing, or going above and beyond and creating extra laws and rules—but we can fulfill His will, and we can truly hallow His Sabbaths.