

The Sabbath Is a Delight
Russell M. Nelson, *Ensign*, May 2015

Dear brothers and sisters, these two days of conference have been glorious. We have been uplifted by inspiring music and eloquent prayers. Our spirits have been edified by messages of light and truth. On this Easter Sunday, we again unitedly and sincerely thank God for a prophet!

The question for each of us is: because of what I have heard and felt during this conference, how will I change? Whatever your answer might be, may I invite you also to examine your feelings about, and your behavior on, the Sabbath day.

I am intrigued by the words of Isaiah, who called the Sabbath “a delight.”¹ Yet I wonder, is the Sabbath really a delight for you and for me?

I first found delight in the Sabbath many years ago when, as a busy surgeon, I knew that the Sabbath became a day for personal healing. By the end of each week, my hands were sore from repeatedly scrubbing them with soap, water, and a bristle brush. I also needed a breather from the burden of a demanding profession. Sunday provided much-needed relief.

What did the Savior mean when He said that “the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath”?² I believe He wanted us to understand that the Sabbath was His gift to us, granting real respite from the rigors of daily life and an opportunity for spiritual and physical renewal. God gave us this special day, not for amusement or daily labor but for a rest from duty, with physical and spiritual relief.

In Hebrew, the word Sabbath means “rest.” The purpose of the Sabbath dates back to the Creation of the world, when after six days of labor the Lord rested from the work of creation.³ When He later revealed the Ten Commandments to Moses, God commanded that we “remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.”⁴ Later, the Sabbath was observed as a reminder of the deliverance of Israel from their bondage in Egypt.⁵ Perhaps most important, the Sabbath was given as a perpetual covenant, a constant reminder that the Lord may sanctify His people.⁶

In addition, we now partake of the sacrament on the Sabbath day in remembrance of the Atonement of Jesus Christ.⁷ Again, we covenant that we are willing to take upon us His holy name.⁸ The Savior identified Himself as Lord of the Sabbath.⁹ It is His day! Repeatedly, He has asked us to keep the Sabbath¹⁰ or to hallow the Sabbath day.¹¹ We are under covenant to do so.

How do we hallow the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things not to do on the Sabbath. It wasn't until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a sign between me and my Heavenly Father.¹² With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don'ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, “What sign do I want to give to God?” That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear.

Though the doctrine pertaining to the Sabbath day is of ancient origin, it has been renewed in these latter days as part of a new covenant with a promise. Listen to the power of this divine decree:

“That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High. ...

“And on this day ... let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, ... that thy joy may be full. ...

“And inasmuch as ye do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances, ... the fulness of the earth is yours.”¹³

Imagine the scope of that statement! The fulness of the earth is promised to those who keep the Sabbath day holy.¹⁴ No wonder Isaiah called the Sabbath “a delight.” How can you ensure that your behavior on the Sabbath will lead to joy and rejoicing? In addition to your going to church, partaking of the sacrament, and being diligent in your specific call to serve, what other activities would help to make the Sabbath a delight for you? What sign will you give to the Lord to show your love for Him?

The Sabbath provides a wonderful opportunity to strengthen family ties. After all, God wants each of us, as His children, to return to Him as endowed Saints, sealed in the temple as families, to our ancestors, and to our posterity.¹⁵

We make the Sabbath a delight when we teach the gospel to our children. Our responsibility as parents is abundantly clear. The Lord said, “Inasmuch as parents have children in Zion ... that teach them not to understand the doctrine of repentance, faith in Christ the Son of the living God, and of baptism and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of the hands, when eight years old, the sin be upon the heads of the parents.”¹⁶

Years ago the First Presidency stressed the importance of quality family time. They wrote:

“We call upon parents to devote their best efforts to the teaching and rearing of their children in gospel principles which will keep them close to the Church. The home is the basis of a righteous life, and no other instrumentality can take its place or fulfill its essential functions in carrying forward this God-given responsibility.

“We counsel parents and children to give highest priority to family prayer, family home evening, gospel study and instruction, and wholesome family activities. However worthy and appropriate other demands or activities may be, they must not be permitted to displace the divinely-appointed duties that only parents and families can adequately perform.”¹⁷

When I ponder this counsel, I almost wish I were a young father once again. Now parents have such wonderful resources available to help them make family time more meaningful, on the Sabbath and other days as well. They have LDS.org, Mormon.org, the Bible videos, the Mormon Channel, the Media Library, the Friend, the New Era, the Ensign, the Liahona, and more—much more. These resources are so very helpful to parents in discharging their sacred duty to teach their children. No other work transcends that of righteous, intentional parenting!

As you teach the gospel, you will learn more. This is the Lord’s way of helping you to comprehend His gospel. He said:

“I give unto you a commandment that you shall teach one another the doctrine of the kingdom.

“Teach ye diligently . . . , that you may be instructed more perfectly . . . in doctrine, in the law of the gospel, in all things that pertain unto the kingdom of God.”¹⁸

Such study of the gospel makes the Sabbath a delight. This promise pertains regardless of family size, composition, or location.

In addition to time with family, you can experience true delight on the Sabbath from family history work. Searching for and finding family members who have preceded you on earth—those who did not have an opportunity to accept the gospel while here—can bring immense joy.

I have seen this firsthand. Several years ago, my dear wife Wendy determined to learn how to do family history research. Her progress at first was slow, but little

by little she learned how easy it is to do this sacred work. And I have never seen her happier. You too need not travel to other countries or even to a family history center. At home, with the aid of a computer or mobile device, you can identify souls who are yearning for their ordinances. Make the Sabbath a delight by finding your ancestors and liberating them from spirit prison!¹⁹

Make the Sabbath a delight by rendering service to others, especially those who are not feeling well or those who are lonely or in need.²⁰ Lifting their spirits will lift yours as well.

When Isaiah described the Sabbath as “a delight,” he also taught us how to make it delightful. He said:

“If thou turn away . . . from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, . . . and shalt honour [the Lord], not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:

“Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”²¹

Not pursuing your “own pleasure” on the Sabbath requires self-discipline. You may have to deny yourself of something you might like. If you choose to delight yourself in the Lord, you will not permit yourself to treat it as any other day. Routine and recreational activities can be done some other time.

Think of this: In paying tithing, we return one-tenth of our increase to the Lord. In keeping the Sabbath holy, we reserve one day in seven as His. So it is our privilege to consecrate both money and time to Him who lends us life each day.²²

Faith in God engenders a love for the Sabbath; faith in the Sabbath engenders a love for God. A sacred Sabbath truly is a delight.

Now, as this conference comes to a close, we know that wherever we live we are to be examples of the believers among our families, neighbors, and friends.²³ True believers keep the Sabbath day holy.

I conclude with the farewell plea of Moroni, as he closed the Book of Mormon. He wrote, “Come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then . . . are ye sanctified in Christ.”²⁴

With love in my heart, I leave this with you as my prayer, testimony, and blessing in the sacred name of Jesus Christ, amen.