

[The Sabbath](#)

The sanctity of [the Sabbath](#) was instituted at Creation. After His creative work of six days, God rested on the seventh day and hallowed it. By hallowing it, God set the seventh day apart. He consecrated it as holy. Proper [observance](#) of [the Sabbath](#) was one of the [Ten Commandments](#) given at Mount Sinai. It is important to remember that its institution was an integral part of the creation covenant. In the Old Testament, violation of the [Sabbath](#) was a [capital](#) offense.

The word [Sabbath](#) means “seventh.” That is why some insist that Saturday is the only proper day to celebrate the Sabbath, and that it is illegitimate to [observe](#) it on Sunday. However, historic Christianity has always observed Sunday as [the Sabbath](#) because in the New Testament it is “the Lord’s day,” the day of Christ’s resurrection. The principle of Sabbath, one in seven, remains intact. The weekly [Sabbath](#) has been in perpetual effect since Creation and was observed by the apostles.

Questions of proper Sabbath [observance](#) continue to be debated among theologians. Most agree that [the Sabbath](#) includes a mandate to rest from all but necessary commerce or labor. The [Sabbath](#) is also a time for corporate worship and special attention to the study of God’s Word. It is a special time of rejoicing in Christ’s resurrection and in the hope of our Sabbath rest in heaven.

Disagreement centers on the role of recreation and works of mercy. Some regard recreation as a worldly violation of the Sabbath, while others insist it is an important part of rest and refreshment. The Bible nowhere explicitly promotes or prohibits recreation on the Sabbath, though the meaning of *pleasure* in Isaiah 58:13 may suggest that it is prohibited.

A less strident debate focuses on the issue of works of mercy. Many appeal to Jesus’ example of special ministry on [the Sabbath](#) Day as an

implicit command for [Christians](#) to be actively engaged in works of mercy on the Sabbath, such as visiting the sick. Others contend that Jesus' example proves that it is lawful and good to be so engaged, but that what is allowed is not necessarily required. (That such works of mercy are not limited to the [Sabbath](#) is clear.)

Summary

1. [The Sabbath](#) was instituted at Creation and is still in force.
2. [Sabbath](#) means "seventh." It refers to a cycle of one day in seven.
3. The early church celebrated [the Sabbath](#) on the Lord's Day, moving the [Sabbath](#) from Saturday to Sunday (the first day of the week).
4. [The Sabbath](#) requires cessation from regular labor (except necessary labor) and the assembly of saints in corporate worship.
5. There is disagreement over the propriety of recreation and the necessity of works of mercy on the Sabbath.

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