

# Leaders' Notes

The Ten Great Freedoms  
Sermon #5

First Brethren Church of Sarasota, Florida  
January 31, 2010

Dear Growth Group Leader:

This week I want to encourage you to be diligent in reaching out to your growth group members that are not attending regularly. I guess I need to write this because I'm not very good at it. It probably stems from a fear of rejection. I don't want to call someone and have them tell me that they don't like the growth group meetings. But I have often had people tell me that they had stopped attending church or a Bible study because of a personal issue and they wondered why nobody called them. Now, that is a problem for those who don't come to worship. It is difficult to identify those who have missed two or three Sundays in a row. I'm sure we shouldn't call everybody who missed each Sunday. Sometimes people have to take responsibility for their own attendance at a service.

However, in the small groups it is not difficult to identify who has fallen off in their attendance. We need to find out why. It may be because their health has been bad or their strength is failing. It may be because they have some other personal problem. Even if it is because they don't like the group, we need to know why. Is your group somehow failing to meet their needs for fellowship and friendship? Are the questions too elementary or too difficult? We may not be able to please everyone but if we find out what people are thinking, we can probably help our people better.

If you have ideas for improvement, let me know. I don't like to hear criticism but I prefer it to unspoken disapproval.

You also may want to ask Iris about her idea of having her group to her house for a special fellowship meeting with potential members for next quarter. I think it sounds like a great idea.

Blessings,

Pastor David

## Freedom of rest

*Exodus 20:8-11*

### Freedom from slavery to work

“Sabbath” comes from the Hebrew “to cease”.

The Sabbath predated the law. It began at creation.

### Freedom from slavery to the Sabbath

We are no longer required to observe the Sabbath.

*Galatians 4:8-11, Colossians 2:16-17*

Jesus fulfilled the Sabbath rest.

*Matthew 11:28-30*

The Sabbath was given by God for our blessing.

*Mark 2:23-28*

### Free to rest

Sabbath-keeping is not the problem—legalism is.

*Romans 14:5-6*

The Sabbath reminds us we need to rest.

The Sabbath reminds us we need God's help.

God doesn't need ours.

The Sabbath reminds us we need fellowship with God.

*Luke 10:38-42*

# Home Bible Study

## Freedom of intimacy with God

### Getting started

1. Did any part of the sermon make you think?
2. What did Jesus mean in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”

God’s commands are not a burden to test us. If they are a test, they are a test of whether we trust that God is working for our good. His commands are guidelines to make our lives better. The Pharisees were making the Sabbath another burden and a heavy one at that. This is important because if it is true, as I believe, that we are not *required* to keep the Sabbath, then we should decide whether we *want* to keep the Sabbath and how we want to do so. We should want to find the rest and restoration that God designed the Sabbath to provide.

3. Why do so many find the idea of the Sabbath to be so difficult? What drives us to fill all of our time with goal-oriented activities?

I believe some people get their feelings of self-worth and significance from their jobs. They are constantly driven to work harder and longer in order to prove their worth. Of course, honest work is ennobling and honorable but it will never provide the significance that can only come from being a child of the Creator of the universe.

Others may work so hard because they are trying to make more money to make ends meet. This may be a problem of overspending, confusing wants with wishes. It may also be a problem of trusting in money rather than in God.

Others may just be imitating those who are workaholics. Our society really encourages and honors workaholics.

### Going deeper

4. Read Luke 13:10-17. What did the ruler of the Synagogue not understand about the Sabbath? What did Jesus teach instead?

The ruler of the Synagogue thought that the Sabbath was a burden God gave us to test our devotion to him and should be followed even when it

was obviously a terrible alternative. Jesus taught that it was not only allowed but a good thing to do good on the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made for our benefit.

5. Read Galatians 4:8-11. What does Paul teach about the Sabbath here? Is it wrong for Christians to keep a Sabbath? Is it wrong for Christians to insist on others keeping a Sabbath? In short, what should the Sabbath mean to us as Christian believers?

Obviously the Sabbath is not only not required for Christian believers, it can become a hindrance to our relationship with God if our motives are not correct. Reading the rest of Galatians I believe shows that the problem is when we put our faith in works done for God rather than in the grace of God. If I think that God approves of me, or loves me more, because I stop working one day of the week, then I am not trusting God’s grace. My religion is all about me and how good I am rather than in the grace and mercy of God. Whatever I do with the Sabbath, it should be because I trust God’s ideas are for my blessing and not a vain attempt to earn God’s favor.

### Putting it into practice

6. Do you think you need a Sabbath in your life?

I believe we should follow the Sabbath because it is good for us, not out of a slavish obedience to the fourth commandment. The Sabbath is hard-wired into our nature. We will do better work and have better mental and physical health if we keep a day for praying and playing.

7. What would you have to reorder in your life in order to have a Sabbath?

This is highly individual. If someone has to work three jobs to make ends meet, then maybe they are trying to support to high a lifestyle. They may need to downsize their lives and take a day off now and then. They may need to reorder their priorities for their free time. They may need to turn off the TV now and then. What do you think?