Keeping the Sabbath Holy

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From a young age, I knew it was the Sabbath whenever I heard the hymn, “O Happy Day that Fixed My Choice”. To me, the Sabbath was when all the brothers and sisters would gather in church to worship God together.

But nowadays, it seems that some no longer see the Sabbath in the same way. Looking around the chapel, the pews are sparsely filled.

Do you know that it is the Sabbath? Has the Sabbath become less important in your life?

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words. Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Isaiah 58:13–14

From this passage, what should your attitude and mentality be towards keeping the Sabbath so that your faith can be strengthened?

1. Keep the Sabbath holy

“Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations…” (Ex 31:13b).

The Sabbath is a special day, for God made it holy and blessed it (Gen 2:1–3). Furthermore, the Ten Commandments, given to Moses by God on Mount Sinai, included the fourth commandment: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8).

Since the seventh day is sanctified as the Sabbath by God, it belongs to Him. If you are aware of this, you will not look lightly upon the Sabbath; rather, as the child of God, you will make the determination to draw near to worship Him and take heed of your actions by governing your heart and thoughts (Eccl 5:1).

It was the custom of Jesus and His disciples to enter the synagogue on the Sabbath and read the Scriptures. In the same way, you can also come to the chapel to pray, to read the Bible, to serve and to worship God on the Sabbath. Use your time to join

Forthcoming Events

(June 2013-August 2013)

National:

- **June 12–16**: International Youth Fellowship — Newcastle, Pr. Steven Shek
- **June 23–25**: Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — Gifford Park, Pr. Johnny Liu & Pr. FF Chong
- **June 28–30**: Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — London Central
- **June 30-July 3**: Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — Elgin, Pr. Johnny Liu & Pr. FF Chong
- **July 7–9**: Church Dedication & Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — Leicester
- **July 12–14**: Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — Forest Hill, Pr. TK Chin & Pr. Joseph Shek
- **July 20–21**: Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — Cambridge, Pr. TK Chin & Pr. Joseph Shek
- **July 22–24**: Spiritual and Evangelical Convocation — Newcastle, Pr. Michael Chan & Pr. Steven Shek
- **July 29-August 3**: National Student Spiritual Convocation — Edinburgh, Gifford Park & Elgin, UKGA preachers / RE Department
- **August 4–25**: Youth Theological Training Course — Leicester & London, UKGA preachers

Cardiff:

- **June 1**: Pastoral ministry, Bro. Ken Zhou
- **June 12-23**: Pastoral ministry & Training, Pr. TK Chin
- **July 1–8**: Pastoral ministry & Training, Pr. Joseph Shek
- **August 8–12**: Pastoral ministry, Dn. Thomas Chan

Europe:

- **June 3–10**: Pastoral Visit, Pr. Joseph Shek & worker

Africa:

- **May 2–June 2**: Ghana & Togo, Pastoral ministry & Training, Pr. TK Chin & volunteer(s)
- **May 22–June 18**: Zambia, Pastoral ministry & Training, Pr. FF Chong & volunteer(s)
- **June**: Tanzania, Student Convocation, Volunteers & Kenya workers

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:18)
2. Call the Sabbath a delight

Today, the people of the world delight in the things they pursue in life. But many centuries ago, Solomon re-assessed his desire to chase after physical pleasures:

Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure,
For my heart rejoiced in all my labor;
And this was my reward from all my labor.
Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done
And on the labor in which I had toiled;
And indeed all was vanity and a fleeting shadow.
There was no profit under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 2:10–11

In the end, the things that man takes pleasure in are meaningless.

You may feel that attending Sabbath services are troublesome or a burden. However, if you look at it another way, the Sabbath is a day when you can put aside your worries and enjoy the spiritual rest we gain from the word of God.

True delight can be found when you go to church (Ps 122:1), for in the house of God, there is strength and joy (1 Chr 16:27). With a heart of joy, you will be spiritually uplifted, as if you are riding on the high hills of the earth. And you will receive satisfaction when you come before Him, as you are fed with the words of God and the heritage of Jacob (Isa 58:14), that is, God Himself and His goodness.

3. Respect and honour this day

To show respect when you attend a wedding, you will make an effort to dress appropriately and attend the ceremony on time. Likewise, you should treat the Sabbath as a day worthy of respect by doing the same.

How can you show respect for the Sabbath? You can do so by not doing your own things, or speaking your own words, or pursuing your own pleasures (Isa 58:13). Turn your focus back to God and worship Him, instead of concentrating on your own matters. This shows that you honour God more than yourself.

Perhaps you only attend one worship service or arrive at church in your own time. But if you respect the Sabbath day, you would arrive in church before the service begins, and use your heart to sing hymns, listen to the sermons spoken and pray.

Because this day belongs to God, God will respect those who respect Him and honour the Sabbath (1 Sam 2:30).

Conclusion

The Sabbath is not only a day blessed by God, but also when God can bless you and satisfy your soul.

May you honour this day with a reverent heart, and let Sabbath be a happy day that fixed your choice on Jesus, our Saviour and God.

UK Church News

Elgin

On 1 January, our New Year’s thanksgiving service was titled, “Looking Back, Looking Forward”. We received encouragements from the Religious Affairs Officer, Bro. Denny Chan, to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Ps 122:6–9), and reflections and testimonies from Dns. Mary Tang, Sis. Margaret Shek and Sis. Pearl Shek. These sisters reflected on the Lord’s mercy and love bestowed to them during their weak times in faith and His help on their future journeys. There were also hymnal presentations from three groups, with one group incorporating musical instruments to praise the Lord’s great and affectionate love. During the New Year’s meal, gifts were given to the children, the elders and to each family. We were joined by working and studying brethren who visited us from around the UK.

From 11–23 January, Pr. Johnny Liu came to pastor the church, led interpretation training and the adults’ Bible study. He also visited the Aberdeen members and assisted in the preaching work.

On 10 February, we held a “Brethren Day”, led by the RE Department and the Youth Co-ordinators. The activities involved games to encourage better communication and to learn about each other. Everyone was enthusiastic, and filled with laughter and spiritual joy. Coincidentally, it was also the Chinese New Year, and we enjoyed our meal together with thanksgiving. The day ended with everyone singing, “In Lord Jesus, We are One Family”.

In March, Pr. Johnny Liu returned and assisted in the evangelical work in Inverness, gospel training, workers’ fellowship, RE prayer session and the visitation work in Aberdeen.

Gifford Park

Thank God, Gifford Park has had a most blessed and fruitful start to the year. On 1 January, the members gathered together in worship for the New Year’s thanksgiving service, to give thanks for the past year and to look forward to the coming year. Each household brought some food to share in fellowship over tea break.

During his pastoral visit in February and March, Pr. FF Chong led a special theological training, aimed at the church board members of both Gifford Park and Edinburgh TJCs. The training lasted for three weeks, in which we studied teachings from the Book of Jeremiah, and doctrinal lessons on the Holy Spirit and water baptism. We hope to resume the training when Pr. Chong returns to Edinburgh.
Newcastle

Praise to our heavenly Father for the dawn of another exciting and blessed year. At our annual thanksgiving service, we gave thanks for the past year and renewed our hearts to serve Him better. On 21 January, Pr. Steven Shek continued Bible studies on Exodus chapter 34 and led a sermon training session. On 27 January, Sis. Angela Liu and Sis. Hazel Lai introduced the important work of RE in Africa and also encouraged the RE Teachers to participate in this work.

The start of February began with a Sisters Fellowship meal, a fellowship for the elderly and a thanksgiving service to celebrate the Lunar Chinese New Year. On 16 February, we held the National Hymnal Composition Workshop across the UK churches, in preparation for Ministry Volunteer Program (MVP) in May. The workshop united the talents of our youths to compose children’s hymns based on the Ten Basic Doctrines.

We were blessed to host the 3rd Adult Theological Training Course on 18–21 February. Pr. HH Ko led and encouraged the attendees with the study of Revelation chapters 4–6, about the opening of the scroll and the seven seals.

On 9–10 March, many prospective couples attended this year’s Pre-Marriage Course, led by Pr. Michael Chan. There was a local Sister’s Fellowship service on 18 March, and on 24 March, the RE Teachers joined their counterparts in Sunderland for the RE Teachers’ Training led by Pr. Michael Chan.

Sunderland

Thanks to the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus, we have been able to purchase the building next door, on Williamson Terrace, previously a council-run home for at-risk teenagers.

We learnt the building was possibly up for sale in December 2011. Seeing a rare opportunity for expanding the church premises, we contacted Sunderland City Council for more information. The building was owned by the Three River Housing Association, so we wrote to them asking to be notified about the sale of the building.

We heard nothing until April 2012, when Dn. David Ho and Pr. Michael Chan noticed a “For Sale” sign on the building. However, the sign was taken down the next day and the estate agents had no information because the property was new to the market.

Thank God, the estate agents kept us informed. We contacted the seller in May 2012, but the sale was to be conducted through closed bids in the following weeks, where the seller would also take into account the proposed use of the building.

Time was of the essence, so we held an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) in June 2012. The congregation voted unanimously in favour of offering a bid, and a majority consensus voted for allowing the church board to decide on how much to offer, within budgetary allowances.

In July, after the board members had viewed the property, a bid of £264,000 was submitted. Thank God, the offer was accepted in August. Some minor issues delayed the process, but the transaction was finally completed at the start of this year.

The members in Sunderland are united in joy and thanksgiving for God’s guidance and providence, especially as plans to extend the church building have been discussed for over ten years. Minor renovations have started and, God willing, the building will be fit for use soon.

On 9 March, we held an evangelical service with the theme “To An Everlasting Home”. Thank God, eighteen friends heard the message, delivered by Pr. Steven Shek, and hymns were presented by the Harmony Choir.
Leicester

During our New Year’s thanksgiving service on 6 January, Pr. Johnny Liu reminded us of God’s grace in giving us a big new church building to worship Him in, and encouraged us to do our part by spreading God’s word and serving Him all the more.

The first evangelical service of the year was held on 23 February. Pr. Johnny Liu spoke on the topic “Why the True Church?”. The service was attended by four truth-seeking friends, including a lady who had visited the church previously.

On 17 March, we had the pleasure of welcoming many visiting London Church members. Bro. Nissi Chin encouraged us with the message “Preach the Word of God”. After the service and tea break, we had a fellowship that consisted of a hymnal exchange, a brief overview of London’s evangelical work and a photographic presentation about Leicester’s refurbishment work.

Cambridge

We welcomed and bade farewell to Bro. Glenn Low, who studied in Cambridge before returning home to Singapore. We also welcome Bro. Nicholas from Malaysia, who has been studying in Cambridge, and regularly brings his friends to Sabbath services.

Other visitors who have come to visit us are Bro. Wai Kee Ng and his family (Newcastle), Bro. Chris Liu (Leicester); and on a more regular basis, Bro. Duncan Shek and his family (London Central), and Sis. Xiao Lan and her two sons (Fujian, China). When our ministering preachers, Joseph Shek and TK Chin, visit, we extend our Sabbath timetable and have Sunday services and visitations.

We look forward to visitors from the International Youth Fellowship in June and our annual spiritual convocation in July. Please pray for the members at Cambridge Prayer House and God’s guidance in all the holy work here.

London

Praise God, we were able to hold the 10th Africa Voluntary Missionary Workers Training between 7–11 January. The lessons were led by Pr. FF Chong, Pr. HH Ko, Pr. Derren Liang and Bro. Michael Hsu. UK brethren attended the training along with overseas visitors from as far as the US and Taiwan.

We warmly welcomed theological student, Bro. Raymond Leacock who came to London for student training between 1–9 February. Bro. Leacock shared with us his experiences in training to become a preacher. We pray that God will continue to guide him on this journey.

On 27 February, university and working youths held an informal evangelical during the midweek fellowship. Although no friends attended, we took the opportunity to share and discuss the obstacles we face in preaching to our friends. We pray that God will guide and inspire all the London members to preach and invite their family and friends to upcoming evangelicals and other church events.

We hosted the UKGA board meeting on 4–5 March, followed by the Truth Research Committee meeting on 5–6 March.

On 17 March, many London brethren visited the church in Leicester. This was an opportunity for the members to see the new church building and fellowship with the Leicester members. Each church shared the events they were planning and their experiences in the evangelical work. Leicester brethren recounted the history behind purchasing the new church building, and as a result, we were able to share in offering praise and worship to God.

Church Events

The newly purchased building on Williamson Terrace, Sunderland