CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER 26 2026

Scripture Story: Matthew 5:17-22.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 25, 26.

the imprisonment of truth



Photo by Colleen Cahill

flashlight

"It was to keep this truth ever before the minds of men, that God instituted the Sabbath in Eden; and so long as the fact that He is our Creator continues to be a reason why we should worship Him, so long the Sabbath will continue as its sign and memorial. Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man's thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 438).

key text

"For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

(Matthew 5:18, NIV)

what do you think?

Write down the top seven reasons that you think people use to justify not keeping the Sabbath. Then, in your personal notebook jot down some of the main reasons you love the Sabbath.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

did you know?

A Roman Catholic catechism states that the Bible never does away with the Sabbath and that, in fact, the Catholic Church itself changed the day from Saturday to Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection.

"You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctified," says James Cardinal Gibbons (*The Faith of Our Fathers,* 1917 edition, pp. 72, 73). He is also quoted as saying, *"The Catholic Church . . . by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday"* (*The Catholic Mirror,* official organ of Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893).

No power has been given any church to modify the law of God (see Matthew 5:18).

INTO THE STORY

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

"For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

"For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

(Matthew 5:17-22, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Examine the first few verses of Matthew 5. To whom was Jesus speaking when He talked about the importance of God's laws?

Why do you think Jesus spoke so strongly about keeping God's laws?

What's the difference between "abolish" and "fulfill"?

What does this passage tell us about the seriousness of our example?

In Isaiah 58:13 the Bible refers to the Sabbath as something that we should *delight* in. What does it mean to *delight* in the Sabbath? If you're having a tough time coming up with an answer, look up the definition of *delight* in a dictionary.

Jesus makes the point that those who practice obeying God's laws and teach others to do so will be called great in heaven. Can we effectively share the Sabbath truth if we ourselves do not practice it, or find no joy in it? Explain your answer.

If you were ever put into a situation in which you had the opportunity to defend God's law and the fourth commandment, how would you do so?

punch lines

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" **(John 14:15, KJV).**

"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" **(James 2:10, KJV).**

"But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" **(James 2:20-24, KJV).**

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" **(Colossians 2:8, KJV).**

further insight

"The confession of faith made by saints and martyrs was recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 459

"We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 460

Sabbath

Read Leviticus 23:3.

Complete the *What Do You Think?* section. What are some of the reasons that people give for claiming that they no longer have to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy? Two passages referenced from Scripture are found in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16.

Notice the distinction between the ceremonial special days and sabbaths, and God's Sabbath that is part of the moral law. The law that Jesus said would never pass away was the moral law, the Ten Commandments. The ceremonial laws would be fulfilled in Him.

Sunday

Read Luke 4:16-21.

Read the *Into the Story* section and respond to the *Out of the Story* questions. Jesus specifically told us that no part of His law will ever be taken out of effect until all be fulfilled. Many people think Jesus is saying that this means when He died on the cross all was fulfilled, and thus we are no longer under the Ten Commandments. Rather, they say, we are "liberated" to a higher and more spiritual law of Christ. But how does keeping the Sabbath reveal Christ? How does it remind us of our liberation from sin?

Monday

Read Matthew 5:18.

The *Key Text* tells us that "not the least stroke of a pen" will disappear from the law until all is fulfilled. In the original language of the New Testament the word "iota" is used. This is the ninth letter of the Greek alphabet, and is equivalent to the "yod," the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Jesus apparently wanted us to know that even the smallest letter of the law was important and, thus, how much more so is the Sabbath.

Read Matthew 12:10-12, Mark 3:1-6, and John 9:13-16. Notice that Jesus observed the Sabbath. It was His custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, just as we might go to church on Sabbath. If Jesus was planning to change the Sabbath day, why then did He keep it during His lifetime? What does Luke 4:16 tell you about how special the Sabbath was to Jesus?

Tuesday

Read Genesis 2:1-3.

Read the *Flashlight* quotation. According to Ellen G. White, what impact does keeping the Sabbath have on those who observe it? Why is this the case?

What did God do after He finished six days of "work"?

Every time we come aside to rest, we honor God as our Creator and Sustainer. According to Romans 1:18-23, what happens to people who reject the laws of God, who remove God from their lives?

Wednesday

Read John 14:15.

Read through the *Punch Lines*. Why is God linking obedience with love? How does one prove their love to another person? Do they prove it by doing what they think will make the other person feel loved, or do they pay close attention to what pleases the other person and then do that?

God's law was so unbreakable that Jesus had to die to meet its demands. Yet, this "keeping" the law through death was motivated by Jesus' love for us. What does John 10:11 tell you about Jesus' love?

Thursday

Read Philippians 2:13-15.

What is it about the Sabbath that you think causes people to be so opposed to it? Is it a matter of wanting to do our own thing and not have anyone, including God, telling us what we should or shouldn't do? Is it a matter of people honestly believing the Bible did away with the Sabbath? Or a bit of both? What do you think?

Friday

Read Isaiah 58:13.

Do you ever find yourself seeing the Sabbath as an unwanted inconvenience? Have you ever caught yourself wishing that the sun would set so you can get on with doing your plans without feeling guilty? These thoughts have crossed many people's minds.

In what ways can we truly come to appreciate and look forward to the Sabbath?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 25, 26.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.