

## **SABBATH & MANAGEMENT, THEOLOGY & APPLICATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Without detracting from the importance of setting aside one day of worship each week some scholars believe that the meaning of Sabbath contains broader principles. This paper presents a summary of Sabbath theology based on two biblical themes: Creation and Covenant. It provides support for why managers should consider applying Sabbath principles in their work. Part III shows some of the ways in which this might play out in managerial work.

### **Key Words**

Covenant, creation, management, principles, Sabbath, spirituality, Sunday, work.

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Some notable Christian business leaders have displayed a high view of Sabbath in their companies. For example, S. Truett Cathy the founder of Chick-Fil-A<sup>®</sup> and the O. D. McKee family who owns and operates McKee Foods, Inc. (Little Debbie<sup>®</sup> brand of snack cakes) have each chosen a different day on which to have their businesses closed. Travel to any Chick-fil-A on Sunday and you will be greeted not by a friendly associate waiting to fill your order for fried chicken but rather a poster explaining that Chick-fil-A stores are closed on Sunday. In honor of what they believe to be the biblical Sabbath the leaders of McKee Foods close its bakery production lines down on Friday afternoon and crank them back up again on Sunday morning. But is Sabbath and Sunday observance only about taking a day off for worship? Or is something deeper at stake that the day of worship points to and even is intended to foster?

Few scholars have discussed that Sabbath concept in terms of its potential application in the world of applied economics choosing instead to focus on what might be called the core of

Sabbath theology as it relates to keeping the Sabbath day of worship, exploring the theological connections between Sabbath and other biblical teachings such as creation, covenant, salvation, eschatology and many other biblical teachings.

Without detracting from the importance of setting aside one day of worship each week some scholars believe that the meaning of Sabbath contains a cluster of broader principles applicable to our living the other six days of the week. Those who see potential application of Sabbath principles in the arena of economics have not fully developed such a thesis in terms of management. Instead, they have merely mentioned the potential for application. Moreover, other writers who interpret Scripture for the world of business also see potential for a broader application of the concept of Sabbath, but these writers also have not fully developed the logical conclusion to this idea as it relates to the work of an organizational manager.

The **purpose of this paper** is to apply a theology of the Sabbath as a set of principles for Christians who serve as organizational managers. To accomplish its purpose Part I of the paper will present in summary of Sabbath theology based on the two most prominent biblical themes to which Sabbath is forever connected: Creation and Covenant. Part II will distinguish between Sabbath as a day of worship and Sabbath as a principle for living all of life providing a rationale for why Christian organizational managers should consider applying Sabbath principles in the context of their work. In Part III the paper will extend the thesis that the concept of Sabbath-as-principle has potential for broader application showing some of the ways in which such application might play out in Christian managerial work at the level of the organization.

As mentioned above, most biblical scholars who address the subject of Sabbath have written about it in terms of a day of worship. It cannot be denied that central to the biblical teaching on the Sabbath is the weekly observance of Sabbath its purpose being a day consecrated

for worship to God. The Sabbath command in the Decalogue is explicit on this: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...” (Exodus 20:8-11) Accordingly, this paper will not attempt to comprehensively review the body of literature devoted to exploring Sabbath as a day of worship, but rather will consider the Sabbath applying it as a cluster of broader principles for living and worshipping during the rest of the week, and in particular, application with the eye on the work of managers in organizations.

Another delimitation of this paper is that it will not attempt to explain how the broader business community should implement a day of worship. The implications of offering, or requiring, a day off for worship for all workers or of structuring society so that a day of worship is placed firmly into normal social routines either by legislation (such as by explicit “Sunday Laws”) or by custom is a complex topic requiring far more space than this paper can provide. The question of the implications of closing businesses and organizations (such as hospitals, police departments, hotels, restaurants, water treatment facilities, fire departments, pharmacies as examples) for a day of worship for the broader society in a complex marketplace, while important for the larger discussion on Sabbath theology, also is not addressed in this paper.

A final delimitation of this paper is that it will not review the growing body of literature addressing spirituality, management and organizations. The paper will, however, set up the possibility that literature on spirituality, religion and management can be reviewed in light of the biblical principles explored here.

## **PART I: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF SABBATH**

Scholars consider Sabbath as one of the central biblical themes honored in Scripture. Some have seen the interconnections between Sabbath and several other biblical themes,<sup>1</sup> but the two most prominent biblical themes to which Sabbath is forever connected in Sabbath literature are those of Creation and Covenant. These provide the theological basis for the paper.

This review of Sabbath theology rooted in creation and covenant theology is not meant to be comprehensive. Entire books have been written about this! Instead, the brief review here is intended to demonstrate that the theological foundation for Sabbath is relevant to any broader application of Sabbath as a cluster of principles for all of life, but in particular the life of an organizational manager.

**Sabbath and Creation.** Human history begins with gifts of God's love not a command of God (Miller, 2009, p. 123). The earth itself is one gift, and the Sabbath is another, a gift designed to foster a deepening relationship between God and humankind, a gift which represents the reality of a joyful life of peace (shalom) envisioned for all God's creatures, a life given at Creation and to be continually sustained by the created world and the power of God.

A major purpose of Sabbath is rest from work starting with the rest of God from his work but embracing rest from our work. Unlike the reason for our need of rest from work, God's rest at the end of creation week was not because he was tired. His rest on the seventh day was a "rest of his satisfaction and his stamp of approval" of what he created for humankind (Hafemann, 2001, p. 45). Another dimension of God's rest is that his work was not complete until he had also rested on the seventh day from his labor Dederen (1982, p. 296). This makes Sabbath a definite

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include the following: Creation, covenant, redemption/salvation, resurrection, the Providence of God, God's justice and judgment, the divinity of Jesus Christ, the holiness of God, biblical anthropology, ecclesiology, liturgy, social ethics, public theology, and eschatology.

part of Creation and not merely an afterthought to God's creative activity, suggesting that Sabbath, though not considered work per se, was part of important Divine activity.

This creation link to Sabbath God presented to Israel in the fourth commandment. Each week Israel was to reenact the work of creation by working and then resting not in satisfaction for the work they performed during the week<sup>2</sup> but in gratitude for what God had done for them during that week by continuing to provide for their needs.

The paradox of Creation and Sabbath is that at creation man is given work (Genesis 1-2), but the goal is to enter into rest (Sabbath) with a covenant-giving and covenant-fulfilling God (see Hebrews 4). In the next section the idea of covenant will be reviewed, but because of covenant's close relation to creation it is worth mentioning here that from the very beginning of creation a covenant relationship existed between God and humankind. God walked with humans in the garden signifying that although they were creatures and not divine, God came among them to be close to them.

Andreasen (1978) believes that Sabbath is a symbol that God is Lord of all of our life. The Sabbath day is a means for humans to continually renounce human autonomy and acknowledge God's Lordship in our life. Sabbath is a return to an Eden-like existence where work was free from the toil aspect of work. The Creation Sabbath anticipates the covenant and God's grace. If this is true, it also must anticipate the Incarnation where God comes to earth to live among humans (Philippians 2:1-11), the Cross whereby all things are reconciled to God in

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<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that experiencing satisfaction from our work is forbidden or sinful. Work is part of the Divine Commission at Creation. Certainly, when we work, we fulfill part of God's plan for our lives. In this there is a tension. On one hand, when we look at the results of our labors, we may lament as did the writer of Ecclesiastes that all is vanity. Work can be burdensome. We sometimes do not enjoy all the fruits of our work. On the other, when we find enjoyment in our work, this is a gift of God to be embraced. "There is nothing better for a man *than* to eat and drink and tell himself that his labor is good. This also I have seen, that it is from the hand of God." Ecclesiastes 2:24 (see also Ecclesiastes 3:12-13; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9).

Christ (Colossians 1:19-20), and the Resurrection in which by faith we can participate in newness of life (Romans 5:10).

The weekly Sabbath given at Creation is inseparable from and interdependent with the commission to work. One might even say that Sabbath would lose its meaning if on the other six days no work was done. God's original plan included humans working in a material world. Yet, the aim of this work was not accumulation of material possessions but rather to enter into rest with God while serving the needs of others including that of the Earth. In the Sabbath rest we demonstrate our loyalty to God by resting from our pursuit of material goods. Even though humans were set in a material world the Sabbath was designed, in part, as a barrier to excessive materialism. "The hallowing of the seventh day— its exceptional place in the stream of time—is opposed by human rapaciousness and greed, because it reminds us of the One to whom all time belongs and apart from whom all of our hustle and bustle is fruitless." (Eichrodt, 1957, p. 31)

With sin the peace of Eden was disrupted, altering the course of human history but revealing in its wake the hidden potential of Sabbath. Sin marred the human experience with work and with Sabbath. Work became burdensome toil. Workers needed rest not only from the weariness of toil but also from the brutal battle for survival. More than this, humans need a constant reminder that confidence in our work should never replace trust in God. Accordingly, the promises of recovered peace begin immediately with God's promise of salvation (Genesis 3:15-18). This becomes the seed for biblical hope that Edenic shalom one day will be restored through God's work of salvation. Said another way, Sabbath became a means of keeping alive the hope of Edenic delights. The material prosperity and spiritual vitality of Eden inspired the prophetic visions of extraordinary material abundance (Bacchiocchi, 1985):

Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed; When the mountains will drip sweet wine, And all the hills will be dissolved. (Amos 9:13)

There is biblical basis to conclude this part of the paper with the assertion that Sabbath as envisioned in Creation is primarily about our living in a relationship with God resting from our daily work as we are co-laborers with God in sustaining each other, resting in the joy of God's great gifts contained in the Earth, and now that sin is present resting from our works of righteousness as a means to gain favor with God, resting instead in faith that the work of God's grace in Christ on our behalf is sufficient for our salvation, and finally resting in the hope that one day peace of Eden will be restored at the consummation of God's great plan of salvation. Symbolic of such a relationship is setting apart one day in seven. But Sabbath must be about something larger since it symbolizes a deep relationship with God. This provides the possibility for interpreting Sabbath in a broader way that includes taking one day off in seven but also is deeper and broader in application.

**The Sabbath and Covenant.** Particular attention now must be focused on the relationship between Sabbath and the covenant relationship God established with humankind. One might argue that the central pillar of the central message of Scripture regarding God and his intentions toward us is embodied in the Sabbath, intentions envisioned implicitly in the covenant promises, intentions eventually made explicit in the Decalogue.

Though it is not the first command given by God to the people when he gave the Ten Commandments, this command becomes the cornerstone and capstone of Israel's day-to-day life. It is the first command given to Israel after leaving Egypt and on the occasion of the giving of manna. (Exodus 16:22-30) When stated in Exodus 20:8-11 it becomes a sign that just like at



creation when God created the world, he first created Israel and then asked them to rest from this work by giving the declaration of his love and guidelines for covenant living.

Sabbath also looks forward providing an important anchor point for Israel's covenant-based identity. More than any of the other nine commands the Sabbath command is designed to set God's people apart from all others. On this point Dumbrell (1984) writes:

“Israel is to reflect upon the question of ultimate purposes for herself as a nation, and for the world over which she is set. For in pointing back to creation, the Sabbath points also to what is yet to be, to the final destiny to which all creation is moving.” (p. 35)

This parallel between the Creation account and the formation of Israel as a nation has been

observed by more than one scholar (Lowrey, 2000; Hafemann, 2001).

Sabbath is a sign of the covenant and is even spoken of as a covenant itself:

But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you... So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased *from labor*, and was refreshed. (Exodus 31:13-17)

And also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them. (Ezekiel 20:12)

It seems logical to suggest that the Sabbath loses its essential power as a sign if it is thought of merely in terms of keeping one day separate from the other days since doing so can be done merely as a form of activity (or ceasing from certain activities). True, not working on one day in seven is relatively high in visibility in some cultural contexts such as a faith community, but a sign is something that reveals the essence of the relationship at stake, a relationship that affects all of life. How much more powerful is a sign when the principles of Sabbath are carried forward into the rest of the week?

As Israel began to form their identity under the covenantal relationship with God, at the giving of manna (Exodus 16) God tested their loyalty. The Sabbath became “the chief symbol of testing” (Geller, 2005, p. 11). Geller concludes this assertion by saying that “if rain stands, positively, for providence and its absence, negatively, for divine punishment, the Sabbath stands for loyalty to covenant and its violation for apostasy.” (p. 11)

Sabbath continues to be an important means by which humankind can come to know God and thereby participate in one of the fundamental purposes of covenant: revelation (Walton, 1994). In other words, the Sabbath is instrumental in revealing a covenant-faithful God to humankind.

The Ten Commandments describe the terms on which God intended to give blessings promised in the covenant relationship. The Law and especially the Sabbath command in the Law is God’s secret to life in the covenant community. It represents the best of divine Wisdom for how to live in a covenant community. Obedience was God’s way of delivering all the shalom-filled blessings of torah to his people (Goldingay, 2006, pp. 187-190; Miller, 2009, pp. 122-123; Rayburn, 1984, p. 75). The Ten Commandments were a gift by Creator God to his people as part of the way their identity would be shaped. In particular the Sabbath command lays at the center of the ten, obedience to its precepts as much a response to grace as it is to duty, the means of fulfilling all that God had planned for the community. Accordingly, the Sabbath is not a burden but a privilege, something that other nations did not have and might well be jealous of once they learned of it (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). This command along with the other commandments was given for our good (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). The psalmist surely understood this when he devotes many lines of verse extolling the virtues of God’s law in joyful fashion (Psalm 119).

At the same time Sabbath command restated in Deuteronomy 5 reminds us of the covenantal Salvation-history origin of Sabbath. Here, besides its historical reality, Sabbath becomes a parable of salvation in which God's creative deliverance results in a rest of peace and fulfillment in his love (Dyrness, 1977, p. 172). Its purpose is to renew fellowship with God in the context of a faithful community. As such Sabbath is a "type" of redemption from oppression of sin and unrighteous people. Sabbath reminds us of God's covenantal promises that flow from his loving kindness, promising the reclaim of those who have been trodden down by injustice, providing for preventing injustice, providing a means to restore broken relationships (Dyrness, 1977). Of course it must be remembered that the context of the reminder to observe the Sabbath is a larger message for the community of persons who believe in and desire that their lives align with God and his will. Sabbath observance is a reminder of God's work of salvation, but it also provides a structured way for believers to continue on the journey of restoration. Sabbath observance, by itself, does not necessarily result in the restoration of broken relationships and the rectifying social injustices. Indeed, the Scripture offers examples of how the opposite is true, namely observing Sabbath while bringing further injury to already broken relationships or deepening existing social injustices while maintaining a superficial, though quite visible in the community, observance of the form of Sabbath without its spiritual and essential substance.

It is the substance that is in view here, not merely the form of Sabbath observance. Theologically thinking when considering the great contrast between spirit of Sabbath observance and the busy, sometimes hectic, lives we lead in the world of business and even nonprofit organizations, we can see that that the ideal of observing the Sabbath day offers an opportunity to devote our attention to things that have no instrumental or practical purpose (Massaro, 2010). The day of rest points to the senselessness of uninterrupted work that "tends to rob man of being

creatively involved with the world, until he is taken hostage by considerations of yield and profit.” (Andreasen, 1978, p. 41) This day is:

- a time for being and not necessarily doing,
- a day of rest from commercialism,
- a day that relieves us of the heavy burdens of work necessary for survival (Ex. 34:21),
- a day that has the potential to protect humankind from totalitarianism of all kinds (Andreasen, 1985, p. 99),
- a day of rest from constant drive fueled by ambition and greed in society,
- a day of liberation from secular pressures and mundane duties that crowd the week (Guy, 1985, p. 32),
- a warning against our tendency to become full of our own power and efficacy (Dederen, 1982, p. 301),
- a day that recognizes the importance of diligent work but at the same time sponsors a limit to our acquisitive drive (Ryken, 1987, p. 105),
- the day that relativises human work (Miller, 2009, p. 132),
- a constant reminder that through faith in God we can be content in God’s providing care.

If the essence of Sabbath is packed with theological significance, this does not necessarily mean that those Christians who take a day off from work or business owners who close their business for Sabbath (or Sunday) observance do so for the purpose of limiting ambition, greed, or acquisitive drives. Persons who are not Christians or Jews still take one or two days off every week to rest and, clearly, this does not mean that they do so for religious reasons. Having one or two days off out of seven has become a general custom stripped of its ancient theological roots. But even if Sabbath and Sun day are observed for other than purely

theological reasons and even if the theological significance of Sabbath has been lost even for some Christians, this does not detract from its ancient essential theological significance.

Commenting on the economic dimension of the Sabbath's meaning Henry Rempel (2003) says: "... it has to do with the need for periodic renewal of the created order. It means that there is more to life than greater efficiency in the production of material goods and services." (p. 61) In this regard Sabbath involves several elements. It fosters a concept of contentment with having enough which challenges "the assumption in economics that all human beings have an unlimited capacity to want. Sabbath also encourages contributing to the well-being of the larger community by going beyond personal desires for material acquisition. Sabbath enables workers to rest from their labor "periodically and reminding them that their Creator, rather than human endeavor, ensures the sustenance required for life." (Rempel, 2003, p. 62) Continual pursuit of material goods comes at the cost of our relationship with God and with the communities to which we belong. This is what Sabbath is designed to counteract.

The Sabbath command is the bridge or hinge between loving God and loving one's neighbor as it explains all the other commands in the Decalogue (Miller, 2009, p. 117; Dawn, 2010), the command that stands at the junction between theology and ethics (Lowery, 2000, p. 106), the provision that God has made for safeguarding the community's honoring the other commandments. This can be seen in its connection with the first and the tenth that are especially important in the world of business. For example, loyalty to the Creator God is much more than avoiding worshiping other gods the focus of the first commandment. Worshiping God and enjoying God's presence in your life comes to a culmination every Sabbath day. Thus the Sabbath has a continuing positive influence the rest of the week helping the believer to remain loyal to God throughout the week. In more blunt terms Sabbath is a safeguard against idolatry

that can be tempting in the world of business (Miller, 2009, p. 133). Sabbath, the perpetual reminder of God's saving acts, enlivens the first commandment. It continually reveals God to his people in a way similar to the acts of God to which the Sabbath points. The Sabbath command is also linked with the tenth command not to covet. The command to avoid coveting is not completely fulfilled by merely avoiding the negative dimension of the command. It is a Sabbath mentality or guiding orientation the rest of the week which helps members of the community remain content with blessings they have received. This principle of a positive fulfilling of the law (rather than a mere avoiding the negative elements forbidden) appears to be at the root of Jesus' teaching on the law in his Sermon on the Mount.

Sabbath is the great leveler of society: It applies equally to the top-echelon executives as it does to the front-line, lower-skilled, and lower paid, workers as Andreasen (1985) observes:

“On the Sabbath the executive and his janitor share the same pew; no one gives the other an order or extracts a service. The Sabbath sets all men free, and makes them equal. It restores the ideals of solidarity and unity in the community.” (pp. 102-103)

In this Sabbath command we see a Sabbath moral principle of “*shared sabbath observance*” (Edwards, 1982, p. 5) The Sabbath day is to be observed by all those connected with the household even slaves and strangers (Schmidt, 1983). In true Sabbath worship we come to know that others have needs as well as ourselves and that care for these needs is a legitimate way to serve God. (Miller, 2009, p. 118) Each household made provision for all persons present to worship on Sabbath day regardless of social status.

The theology of Sabbath under the covenant is extended to how humans are to manage the land (Leviticus 26:34; 2 Chronicles 36:21). The land was to be given a rest every seven years. This rest for the land was not merely for the utilitarian value of improving the productivity of fields but also reflected the right of the land. Sabbatical continually taught Israel that God is

the ultimate owner of land and wealth-building assets. These resources cannot endlessly be exploited. (Andreasen, 1978, p. 42)

Every sabbatical year slaves were to be freed and debt was to be released. The Sabbath would be a continual reminder of Israel's own slavery. By participating in the sabbatical year Israelites would continue to participate in the emancipation by giving freedom to "those in their midst not free to observe it." (Andreasen, 1978, p. 50)

The connection between Sabbath and care for people raises an important question: Do we have sufficient biblical support for the idea that Sabbath as a set of principles can and should be applied in a broader arena of life than a day of worship? The next section of the paper will address this question.

We have observed how the Creation theme envisions Sabbath as a promoter of our relationship with God. We can make similar observations when considering how covenant thinking infuses Sabbath with significance. In the Sabbath we see that each person in the covenant community has more than utilitarian, economic value; each has intrinsic worth. Sabbath is central to covenant, a symbol of the covenant, an anchor for and contributor to the identity God's people, a sign of the covenant, a sign of loyalty to faithful God, a means of revealing the God of the covenant, means for coming to experience all that God had intended for the covenant community. Keeping the Sabbath day carries with such activity the means by which humans can lay aside their desires to acquire more and more. It levels society placing each person, regardless of social status, in the same position with God and with each other once every week. These observations are provided in a summary in the following Table:

[Insert Table 1 here.]

This summary of Sabbath theology prepares us to consider an important distinction implicit in the thesis of other writers that the Sabbath as a day of worship contains a cluster of principles for daily living all week long. Such a distinction is considered in the next part of the paper.

## **PART II: SABBATH PRINCIPLES**

In this part of the paper we will advance the thesis by considering that the core purpose of the Sabbath must be retained even when exploring for broader principles, seeing that Sabbath principles are derived from theological meaning of Sabbath, reconsidering how Sabbath is a sign of the covenant, reflecting on the idea that bringing glory to God in worship must not be limited to just one day of worship, noticing how the biblical idea of *imitatio Dei* (imitating God) supports the rationale for seeking broader principles applicable to every day, reviewing an example from the prophet Amos that demonstrates the existence of broader Sabbath principles, and examining the contributions of scholars who have suggested that broader principles exist in the idea of Sabbath.

**Core Purpose of Sabbath.** After reviewing the theology of the Sabbath, we conclude that the core purpose of the Sabbath is in setting aside by the cessation of work a recurring portion of time, one whole day per week, for the purpose of worship. This focus is explicitly laid out in the Decalogue:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work... (Exodus 20:8-10)



Whatever conclusions we draw about identifying broader principles that have potential application in our lives, this core purpose of Sabbath cannot be forgotten. Said in other words, if there are broader principles embedded in Sabbath which are applicable to the rest of life, such principles must not undermine the core purpose of Sabbath.

That being said, the fact that even though some Christians changed day of Sabbath worship (Saturday) to Sunday in honor of Christ's resurrection, suggests that these believers in the early centuries viewed Sabbath through the lens of fundamental principles that the day represents.

**Principles Derive from Theological Meaning.** The deeper theological meaning of a weekly day of worship is something greater than the mere cessation of work. It is the meaning behind the cessation of work and the thinking that becomes embedded in the worshiper that is in focus here. Sabbath involves a way of thinking about our existence in God's created order. For example selecting an item from the above summary Table 1, scholars have pointed out that Sabbath is not merely absence of work but rather celebrating the creative work of God. This worship of celebration involves recurring patterns of thinking during worship expression, patterns of thinking that transcend the mere cessation of work, patterns of thinking that have the potential for spanning more than one day in seven.

Such worship, it might be said, can be accomplished by a single person who wishes to worship God. But, a similar point might be that Sabbath is a means for the covenant community coming to experience all that God had intended for the community as a whole. The core purpose of Sabbath may be envisioned when the covenant community, having laid aside its work, having committed together to share in the common blessing of corporate Sabbath worship, gathers together on the Sabbath.

**Sign of the Covenant.** We have seen above that the Sabbath is a sign of the covenant. We reason here that covenant relationships are broad in their application, pervasive in their impact on all of life. We also reason here that covenant would cease to have meaning if, on the one hand, regularly scheduled time is spent between parties to a covenant, but if, on the other hand, how life is lived under a covenant arrangement is not guided by the same principles underlying why the parties spend time together. It doesn't seem to be conjecture to say that Sabbath would cease to be a sign of the covenant if the principles of covenant are accepted one day of the week but ignored or outright rejected the other days of the week. Said in positive terms, the core purpose of Sabbath, spending a consecrated day in worship to God, is inseparable from how we spend the rest of the days of the week with and for God. In this, it should be clear, is a call for the integration of faithful life of worship rather than a fragmentary life of worship only once every seven days.

**Bringing Glory to God.** In Hafemann's (2001) view "God has created us in such a way that our fulfillment is wrapped up in displaying his glory." (p. 41) If displaying God's glory is the way to fulfilling our true purpose on earth, this could be accomplished by setting apart one day of worship from six days of labor, while at the same time applying Sabbath principles on an ongoing basis throughout the work week. Suggesting that bringing glory to God should occur on just one day a week is to introduce the fragmentary approach to life, a thought quite contradictory to everything in Scripture.

***Imitatio Dei, imitatio Christi.*** Various scholars have identified the principle of *imitatio Dei* (imitating God) as running through scripture. For example the following passages are representative:

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deuteronomy 10:12)

Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. (Leviticus 19:2)

This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. (John 15:12)

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus... (Philippians 2:5-11)

Some have identified the application of this principle specifically to covenant and to Sabbath (E.g., Schmidt, 1983, p. 92; Fretheim, 1991, p. 247). In the words of Jacob (1958) the Sabbath is “an invitation to act like God.” (p. 176) Every week God’s people have an opportunity to participate with him by being the means by which God acts continually on behalf of the world. Thinking specifically of Creation Wenham (2000, pp. 26-27) justifies the principle of imitation by saying that the Sabbath comes so soon after the statement in Genesis that humankind is created after the image of God. In this temporal sequence in the Creation narrative Sabbath is being “set out as a model for mankind to follow.”

Imitating God in terms of Sabbath keeping cannot just mean placing aside one day in seven for worship in the rest of God as important as this is. Surely it also means participating in the work of God during the work week. It is reasonable to think that if *imitatio Dei* applies to the core purpose of Sabbath, it also applies to all days of the week. In fact, it might be argued that Sabbath keeping is not truly such unless what worship of God on the Sabbath day is carried forward into the coming week through imitating the Sabbath rest daily. This is the position taken in this paper.

**The Prophet Amos.** In the days of the prophet Amos we see that for some marketplace traders the rich spiritual meaning of the Sabbath had been replaced by a shallow form of

worship. Traders kept the letter of the law by refraining from actual work, but during the Sabbath hours they became impatient not only for the hours of the Sabbath to pass so that commercial activity could resume but also for the Sabbath to pass so that they could resume taking advantage of customers.

The Hebrew prophet provides one of the best illustrations that true Sabbath keeping is not just observing one day of worship in seven:

Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land, saying, "When will the new moon be over, So that we may sell grain, And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat *market*, To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger, And to cheat with dishonest scales, So as to buy the helpless for money And the needy for a pair of sandals, And *that* we may sell the refuse of the wheat?" The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob, "Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds. (Amos 8:4-7)

In the prophet's view though the hours of Sabbath might be set aside and no commercial work performed on that day, Sabbath keeping is not a valid sign of covenant for the person who is itching for the hours of the Sabbath to be over so that he can go back to the market for the purpose of taking advantage of other people (Miller, 2009, p. 154). The implication of Amos's sermon is that if the trader took Sabbath with him to the marketplace and ceased from the unjust labor of trying to gain at others' expense, Sabbath keeping on the day of rest would be acceptable to God.

**Contributions of Scholars.** Contributions of biblical scholars specializing in Sabbath theology show that some Bible students assert the direct connection between the purpose and meaning of Sabbath and its application for all of life. A good example of this is the thought summarized by Dederen (1982) who says:

"The Sabbath seems to be the sign of what every other day ought to be, in that it defines and illumines man's attitude in all of his deeds. Man's actions—indeed, man's whole life—find their true meaning in the context of the fundamental attitude denoted by the Sabbath day as a day belonging to God." (p. 301)

Because of its establishment at creation the Sabbath is a fundamental principle of the universe (Lowrey, 2000, p. 79). As a perpetual reminder of God's loving kindness toward humankind and is to be observed week-in and week-out. Tilden Edwards Jr. (1982) says, "We need to open and deepen the promise of sabbath time as an integral dimension of the Christian life that touches positively all its other dimensions." (p. 3) One way this occurs is when we see Sabbath involving "not only special days, but also those different moments everyday when 'mini-sabbaths' come..." (p. 13) He advocates setting aside just a few minutes to rest in God and "still our work." Stevens (2006) discusses Sabbath in terms of its healing and peace-producing qualities, subjects that are of interest to Christians in business. Sabbath, in his view, ministers to the person by offering a means of renewal. It reveals the heart of God who has redemption intentions for the world. Sabbath redeems time and space. While this current essay does not disagree with Stevens, it recognizes the need to take a study of the Sabbath a little deeper to explore how this institution of worship can be applied in a broader way in business organizations.

Closer to the thesis of this paper the analysis of Sabbath put forward by Andreasen (1974, 1978, 1985) acknowledges the link between Sabbath and the world of business. As we have seen, in his view, Sabbath is an agent or instrument of freedom, a great leveler of society, a symbol that God is Lord of all of our life, a reminder of the senselessness of uninterrupted work, a faithful protection for man from totalitarianism, and a weekly condemnation of greed.

Scholars, not necessarily specialists in Sabbath theology, interested in the biblical foundations for business have introduced the possibility of a broader application of Sabbath but they do not offer a rationale for this nor do they fully develop this thesis to its logical conclusions in terms of managerial work. For example, Chewning, Eby and Roels (1990) say

that when Jesus interpreted the Sabbath, at stake were larger principles that carry “the spirit of the law in daily business decisions.” (p. 239) Higginson (1993) offers a discussion of Sabbath’s implications for business by discussing what might be called a primary interpretation of Sabbath. Stackhouse (1995) makes brief reference to the applicability of Sabbath to business. Diddams, Klein-Surdyk, and Daniels (2004) say that:

“Sabbath keeping will offer the most respite when it is celebrated as part of a cycle of integrated and intrinsically motivated faith that is part of one’s everyday life and sense of self...we believe that psychological wellbeing will be most pronounced when Sabbath keeping becomes integrated into an internalized religious belief system that regularly strives for respite and well-being.” (Diddams, Klein-Surdyk, & Daniels, 2004, p. 6)

This presupposes that the person keeping Sabbath during the week already has an established faith. True Sabbath keeping involves accepting God’s influence in all of life. The implication is that this inward experience is something that applies all through one’s week not just on a day of worship. More recently, Wong and Rae (2011) see general principles “that are bound up with the Sabbath command that we ought to take seriously today.” (p. 105) They talk in terms of developing a “sabbath outlook or lifestyle” (p. 106, 208).

We have reviewed the basic purpose of Sabbath, the cluster of ideas that comprise its theological meaning, and the reasons why Sabbath can also be seen as a set of principles. IN Part III the paper will extend the set of Sabbath principles into the work of an organizational manager.

### **PART III: APPLICATION FOR MANAGERS**

As vice regents on Earth (Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8), we are to look after the interests of those for whom we are responsible by providing Sabbath-like experiences for employees. Sabbath was made for humankind (Mark 2:27), the Creator looking after the interests of the

created. Sabbath principles can impact several areas of managerial life from planning, hiring, firing, performance goals, and managing change. Yet, some tensions exist.

Accordingly, the question is how might a person take Sabbath principles to work? The following represent areas of managerial and leadership experience where the principles of Sabbath should be considered recognizing that there will be differences of opinion among Christians on specific details.

**Preventing or healing injustice.** Based on the Scripture record this is perhaps the most obvious area where Sabbath principles can be taken into the workplace. Injustice is often involved with the acquisition of wealth (Schnackenburg, 1965, p. 126). Taking a day off from work places a structural limit on wealth acquisition. Taking Sabbath principles to work means advocating on behalf of acquisition of wealth through fair means and remaining open to the possibility of other limits being placed on wealth acquisition. In some high-pressure, high-performance organizations this is far from easy. Some faithful managers may find themselves in a toxic organization, such as Enron, where cut-throat internal competition for the rewards of performance is opposed to Sabbath principles. If advocacy for justice is met with scorn or worse, the faithful manager may need to find another job.

**Planning for contingencies.** Managers who are interested in keeping Sabbath principles at work will, over time, become better and better at planning for and responding to contingencies so that future events have less of an unfavorable impact on the prospects of maintaining a Sabbath-rest perspective (not to mention the ability of the manager to leave the intensity of work behind on the Sabbath day!). In this way, contingency planning takes on an added depth of meaning when seen in the context of Sabbath theology. Contingency planning minimizes the risk

that stressful difficulties will arise at the end of the work week making it difficult for the manager to leave these behind on the day of worship.

**Structural changes.** When an organization downsizes, Sabbath-thinking managers will contend with the layoffs in ways that respect workers since these are created in God's image. After downsizing additional pressures will likely be placed on the remaining workers to fulfill the organization's commitments to the common good using fewer resources. All this will create additional need for Sabbath-healing actions on the part of a wise manager.

**Managing toil.** Managers will remember the Sabbath by keeping mind the rest that workers need especially after or during the completion of toilsome tasks. Such times of respite should be offered to workers in advance so that they are aware of the rest that they will enjoy after hard work. The manager has a responsibility to watch out for the impact of work on workers and, when necessary, allow them time to refresh from their toils. At the same time, the other side of the coin is that managers must not allow workers to dishonor the Sabbath by taking lightly periods of rest, extending break time (thus stealing time from the company). Abusing breaks by faking fatigue or physical conditions which prey upon the compassionate manager should be prevented whenever possible.

Every job has its less-favored elements (the dirty work). However, what is dirty work for one person may not be quite as bad to another. Some workers are saddled with the responsibility of doing the dirty work. Asking for volunteers for such tasks allows the opportunity for persons who have a special interest in this type of work to come forward, be recognized for their contribution to the rest of the organization. Sabbath-principled managers can periodically rotate workers who have the most loathsome jobs for a specific period of time and give them a break. Rotating other workers onto these jobs for a short period of time can increase the respect that



workers have for each other. If job rotation is difficult because of the differences in skills required, the manager will collaborate with workers to work out an arrangement for sharing loathsome tasks.

Managers who remember Sabbath principles will plan times when employees can celebrate the joy of working, even the joy that comes from completing unsavory tasks. Encouraging other workers to voice appreciation for completing the least favored tasks can lighten the burden of such tasks on the workers who take responsibility for them.

Managers who roll up their sleeves and help workers complete onerous tasks bring a Sabbath to work with them. This is similar to helping a neighbor get an ox out of the ditch on Sabbath. It is also a means to imitate the Incarnation ministry of Jesus (Philippians 2:1-11).

Sabbath-thinking managers will act as a bulwark of protection against the slights and disrespect which other managers and workers are prone to sling at workers who complete unpleasant tasks. Such a posture by the manager will reinforce a culture of discipline and respect for all. Managers will periodically remind all workers that the reason why their tasks are not unpleasant is because some workers have taken the responsibility to sacrifice a degree of pleasantness on behalf of others in the organization. Those doing unpleasant work truly are serving in a redemption capacity saving others from at least some of the evil of work.

Keeping Sabbath at work is not only about giving release from oppressive tasks or time for respite from the burden of work. Keeping Sabbath principles also involves entering into the joy of work itself for the common good which it serves and helping to share this joy with others. Taking the Sabbath into the workplace might come from raising awareness among of all workers regarding the importance of time and the importance of their work in the larger picture of the good that the organization is doing in society. Such Sabbath keeping will involve giving voice to

the common good perspective when workers are prone to forget the purpose of the organization. Keeping Sabbath alive during the week may involve periodic celebrations of the common good that has been served when projects are completed or at other symbolic occasions such as signing or renewing a contract, an action that was at least in part dependent upon the diligence of workers serving faithfully as to the Lord (Colossians 3:23).

**Hiring, performance reviews and firing.** Bringing Sabbath into the workplace can be experienced in the hiring process. Which is better for the worker: to hire someone and place them into a job which, for them, is extremely loathsome and then contend with the impact of this on their life or, to hire someone who is better suited to the tasks and for whom the job is less loathsome and on whom the job has less disagreeable impact?

Keeping Sabbath principles at work might mean that when conducting annual performance reviews, the manager will take into consideration the intensity of work, the personal burden of work and the opportunities that the organization has afforded workers. If the organization has provided few times of respite from intense, difficult and sometimes downright unpleasant tasks, managers should be careful not to hold workers to such a high performance standard on all dimensions of performance evaluations that is impossible to achieve. During performance reviews as well as at other times also Sabbath-observing manager will be sure to recognize the contributions of each employee to the completion of tasks which serve the organization and its larger purpose.

How will a Sabbath-keeping manager deal with the need to let an employee go? Whenever a manager must sack an employee for consistent poor performance, safety violations, insubordination or other valid business reasons, she will recognize that the employee has already breached the covenant relationship between the firm and the worker. Firing the worker will be no

more than a logical next step once it is determined that the covenant work relationship is beyond recovery. Firing becomes a natural consequence of the employee's choice. However, such an action will be done in the spirit of Sabbath keeping, i.e., releasing the employee from the burden that the employee would have to carry if he were to stay with the company under the circumstances.

To remain with the firm the employee would have to endure the slights or anger of coworkers and other managers not to mention the personal psychological burden of working in an organization where it becomes common knowledge that he is a slacker, unsafe, or politically untrustworthy. Such a burden is far too great for most employees to bear on a continual basis. Accordingly, releasing the employee is simply the best thing to do. Such decisions come with risks. I remember the time when I had to let go a director of maintenance who gradually had become unproductive and nonresponsive to the needs of the organization. Six months after letting him go I learned that he had Alzheimer's Disease.

The spirit of Sabbath keeping will also be present among top-echelon leaders who, because of their own errors of judgment or the complexity of the work situation, find themselves tempted to fire a manager merely for political gain (or protection) inside the organization. All things being considered, Sabbath principles would lead away from this in favor of other approaches.

**Celebrating the Image of God.** Sabbath-keeping managers will bring Sabbath into the workplace by voicing appreciation to other managers and their workers either in private or in community. At the same time managers will be careful not to inflate workers' sense of individual self-efficacy to a point of hubris. Sabbath continually reminds humans that there are limits to what we can accomplish. It should lead us to have confidence in our Creator who sustains us by

His power and through the collective efforts of the communities of humankind with which we are all interdependent.

**Performance goals.** Managers can bring relief to workers who are worried about the impact of their mistakes on the fellow workers, on customers, or on suppliers. While managers will take the opportunity of mistake making to help employees learn, whenever possible they will extend an attitude of grace to employees. This does not mean that managers must throw performance goals into the landfill for the sake of Sabbath keeping. Rather, it means that performance goals can be honored while the worker whose performance undermined the goals can be treated humanely.

Human managers may not always get it right. They may misjudge the impact of work on workers. They may assume too much about workers' resiliency to bounce back from toilsome labor. They misjudge the actions of competitors and thereby require much of workers by of competitive response. They may be prone to have high expectations of less experienced workers or high expectations of themselves. They will see the enormity of the tasks that need to be done as efficiently as possible and place on workers challenging goals which require herculean efforts. They will not always plan as wisely as they wish and thereby schedule work that needs to be done rapidly just before deadlines requiring of workers that they sacrifice some of Sabbath-like experiences in order to get done the job that the organization asks of them. It is more likely that managers, especially in for-profit organizations, will err on the side of requiring more of workers than Sabbath wisdom would call for. Such managers may need reminding, from time to time, that workers need Sabbath. In short, such managers may be in greater need of heeding God's command, "Remember the Sabbath...!"

The manager will remind workers that, although work is important in serving God and serving each other, although performance goals are important, life is more than the results of our accomplished work. In other words, the manager will remind others that there are bigger issues at stake than the work carried on by one employee, one work team and even one organization. They will remind workers that the community for which the organization services is much bigger than the organization and that life is even bigger than that. This perspective will help prevent the pressures of work and mundane duties from completely crowding out the significance of the Sabbath. The manager need not preach about this to workers.

**Extending the principles to the broader community of business.** The connections between Sabbath and covenant cannot be forgotten here. Covenant relationships in business usually have spans larger than just the pool of employees. Covenant relations also can include customers, suppliers, and employee families. Thus, Sabbath-principled managers will be mindful of work situations on these other stakeholders. There are times when customers, suppliers and families need release from the oppression of work situations.

**Tensions.** Sabbath principles in managerial work can sometimes be ambiguous. There may be tradeoffs that have to be made when wanting a particular Sabbath-like benefit. Thus, when Sabbath-principled managers advocate for release from onerous regulations they will be responsible by keeping in mind the protections that such regulations are designed to protect. Managers will advocate just as vigorously for the protections at stake as well as for the release from regulations that are oppressive. Likewise, subordinates who advocate for the need of additional protections through regulations will learn to advocate just as vigorously on behalf of relieving the organization from the oppression of additional regulations. Thus, to keep Sabbath wisely those interested in Sabbath-like principles at work must dialog together regarding the

unintended consequences of taking actions which, on the surface, seem to provide release from the burdens of work, but on a deeper level carry the seeds of unexpected oppression as a result. Sabbath, after all, is meant to be a communal experience.

Sabbath keeping encourages getting the job done. Managers will work tirelessly and smartly to plan, organize, lead, and maintain accountability for completed work. It is only in completed tasks that much of the common good can be served by the organization. Thus, while managers will be vigilant to relieve oppression, give release to the captives (those whose economic situations require them to work in order to live) and redemption from the deleterious effects of organizational life, they also will work to get work accomplished. This presents managers with a unique opportunity to serve in moments of time when two competing pressures are at work.

On the topic of tradeoffs we must not forget that any significant action which brings release to particular burdened workers has the potential of raising the costs of doing business and this, assuming a competitive marketplace, carries the risk that prices will go up and competitive pressures will become greater as a result. Thus, managers will think carefully about the impact of Sabbath-like actions. In some cases the manager may need to ask of workers that a counter-measure be found to keep expenses from rising as a result of workers enjoying release from the burdens of work in order to prevent the unpleasant impact of having to downsize later in response to market pressures.

Oppression may come from the structure of the organization as well as from the demands of the tasks, the demands of customers, the actions of competitors, the requirements of regulations and any number of other places. The Sabbath-principled manager will seriously look

at possibilities of making structural changes in these relationships recognizing that doing so may create unwanted side-effects that must themselves be managed.

In some countries where the law permits, or requires, managers must make reasonable accommodations for workers who cannot in good conscience work on their day of worship. In this lies a tension: If it is the Christian believers who request and always receive accommodation, this, in effect, may prevent other workers who are not believers from ever experiencing a day of worship. The believers can feel grateful that their day of worship has been preserved, but what about the other workers missing out on the benefit? As far as possible managers will provide accommodation for workers with differing days of worship (Friday, Sabbath, or Sunday). In the best case, an organization might have some Muslim, Jewish, and some Christian workers each of which could get the preferred day off for worship. In reality this is rarely the case and managers may have to muddle through the challenges of scheduling. Bringing Sabbath into the workplace applies as much to nonbelievers as to believers. Christian managers will be mindful that release from work is needed equally by all.

### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

We have reviewed Sabbath theology both in terms of Sabbath as a day of worship and Sabbath in its deeper theological meaning, meaning that forms the basis for applying Sabbath principles to the rest of life. We have seen some of the ways in which Sabbath can be applied as a daily work of worship in the life of a manager. There are ambiguities; well-meaning faithful Christians may differ on some of the application details. Yet, when taking Sabbath principles deeply into organizational life, there appear to be many things to consider.

While much of what is stated here is worded from the point of view of Christian business managers, it is just as applicable to all levels of authority, all types of leadership formal or informal. For example, the front line Christian worker demonstrates leadership by speaking to work associates and to other leaders regarding the need for improvements in work environment. At the other end of the chain of authority, the Christian who sits on the Board of Directors has an opportunity to exercise Sabbath-like oversight responsibilities by asking company executives to explain how the moral tensions of work are managed on a day-to-day basis.

Can it be that keeping the Sabbath holy on the day of worship is to a degree dependent upon the ability of the worker to keep Sabbath the rest of the week? This paper suggests that this is indeed the case.

Will Sabbath keeping make managers better contingency planners or more relation-oriented leaders? Perhaps, but not necessarily. Will Sabbath keeping (as a set of principles at work) be an influence which raises the moral trajectory of the organization? Probably, but in some instances it is not always clear what the Sabbath principle will suggest to the manager for both short-term and long-run.

An important hypothesis that comes from this paper is that the theological meaning of Sabbath as seen in its broader principles applicable for organizational setting and the stream of literature related to spirituality, religion and management are related. There are likely some, but not necessarily exhaustive parallels with the biblical theology explored here. While reviewing these parallels is beyond the scope of this present paper, this paper does establish the biblical theological basis for a systematic review of the principles of spirituality applied in the organizational management setting. After such a review is completed a comparison can then be made to evaluate the degree to which contemporary principles of spirituality as represented in the



management literature, are consistent with or contrary to the principles based on the biblical theology of Sabbath.

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**Table 1**

<b>THE MEANING OF THE SABBATH: A SUMMARY</b>	
Not merely absence of work but also work's fulfillment celebrating the creative work of God	levels society placing each person, regardless of social status, in the same position with God
resting from our daily work as we are co-laborers with God in sustaining each other	each person in the covenant community has more than utilitarian, economic value
resting in the joy of God's great gifts contained in the Earth	a symbol of the covenant relationship with God
resting from our works of righteousness as a means to gain favor with God	an anchor for and contributor to the identity God's people
resting in the hope that one day the peace of Eden will be restored	a general call for obedient loyalty to the Creator God; a sign of loyalty to God, a sign of the covenant
an invitation to act like God, a means of revealing God	means for coming to experience all that God had intended for the covenant community
the provision that God has made for safeguarding the community's honoring the other commandments	the means by which humans can lay aside their tendency toward acquisitiveness
providing for preventing injustice, providing a means to restore broken relationships	the Sabbath command is the bridge or hinge between worship to a loving God and loving one's neighbor
the release from things that enslave, oppress and bind human life	it fosters the keeping of the other Commandments