

THE SABBATH DAY

READ: EXODUS 20:8; MARK 2:27-3:6

Charlotte's family had just finished Sunday dinner at Grandma's. "Charlotte, would you help me with the dishes, please?" asked Grandma, handing Charlotte a dish towel. "I'll wash, you dry! Now, what did you learn in Sunday school today?"

"We've been learning about the Ten Commandments, and today was about keeping the Sabbath day holy. Some kids started arguing about what you should or shouldn't do on Sunday. Heather said her family doesn't do any work or chores around the house, but Jason said his dad takes Sunday to do odd jobs he hasn't had time to do during the week. I was a little confused about it all. What do you think, Grandma?"

Grandma thought for a moment. "That can be a touchy subject for believers. In fact, people were disagreeing about the Sabbath in Jesus's day. One Sabbath day, Jesus and His disciples were picking some heads of grain because they were hungry. The Pharisees, who had set up strict rules about what you could and couldn't do on the Sabbath, accused Him of breaking the law because He was doing work by picking grain. Another time those same Pharisees were upset that Jesus healed a crippled man on the Sabbath."

"You mean Jesus got in trouble?" Charlotte asked in surprise.

"With the Pharisees, yes! They were more focused on following rules than following Jesus." Grandma rinsed a soapy dish and handed it to Charlotte. "I think God intended the Sabbath to be a time of rest and refreshment from our daily work and routines," Grandma said. "It refreshes us to remember what Jesus did to save us and to worship Him with other Christians. But the Sabbath can look different for different people. Our family likes to spend time doing things together. Some people enjoy hobbies on Sunday, while others just like to take a nap!"

"Like Grandpa!" Charlotte laughed. "A couple of Sundays ago, Dad helped our neighbor fix his flat tire. Do you think that was okay?"

"That sounds like Jesus! The Bible tells us Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. He was more concerned about loving others than following the list of rules made by the religious leaders of the day. I think your dad showed Jesus's love to your neighbor and that was his way of keeping the Sabbath holy." ♥ KENDRA ANGLE

HONOR JESUS ON THE SABBATH

KEY VERSE: THEN [JESUS] SAID TO THEM, "THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN, NOT MAN FOR THE SABBATH." MARK 2:27 (NIV)

Does your family take a break from the normal routine of work and school on Sundays? Keeping the Sabbath day holy means taking time to honor Jesus by going to church, relaxing with your family, and even helping others. We can rest because we don't have to do anything to earn God's favor—Jesus earned it for us! God made the Sabbath day for our benefit, and each family has a different way of keeping it special.

WHY CAN'T I?

READ: EXODUS 20:12; EPHESIANS 6:1-4



But, Dad, why can't I?" asked Ella when her dad insisted she turn off a TV show she wanted to watch.

Her brother Jonah looked up. "Yeah. I heard that's a good show."

"I don't think it's a good thing for either of you to watch," said Dad.

Ella collapsed on the couch. "It's not fair! All the rules we have just make my life completely unbearable!" She had a tendency to be a bit dramatic.

As the kids and their dad ran some errands the next day, they drove past their church. "Look!" Jonah pointed to small trees that had just been added along the edge of the property. "Dad, why did they tie those little trees down like that?"

Ella giggled. "Do they think they might try to run away?"

"Remember when we visited Nana and Papa last summer and took a walk through the woods behind their house?" Dad asked.

"Sure. Jonah and I both beat you when we raced to that crooked tree near the stream!" said Ella.

"That's okay, Dad. Everybody gets a little slow in their old age," Jonah teased.

Dad laughed. "Well, one of you mentioned that the tree was crooked and leaning over a lot."

"I named it the Snake Tree," Jonah said.

"It was probably damaged in a storm years ago when it was about the size of those new trees at the church," Dad said. "The grounds keepers at church staked those young trees to hold them in place and help them grow straight and tall in spite of storms and winds." He grinned at the kids. "That's kind of like what parents do."

"You mean..." Ella hesitated. "Like you giving us rules to follow and being careful about what we watch?"

Dad nodded. "The Bible tells parents to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. It's my job to love you and help you grow in a way that reflects how Jesus loves you and helps you grow—and that means doing what I think is best for you and disciplining you when you do wrong. I want to help you grow strong in your faith in Him."

Ella sighed. "I know. And even though I don't always like your rules, I'll obey them, because the Bible tells children to honor and obey their parents!" ♥

MIKE A. DIZE

HONOR AND OBEY PARENTS

KEY VERSE: CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN ALL THINGS, FOR THIS IS WELL PLEASING TO THE LORD. COLOSSIANS 3:20

Do you appreciate your parents? You may not like their rules or enjoy being disciplined when you break them, but remember that God put them in your life because He loves you. Their job is to point you to Jesus and help you grow strong in Him. Thank God for them, and obey your heavenly Father's command to honor and obey your parents.



A HATEFUL HEART

READ: EXODUS 20:13; MATTHEW 5:21-24

EDITOR'S NOTE: THIS STORY ADDRESSES MURDER AND MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.

Oscar was putting the finishing touches on the longest mini race car track ever built in his bedroom when his mom called down the hall. "Oscar! It's time to go visit your dad!"

Oscar sighed and trudged into the kitchen. "Can't you go without me, Mom? You could drop me off at Milo's."

"Oscar..." Mom sighed and set down her purse. "You never want to go visit your dad. Why is that?"

Oscar felt tears coming to his eyes, and he wiped at them angrily. "I...I just..." Suddenly the words just burst out. "I hate him!"

Mom looked a little startled, but her voice remained calm. "You hate him?"

"Yes, because he murdered someone!" Oscar was almost shouting. "He murdered someone and he deserves to be in prison and I hate going there and I hate him for doing this to us!"

Mom let out a long breath. "I understand how hard this is for you, Oscar. It's hard for me too. If I didn't have Jesus helping me through this, I don't know what I'd do." She looked at Oscar. "Did you know Jesus talks about murder in the Bible?"

"I know one of the Ten Commandments forbids murder," Oscar said.

"Yes, but did you know Jesus said hating another person was a form of murder?"

Oscar felt his cheeks flush. "He did?"

Mom nodded. "Every human life is precious to God. He created each person in His image, and He loves us all so much that Jesus died on the cross to save us. Jesus compared hate to murder because both go against Him, our Creator and Savior."

"I guess that means I committed murder in my heart by hating Dad," Oscar said quietly.

Mom put an arm around him. "We've all sinned against God, Oscar, but the good news is that Jesus forgives. Talk to Him about how you feel, and trust Him to replace your hate and bitterness with His love."

Oscar nodded. "Mom? I changed my mind—I want to go visit Dad. I think he'd like to hear about the race car track I'm building." ♥ COURTNEY LASATER

DON'T HATE OTHERS

KEY VERSE: ANYONE WHO HATES ANOTHER BROTHER OR SISTER IS REALLY A MURDERER AT HEART. 1 JOHN 3:15 (NLT)

Are you harboring hatred in your heart? By comparing hate to murder in the Bible, Jesus makes it clear that hating someone is a very serious sin. He tells us to love one another because He created us and loves us so much He died to take the punishment for our wrongs. Confess your hateful feelings to Him, and trust Him to replace them with His life-giving love.

FAMILY LOYALTY

READ: EPHESIANS 5:22-28



Caleb and Jake Parker were cousins who lived across the country from each other. When they got together, they had a lot of fun, but that didn't happen too often. This summer, however, Caleb was staying with Jake for an entire month while his mom had knee surgery.

"You boys are so much alike," Mr. Parker remarked as he drove them to Wacky Wednesdays, the summer kids' club at church. "You like the same things and you look enough alike to be brothers."

"Except Caleb's a Pirates fan and I'm a Dodgers fan." Jake laughed. "He's dreading the game on Saturday even though we're sitting right behind home plate because he knows we're gonna win." Jake poked his cousin. "You could become a Dodgers fan just for the summer."

Caleb looked horrified. "No way! I'm a Pirates fan forever and ever." The boys had been debating about their teams since the day Caleb arrived.

Mr. Parker turned onto the highway. "Are you boys still learning about the Ten Commandments at Wacky Wednesdays?"

"Yeah," Jake said. "Today we'll be talking about the seventh commandment."

"It has something to do with adults...ery or something like that," said Caleb. "I don't understand what that word means."

"Adultery," Mr. Parker corrected. "That verse is talking to husbands and wives. God is telling them to be loyal to each other. Do you boys know what loyalty is?"

"Sort of," the boys both answered, but they didn't sound too sure.

Mr. Parker smiled. "Actually, you guys just showed me loyalty—Caleb, you are loyal to the Pirates, and Jake, you are loyal to the Dodgers. No one could talk either one of you out of being loyal to your own team. And that's the way I feel about your mom, Jake. No one could talk me out of loving her. I am loyal to her. That's what that commandment is saying husbands and wives should do—be loyal to one another so their marriage will reflect the love and faithfulness Jesus shows all of us."

"Thanks, Dad. You're a good explainer. Now I understand what loyalty is."

"Right," said Caleb, "Go Pirates!"

"No," Jake said. "Go Dodgers!" ♥ LINDA WEDDLE

BE LOYAL TO YOUR FAMILY

KEY VERSE: YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY. EXODUS 20:14

Who are you loyal to? Your soccer team? Your school? Your friends? The Lord tells husbands and wives to be loyal to each other. Jesus loves us and promises to always be faithful to us, and He tells husbands and wives to demonstrate that same kind of faithfulness in marriage. Even though you're young, you can trust Jesus to help you be faithful like Him throughout your life.

EDDIE'S RAINCOAT

READ: EXODUS 20:15; MATTHEW 5:38-42

Eddie wanted to play in the rain, but his raincoat was too small. If only he had his big brother's cool camouflage raincoat. That would solve his problem.

Eddie poked his head into Dylan's room. "Dylan? Can I wear your raincoat?"

Dylan didn't answer. He was still asleep. What if Eddie took Dylan's raincoat as his own? Dylan needed a new one anyway. It wasn't stealing if Eddie asked first, right?

"Can I *have* your raincoat?" Eddie asked. He took Dylan's snoring as a yes. He grabbed the raincoat and scurried out to the backyard. Eddie splashed in every mud puddle. He didn't hear the door open a few minutes later.

"That's my raincoat!"

Eddie felt sick to his stomach. "You gave it to me!"

"No, you stole it!"

Eddie stepped back and tripped. The raincoat made a ripping sound as Eddie fell down. Dylan ran inside. Before Eddie could stand, Dylan and Mom were at the door. "Eddie, please come here," Mom said. Eddie trudged over. The tear in the coat went all the way down the side. "Why did you steal Dylan's coat?"

Eddie shook his head. "I didn't!"

"Yes, he did!" Dylan said.

Mom shushed Dylan. "Eddie, you acted like it was yours. Isn't that stealing?" Eddie hung his head. "Do you know what Jesus says about stealing?" asked Mom.

"It's bad? I know one of the Ten Commandments says not to steal."

Mom nodded. "Instead of stealing, Jesus tells us to give. He even says that if someone wants to take your shirt, you should give them your coat too. He gave His own life to save us, even though we didn't deserve it, and He tells us to give to others in the same way. Stealing is the opposite of what we're called to do as His followers."

Eddie handed the raincoat back to Dylan. "I'm sorry I took this."

Dylan shook his head. "You keep it. It's ripped now anyway."

No one kept the camouflage raincoat. Eddie went back to his small coat, and Dylan got a new one. But after that morning, Eddie started giving things to Dylan, and Dylan started giving things to Eddie. One thing Eddie knew for sure was he wouldn't be stealing any more raincoats. He wanted to give like Jesus. ♥

BECCA WIERWILLE

GIVE, DON'T STEAL

KEY VERSE: IF YOU ARE A THIEF, QUIT STEALING. INSTEAD, USE YOUR HANDS FOR GOOD HARD WORK, AND THEN GIVE GENEROUSLY TO OTHERS IN NEED.
EPHESIANS 4:28 (NLT)

Have you ever taken something that didn't belong to you? How did you feel about it afterward? Sometimes we think stealing something we really want will make us happy, but true joy doesn't come from things. Joy comes from Jesus, who gave His life for us and who teaches us to show others His kindness, generosity, and love.