New books on Sunday, or the Sabbath, appear with increasing rapidity. This new publication upholds the Sabbath’s subversive, countercultural nature—despite its centrality to early American identity. 


Writing about creation, Swoboda makes the startling claim that, “Sabbath is a string holding everything together” (127), but he makes his case. He details a theology of the Sabbath through four domains: The Sabbath for Us, Sabbath for Others, Sabbath for Creation, and Sabbath for Worship. In each of these divisions the author is fully alert to contemporary cultural issues. In early chapters he explores issues of time, work, health and relationships, making a “pivot” toward exploring the way Sabbath affects corporate and social realities. The world of economics and work, the environment and all animate life are not beyond the reach of Sabbath. Swoboda concludes his study with reflection on Sabbath and witness, worship, and discipleship, and ends by affirming, “Joy rules the Sabbath” (167, 202).
Editor's Journal

By Rodney L. Petersen

The Joy of Sunday

The Lord’s Day, Sabbath, and Sunday offer us the opportunity to be human, to support each other, and to build community, neighbor by neighbor, a neighbor at a time.

This Sunday Magazine’s cover depicts a tree growing in a barren land, fed by some deep inner spring—perhaps refreshed, as we are, by the well-deep nurturance of the Lord’s Day. We might also describe Sabbath or Sunday as a day of rest, a day for family or community, a day of joy. Walter Brueggemann writes of Sabbath as resistance—resistance to the anxiety, coercion, exclusivism, the multitasking we all do to satisfy the ever-elusive gods of productivity and competition.

Young Ghil Lee’s article, “Sharing the Oasis of Sabbath Joy with Others,” puts forward the idea of Sabbath as a regenerative oasis shared with others, denaturing our culture’s corrosive acidity. This communal dimension of Sabbath is also seen in Ronnie Tucker’s discussion of “The Joy of the Sabbath in The African American Culture.” The joy and reverence tied to Sabbath worship and family life in black culture are key elements still shaping the African American lifestyle.

LDA president emeritus David McNair’s Reflections remind us of the Sabbath’s economic implications. Whether on a Sunday in earlier agrarian settings, or today, despite its more ambiguous place in contemporary America, a day set apart is a day of joy. The interview, “Shared Beauty and Joy: Shabbat in the Abrahamic Traditions of Christianity and Judaism,” with Hector Pagan likewise highlights his experience of the liberative elements of Sabbath in Jewish and Christian cultures. Readings and studies shared from his personal spiritual journey represent a theological treasure trove of refreshment for a spiritually barren culture.

In “The Joy of Sunday in Light of Pope Francis’ Message,” Donald Conroy gives further theological foundation to our theme of Sunday as a day of joy. He contextualizes and explicates Francis’ challenging series of “joy-centered” messages, now reaching readers of all faiths and walks of life. Lenore Tucker and Donna La Rue complement this work with an Adult Bible Study focusing on the terms ‘Sabbath’ and ‘Joy.’

Finally, Tom Ryan offers a review of The Book of Joy, by Desmond Tutu and the Dali Lama. Without noting a necessary theological connection between the persistence of joy in human life and the Sabbath, Ryan writes, “Archbishop Tutu hopes the book will awaken in us how deeply we are wired for complementarity, for togetherness.” To be human we need other people. Tutu adds, “That’s why when they want to punish you they put you in solitary confinement. Because you can’t flourish without other human beings. They [other people] give you things you cannot give yourself, no matter how much money you have.”

The Lord’s Day, Sabbath, and Sunday offer us the opportunity to be human, to support each other, and to build community, neighbor by neighbor, a neighbor at a time. This is a day of joy!
Sharing the Oasis of Sabbath Joy with Others

by Young G. Lee
My journey with the Lord’s Day began with the Christian high school I attended in Korea. Many of our teachers were very devout; one day a teacher told us, “Only those who study hard during the weekdays deserve to enjoy the Sabbath on Sunday.” His words did not stop me from studying on Sundays in high school and college. But when I did so, his words chased after me.

I trained and served as a medical officer in the Korean Army, and began attending early morning weekday prayer meetings* at the military base church. At the age of 23, after finishing my tour of duty, I went to the U.S. Called to become a minister, I entered seminary.

English is not my primary language, so each week’s work took a huge toll on me. One Monday, feeling tired in class, I recalled my high school teacher’s words. I realized I could only survive school by taking a Sabbath on Sundays.

I stopped studying every Saturday at midnight, and resumed studying at midnight on Sunday. I came to enjoy every second of Sunday, no matter how far behind I was in my studies, even if I had Monday exams. It was like an oasis for me. I didn’t observe the Sabbath as a legalistic practice, but voluntarily. And I enjoyed it: expectant of my Sunday oasis, I studied hard during the weekdays, and each Sunday my Sabbath day rewarded my hard work.

But it only lasted for the three years I was in seminary.

As I began my ministry, I had a ‘day off’ on Mondays, but it was not really a Sabbath. As a seminarian I could stop studying at my own risk; if I were unprepared for an exam, I accepted the outcome. But as a minister, I needed to visit hospitalized members and officiate at funerals on Mondays. My oasis dried up. I concluded that pastors cannot enjoy a real Sabbath.

One day, though, a Bible verse enlightened my Sabbath observance. Exodus 23:12 says, “Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger may be refreshed.” (KJV) I saw that hospitality toward others, especially strangers, might complete my Sabbath practice. And so, on Mondays I began a new ritual of having fun with friends.

Sometimes I invite new pastors who have just moved to Boston—a different kind of stranger—to join me for a meal or a cultural event. These gatherings may not always happen on Mondays, either. But meeting without an agenda is taking a Sabbath regardless of what day of the week it is, isn’t it?

I once enjoyed my seminary Sunday Sabbaths by myself. Now I observe the Sabbath in a truly biblical way, not only for myself, but for and with others. I finish my sermon by Thursday night or Friday morning, so I am free for all the other things that go on over the weekend. We have many preparations on Saturdays, and meetings on Sundays, so I have Monday as my Sabbath.

I now observe the Lord’s Day on Sundays, and the Sabbath on Mondays.

Notes:

* These hourly meetings run from 6 to 8 AM in many churches in Korea, of all denominations, each attracting as many as a thousand attendees at a service. Adapted a century ago from pre-Christian practice, they still continue in many churches in Korea and the U.S.

Rev. Dr. Young Ghil Lee was born in the U.S., then attended high school in Korea. He trained in medicine, and served in the Korean Army as a medical officer for three years. Finishing his tour of duty at 23, he went to the U.S., where he did his Th. M. at Westminster School of Theology, and his Thm. at Princeton; his primary ministerial experience has all been in the U.S.

Now I observe the Sabbath in a truly biblical way, not only for myself, but for and with others.
The Sabbath has always been a point of joy and a day of reverence in black culture, with the church, Sunday worship, and family as key elements in the African American lifestyle. Two Bible verses are etched deeply in the heart of African American history: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex 20:8), and, “But the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” (Ex 20:10) Sabbath produces joy because it affords a time of relief from “Pharaoh,” the hard taskmaster of society.

Sabbath joy begins in the mind and heart. The work week adds so many struggles, oppression, depression, and other tribulations to African Americans’ lives. Returning to work on Monday, no matter how difficult the week may become, there is a blessed hope that on “Sunday Morning,” (1942) welcome relief will come. Burdens and heartaches will be removed; hands that work hard and backs bent from menial tasks will be healed. African Americans can enter a house of prayer and feel the Lord’s presence—there is often some form of worship going on all Sunday long.
The joy of the Sabbath in African American culture gives a sense of importance, that God is a just and fair God who will do right by God’s people, as I Peter 2:9 says: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light.” At the heart of the Sabbath worship experience is the reassurance that God has not forgotten the African American people. It reminds us we cannot afford to forget where our blessings and help come from. Sabbath joy provides not only an escape from life’s trepidations, but encouragement to endure its struggles. As Rev. Tim Rice sings, “Trouble Don’t Last Always” (1955).

The joy of the Sabbath is exemplified in song: “The Lord Will Make A Way,” (1977); “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” (1938); “Guide Me, Oh Thou Great Jehovah,” (1745); and “Father, I Stretch My Hands to Thee” (1749). The Sabbath is but one day, yet it has a deep, abiding impact on our culture’s life-blood. Sabbath joy gives African Americans a chance to “catch their breath” from the world’s cares, and concentrate on two very meaningful things: God and family.

Entering the “Safe-Haven” that only God provides, we collectively find restoration, deliverance, repentance, guidance, and encouragement. We find faith to face life’s struggles, understanding that God walks alongside, and hearing answers to our questions that only God can give. Even if only momentarily, Sabbath joy gives energy, emotional stability, psychological relief, the restoration of self-esteem, and—most importantly—a necessary, special closeness to God.

Sabbath joy is equated spiritually with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, bringing hope for tomorrow, and belief in a better day ahead. Relief comes because in God’s house we find joy, love, and peace—a peace the world does not give, and cannot take way. By Friday, we may feel crucified by society’s troubles, and by the deplorable conditions experienced throughout our culture, but no matter how hard the week, Sunday morning’s joy brings the hope of resurrection.

Soon we shall be done with the World’s troubles and find sweet rest in the arms of Jesus! ■

**Rev. Dr. Ronnie Tucker**, of Chambersburg, PA, is a well-known and highly respected revivalist, author, pastor and educator. A certified Dean of Christian Education in the National Baptist Congress of Christian Education, he is also an instructor in the Pennsylvania State Congress of Christian Education, and an Academic Counselor at Penn State University/ Mount Alto campus.

“in God’s house we find joy, love, and peace—a peace the world does not give, and cannot take way.”
I grew up on a farm. Attending church was never in question: we headed into town to our Presbyterian church on Sundays, then visited the neighbors to go horseback riding, or went home to savor other joys of farm life for the rest of the day.

I was never comfortable with that other Sunday ritual, eating out on Sundays – our communal Sabbath – because it prevents food service workers from attending worship. For a long time, my quiet refusal to join members of one church for their traditional after-church lunch generated talk. Some commented behind my back, saying, “...Doesn’t he know he can’t work his way to heaven?...He’s trying to be a goodie two shoes...” and so on.

They evidently weren’t thinking of the fourth commandment, or of Jesus’ care for those in need—like all those working unnecessarily on Sundays. However, the joy inherent in the Sabbath was brought home to me when I interviewed a restaurateur who closed on Sundays.

Don took over his Dad’s restaurant. A few months later he told his Dad he was going to close on Sundays. Dad’s comments were over the top. “It’s a tradition for all the church people coming in after church, the highest dollar volume per hour for the entire week, etc., etc.”

But Don said he was closing for his employees.

One day I interviewed one of Don’s long-time employees about the Sunday closing of that first restaurant (Don now has three). I remember his employee’s shining eyes as she told me of the workers’ delight at the announcement that they would never again be open on Sundays. They could count on every Sunday as a day of rest and worship. The employee added, “I could now do for my children what my mother did for her kids: she took us to church every Sunday!”

I found the real Joy of Sabbath right there, in that conversation.

Don’s first restaurant took a hit in sales with that first Sunday closing, but somehow, just somehow, the little weekday catering business he started began to grow. Amazing, isn’t it! Your work is your witness, and being closed on Sundays for your employees is indeed a witness. The Israelites’ neighbors always wondered why they worked seven days a week, while the Israelites took a day out and worshiped, celebrating just one god, when they had so many more!

Our institutional church often says, “We need more people.” But we fail to act when it comes to observing Sabbath. After church, many pastors eat out with members, failing even to thank the people working on Sundays who make it possible. Jesus cared for the poor and the marginalized. Our churches should be right there, in His place.

Is it possible that in a hundred years people will look back and wonder what caused the United States to decline so suddenly?

Maybe our loss of the Joy of Sabbath has something to do with it.

David C. McNair, LDA President emeritus, teaches at regional penitentiaries and serves as a missioner/visitor overseas. An officer in Big Brothers and Sisters, Global Outreach International, and the Mississippi Food Network, he has also endowed programs for students working with missionaries abroad. He saw active duty in the USAR; worked in print and TV journalism, and created Cinema 8, the first “over the air” cable TV in the U.S.
DL: Can you describe your path so far? Where are you now?

HP: To understand the Jewish faith better in my own mind, I studied its history, read Talmud (2005), and attended synagogue. I didn’t necessarily want to convert. Two months before my reception, I visited the synagogue where it would happen, and for some reason I decided to wait.

I then discovered the Boston Fellows Program—a nine-month program of meetings and retreats focusing on religion, science, and education—and began studying with them. It was a confusing time. I was sure, I was not sure.

Throughout my studies, one doctrine that mattered to me was the beauty of communal Sabbath observance. I didn’t want to lose that when I decided, more by intuition than belief, that I would re-accept Jesus and re-engage with the New Testament.

DL: What readings or Scriptural verses made either tradition more meaningful to you?

HP: In Dt 6:6, God sets the Shemah (‘Hear, O Israel...’) as a wake-up reminder: to remember the Sabbath, and keep it holy, we should keep observing Sabbath. Two rabbis, Heschel and Soloveitchik, have also written on this topic.

Heschel’s Sabbath (1951, 2003) calls the Sabbath the climax of our living. Some think we rest to recover energy, so we can work the rest of the week. But reversing this, Heschel says we should live all our days for the sake of the Sabbath (pp. 2-3). We stop working, not because, like animals, we have to rest, but because, as spiritual beings, we must regain a sense of life’s purpose, beyond just gaining profits.

Heschel’s book can be synthesized with Soloveitchik’s essay, “The Lonely Man of Faith” (1965, 2001) a commentary on Genesis 1-2. This version of the creation story describes two Adams, with two different natures. The first is...
I don’t need to deny Him who gave me meaning and purpose, and… I can speak up openly with people of my faith.

given the earth: to improve our relationship with the environment, humans must discover “how things work.” in reality. The second Adam, less pragmatic, seeks a purpose behind the reality. For Soloveitchik the ‘majestic’ Adam I holds sway the first six days of the week; on the Sabbath, the ‘redemptive’ Adam II is in the ascendant.

Meeting this new, necessary aspect of ourselves, Adam II, we can appreciate the world as it is.

Further, in Mt 5: 17, Jesus says he has not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it. Earlier, in Mt 4:4 he also emphasizes that we live, “not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God,” We need to stop doing things that do not fulfill us, and attend to being.

DL: How does your Sabbath/Sunday practice function now in your life, and the lives of others?

HP: I still recite the Shemah, light the candles, say the prayers; I still attend synagogue. I turn off my cell phone, don’t watch TV, don’t buy food outside. I read, I have Shabbos dinner with my community. We rest, we don’t work. We pray.

But—I’m not consistent: Sometimes I visit churchgoing friends or family members. I might invite guests from either or both communities. Our observances differ, but we respect each other.

DL: You spoke of your joy in finding the LDA website. What did it mean to you?

HP: I was glad to find a Christian organization that upheld the mandate to observe the Sabbath; I had been troubled to think that, in returning to Christianity, I might have to reject the personal experience of Sabbath that had become so important to me, and the Biblical truth it represented.

In fact, the celebration of Sabbath was the main reason I stayed with Judaism for so long.

The LDA website gave me a feeling of liberation. It affirmed that, as a Christian, I don’t have to deny the healing, integrated presence of Sabbath: it lets me value both important aspects of faith in my life. It truly brought me joy to know that there is a Christian organization with such a long tradition of observing and creating awareness of the biblical mandate of keeping the Sabbath.

Although I understood that the Sabbath could be observed regardless of my spiritual affiliation, by some reason, since I began observing this biblical mandate, I had a perceptual association between “Shabbat and community”

Now I know that there are Christian communities aware of this beautiful biblical mandate, that I don’t need to deny Him who gave me meaning and purpose, and that I can speak up openly with people of my faith about the beauty and necessity of observing the Sabbath.

In a world where success and getting to the top lie at the heart of culture as the motivation for vocation, the message of the Sabbath is more than necessary.

BA, University of Turabo.; M.S, Bay Path University.; Ed.S candidate, Bay Path University, (Longmeadow, MA) works in the Canton, MA School system. His extensive exploration of the two Abrahamic faith systems—Judaism and Christianity—is evident in his articulate description of the readings, practice, and faithful responses he has made, and to the riches he found in each.
We weren’t made for the Sabbath—it was made for us. (Mark 2:27) The poetry in the prose of the week, it is a day for rest, leisure, food, fun, fellowship.

And, to be sure, a day for joy.

In April 2015 His Holiness the Dalai Lama—Tibetan Buddhism’s acknowledged leader—and Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu—overseer of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission—spent a week in Dharamsala, India, deepening their friendship and celebrating the Dalai Lama’s 80th birthday. Writer Douglas Abrams ‘listened in’ as they reflected on what their very different lives have taught them of joy.

Neither a Buddhist nor a Christian book, this is a universal work, supported not only by opinion or tradition but also by science. The authors share insights on the nature of true joy; obstacles to joy; and the eight pillars of joy: four qualities of the mind—perspective, humility, humor, and acceptance—and four of the heart: forgiveness, gratitude, compassion, and generosity. Joy, it seems, should be taken seriously—and shared.

This is consistent with the University of Glasgow’s Institute of Neuroscience and Psychology findings, that there are only four fundamental emotions: fear, anger, sadness, and joy or happiness. (Beck, 2014; Jack, et al., 2009). A recent Gallup poll has found that the number of close friends people report having has fallen from three to two (McMillan, Smith-Lovin, and Brashears, 2006, p. 15). We may have hundreds of Facebook friends, but our true, close friends are decreasing. One in ten people said they had no close friendships at all.

For the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu, exploring joy means discovering what makes human experience satisfying. Events may create fear, anger, and sadness in us, as part of the warp and woof of life. But they need not determine who we are. Seemingly negative things may have a positive effect: Nelson Mandela’s 27 years in prison helped him become more magnanimous and compassionate, expanding his capacity as South Africa’s first black president to put himself “in the shoes of the other.”

For the Dalai Lama, joy depends on the attitudes, perspectives, and reactions we bring to situations, and to our relationships with others. Pushed into exile by China’s 1950 Tibetan invasion, he has met new people, learned new things, grown in empathy and compassion. He and the Tibetan people were not alone in their suffering: “...we heal our own pain...by turning to the pain of others,” he says. “And the more we turn toward others, the more joy we experience, and the more joy we experience, the more we can be . . . a reservoir of joy, an oasis of peace, and a pool of serenity that can ripple out to those all around [us].”

Archbishop Tutu hopes the book will awaken in us how deeply we are wired for complementarity, for togetherness. “You need other people to be human. That’s why when they want to punish you they put you in solitary confinement. Because you can’t flourish without other human beings. They give you things you cannot give yourself, no matter how much money you have.”

Joy is the reward, he says, of seeking to give joy to others. When we show love to others, do things for others, we experience a deep joy that does not occur in any other way.

The authors do not relate their reflections to the Sabbath as such, but we certainly can. They remind us that joy is in fact our birthright: even more fundamental than happiness. They share their hard-won wisdom of how to live with joy in the face of life’s inevitable sorrows.

Together they explore how we can transform joy from a fleeting feeling on one day of the week into a lasting way of being. It’s not by accident that a major component of Sabbath practice is the renewal of relationships—having a good conversation, doing something fun together, enjoying a favorite-food meal, as well as deepening our relationship with the Divine through prayer.

This rich, humorous, down-to-earth book is easily read: each writer presents simple ways of overcoming obstacles to joy and engaging, whether regularly or occasionally, with the eight pillars of joy. It can inspire our own practice and help us to live more joyfully—not only on the Sabbath, but each day of our lives.

Fr. Thomas Ryan, CSP, directs the Paulist North American Office for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations located in Boston.
Early in 2018, six months after he became Bishop of Rome Pope Francis began to issue a challenging series of “joy-centered” messages. Stirring up the Christian community as part of his New Evangelization effort, these writings include his first major address, Praise Be (Laudato Si; 2015), as well as The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia; 2016), The Joy of Truth (Veritatis gaudium; 2018) and his most recent apostolic exhortation, Rejoice and Be Glad (Gaudete et exsultate, 2018).

Personally practicing this New Evangelization, Pope Francis joyfully teaches, preaches and (above all) acts to touch the lives of those in difficulty: refugees, orphans, the sick, and poor families. He especially proclaims this joyful message in his weekly homilies. Sundays are to be celebrated as the Lord’s Day, and joyfully observed by those called to follow Jesus, reaching out to all humanity with words and actions.

Are we ready for the challenge to be Joy-filled Sunday Celebrators living the New Evangelization? The Good News has for many become the “Dull News.” We live our Christian lives, as Pope Francis remarks in The Joy of the Gospel (2013), as if we were living in a museum-keeping, “Preservation” type of Church. Our Sunday practice has become a joy-less routine.

A particular Gospel passage, however, suggests a remedy for this situation, as an opportunity for all who confess Christ to live a life consistent with that calling. Luke’s narrative describes two disciples travelling from Jerusalem to the small town of Emmaus on the first

They had had great expectations of Jesus, but he was handed over to the authorities and sentenced to death by crucifixion. Dismayed, they said: “We had hoped (this is in the Greek aorist tense, literally, “we were hoping,”) that Jesus was the one who was going to set Israel free.” We know what happened, then: Jesus revealed himself as they sat down. In the breaking of bread, he was made known to them. Sorrow turned to joy the first Sunday of the Christian era!

Twenty centuries and countless retellings of this story later, we know it well. But many Christians, gathering on Sunday, don’t really feel the Good News: they dutifully go through the motions of religious observance but fail to find the real joy of the Gospel.

These Christians, like many in secular or non-religious cultures, feel stuck and dejected. Many see our age as a joy-less one, full of chaos and uncertainty about the real direction and goal of human life. They characterize history much as the Enlightenment atheist Voltaire did, saying, “…History is a shipwreck, and we need to gather up the pieces to survive our unhappy fate.”

We may not be so cynical as that acknowledged unbeliever, but persons of faith often project a sense of doom. We want to escape such a dismal fate, even as we only theoretically acknowledge our belief in Jesus, seeing the Resurrection as one among many other myths of human invention.

But Pope Francis’ exhortations call us to bestir ourselves, take our faith both seriously and joyously—as if we could ever think of doing otherwise. Like his namesake, Francis sees creation as gift, the faithful life as full, engaged participation in that gift. The gift of Sunday in particular allows us time and space to reflect on these riches, to offer prayers of gratitude for them, and to celebrate with all those others who have come to the party throughout the ages and around the globe. Can the children of the bridegroom mourn when the bridegroom is among them? (Matt. 9:15) No!

Our only proper response to Christ’s presence among us— as Francis strives to remind us—is joy.

Donald B. Conroy, S.T.L., Ph.D., a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Greensburg (PA), is president of the International Consortium on Religion and Ecology and North American chaplain to the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements. He was also a member of the United Nations Advisory Committee on Environmental Sabbath/World Day of Rest and co-editor/author of Earth at Risk (Humanity Books, 2000).
Scriptural References: (KJV unless otherwise noted)

**Hebrew Scriptures**
- Genesis 1-2: Creation story (Soloveitchik’s two Adams)
- Exodus 20:6-12: Remember the sabbath day…maidservant…
- Exodus 23:12: Six days shalt thou work…
- Deuteronomy 6:6: ‘Hear, O Israel…” (Shemah)
- Psalms 126:5: They that sow in tears shall reap in joy

**Christian Scriptures**
- Matthew 4:4: We do not live by bread alone…
- Matthew 5:17: Jesus came not to abolish but fulfill the Law…
- Matthew 9:15: Can the children of the bridegroom mourn…
- Matthew 28:1: ‘On the first day of the week’
- Mark 2:27: God made the Sabbath for humanity, not…
- Mark 16:1: ‘On the first day of the week’
- Luke 24:13-35: Emmaus is ‘a sabbath day’s journey’
- John 16:20: Sorrow shall be turned to joy
- I Peter 2:9: Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood…

Articles and Essays:

Books and Longer Works:

Music:

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- Boston Fellows (http://www.bostonfellows.com/)
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General Reference Works (Bible Study, Other)
**Bible Study: A Scripture Study on the Terms ‘Joy’ and ‘Sabbath’**

This issue’s Bible Study continues to study verbal terms as a key to deeper engagement with Scriptures—especially as they are enumerated in the Concordance—and so it takes a look at the use of the words “joy,” (as translated from the Hebrew and Greek into English) and “Sabbath” (reading it both as “a generic day of rest,” and ‘a day set aside for worship and regenerative activities’; we do not address here whether Friday, Saturday, or Sunday is mandated).

**Class Structure:**

I. **Joy:** This word and its variants appear 98 times in Hebrew Scriptures (HS), 68 times in Christian Scriptures (CS).
   a. The books of Isaiah and Psalms have the most references overall; there are 29 references in the Gospels/Acts with the rest of the CS references in the Epistles; none appear in Revelation. What might cause this?
   b. Joy rewards perseverance in adversity, including but not only in battle victories; is felt at God’s presence in worship; attends the advent of hope, beauty, a new dawn, or a capable champion. Do you see other occasions?
   c. Visceral responses to or demonstrations of joy include making sounds (whether ‘music’ or ‘joyful noise’); sharing a feast; smiling or moving about (whether in a limited way, or in full-bodied dance). Are there more?

II. **More Joy:** God’s transformative agency turns mourning into dancing, and sorrow into joy: external actions, like mourning and dance reflect inward states, like sadness and glee, that change due to God’s active presence in our lives.
   a. Several texts refer to the transformation to joy from sadness (i.e., Ps 126:5; Jn 16:20). In each of these, God precipitates the change that shifts first the context, and finally, the physical and emotional responses to it.
   b. When the reverse happens, misguided human agency, or direct resistance to God’s stated direction (in prayer, through the prophets, or in a deliberate misreading of a text) seems to be the cause. Can you find examples?
   c. The New Concordance ends with Vine’s Bible Dictionary. See its entries for ‘Joy’ (p. 200). What/Do these definitions and discussions contribute to what has been said and studied above? How/Do they amplify them?

III. **Sabbath:** The Concordance lists the Scriptural references to this word. We will consider its meanings, how they are applied, and in what situations or settings. See Vine’s Dictionary ‘Sabbath’ (p. 323) and bear it in mind, as well.
   a. Ten Hebrew texts refer to ‘a sabbath,’ as a generic resting period; nearly 70 speak of ‘the sabbath,’ as an observance with particular characteristics (which may have varied from one historic time to another). What balance does this suggest between the word’s common use, and its specific communally defined denotation?
   b. Four types of Sabbath references arise in Christian Scriptures: 1) As a Jewish male, Jesus attended Sabbath worship, reading and discussing texts (Lk 4:21); but 2) abrogated other rules, letting his disciples do ritually defined ‘work’ (eating grain from a field: Mt 12:1, Mk 2:23, Lk 6:1) and healing on the Sabbath (Mt 12:9, Jn 5:5). 3) Acts 1: 12 defines the distance from Jerusalem to Emmaus as ‘a Sabbath day’s journey;’ several texts 4) fix Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection on days before, during, or after the Sabbath (Mt 28:1, Mk 16:1).
   c. In Rev 1:10, ‘The Lord’s Day’ may be a unique reference to Christian worship on the day we call ‘Sunday.’ John’s work, the last of the Christian Scriptures (90-95 CE), suggests how long early Christians took to shift to Sunday observance. (See also Pfatteicher on the ‘history of Sunday’ in Journey to the Heart of God (2013).)

IV. **Sabbath,** and ‘Joy of the Sabbath’ are used frequently in common parlance as an integrated term, but do “joy” and “Sabbath” occur in the same places? In the same books? Do they have any connections, and if so, what are they?
   a. No texts refer to both ‘Joy’ and ‘Sabbath,’ but each term shares essential qualities with the other. ‘Joy’ occurs in God’s presence, in response to healing, and in worship, all of which are parts of Sunday/ Sabbath/ Lord’s Day events, as persons of faith engage with God and each other in thanksgiving, meal sharing, and worship.
   b. Are ‘Sabbath’ and ‘Joy’ linked in those cases where either a) A transcendent event like healing happens, especially when Jesus engages with the individual in a penitential transaction regarding the forgiveness of sin; or b) Sabbath is seen as occasion for drawing nigh to God, to which the response is joy? Are there other links?
   c. Read any one of this issue’s articles. They discuss joy in many denominational, communal, and national settings. What verses do they seem to cite or indicate? Are any of them among the listings you have found?