

The Lord's Day

By David Allen

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Acts 20:7 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What is the single most important reason Christians worship together publicly on Sunday?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Exodus 20:8–11 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: How would you describe the similarities and differences between the Sabbath day and the Lord's Day?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to 1 Corinthians 16:1–2 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Do you think Christians are bound by the legal requirements in the Old Testament concerning the observance of the Lord's Day? Why or why not?

Scripture to Memorize

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight." Acts 20:7

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand why God has set aside Sunday as the Lord's Day for worship and rest.

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He is the author of *Hebrews* in the New American Commentary series; *Lukan Authorship of Hebrews*; *1–3 John: Fellowship in God's Family* in the Preaching the Word series; and *Preaching Tools: An Annotated Survey of Commentaries and Preaching Resources for Every Book of the Bible*. David also is the coeditor and contributor of *Whosoever Will: A Biblical-Theological Critique of Five-Point Calvinism*, *Text-Driven Preaching*, and *The Return of Christ: a Premillennial Perspective*. You can follow David on Twitter @drdavidlallen and on Facebook at David Lewis Allen. His website is www.drdavidlallen.com.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Suppose you ask a friend to go to the movies with you on Sunday afternoon after church. Your friend wants to go but says no. He says he wants to spend the afternoon resting and enjoying some personal time with God. Would you be offended in any way?

Now picture the same scenario, but in this case your friend responds that he cannot go to the movies because Christians are not supposed to do anything on Sunday except worship God. Would you agree or disagree?

Read Acts 20:7 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 7. On the first day of the week. Luke records that Paul met with the Christians in Ephesus on a particular day. How do we know what day of the week that was? The answer is found as the Gospels describe the day when the women first came to the tomb where Jesus had been buried.

Matthew 28:1: "Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week..."

Mark 16:1–2: "When the Sabbath was past . . . very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb."

Luke 24:1: "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb."

John 20:1: "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early..."

All four Gospels say that Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week. Notice that this day was after the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day is Saturday. The first day of the week is Sunday, the Lord's Day.

Believers worship on the Lord's Day, Sunday, because it commemorates the resurrection of Jesus. Since the earliest history of the church, Christ followers have met together for worship on Sunday. In Revelation 1:10, John tells us that he received the vision of the Revelation of Jesus Christ when he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day—that is, on Sunday. That is why we call Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the question: What is the single most important reason Christians worship together publicly on Sunday?

Discussion Question

What is the significance of the resurrection of Jesus for Christians to choose Sunday as the day they worship together publicly?

Read Exodus 20:8–11 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 8. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. What is the significance of the Sabbath day in the Old Testament? One of the Ten Commandments prescribed that the Jews in the Old Testament were to work six days of the week, but then they were to rest one day, the Sabbath day. The word *Sabbath* means “rest.” According to Genesis 1, after God created the universe in six days, He rested on the seventh day. That means God ceased from work because He had completed all of creation. It does not mean God rested because He was physically tired. This was to become a model for the Jews of the Old Testament.

Verse 11. the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. The Sabbath day was blessed by God and was holy. There are similarities between the Sabbath day and the Lord’s Day, but we should not call Sunday the “Sabbath.” By definition, the seventh day of the week refers to Saturday.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now answer this question: How would you describe the similarities and differences between the Sabbath day and the Lord’s Day?

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1–2 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 2. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside. Another part of the corporate worship of early Christians on the Lord’s Day was giving money in an offering.

Since God is our Creator and Redeemer, He commands and deserves our worship on the first day of each week. Remember when the people of Israel began to move into the promised land after the Exodus? Jericho was the first city they took. God had said the people were not to take any spoils from the victory over Jericho because they were to be totally devoted to the Lord. As Christians, we dedicate the first day of the week, Sunday, as our day of devotion and worship of the Lord.

Because our culture increasingly is turning its back on God, many are losing any sense that Sunday should be devoted to Him. The business world increasingly sees Sunday as another day to make money. Those who plan athletic, artistic or academic competitions increasingly see Sunday morning as just another time to plan events. This makes it very difficult for some Christians to make decisions about what to do and what not to do on Sundays.

We honor the Lord’s Day because of the principle of the day of rest, which is rooted not only in the Old Testament and the Ten Commandments but in creation itself. As a model for us, God rested on the seventh day after creation. Some are not able to rest on Sunday for various reasons. In this case, another day might be needed to maintain this principle.

We are not bound by the legal requirements of the Sabbath Day as given in the law of Moses in the Old Testament. That law was for Israel as a nation and included precise guidelines concerning just how much work could be allowed. The ancient Jews debated such matters—as whether they could eat an egg that was laid on the Sabbath, or whether they could break a dead twig off a bush. We should not let our keeping the principle of rest on the Lord’s Day degenerate into such legalism.

Individual issues and questions about what else we should do besides attend corporate worship are best left to each individual conscience within the guidelines set by God in Scripture for the Lord's Day.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to these questions: Do you think Christians are bound by the legal requirements in the Old Testament concerning the observance of the Lord's Day? Why or why not?

On Your Own

In the space below, list some specific and practical ways you can make the Lord's Day a priority. What activities do you think a Christian should and should not engage in on Sunday? When everyone is finished, the group can share their responses.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** at the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to. . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week, immediately following the Sabbath day. The Sabbath day was Saturday, so Jesus was raised on Sunday. Since the days of the early church, Christ followers have met together for worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day, because it is the day that commemorates the resurrection of Christ.

Sunday is primarily to be devoted to worship of God and rest. This is based on the principle of the Sabbath in Exodus 20:8–11. As God rested on the seventh day after the six days of creation, so believers now work six days a week and devote Sunday as a day of worship and rest.

When we meet together for corporate worship on Sunday, we are demonstrating our obedience to the Lord by putting Him first on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day.

Follow up Question

Should families spend any time together on the Lord's Day, in addition to worshipping God publicly in church?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.