

Suggestions for the Lord's Day during COVID 19 "Quarantine"

This is a unique time in the life of the church. While we are unable to meet for worship, prayer, and fellowship, the observance of the Lord's Day is greatly diminished. However, in these circumstances, we are given an opportunity to think differently about things that have been part of our regular routine.

Whenever we are given unexpected gifts of time or money, we reveal something of our priorities in the ways we use those gifts. In the fall, for example, when the country goes off of Daylight Savings Time, we each get an extra hour. How do you deal with that hour? Do you a.) purposely go to bed at the same time as usual in order to catch up a little on your sleep deficit? b.) use it to attend to some task you haven't been able to find time for? c.) indulge in something you've been wanting to do? or d.) fritter away the time?

What about times when you receive some unexpected money? Do you a.) put it toward paying off some of the debt you may have? b.) put it toward something you need but haven't yet been able to afford? c.) use it to help someone you know who is in need? d.) contribute it to a charity you have been wanting to contribute to? e.) splurge with some sort of celebration? or f.) just let it get absorbed into your general spending?

So, we are given at least one Lord's Day (likely more than one). How will we use it (them)? The opportunity that presents itself may provide us with a chance to re-evaluate the way we spend our normal Sabbaths.

Isaiah 58 gives us this promise:

"If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the Lord honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the Lord,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

When Adam and Eve were created, their first full day was spent, not working, but in communion with their Creator. What would it be like if our first day of the week were primarily spent in communion with our Savior?

What kind of responses do we have to this call to “call the Sabbath a delight”? Certainly it is more than “going to church.” How *do* we spend our Sabbaths? When we have the regular Sunday activities at the church, we participate in a worship service, (which includes reading and hearing the Bible preached, confessing our sins, receiving assurance of being forgiven, singing hymns and Psalms, praying, giving our offerings, receiving the Lord’s Supper, and receiving the benediction), we sit under the teaching of the Word in Sunday School classes, we have social interaction.

When we don’t have the usual services, are there ways to approximate the benefits they provide us? The church is trying to make available live streaming of at least part of the morning worship. If you are able to access that “services,” you will receive some of those benefits.

Nevertheless, let me offer some suggestions of how the day may be spent in a spiritually profitable way. Some of these may be activities you could add even on days when the church routine is back to normal.

- I. Reading and/or hearing the Bible read and/or taught.
 - a. Individually or as a family read the Scriptures. Make observations.
 - b. Use Bible study resources to explain unclear sections.
 - c. Listen to a recording of a Bible teacher or preacher. Take notes.
 - d. Discuss with others/quiz children and young people concerning the content.
 - e. Memorize a passage of Scripture.
 - f. Based on the Scripture read, confess sins that convicted you.
- II. Singing hymns and psalms
 - a. Sing from any hymns and/or Psalms you have memorized or that appear in a hymnal or Psalter you have.
 - b. Read out loud hymns and Psalms. Reading these in an expressive manner often helps to see meaning that evades us when we are concentrating on singing.
 - c. Be sure to read hymns that are unfamiliar to you. Note any texts that you would like to learn the music to.
- III. Praying
 - a. Offer prayers based on the Scriptures studied.
 - b. Pray that the Gospel will reach across the world and into your own heart.
 - c. Pray for the items on the weekly prayer sheet.
 - d. Pray for any missionaries, ministries, and other individuals or agencies, that either the church or you support financially.

- e. Pray about any current news issues (rather than arguing or complaining about them. (We need to pray for those who are sick and their families, for those who are living in fear and anxiousness, for the professionals who are providing medical care, for those working on treatments and a vaccine for COVID-19, and for our leaders to act with wisdom and courage as they make vital decisions that impact each of our lives. Please also lift up the President and our nation's coronavirus task force headed by Vice President Mike Pence in prayer as they work closely and diligently with the myriad of issues related to this pandemic.)
 - f. Take time to update your understanding of the status of any of the people or groups you pray for regularly.
- IV. Spiritual Fellowship. This is more than “shooting the breeze with a friend.” It involves “stimulating one another to love and good works.” It includes “weeping with those who weep, and rejoicing with those who rejoice.” “Bearing one another’s burdens is also at play here.
- a. Contact others in the congregation by phone or email. Listen to hear and understand, not necessarily to respond.
 - b. Take time to write a letter. The investment of thought about the person and reflection on the nature of your relationship will yield benefits to both sender and receiver.
 - c. When the current health crisis is past, have others over for a meal or a dessert.
 - i. In humility, open up to allow people into your life and how God is aiding you on your earthly pilgrimage.
- V. Doing other things.
- a. Read Christian literature. There are undoubtedly many books you have said you’d like to read, but you haven’t found time. A Sunday afternoon or evening is a good time to do just that.
 - b. Read out loud to the family. There are many heroes of the faith, both missionaries and Christians in other walks of life whose biographies are well worth reading.
 - c. Take a walk either alone or with others. This benefits both spiritually and physically.
 - d. Consider whether there are people who are lonely or in need of something that you can provide, and contact them to offer yourself in appropriate ways.

Now is perhaps the very best time to consider developing new habits and routines to learn what it is to “make the holy day of the Lord honorable.”