REST FIRST

After a long, hard day of work, we find ourselves feeling entitled to some rest. Our mindset tends to consider rest as something earned as a reward for labor. This thinking seems to find support in the creation narrative. God works for six days and then rests on the Sabbath day. And are we not called to follow His example?

On closer examination, though, we find that Adam and Eve’s experience differed in one particular. Whereas the creation story begins with God working, Adam and Eve’s life begins with resting. After creating Adam, “the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Although he had received his assignment, Adam would not begin his work until after the Sabbath. Thus, in the case of humanity, God designed that a fruitful life would begin with resting in Him. Rest is not earned. It is a gift from God.

The Sabbath also laid the foundation that while Adam must work, his work is not the ultimate source of his sustenance. Adam and Eve were able to breathe, eat, and drink before they lifted a finger in labor. It was God who provided for them. And the Sabbath was ever to remind them that they were dependent upon God.
Write out John 15:1–11 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you are pressed for time, write out John 15:4, 5. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
**KNOW YOUR PLACE**

In Barbados there is a saying, “yuh bes kno yuh place,” which means, “you had better know your place.” The saying is directed to those who are disrespectful or who have temporarily forgotten their proper place in society.

One’s place in society is invariably determined by the place of others. This is most surely the case with God and humanity, or with God and creation. And the Sabbath commandment has everything to do with this. In the entire universe, insofar as the Bible is concerned, there are only two ways to exist: as Creator or as part of creation. This is both logical and theological, because the Creator is “before all things” (Col. 1:17). Indeed, “all things were made by him” (John 1:3, KJV). The Bible further states that “by him all things consist” (Col. 1:17, KJV). “Consist” may be better translated as “hold together.” All of creation depends upon God! Not the other way around!

The title of “created” applies to everything in creation except the Creator. The angel Gabriel is as created as the living mote in the sunbeam or the leviathan in the waters. If Gabriel and the mote exchanged places they would still be created! Nothing in creation can escape the restriction of having been created. Therefore, any attempt to escape the “created” brand is really an attempt to be God, for there are only two choices: Creator and creation.

The Sabbath commandment is God’s way of telling unfallen and fallen beings, “Know your place.” The commandment accomplishes this by reminding creation of God’s proper place. As His place is understood and respected, His creatures then recognize and accept their place. Recognition of and dependence upon God is the very principle of the Sabbath commandment. This universal principle undermines the popular earthly concept of “the self-made man.” There is no such thing. “It is he that hath made us and not we ourselves” (Ps. 100:3, KJV). “Accepted by the will, received into the soul,” (White, Education, 126.) this Sabbath principle of dependence guards against pride and self-sufficiency. It is a weekly reminder to “Know your place.”
The Sabbath principle (recognition of and dependence on the Creator) existed before the Sabbath day was introduced in Eden. Ellen White writes, “After the transgression of Adam the principles of the law were not changed, but were definitely arranged and expressed to meet man in his fallen condition.” (Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 80.) Laws enable finite minds to comprehend and observe principles. Speed limits are laws; unselfish regard for the well-being of others is the principle.

The reality is that without God, nothing would exist. “He is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Col. 1:17, KJV). God stands singularly as the uncaused cause of everything in existence. Whether it is acknowledged or not, then, everything is dependent upon Him for its existence. From the blade of grass to the majestic lion to, yes, even the unbeliever—all are dependent upon God for life! “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:45). Without God, there is no life.

At the forbidden tree, the serpent insinuated that it is indeed possible to live a life outside of God’s will. He told Eve that if she disobeyed God by eating the fruit, she would not die. But sin caused a rift between humanity and God (Isa. 59:1, 2). Even after they had sinned, though, it is the omniscient God who came looking for Adam and Eve who were hiding from His presence in shame (Gen. 3:9–11). They were hiding from the One who was their source of life.

In our sinful state we separate ourselves from those things that engender life, even from life itself. Dependence upon God did not result from sin. It is endemic to the Creator-creature relationship. By attempting to become a god (Gen. 3:5), humanity sought to live independent of God (which is an ontological impossibility). Nothing can exist independent of God.

Christ came to restore life to His fallen creation (John 10:10). Life, and one that is fruitful, can only be found as we remain in Christ (John 15:5, 6).

As we cease from our labor each Sabbath, we are reminded that it is not our labor that gives us life. Our minds are drawn to the source of life on whom we depend for life. It is only as we embrace our dependence on God that we can experience life in its fullness.
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Psalm 100  
Genesis 3:1–11  
Job 38, 39  
Psalm 37:1–8  
Colossians 1:17

What other verses come to mind in connection with John 15:1–11?

Review your memorized verse from John 15:1–11.
ALL THESE AND THOSE ARE MINE

Upon his return from a successful military campaign to deliver his nephew Lot, Abraham met Melchizedek, king of Salem and priest of the Most High God. In blessing Abraham, Melchizedek said, “Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:19, KJV). Shortly thereafter, the cowardly king of Sodom (who had fled from the invaders who captured Lot) made a special appeal to Abraham. In responding, Abraham said, “I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth” (Gen. 14:22, KJV). This well-deserved title of universal possessor is similarly expressed by Paul: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Col. 1:16, KJV).

By the unerring inspiration of the Spirit of truth, the very first verse of the Bible, creation’s summary statement, declares, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, KJV). Heaven and earth rightfully belong to God because He made them. This includes “all that in them is” (Exod. 20:11, KJV). Animate and inanimate, animal and human life are God’s.

In the six-day span of creation, God made humanity after everything else. Neither Adam nor Eve could lay claim to anything they saw. Not a lowly blade of grass. Not a molecule of air. Not a hair follicle! This is essentially the argument God used to put Job in his place: “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4, KJV). Job, like Adam, had nothing to do with creation. “And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good” (Gen. 1:31, KJV).

Humanity, and everything that lives and exists, is indebted to God. “He is caring for us every moment; He keeps the living machinery in action; if we were left to run it for one moment, we should die. We are absolutely dependent upon God.” (Ellen G. White, Counsels on Diet and Foods (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938), 56.) This indebtedness should underlie all plans and propositions.

Is there a connection in this to Sabbath observance? Most assuredly. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that existence apart from God is impossible. What a lesson in humility! To the entrepreneur, Ellen White writes, “That which lies at the foundation of business integrity and of true success is the recognition of God’s ownership. The Creator of all things, He is the original proprietor. We are His stewards.” (White, Education, 137.) And to the student she counsels, “Every youth should be impressed with the fact that he is not his own; that his strength, his time, his talents, belong to God.” (Ellen G. White, Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 285.) To the ruler, the Bible says, “For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1, KJV).

The basis of this ownership is creation. Mankind made nothing and therefore is indebted to God for everything.

The Sabbath declares it. Sabbath-keeping celebrates it!
AUTHOR AND FINISHER

Not all the wisdom and skill of man can produce life in the smallest object in nature. It is only through the life which God Himself has imparted, that either plant or animal can live. So it is only through the life from God that spiritual life is begotten in the hearts of men. Unless a man is “born from above,” he cannot become a partaker of the life which Christ came to give. John 3:3, margin. . . .

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus.

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven’s light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ.

Jesus teaches the same thing when He says, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . Without Me ye can do nothing.” John 15:4, 5. You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Psalm 16:8. (White, *Steps to Christ*, 67–69.)
Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

How do you see “proper places” in society?

How has this idea been abused by those who have been “created”?

How does the Creator supersede these abuses in society?

How does the Sabbath guard against sin on the personal/individual level as well as the social/corporate level?

What is the difference between laws and principles?

Why do creatures seek to become the Creator?

How do we differentiate social independence from spiritual independence?

How do you express your indebtedness to God as your Creator?