GUARDIANS OF THE SEAL

The world’s most popular art museum is the Louvre in Paris, France. The museum houses the most famous painting in the world: the *Mona Lisa*, also known as *La Gioconda*—reputedly the most heavily insured work of art in the world displayed behind bulletproof glass since 1956. While the *Mona Lisa* is just one of more than 7,500 paintings in the Louvre, 80 percent of visits to the Louvre are for this painting. Made by a man, an imperfect man, the *Mona Lisa* is now more than 500 years old and still going strong because of the stratospheric value placed upon it and, consequently, of rigorous protection.

The Sabbath day, made by the omnipotent, almighty Creator, is roughly six thousand years old, and has virtually petered out from the world despite a stentorian command from the universal sovereign to guard it—not behind bullet-proof glass, but in the heart! “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exod. 20:8, KJV) God commands. To “keep it holy” is to set it apart, or to dedicate it to a holy use, or to consecrate it for a sacred purpose. The command is to preserve God’s flawless artistry.

Because of general consensus of the consummate skill of Leonardo da Vinci, no one attempts to improve or alter the Mona Lisa. They preserve what was made . . . without a command from Leonardo da Vinci! But, even with a direct command from the Creator and Sustainer of life, spoken with a voice that shook the earth, very few preserve, protect, or observe the Sabbath (Heb. 12:26).

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy in the fleshy museum of the obedient heart!
Write out Exodus 16 from the Bible translation of your choice. If you’re pressed for time, write out Exodus 16:4, 5. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
**WORK WELL DONE**

When God created, He worked—because creation is work! A comparison of two Bible verses quickly establishes this truth. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1, KJV). And regarding the completion of His creation the Bible says, “And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made” (Gen. 2:2, KJV).

Creation is work, and the first person in the Bible to work is God. It may be rightly said that God invented or originated work. To work, therefore, is to engage in an activity invented by the Creator. But it is not enough to just work. The work must have a quality . . . goodness!

The following Bible principle admits of no exceptions, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do [work], do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31, KJV).

In His assessment of the completed creation, God described it as “very good” (Gen. 1:31). This “good” cannot merely mean “pleasant.” It may also convey the concept of the complete absence of evil or badness. The Bible declares that “the Lord is righteous in all his ways and holy in all his works” (Ps. 145:17, KJV). Because creation was good, it somehow reflected the glory of God: “The heavens declare the glory of God” (Ps. 19:1), and “the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isa. 6:3).

True Sabbath observance must include a review of the week of work past. Was the work well done? Did it express goodness? This is essential because shabby, sloppy, careless work misrepresents the character of God and ruins true sabbath rest. True sabbath rest is rest from work well done! This is godly living.

“God appointed labor as a blessing to man, to occupy his mind, to strengthen his body, and to develop his faculties.” (White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 50.)

The entrance of sin did not in any way alter this divine purpose!
ALWAYS PREPARED

Since 1907, the motto of the Boy Scouts movement has been, “Be prepared.” The founder of the movement, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, commented on the motto as always being “in a state of readiness.” (R. S. S. Baden Powell, Scouting for Boys, part 1 (London: Horace Cox, 1908), 48.) The United States’ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), formed April 1, 1979, stands ready to assist local and state officials in times of overwhelming crises. Individual savings accounts have a related object: to provide financial shelter in the proverbial “rainy day.” This is thinking ahead—being prepared!

It is God who originated forward planning. When God charged Moses with leading the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage, He reassured him that a land “flowing with milk and honey” had already been prepared for them (Exod. 3:8). It was described as “the glory of all lands (Ezek. 20:6). The divine Being who led the Israelites through the wilderness was the same One who, in human form, fed the five thousand with “five barley loaves, and two small fishes” (John 6:9, KJV). The Bible says of Jesus that, prior to asking Philip how the multitude might be fed, “He Himself knew what He would do” (John 6:6). God is never surprised by emergencies!

God’s constant state of readiness is most powerfully attested by the everlasting covenant that predated the creation of mankind (2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:20). While God did not ordain sin, He was fully prepared in case it occurred. Sadly, it did, but salvation is available because God was prepared.

Another equally convincing case for the preparedness of God is creation. God made everything that was essential for the first pair’s existence and happiness, and then He made them. Ellen White touchingly writes, “After the earth with its teeming animal and vegetable life had been called into existence, man, the crowning work of the Creator, and the one for whom the beautiful earth had been fitted up, was brought upon the stage of action.” (White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 44.)

Did not Jesus say, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2)? For every crisis in the believer’s life, a way out already exists. The Sabbath is a celebration of many things, one of which is the preparedness of God to salvage His people in times of crisis.

The response or solution to the reader’s problem already exists!
Review your memorized verse from Exodus 16.

What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

Leviticus 23:3
2 Thessalonians 3:10
Colossians 3:22–24
Genesis 2:15
Mark 15:42

What other verses come to mind in connection with Exodus 16?
The holy life of Jesus drew words of admiration from the lips of friends and foes alike. The officers sent by the Pharisees and chief priests to arrest Him returned with this testimony, “Never man spake like this man” (John 7:46, KJV, emphasis supplied). Under the cover of night, Nicodemus, the closeted disciple said, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him” (John 3:2, KJV, emphasis supplied).

The words Christ spoke marked Him as different. The things Christ did marked Him as different.

The same can be said about the Sabbath! Admittedly, the Sabbath does not say anything, but things are said about it. Similarly, the Sabbath does not do anything, but things are done on it. On the basis of what is said about the Sabbath, and what is done on it, its uniqueness is highlighted.

What is said about the Sabbath? The Sabbath day entered the world at the end of the first seven-day period. The language to introduce it states, “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it” (Gen. 2:3, KJV, emphasis supplied). The most well-known Sabbath passage adds that the day is hallowed and holy (Exod. 20:8, 11).

Blessed! Sanctified! Holy! Hallowed! These things are said about the Sabbath. Never spake any man this way about any other day.

What is fine on the Sabbath? God commanded His people to rest from wage-earning labor and secular activities on the Sabbath (Exod. 20:10). He also requires them to gather for holy convocations on that day (Lev. 23:3). They were to especially guard their conversations on the Sabbath and avoid pleasure-seeking (Isa. 58:13).

Rest from work. Worship communally. Avoid common speech. Avoid secular pleasures. These are some things to be done on the Sabbath. Never was any day so divinely guarded as this day. Never has there been a day to which an entire other day is assigned as a day of preparation for it.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy: to preserve its one-of-a-kind status! After all, it uniquely wears a heavenly halo. (See Ellen G. White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1882), 32.)
ON FRIDAY

All through the week keep the Lord’s holy Sabbath in view, for that day is to be devoted to the service of God. It is a day when the hands are to rest from worldly employment, when the soul’s needs are to receive especial attention. . . .

When the Sabbath is thus remembered, the temporal will not be allowed to encroach upon the spiritual. No duty pertaining to the six working days will be left for the Sabbath. During the week our energies will not be so exhausted in temporal labor that on the day when the Lord rested and was refreshed, we shall be too weary to engage in His service. . . .

On Friday let the preparation for the Sabbath be completed. See that all the clothing is in readiness, and that all the cooking is done. Let the boots be blacked, and the baths be taken. It is possible to do this. If you make it a rule, you can do it. The Sabbath is not to be given to the repairing of garments, to the cooking of food, to pleasure seeking, or to any other worldly employment. Before the setting of the sun, let all secular work be laid aside, and all secular papers be put out of sight. Parents, explain your work and its purpose to your children, and let them share in your preparation to keep the Sabbath according to the commandment. . . .

There is another work that should receive attention on the preparation day. On this day all differences between brethren, whether in the family or in the church, should be put away. . . .

When the Sabbath commences, we should place a guard upon ourselves, upon our acts and our words, lest we rob God by appropriating to our own use that time which is strictly the Lord’s. We should not do ourselves, nor suffer our children to do, any manner of our own work for a livelihood or anything which could have been done on the six working days. Friday is the day of preparation. Time can then be devoted to making the necessary preparation for the Sabbath and to thinking and conversing about it. Nothing which will in the sight of Heaven be regarded as a violation of the holy Sabbath should be left unsaid or undone, to be said or done upon the Sabbath. God requires not only that we refrain from physical labor upon the Sabbath, but that the mind be disciplined to dwell upon sacred themes. The Fourth Commandment is virtually transgressed by conversing upon worldly things or by engaging in light and trifling conversation. Talking upon anything or everything which may come into the mind is speaking our own words. Every deviation from right brings us into bondage and condemnation. (Ellen G. White, *Child Guidance* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1954), 527–530.)
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.

What does the treasuring of masterpieces reveal about humanity?

How does the Sabbath vivify excellence in your personal life and work?

In addition to rest, how do you connect work with Sabbath?

How do you prepare for secular events?

How do you prepare for spiritual events?

How are these two similar and different?

Where are areas you can work on regarding preparation?

How can you continue to preserve the uniqueness of the seventh-day Sabbath?

How is Sabbath preparation connected to preparation for the second coming of Jesus?