

# The Centrality of Worship to Life and the Sabbath: Implications for Business<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** The primary mandate for humankind is worship, specified by God when he placed Adam in the garden. The Hebrew grammar and phrasing makes clear that Adam's primary role is as a priest before God with the charge "to serve and to guard." To emphasize the primacy of worship, God instituted the Sabbath as a day of "rest," denoting a time for human beings to cease other activities and to focus exclusively on worshipping the Creator. In today's world, business owners and managers in pursuit of bigger markets, increasing revenue streams, and greater profitability often ignore the mandate to observe a day exclusively dedicated to the worship of God. Yet, for Christian businesspeople — owners, managers, or workers — the act of honoring God through a dedicated day set aside for worship communicates a recognition of the supreme priority of obedience to that command.

## INTRODUCTION

A discussion on a proper Sabbath observance begins with an understanding of God's purposes in the creation event. In Genesis 2:1-3, God completed his creation work on the sixth day and sanctified the seventh day as holy, because on that day he ceased. As discussed later, God ceased because he had provided everything needed; he saw that it was "good" (Genesis 1:10,12,18,21,25) and when he finished, it was "very good" (Genesis 1:31).<sup>2</sup>

Genesis 2:4 introduces a more detailed account of the garden and humankind's purpose in creation. Here in Genesis 2, the foundational element for understanding the function of the Sabbath first emerges. This foundational element, worship, reveals the purpose for which God created human beings and what God expected them to be doing in the garden prior to the Fall of Genesis 3. Whether for the nation of Israel in the Old Testament or for the church in the New Testament, the Sabbath command in terms of God's intent for humankind holds sway.

The fact that God commanded worship as the primary mandate for human beings in the garden highlights the importance of viewing the Sabbath in terms of worship and not merely as a day off. The New American Standard Bible translation of Genesis 2:15 states that "the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." The phrasing in the Hebrew text,

as will be discussed below, indicates that God commands his human creation to engage in acts of worship. This primary mandate for humankind, specified by the Creator himself at the time of creation, explains not only God's purpose for the original two individuals but — even after the Fall (Genesis 3) — also the purpose behind the principle of Sabbath observance for all of their progeny.

The objective of the paper is to provide a theological foundation and rationale for Christian business owners, executives, and managers to make the principle of Sabbath observance a priority for themselves and to make it possible for their employees to do so also in businesses where that is possible. These authors endeavor to highlight the importance of worship — not just respite from work — in Sabbath observance and to apply this principle to how Christian businesspeople make business decisions concerning the Sabbath, such as whether to be open seven days a week, whether to provide a rotating schedule among employees in order to accommodate a day of worship, and whether to refrain from scheduling work such that it interferes with Sabbath observance.

The Old Testament "Sabbath" was Saturday, the seventh day. As discussed later, most — not all — Christians observe the first day of the week (e.g., Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). For those who observe other days, our recommendations apply for those days. Therefore, this paper takes the position of the Sabbath as a principle —

the importance of setting aside a day for worship — not as pertaining to a particular day of the week.

The paper first covers a short definition of worship, God's injunction to "subdue" the earth, and a discussion of the mandate to worship that God gave to human beings when Adam was placed in the garden. The primacy of worship for humankind is a necessary foundation for commenting on the role of Sabbath observance by Christian businesspeople today, because apart from the foundational principle that the primary purpose for humankind is to worship the Creator, any number of purposes and activities theoretically could be attributed to Sabbath observance.

This paper next examines how the Fall changed God's administration of worship and differentiates work and worship. Next, the paper covers issues pertaining to Sabbath observance and the responsibility of believers who are part of the working world, in business and in professions, to practice Sabbath observance. We also include a section on why businesspeople need a respite from their daily labors and, where possible, how to initiate business practices that honor the spirit of the Sabbath command.

## THE ESSENCE OF WORSHIP

The English word "worship" comes from a Saxon/Old English word that means "worthship" or "worthiness." Worship represents "an action motivated by an attitude that reveres, honors, or describes the worth of another person or object" (Martin, 1988, p. 1117). Worship denotes "reverent devotion and service to God motivated by God's saving acts in history" (p. 1118).

Scripture uses more than one word to denote worship, pointing to the multi-faceted nature of worship. One example is *חווה* (*havah*), rendered *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה*, which means "to prostrate oneself" or to assume the posture of kissing the ground, as in doing homage before a higher person or in an attitude of prayer (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2001, p. 296). Similarly, *קדד* (*qadad*) means to "bow or kneel down in homage" and is always linked with *חווה*, for which it serves as "preparatory action" (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2001, p. 1065). More frequently used, however, is *עבד* (*'abad*), the same word as in Genesis 2:15, which often refers to service to God as worship, as in Deuteronomy 6:13, ". . . and you shall worship him [the Lord]" and in Exodus 3:12, ". . . you shall worship God at this mountain." Thus, worshipful activity engages in reverential acts that acknowledge and show appreciation for God and obedience to his commands.

Worship involves activities and attitudes that focus exclusively on God. The Scriptures explicitly restrict proper worship to having only God as its object; anything else is idolatry (Exodus 20:3-6). Although serving others with meals, financial support, counseling, and a wealth of other activities can certainly minister in the name of Christ, worship entails activities directed *only* toward God as its object and in response to his instruction. Examples in Scripture can be seen in Psalms 95, 96, 100, and 103, among other places. The church has historically considered prayer, hymns, Scripture reading, the Eucharist, and Baptism as acts of worship.

The church also has historically affirmed that humankind was created to worship God. For example, Lactantius (1886), the great theologian of the early 4th century, says it well:

Wherefore, if any one should ask a man who is truly wise for what purpose he was born, he will answer without fear or hesitation, that he was born for the purpose of worshipping God, who brought us into being for his cause, that we may serve him. (Chapter 9)

And also:

For that is the duty of man, and in that one object the sum of all things and the whole course of a happy life consists, since we were fashioned and received the breath of life from Him on this account, not that we might behold the heaven and the sun, as Anaxagoras supposed, but that we might with pure and uncorrupted mind worship Him who made the sun and the heaven. (Lactantius, 1886, Chapter 9)

The first question in the Westminster Catechism of 1648 is: "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The response is, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God and fully to enjoy him forever," citing as support Psalm 73:24-28; 86:9, 12; and 1 Corinthians 10:31. Additionally, both "glorify" and "worship" are collocated in Psalm 86:9 and Revelation 15:4, showing that these activities are linked linguistically. Psalm 16:5-11 speaks of the joyous communion found in the presence of the Lord. In John 14:20-23, the Lord's statements to his disciples reflect intimacy and communion in fellowship with God, even going so far as to liken the unity to that experienced by members of the Trinity. The eschatological expectation of eternal worship is shown in Revelations 21:3-4. From the beginning, when God placed Adam in the garden, man's primary mandate for worship is made clear (Genesis 2:15).

## GENESIS 2: IN THE GARDEN

When the Lord God placed Adam in the garden, he instructed Adam in the human being's role in God's creation. Adam was to עבד (individually, the word is variously rendered in the Old Testament as "to work," "to serve," "to cultivate") and to שמר (individually meaning "to keep," "to watch," "to preserve," "to guard").

However, the phrase, "to cultivate and to keep it" (לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ)<sup>3</sup> or as the ESV translates, "to work it and to keep it," is a collocation. A *collocation* is a set of two or more words which, when used together in a specific pattern by an author, takes on a new, technical meaning, which cannot necessarily be discerned by focusing on its composite parts (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 2004).

Collocations are present today. When "seat of power" is used in conversation, people automatically know that it is an office or the officeholder who is in view and not his chair or backside, because they understand how collocations work in English. Hebrew likewise has words that when used together in a particular pattern take on a specialized meaning. This is how עבד and שמר function together in ". . . legal texts of observing religious commands and duties (Numbers 17:9; Leviticus 18:5) and particularly of the levitical responsibility for guarding the tabernacle from intruders (Numbers 1:53; 3:7-8)" (Wenham, 1987, p. 67). Thus, לְעַבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ in Genesis 2:15 functions as a technical phrase that when used as a unit denotes activity related specifically to worship and service to God (Morrow, 2012; Ross, 1998; Wenham, 1986).

Thus it is that Wenham (1986; 1987), Morrow (2012), Collins (2014), Emmrich (2001), and others suggest that the Genesis garden is an archetypal sanctuary where God dwells and where man worships him. That is, according to Wenham, the words in Genesis 2:15, which translate as "to cultivate and to keep it," suggest the process of and activities associated with worship — not "work" as "toil," which is the distinctive descriptor of work in the post-fall world (Talley, 1998).

Wenham (1986) suggests that when these words are used together, as they are in Genesis 2:15, the original audience — and so should the contemporary audience — would have immediately known that labor *qua* labor was not at issue. The ancient Hebrew audience would have automatically recognized the collocation as a reference to worship. Thus, the word "work" as it is used in this phrase *cannot* be equated with the idea of working for a living as known after the Fall or in contemporary life.

Ross (1998), in agreement with Wenham, says concerning the specialized meaning of the two verbs in Genesis 2:15, "These two verbs are used throughout the Pentateuch for spiritual service" (p. 124). He continues, "'Keep' . . . is used for keeping the commandments and taking heed to obey God's Word; 'serve' . . . describes the worship and service of the Lord, the highest privilege a person can have" (p. 124).

Mathews (1996) also recognizes the link between these verbs and the service of worship. He notes that עבד frequently describes priestly duties in the tabernacle (and later in the temple) (e.g., Numbers 8:11, 15, 19, 22; 18:6, 21, 23) as well as in the completed construction of the tabernacle in Exodus 39:32, 42. With respect to שמר, it expresses "the faithful carrying out of God's instructions (e.g., Leviticus 8:35) and the caretaking of the tabernacle (e.g., Numbers 1:53; 18:5)" (Mathews, 1996, p. 210). Mathews (1996) notes, "Both terms occur together to describe the charge of the Levites for the tabernacle (Numbers 3:7-8; 18:7), thus again suggesting a relationship between Eden and tabernacle" (p. 210).

Wenham (1986) explains, "On the basis of Exodus 3:12 and Numbers 28:2, [this phrase] equates man's work in the garden with the offering of sacrifice" (p. 19), alluding to priestly responsibility in Israel's worship of God. However, blood sacrifice was unnecessary before the Fall and the introduction of sin into God's perfect creation. Since sacrifice was not instituted until after the Fall (Genesis 3), it is more likely that the words refer not to the act of sacrifice in the garden specifically, but generally to the processes attached to worship carried out in the garden and then later by the priests in Exodus and Numbers according to the sacrificial system prescribed for Israel.

Cassuto (1961), accordingly, translates the key Genesis 2:15 phrase as "to serve and to guard" (p. 121). One must note the lack of a direct object in Cassuto's translation. Importantly, "it" is missing from Cassuto's translation and, therefore, the direct object, the only putative reference to the garden in this verse, is eliminated.

Here's why: The ancient Hebrew texts were consonantal texts only; that is, they did not include any vowels or other indicators for how the text should be read. Consequently, as could happen if an English text had no vowels, some texts were ambiguous. Should "th ct s n th mt" be read as "the cat is on the mat" or "the cot is on the mat" or "the coat is on the mat"? In the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium CE, several centuries (by anyone's reckoning) after Genesis was composed, the Jewish scribes and rabbis added "points" around the text to assist in the

pronunciation and disambiguation of the text. (The currently used system of vowel notation found in the widely used text *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, the Hebrew Old Testament, was only written down between CE 600-1000 (Brotzman, 1994)).

The potential presence of the direct object “it” in this verse is dependent on a single dot, “.”, a *mappîq*, that was placed by the scribes into the middle of the final letter in each of these infinitive verbs, “to serve” and “to guard.” Cassuto contends that the rabbis erred in placing the *mappîq* in those verbs, which, effectively, adds a singular, feminine direct object to the verb.

Cassuto has two primary reasons for his objection. 1) No reasonable antecedent to the feminine “it” is present. If a direct object is present in the “it,” then one must determine what the “it” is. Most commonly in modern translations, the “it” is specified as the garden. But there are serious grammatical problems with doing so.

“Garden” in the Hebrew Bible has two different spellings, one that is masculine and one that is feminine. The occurrence in Genesis 2:15 and the other four occurrences of “garden” in Genesis 2 as well as the eight occurrences in Genesis 3 are of the masculine “garden.” Thus, this would be the *only* place in the Hebrew Bible where the “garden” would be feminine, and yet the surrounding context clearly uses the masculine form.

The standard lexicon for biblical Hebrew, *HALOT* (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2001, p.198), even shows its befuddlement by listing Genesis 2:15 under the masculine spelling for “garden” but adding “(fem. ?)” to indicate that it is not wholly persuaded that this occurrence is genuinely feminine. (It is noteworthy that the feminine form for “garden” is listed on the very next page in *HALOT*.) Accordingly, Cassuto (1961) believes that it is misplaced special pleading to argue that this form of “garden” has mysteriously changed genders in this verse alone. 2) Cassuto’s second objection is that “tilling the earth” was not imposed on man until after the Fall, in Genesis 3:17-19, and is intentionally juxtaposed by the author of Genesis against man’s previous, innocent state, when he did not have to work for food (p. 122). With no direct object associated with these verbs, “work” and “serve,” the implication that man’s purpose in the garden was to worship and not to till the ground would have been crystal clear to the original audience. Consequently, Cassuto, Wenham, and others agree that Adam’s primary purpose is to worship God.

Cassuto (1961) notes an additional facet. He believes that Adam’s service in worship included preserving or

guarding the sanctuary from malignant intruders, such as the serpent. Thus, the Hebrew text, as read by Cassuto, is even more emphatic that the God-ordained function of man in paradise was to serve the Lord in worship and to preserve the sanctity of the place of worship. *HALOT* (Koehler & Baumgartner, 2001) supports Cassuto, as it lists the specific meaning of שמר in Genesis 2:15 as “watching over locations, objects” (p. 1582).

Sailhamer (1992) also agrees with Cassuto on this point and goes yet another step further (p. 100). The verb in 2:15, which is translated “put,” (i.e. “...and he put him in the garden of Eden...”) is the causative stem of the verb “to rest.” It can be translated “to put” or “to set,” but Sailhamer notes that in passages in which the land prepared for God’s people is in view (e.g., Deuteronomy 3:20, 12:10), the implications of “rest” come to the forefront. He further notes that in 2:8, God put the man into the garden; it does not push the narrative forward to say this again. However, in 2:15, according to Sailhamer (1992), God is going to detail his purpose in placing the man in the garden in 2:8. That purpose is to provide safety in rest so that the man may fellowship with God (p. 100). Thus, 2:15 should be understood as: “YHWH God took the man and he caused him to rest in the garden of Eden for the purpose of worship.” That God’s purpose for the man entailed rest negates any proposition that God placed the man in the garden for the purpose of work. The inevitable consequence, again, is that man’s original function in the garden was as a priest, worshiping in the “temple” which God created.

Even assuming that the ending on those Hebrew verbs is a feminine direct object, which is debatable (see above), the most natural reading is that man was placed in the garden to worship God and to keep holy the place of their meetings. In other words, Adam was created to be a priest. Since the garden was perfect, whatever service God assigned to Adam and Eve would have been service associated with worshipful activity. Once the Fall occurred, maintaining the same degree of intimacy with God became impossible. God removed the man and the woman from the garden, but the mandate to worship remained and was carried forward to Israel in the principle of Sabbath observance (Exodus 20:9-11; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:13-15). That is, the Sabbath was set apart, sanctified (Genesis 2:1-3), and made holy by God as a time to remember his gracious provision (Deuteronomy 5:15), to rest in that provision (Deuteronomy 5:13-14), look forward to the final rest (Hebrews 4:1-11), and to worship him for his redeem-

ing acts on behalf of human beings (Deuteronomy 5:15; 1 Chronicles 17:21; Luke 1:68).

### EXCURSUS ON GENESIS 1:28

A brief excursus on Genesis 1:28 is in order at this point as some may object that, in this verse, God instructed the man and woman to “fill the earth and subdue it,” which sounds as though labor might be involved. Genesis 1:28 begins with the words “God blessed them. God said to them, ‘Be fruitful...’” (ESV). One may be tempted to see “blessed” and “said” as two different actions, but they are not. The blessing is what is said: “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Sailhamer, 1992, p. 96). Although these are phrased as imperatives, they should not be considered obligations that must be carried out for man to fulfill his purpose in the universe. Williams (2013) analogizes to a recent parallel, Spock’s well-known phrase from *Star Trek*: “Live long and prosper!” Spock is not commanding others to go out and ensure that they live a long life and are prosperous. He is pronouncing a blessing on them; the same applies here. To read into this text commands that man must obey is to misunderstand the nature of the blessing.

With the foregoing in mind, we briefly consider the two verbs “subdue” and “have dominion” and whether human labor is indicated by their use. This Hebrew verb for “subdue,” *kabash* (כבש), occurs in the Qal stem in only six other places in the Hebrew Bible. In three of those places (Nehemiah 5:5, 2 Chronicles 28:10, Jeremiah 34:16), the word clearly refers to enslaving a group of people. In one instance (Esther 7:8), it refers to rape. The final two occurrences, Micah 7:19 and Zechariah 9:15, refer to “trampling” or “treading” on something as if to destroy it. None of these uses of *kabash* fit with the motif of Genesis 1 where God makes everything “good” for the man and woman. They would have no reason to “trample” the earth as they would not be waging war against it, destroying it or enslaving it, prior to the Fall.

Neumann-Gorsolke (2009) expresses misgivings noted by other scholars (e.g., Jamir, 2011; McGee, 1981) that “. . . the idea of subduing the earth does not go well with the situation of a just-created world without any enemies and with the idea of a rich world of trees and green that gives food to men and animals” (p. 75). Furthermore, the seven verses noted above in which *kabash* is used is

an extremely small sample from which to deduce all of its possible meanings. However, the usages in Micah and Zechariah do point to a possible underlying meaning to *kabash*, which is confirmed in the Akkadian cognate, *kabāshu*. The *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* (Civil, Gelb, Oppenheim, & Reiner, 1971, p. 10) lists a number of meanings for *kabāshu*, which does include “to trample,” “to defeat an enemy,” and “to make people do work,” all of which comport with the Hebrew uses. However, CAD also lists such glosses as “to step into something. . . accidentally,” “to stride,” “to pace off,” and “to walk upon.” It would seem that *kabāshu* originally had this more mundane meaning of “to walk upon” and that it later developed the others, including those found in the Hebrew Bible. McGee (1981) concurs, noting, “Thus, when used in connection with land, [*kabash*] also has a figurative sense: the land itself is not literally trampled, but rather ‘set foot on,’ i.e. entered and occupied” (p. 36).

Given the picture that Moses paints in Genesis 1, it seems more likely that Moses intends to use *kabash* in conjunction with the verb “fill (the earth)” as an encouragement to the man and woman and their offspring to fill the earth so that they are walking all over it. Thus, they are not to enslave the earth or crush it like an enemy and certainly not to rape it. Within the blessing of Genesis 1:28, they are merely to go forth and, as they multiply, fill up the earth by walking, or pacing it off, to the earth’s ends.

It would be remiss not to point out that Moses is likely using the verb *kabash* here as an intentional double entendre. Moses composed Genesis while the people of Israel were preparing to enter the land of Canaan, and the people likely would have understood the story of the creation of the land and the mandate to fill and walk on it through the lens of what they must accomplish in Canaan. A central part of their entry into the land is the Lord’s command that the people are required to remove the Canaanites from the land. Thus, they must “subdue” the Canaanites and part of that subduing entails filling the land. Interestingly, one of the first things that the Lord says to Joshua is that “[e]very place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses” (Josh 1:3 ESV). Accordingly, the command in Genesis 1:28 to *kabash* the land by walking upon it would have immediately resonated with the Israelites as something that they themselves are about to do. However, the Israelites would not have had only to walk on the land as Adam and Eve were instructed; they would have been required to “trample” (i.e., conquer) the inhabitants of Canaan. The possibility for this double

meaning, “walking on” and “conquering,” could explain why Moses used the rarer *kabash* in Genesis 1:28 rather than the more common *darak* (דָּרַךְ), which was used in the Joshua passage. Within the literary context of Genesis 1:28, *kabash* meant only “to walk upon” and does not imply labor, while the original recipients would have mentally leaped to their immediate obligation to *kabash* in the more active, conquering fashion.

The verb translated “have dominion,” *radah* (רָדָה), is a similarly difficult verb to understand. It often connotes “to rule oppressively,” but it, too, can also have less onerous meanings. In Psalm 68:28, *radah* likely means “to lead” (Cf. ESV, NIV, NKJV, NLT) rather than “rule” (contra NASB, NET). In I Kings 5:4, 30 and 9:23 *radah* refers to the supervisory work that Solomon’s overseers do in the construction of the temple. These few texts, in conjunction with Ezekiel 34:1-10, give a clue to the underlying meaning of *radah* in this text.

Ezekiel 34:1-10 is a prophecy against the kings and political leaders of Israel; however, the picture given by the prophet is of a shepherd who mistreats his flock and abandons the proper role of shepherd. In verse 4, Ezekiel states that the shepherds have “ruled” (*radah*) the sheep with “force and harshness” (ESV). The problem is not that the shepherds have ruled but that they have ruled badly. Zenger (1983) notes that the meaning of *radah* is grounded in the role of the good shepherd (p. 91) This grounding picks up on both the Psalm 68:28 and the I Kings usages of *radah* but moves further. Shepherds lead the flock and they supervise the flock, but they also do much more. Shepherds protect the flock, defend it from predators, and protect the weak from the strong (Zenger, 1983, p. 91). While there would be no predators contemplated in the perfect creation of Genesis 1, human dominion would still relate to nurturing the animals so that the animals would live their lives to the fullest. As Brueggemann (1982) states “[*radah*] has to do with securing the well-being of every other creature and bringing the promise of each to full fruition” (p. 32). Part of God’s blessing then suggests that humankind will enable the animals to live their lives to their fullest capacity.

In sum, *kabash* and *radah* are not commands but rather part of a blessing formula in which God exhorts humankind to be fertile and to fill up the earth and to live life to the fullest along with the animals, under God’s rule and protection.

## GENESIS 3: HOW THE FALL CHANGED EVERYTHING

In Genesis 3:8, the Lord God was walking in the garden, the place where God met with his highest creation to commune with them and fellowship in loving relationship, and he called out to Adam. The same word as is used in Genesis 3:8, which means “to walk to and fro,” is also used to describe “the divine presence in the later tent sanctuaries in Leviticus 26:12; Deuteronomy 23:14; and 2 Samuel 7: 6-7” (Wenham, 1986, p. 20). Thus, this phrase also indicates the Lord’s presence in the place of worship where he seeks to maintain relationship with humankind. Unfortunately, this will be the last time that the Lord and his human creation will meet face-to-face in this sanctuary.

Several consequences result from the Fall. The one most important to this thesis is that human beings no longer have the leisure to worship as they did in Eden. Now, they are forced to toil over the ground before it will produce for them (Genesis 3:17-18). They will have to combat thorns and thistles; they will earn their bread in laborious work and by the sweat of their bodies. Work will not always be successful; business failures involve re-work, wasted resources, late projects and/or diminished benefits, and loss of revenue, to cite but a few negative effects. The original opportunity prior to the Fall to spend unlimited time walking with God has been forfeited; human beings must now devote a large portion of their time to working so that they can live.

As Cassuto (1961) states, prior to the Fall, Adam had no need to till the ground; he was not a gardener, because that was a stipulation attached to the consequences of the Fall. Adam’s mandate in the garden was to engage in acts of worship and service to his God. The curse in Genesis 3 reconfigured Adam’s priorities in terms of what he spends his time doing. He is no longer able to enjoy God without a care about earning sustenance. Now he must work long hours just to stay alive, fighting the earth for produce rather than receiving from it freely.

## WORSHIP AND WORK DIFFERENTIATED

Genesis 2:19-20 recounts the Lord God bringing the animals to Adam to be named, indicating that divinely sanctioned work was performed in the garden. However, it becomes clear in Genesis 3:17-19 that work done after the Fall and work done in the garden before the Fall must be

differentiated. After the Fall, work done for the purpose of worship and to facilitate worship among God's people is different than work done to earn a living. The former *may* be worship, *should* be worship, although it may not be; the latter may be ministry and serve a redemptive function for humanity (e.g., Diddams & Daniels, 2008), but it is not worship as the Bible defines worship. Additionally, solitary worship edifies the Christian, but it cannot replace corporate worship (Hebrews 10:23-25), which requires a designated time and place to assemble and focus on God as the church, members of Christ's body.

The "theology of work" movement is of fairly recent vintage, the term having first appeared in the 1950s (Chenu, 1966), and it has offered spiritual encouragement to those whom God calls to ministry in the marketplace. We agree with Silvano (2002), that "millions of men and women are . . . called to full-time ministry in business, education and government — the marketplace" (p. 18). From this movement, numerous helpful insights into the Christian perspective on work have issued. For example, Volf (2001) argues for a view of work as "cooperation with God" (p. 88). His understanding of work is that "the various activities human beings do in order to satisfy their own needs and the needs of their fellow creatures should be viewed from the perspective of the operation of God's Spirit" (pp. 88-89). He rightly maintains that the world of the material world cannot be excluded from the "sphere of the present salvific activity of the Spirit" (p. 104) from either an exegetical or a theological perspective. This subsuming of work under the power and authority of Christian service resulting from a Christian's redemption and empowerment by the Spirit is certainly biblical and helps reduce the artificial compartmentalization of the "sacred" and the "profane."

But Volf (2001) does not make the mistake of explicitly equating work and worship. He explains:

As much as [Christians] need to do God's will, so also they need to enjoy God's presence. In order to be truly who they are, they need periodic moments of time in which God's commands and their tasks will disappear from the forefront of their consciousness and in which God will be there for them and they will be there for God — to adore the God of loving holiness and to thank and pray to the God of holy love. (p. 137)

Witherington (2011), likewise makes a strong case for work as ministry (p. 144). Nevertheless, he too warns, "We need a holy day to focus on worshiping the Lord." He adds, "My humble suggestion would be that Christians

need to take their weekends back from where they have been exiled to — the soccer fields, the malls, and of course, the workplace" (2011, p. 145). Work, in the sense that it is toilsome and often requires unhealthy compromises in time usage, is a result of the Fall. As Christians, we are commanded to work (e.g., 2 Thessalonians 3:10, 12). Work is necessary to provide sustenance for families (1 Timothy 5:8). Work can be godly service in which Christians play a uniquely redemptive role in God's creation to alleviate poverty and encourage education and healthful living as well as to foster reconciliation of others with God. But work is not the same thing as worship.

Accordingly, it is one thing to recognize the importance of taking "every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5b) and another thing entirely to equate all work activity as worship. One is a reasonable application of the principle of recognizing God's sovereignty over all of life; the other violates evidence for the differentiation of work and worship in the Scripture.

Compelling evidence for treating worship and work differently is found in the clear distinction between work and worship in the Decalogue. Note that those in positions of authority over others are responsible for the compliance of persons under them, including not only other members of the immediate household but also workers and guests.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (Exodus 20:8-11)

Notice that all persons under the "management" of the head-of-household were under obligation to observe the Sabbath, a command that extended to servants, guests, and even livestock associated with the household. It is not a stretch to believe that provision should equally be made in today's workplace for Sabbath observance by executives, managers, and employees alike.

Regardless of how important the process of work was for the people of Israel, here God has established a clear demarcation between work and worship. That the Jews grossly distorted the Sabbath and made it into a burden rather than a day of blessing for the people is irrelevant with respect to God's intent for the Sabbath.

## THE PRINCIPLE OF SABBATH OBSERVANCE CONDUCTIVE TO WORSHIP

In Genesis 2, God honored the seventh day because it was on that day that his work was complete and that he ceased creating (Genesis 2:2). He ceased from his labors because everything was provided; there was no longer any good thing left undone that he could have designed for his creation. This includes, of course, provision for Adam and Eve in the garden — both material sustenance and spiritual well-being.

When God finished his work of creation, the Scriptures say that he “rested” or “ceased.” Since God does not become tired, we understand that he ceased one activity and began another. With his work complete, including his “temple” or holy place where he would meet with his creation, his “rest” began.

“Rest” is associated with God’s being in a place of worship. According to Ross (1998), the verb “to rest” actually means “to cease” (pp. 113-114). “It is not a word that refers to remedying exhaustion after a tiring week of work; rather, it describes the enjoyment of accomplishment, the celebration of completion.”

For example, Psalm 132:7-8 states, “Let us go to his dwelling place; let us worship at his footstool! Arise, O LORD, and go to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.” (For more on “footstool,” see Isaiah 66:1 and Matthew 5:35). The parallelism of Hebrew poetry shows that God’s dwelling place is also the place in the earth where he is worshipped, and that place is known as his “resting place.” Additionally, there is a reference here to the place of the “ark,” which was in the Holy of Holies, first in the Tabernacle and subsequently in the Temple. It should be remembered that God instructed Moses that when he would meet with Moses, God would speak from between the two cherubs on the ark. Thus, by using “temple language,” the psalmist conveys that God is enthroned in a place set aside for worship, which is also his resting place (Barcellos, 2013). (See also Psalm 132:13-14 for similar imagery.) Justifiably, then, the reader may conclude that a place set aside for worship and specifically designated for fellowship with God is in keeping with his design for worship. For the Christian, biblical “rest” is found in meeting with God.

As Barcellos (2013) points out, “A day consecrated by God for man did not begin at Sinai. The Sabbath predates both Sinai and Israel as God’s Old Covenant nation. It is not unique to Israel; it is for man from the beginning” (p. 141). The principle of Sabbath observance is encom-

passed in the creation mandate passed on to Adam. The importance of setting aside a place and time to worship has its inception in the very beginning when God himself first created and sanctified, or made holy, the place where he would meet with Adam and Eve.

After Genesis 3, where once the garden had been God’s special dwelling on the earth and the place where he came to fellowship with human beings, there was no designated holy dwelling place for God upon the earth. His sanctuary, the garden, was defiled by sin. Yet Scripture indicates that God has always provided a place where humankind could approach him and worship, and that theme again emerges with Israel after the Exodus. With God’s dwelling in the tabernacle, the text revisits God’s taking his rest with Adam in the garden for the purpose of receiving worship and for entering into relationship with human beings. In setting aside the seventh day as a holy Sabbath to the Lord, God provides a time of resting from labor to facilitate worship and a place for humankind to meet with God to cultivate relationship with him and serve him.

In the New Testament after the ascension of Jesus Christ, we find the church worshipping on the first day of the week to commemorate the day of resurrection. Interestingly, Witherington (2011) notes that “the earliest Christians, who were all Jews, observed both [the Sabbath (Saturday) and the Lord’s Day (Sunday)]” (pp. 143-144). Although the Sabbath is no longer widely regarded as strictly meaning the “seventh day,” the principle of “Sabbath” observance as a day to come aside, rest in the Lord, and meet him in worship is retained because the Sabbath was instituted from the very beginning, at creation. A time for worship was established for all humankind and not just Israel.

Since the time of Moses, conditions that promote proper Sabbath observance and a time set apart for worship must be managed intentionally because this notion will be challenged repeatedly by those for whom the Sabbath holds little meaning. The forces of the culture are always in opposition to following God’s commands. For example, in Nehemiah 13:15-22, Nehemiah faced a challenge to preserve the Sabbath, and the challenge issued from the “business community” of his day.

After a short hiatus from the work in Jerusalem, Nehemiah returned to find those in Judah treading the wine presses on the Sabbath as well as bringing grain, wine, grapes, figs, and all sorts of goods into Jerusalem to be sold on the Sabbath. Additionally, foreign businesspeople from a major commercial center in the Ancient

Near East, the “men of Tyre,” were importing fish and other goods to be sold on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah reprimanded the nobles of Judah for allowing these conditions to continue. He reminded them of the discipline brought on Judah by “profaning” the Sabbath. That is, the Judahites had been carried off into the Babylonian captivity in part as a result of failing to honor the Sabbath as a day dedicated exclusively to worshipping God and ceasing from work. Jeremiah had delivered a strong rebuke from God on this very issue before God judged Judah by bringing the Babylonians against them (Jeremiah 17:19-27). To ensure that no marketplace activity would take place on the Sabbath and remembering the warnings from Jeremiah, Nehemiah closed the gates of the city right before the Sabbath and only re-opened the city for business after the Sabbath had passed. Nehemiah and the people had made a commitment to Sabbath observance (Nehemiah 10:31).

Additionally, in Nehemiah 13:22, Nehemiah commanded the Levites to purify themselves because they were about to begin an act of worship before God. Nehemiah then installed the Levites as gatekeepers to “sanctify the Sabbath.” Nehemiah’s action here is reminiscent of the fact that one of Adam’s responsibilities as priest was to “guard” the garden, that is, “keep” the place of worship and preserve the sanctity of God’s holy place. Here we see the Levites as God’s priestly representatives in Judah also charged with “keeping” or “guarding” the gates of the city as part of the priestly function to preserve the Sabbath for worship.

It is noteworthy that the Lord had set apart all the sons of Levi to himself (Numbers 3:5-13) to “minister” (v. 7) and to “guard” (v. 8) (same collocation as used in Genesis 2:15) because they had dedicated themselves to the Lord after the incident of the golden calf (Exodus 32:25-29). Thus, the Levites became the theocratic representatives ministering in the tabernacle and later the temple, just as Adam was intended to minister in the garden. Now, in the time of Nehemiah, the Levites are explicitly told to guard the gates to protect the sanctity of the Sabbath, similar to Adam being told to guard the garden to preserve the sanctity of the place where God met with Adam and Eve.

The point for Christians today is that the sanctity of a time distinctly set apart for worship will be challenged in every generation. Those who have been appointed as priests, which in our day is all believers (1 Peter 2:9), also have an obligation to preserve the sanctity of Sabbath worship. As was shown in Nehemiah’s day — and also in

Jesus’ day when he had to drive the moneychangers out of the temple (Matthew 21:12-13) — those who engage in commerce have a propensity to intrude and appropriate for themselves that which has been sanctified and set apart to God.

Christians today need to be aware of this pattern and to guard against it. Christians are priests who have been charged with preserving the sanctity of worship and the time dedicated to serving God. Wherever Christians have influence in the business world, they also have a sacred responsibility to be God’s representatives in preserving that which is holy. Business today, as it has always done, threatens to dominate the culture. Throughout the world, business is arguably the institution with the most influence on society and culture, especially as global economic interests continue to increase rapidly. Thus, a growing Christian countercultural initiative is also needed.

#### WHY BUSINESS PEOPLE NEED SABBATH WORSHIP

Many business executives, managers, and owners today behave as if their employees should be available if needed on a 24/7 basis. For example, Maume and Purcell (2007) discuss the significant increases in the pace of work between 1977 and 1997, largely attributable to job complexity and the length of work schedules. Heavy demands from the workplace also occur among professionals, who report ever-increasing job demands and higher stress to accompany those demands (Moen, Lam, Ammons, & Kelly, 2013). One article characterizes the American workforce as “overworked” and “time poor” (Gornick, 2005) and documents that Americans report more dissatisfaction in balancing work life and family life than do Europeans.

Both academic and business-press literature report a multitude of negative effects associated with work overload. The resulting burnout is associated with emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of having low personal accomplishment (Jackson, Turner & Brief, 1987). Heavy workload even has a negative impact on physiological markers, such as blood pressure, reported affective distress (Ilies, Dimotakis, & De Pater, 2010), and emotional exhaustion (Elloy, Terpening, & Kohls, 2001).

The effects of overwork show up for businesses in several ways, including absenteeism (Bekker, Croon, & Bressers, 2005), increasing the chances of losing a company’s best employees (Messmer, 2004), and reduced pro-

ductivity (Brecher, 2011; Hagel, 2013). These symptoms have been found to influence job performance among nurses (Bekker et al., 2005), to lower the quality of care from physicians (Shirom, Nirel, & Vinokur, 2006), and to incite even more frequent leave among academics (Anonymous, 2007). Parental overwork also translates to stress in the home and problem behavior among adolescents (Galambos, Sears, Almeida, & Kolaric, 1995).

Even the business-related press is taking note of the serious costs incurred by the dysfunctional business environments in which people today have to work. For example, Tom Gardner, co-founder of The Motley Fool, writes that “. . . within 10 years, [new hires will] be overweight, pre-diabetic, worn down by repetitive tasks, with burned-out adrenals. They’ll function at declining rates, finding it troublingly difficult to break the habits they’ve formed in your office” (Gardner, 2014). Thus, the exhausting pace that has become the norm for modern business incurs such huge costs that they can justifiably be termed “life-threatening.” Not only is the quality of daily life impaired, but the devastation to people’s spiritual life looms large.

Although multiple causes exist for the conditions that are diminishing the quality of life for today’s businesspeople and professionals, certainly an imbalance in their spiritual life and lack of opportunity to experience physical and spiritual rest must be viewed as contributing factors in many cases. When businesspeople de-emphasize God’s primary mandate to humankind to worship and instead focus on finding identity and satisfaction in work, modern society creates an ever widening gap between God’s plan for humanity and humankind’s idolatrous substitute. Rest and relaxation do serve an important function for human beings, but perhaps not so well recognized is the need for spending time appreciating God in worship and experiencing the spiritual refreshment that comes from adoring God and fellowshiping with our creator. Thus, it is the worship and spiritual refreshing dimension of the Sabbath that is emphasized herein.

### IMPLEMENTING SABBATH WORSHIP

Karl Barth (1958) wrote, “The goal of creation and at the same time the beginning of all that follows, is the event of God’s Sabbath freedom, Sabbath rest, and Sabbath joy, in which man, too, has been summoned to participate” (p. 98). The creation mandate is for worship, in which all mankind has been called to participate. Thus, the mandate

requires that Christian businesspeople acknowledge and accommodate, even encourage to the extent they are able, regular communion with God in a place that is set aside for that purpose. To do so requires recognition of and acquiescence to several key beliefs: God exists, he has spoken, he has revealed his desire for regular worship and communion with his human creatures, and obedience is crucial.

It is unrealistic to expect the secular business community to take note of God’s commands since the Bible is no longer considered by most members of society as the final authority for ethical practice and spiritual service either in the world of commerce or elsewhere. Christian businesspeople, however, are directly responsible for making personal and, in some cases, company policy for Sabbath observance. Not everyone is in the same situation, so very specific recommendations for faithful Sabbath practice would not apply to all Christians. Yet all believers are responsible for personal Sabbath-keeping, and parents are responsible to teach these values to their children.

Some examples do exist of companies that have initiated policies specifically to support a day of worship for employees. Hobby Lobby and Chick-fil-A are but two examples that have a large public presence. Many smaller businesses run by Christians are also examples of making policies that support Sabbath worship by remaining closed on the day that most Christians (not all) worship.

In general for Christians, honoring God’s Sabbath in the business community means that employers and employees alike place a priority on this usage of time. On the one hand, employers should refrain from imposing so much work on employees that they are under constant pressure to “overwork.” Businesspeople should place less emphasis on “more, more, more” material success and place more emphasis on being with God, with family, with those who are in need. On the other hand, Christian employers should not only refrain from rewarding people who avoid spending time in worship to complete a project but they should create disincentives for employees who engage in such misuse of time. For example, management expectations that an employee would work weekends *on a regular basis* to finish projects should be avoided. Employees who repeatedly use weekends as catch-up time for work that could have been accomplished during the week should not be rewarded for their “great work ethic.”

Obedience to God’s Word has, throughout the centuries, frequently resulted in negative consequences for God’s people. To initiate a policy of Sabbath observance without counting the cost may result in disillusionment when the business loses some of its competitive advantage

compared with other companies that are open 24/7. The decision to restore a proper perspective on worship where it currently is absent or neglected does not mean that Christian businesspeople should walk into this situation blindly but with commitment, faith, and courage.

At least three models of Sabbath keeping have been suggested: life segmentation, prescribed meaning, and integrated Sabbath (Diddams, Surdyk, & Daniels, 2004). Christians may be found using any of the three. However, it is the thesis of this paper that regardless of the model of Sabbath observance chosen, time dedicated strictly to worship — not just to physical rest and relaxation — must be integral to any model of Sabbath keeping that legitimately adheres to the mandate to worship.

God has set in place the potential for human commerce to be greatly redemptive in the world; however, its success does not depend on our working non-stop 24/7. Its success in alleviating many of the outgrowths of sin, such as poverty and sickness, depends on our being in right relationship with God. He is a hands-on creator, who demands our top priority and allegiance. As he made clear to Israel (Deuteronomy 28-30), blessing depends on obedience, and obeying the principle of Sabbath observance is as critical to the continued well-being of our commercial efforts as it is for *any* human endeavor.

## CONCLUSION

The Sabbath represents a time set aside for people to reflect on God's work and gracious provision for his creation, just as God himself reflected on his work. The Sabbath is the time reserved for people to carry out the primary mandate of creation: to worship God and rest in his provision. Having enough time in one's life to set aside a period of time for worship and communion with the Lord is essential for spiritual renewal and societal flourishing.

The principle of Sabbath observance says to business, "You can't have it all. You don't own people." Such a message is particularly important in our present age of 24/7 demands on employees. People were not made to work without ceasing; they were made to worship their God and to commune with him on a regular basis. Christian business owners, executives, and managers should recognize God's design and, consequently, make available substantial time for worship for themselves and their employees. Christian workers should intentionally dedicate a day for worshipping God.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 The authors express warm appreciation to the Special Issue Editor and to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable contributions toward improving the quality of this paper.
- 2 All Scripture quotations are from the NASB unless otherwise specified.
- 3 Further explanation of *לעבדה ולשמרה* is provided here for those who may be interested in Hebrew constructions. First, Hebrew is read from right to left, so we begin with the ל (lāmed) in the first word (לעבדה). The ל is the preposition "to" added as a prefix to the Qal infinitive construct form of the verb עבד. The dots and dashes underneath are the vowel points added by the Masoretes during the second half of the first millennium A.D., as discussed later in the paper. The final ה could indicate one of two usages. As written in the Masoretic text, the dot (*mappiq*) in the center of the final ה, makes the ה into a feminine pronominal suffix, that is, the direct object of the verb. It is the *mappiq* in this and the following Hebrew word to which Cassuto objects, as discussed later in the paper. The second usage of the ה is simply a final letter to preserve the final long vowel which precedes it. This type of the archaic form of the infinitive construct verb occurs a handful of times in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Exodus 29:29; 30:18). As such, this archaic form has no direct object, since the final ה is simply the final letter of the verb and not a pronominal suffix. With Cassuto, we take this construction in Genesis 2:15 as actually representing the second usage of the ה.

The ו (wāw) at the beginning of the second word (ולשמרה) is used here as the conjunction "and." As in the previous word, the ל signals the preposition "to" before the Qal infinitive construct form of the verb שמר. The explanation above of the final ה applies to this verb as well, such that neither infinitive verb has a direct object.

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