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Appendix 5e: Transportation on the Sabbath

This page is part of the series on the 4th commandment: The Sabbath:

1. Appendix 5a: The Sabbath And The Day to Go to Church, Two Different Things
2. Appendix 5b: How to Keep the Sabbath in Modern Times
3. Appendix 5c: Applying Sabbath Principles in Daily Life
4. Appendix 5d: Food on the Sabbath — Practical Guidance
5. Appendix 5e: Transportation on the Sabbath (Current page).
6. Appendix 5f: Technology and Entertainment on the Sabbath
7. Appendix 5g: Work and the Sabbath — Navigating Real-World Challenges

In the previous article we explored food on the Sabbath—how preparation, planning, and the Rule of Necessity can transform a potential source of stress into a time of peace. Now we turn to another area of modern life where these same principles are urgently needed: **transportation**. In today's world, cars, buses, planes, and ride-sharing apps make travel easy and convenient. Yet the fourth commandment calls us to pause, plan, and cease from ordinary labor. Understanding how this applies to travel can help believers avoid unnecessary work, protect the holiness of the day, and maintain its true spirit of rest.

Why Transportation Matters

Transportation is not a new issue. In ancient times, travel was tied to work—hauling goods, tending animals, or going to market. Rabbinic Judaism developed detailed rules about travel distances on the Sabbath, which is why many observant Jews historically lived close to synagogues to walk to services. Today, Christians face similar questions about traveling to church on the Sabbath, visiting family, attending Bible studies, or performing acts of mercy, such as hospital or prison visits. This article will help you understand how the biblical principles of preparation and necessity apply to travel, enabling you to make wise, faith-filled decisions about when and how to travel on the Sabbath.

Sabbath and Church Attendance

One of the most common reasons believers travel on the Sabbath is to **attend church services**. This is understandable—gathering with other believers for worship and study can be uplifting. Yet it's important to remember what we established back in article 5A of this series: **going to church on the Sabbath is not part of the fourth commandment** (Read article). The commandment is to cease from work, keep the day holy, and rest. Nothing in the text says, "You shall go to a service" or "You shall travel to a particular place of worship" on the Sabbath.

Jesus Himself attended synagogue on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16), but He never taught this as a requirement for His followers. His practice shows that gathering is permitted and can be beneficial, but it does not establish a rule or ritual. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27), and its core is **rest and holiness, not travel or attendance at an institution**.

For modern Christians, this means that **attending a Sabbath-keeping church is optional but not obligatory**. If you find joy and spiritual growth in meeting with other believers on the seventh day, you are free to do so. If travel to a church creates stress, breaks the rhythm of rest, or forces you to drive long distances every week, you are equally free to stay home, study Scripture, pray, and spend the day with family. The key

is to avoid making travel to church into an automatic routine that undermines the very rest and holiness you're seeking to preserve.

Whenever possible, plan ahead so that **if you do attend a service, it requires minimal travel and preparation**. This might mean attending a local fellowship closer to home, organizing a home Bible study, or connecting with believers during non-Sabbath hours. By keeping your focus on holiness and rest rather than tradition or expectation, you align your Sabbath practice with God's commandment rather than man-made requirements.

General Guidance on Travel

The same principles of **Preparation Day** and the **Rule of Necessity** apply directly to transportation. In general, Sabbath travel should be **avoided or minimized**, especially for long distances. The fourth commandment calls us to stop our ordinary labor and to allow others under our influence to do the same. When we make a habit of traveling far every Sabbath, we risk turning God's rest day into another day of stress, fatigue, and logistical planning.

When traveling long distances, plan ahead so that your travel takes place either before the Sabbath begins or after it ends. For example, if you're visiting family who live far away, try to arrive before sundown on Friday and leave after sunset on Saturday. This creates a peaceful atmosphere and avoids rushing or last-minute preparation. If you know you will need to travel for a legitimate reason during the Sabbath, prepare your vehicle in advance—fuel it, handle maintenance, and plan your route beforehand.

At the same time, Scripture shows that **acts of mercy are permitted on the Sabbath** (Matthew 12:11-12). Visiting someone in the hospital, comforting the sick, or ministering to the imprisoned may require travel. In such cases, keep the trip as simple as possible, avoid turning it into a social outing, and remain mindful of the Sabbath's sacred hours. By treating travel as an exception rather than the norm, you preserve the Sabbath's holiness and restfulness.

Personal Vehicles vs. Public Transport

Driving Personal Vehicles

Using your own car or motorcycle on the Sabbath is not inherently forbidden. In fact, it may be necessary for short trips to visit family, attend a Bible study, or carry out acts of mercy. However, **it should be approached with caution**. Driving always carries the risk of breakdowns or accidents that could force you—or others—to perform work that could have been avoided. In addition, fueling, maintenance, and long-distance travel all increase weekday-style stress and labor. Whenever possible, keep Sabbath travel by personal vehicle short, prepare your car in advance (fuel and maintenance), and plan your routes to minimize disruption of the sacred hours.

Taxis and Rideshare Services

By contrast, services such as Uber, Lyft, and taxis involve hiring someone to work exclusively for you on the Sabbath, which violates the fourth commandment's prohibition against making others work on your behalf (Exodus 20:10). This is similar to using food delivery services. Even if it seems like a minor or occasional indulgence, it undermines the Sabbath's intent and sends mixed signals about your convictions. The consistent biblical pattern is to plan ahead so you don't need to put someone else to work for you during sacred hours.

Public Transportation

Buses, trains, and ferries differ from taxis and rideshares because they operate on fixed schedules, independent of your use. Using public transportation on the Sabbath may therefore be permissible, especially if it enables you to attend a gathering of believers or perform an act of mercy without driving. Whenever possible, purchase tickets or passes in advance to avoid handling money on the Sabbath. Keep trips simple, avoid unnecessary stops, and maintain a reverent mindset while traveling to preserve the day's holiness.