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Appendix 5f: Technology and Entertainment on the Sabbath

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

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Why Technology and Entertainment Matter

The issue of technology on the Sabbath is primarily linked with entertainment. Once a person begins keeping the Sabbath, one of the first challenges is deciding what to do with all the free time that naturally opens up. Those who attend Sabbath-keeping churches or groups may fill some of that time with organized activities, but even they must eventually face moments when it seems "there is nothing to do." This is especially true for children, teenagers, and young adults, but even older adults can struggle with this new rhythm of time.

Another reason technology is so challenging is the pressure to stay connected nowadays. The constant stream of news, messages, and updates is a recent phenomenon, made possible by the internet and the proliferation of personal devices. **Breaking this habit takes willingness and effort.** But the Sabbath provides the perfect opportunity to do so—a weekly invitation to disconnect from digital distractions and reconnect with the Creator.

This principle **is not limited to the Sabbath alone**; every day a child of God should be mindful of the trap of constant connection and distraction. The Psalms are full of encouragement to meditate on God and His Law day and night (Psalm 1:2; Psalm 92:2; Psalm 119:97-99; Psalm 119:148), promising joy, stability, and eternal life to those who do. The difference on the seventh day is that God Himself rested and commanded us to imitate Him (Exodus 20:11) — making this the one day each week when disconnecting from the secular world is not only helpful but divinely appointed.

Watching Sports and Secular Entertainment

The Sabbath is set apart as holy time, and our minds should be filled with things that reflect that holiness. For this reason, watching sports, secular movies, or entertainment series should not be done on the Sabbath. **Such content is disconnected from the spiritual benefit the day is meant to bring.** Scripture calls us, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44-45; echoed in 1 Peter 1:16), reminding us that holiness involves separation from what is common. The Sabbath provides a weekly opportunity to turn our attention from the world's distractions and fill it instead with worship, rest, uplifting conversation, and activities that refresh the soul and honor God.

Practicing Sports and Fitness on the Sabbath

Just as watching secular sports draws our attention to competition and entertainment, actively participating in sports or fitness routines on the Sabbath also shifts the focus away from rest and holiness. Going to the gym, training for athletic goals, or playing sports, belongs to the ordinary weekday rhythm of our labor and self-improvement. In

fact, physical exercise by its very nature stands in contrast to the **Sabbath's call to cease from exertion and embrace true rest.** The Sabbath invites us to lay aside even our self-directed pursuits of performance and discipline so we can find refreshment in God. By stepping back from workouts, practices, or matches, we honor the day as sacred and make space for spiritual renewal.

Physical Activities That Fit the Sabbath

This does not mean the Sabbath must be spent indoors or inactive. Light, peaceful outdoor walks, unhurried time in nature, or gentle play with children can be a beautiful way to honor the day. Activities that restore rather than compete, that deepen relationships rather than distract, and that turn our attention toward God's creation rather than human achievement, all harmonize with the Sabbath's spirit of rest and holiness.

Good Sabbath Practices for Technology

- Ideally, all unnecessary connection to the secular world should stop during the Sabbath. This does not mean we become rigid or joyless, but that we deliberately step back from the digital noise to honor the day as holy.
- Children should not rely on internet-connected devices to fill their Sabbath hours. Instead, encourage physical activities, books or media devoted to holy and uplifting content. **This is where a community of believers is especially helpful**, as it provides other children to play with and wholesome activities to share.
- Teenagers should be mature enough to understand the difference between the Sabbath and other days when it comes to technology. Parents can guide them by preparing activities in advance and explaining the "why" behind these boundaries.
- Access to news and secular updates should be eliminated on the Sabbath. Checking headlines or scrolling social media can quickly pull the mind back into weekday concerns and break the atmosphere of rest and holiness.

- Plan ahead: Download needed materials, print biblical study guides, or queue up appropriate content before sundown so you're not scrambling for material during the Sabbath hours.
- Set devices aside: Turn off notifications, use airplane mode, or put devices in a designated basket during Sabbath hours to signal the shift in focus.
- The goal is not to demonize technology but to use it appropriately on this special day. Ask yourself the same question we introduced earlier: "**Is it necessary today?**" and "**Does this help me rest and honor God?**" Over time, practicing these habits will help you and your family experience the Sabbath as a delight rather than a struggle.