

By Elder Marcos A.
Aidukaitis
Of the Seventy



The Joy

OF SABBATH DAY OBSERVANCE

Growing up as a Latter-day Saint in a non-LDS environment was one of the enjoyable experiences of my early life. What I remember most is getting together with family and friends for birthdays, holidays, football games, and an occasional family *churrasco* (barbecue). Another favorite memory is going to church together as a family on Sunday.

Keeping the Sabbath day holy and worshipping our Father in Heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, were basic and natural for our family. As a youth in the Church, I always anticipated playing football on Tuesday nights, but I also anticipated going to sacrament meeting, Sunday School, and priesthood on Sundays. It felt so good to be with our brothers and sisters in the gospel that we were not quick to return home afterward.

Not until I was married and had a family of my own did I really appreciate the good example my parents had set during my formative years. As the father of a family, I came to better understand how important it is to “go to the house of prayer and offer up [our] sacraments upon [the Lord’s] holy day” (D&C 59:9). I came to better understand the blessings He has promised to those who keep this commandment.

I vividly remember how happy my friends and I were as youth when we could tell each other that we had not missed a single Church meeting for an entire year. We might not have been fully aware of what was happening to us as a result of our faithful attendance, but we were keeping ourselves unspotted from the world. In addition, our hearts were glad, our countenances were cheerful, and our joy was truly full (see D&C 59:9, 13–15).

A Sabbath Day Tradition

For many years my wife and children and I have had the tradition of spending summer vacation on a small beach near our home in southern Brazil. Sometimes we moved because of work, but no matter how far we lived from that small beach, we always made the annual trip with much anticipation and joy. Likewise, extended family members and friends would travel long distances so we could all be together once a year. Everyone came as early as they could and stayed as long as possible.

At that small beach our family had many wonderful opportunities for spiritual growth and gospel teaching. Most of our extended family members were not members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and did not share our religious beliefs. To



I testify that joy and blessings come from worshipping God on His holy day—including blessings we cannot now see.



Breaking the Sabbath would have been easy to rationalize during our annual vacation at the beach, but we never missed going to church on Sundays.

them the Lord's day was just another day to play and have fun. Because more of the family would be at the beach on weekends than during the other days of the week, our presence and participation in Sunday activities was not only expected but also insistently requested—including by our children.

Our children were small and only just learning to apply the truths of the gospel. To them the temptation of participating in activities with their cousins and friends on Sundays was great. Spending time with family is an important part of the gospel, and breaking the Sabbath would have been easy to rationalize. After all, the closest unit of the Church at that time was more than 60 miles (96 km) away from the beach. Our friends and neighbors in our home congregation were far away, and none of them would ever know if we stayed at the beach instead of driving to the chapel and attending our meetings on Sunday. We

went to church the entire year, and our extended family could be together only a few weeks a year.

Nevertheless, we never missed going to church on Sundays—not even once! We remembered the Lord's teachings:

“And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; . . .

“But remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High. . . .

“And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full” (D&C 59:9–13).



We chose to keep this commandment, and we taught our children that they should keep it as well. Soon they understood that it was more important to worship God on His holy day than to please family and friends or to satisfy their own desires.

Blessed by Obedience

On Sundays at the beach, we would wake up early, dress up for Sunday worship, and travel by car to the nearest chapel. During our trip and throughout the entire day, we would enjoy the peace and joy the Lord has promised to those who keep His commandments. We came to learn that this feeling of peace and joy does not come from the world.

After several years of this routine, something wonderful happened. Our children stopped questioning the importance of worshipping God on His holy day, and several of our children's cousins began to ask if they could go to church with us! Little did we know that the feeling of peace and joy we felt was also being felt by our nieces and nephews upon our return from our meetings. Eventually a great blessing resulted. After some of those children became adolescents, two of them from one family told their parents, "We want to become Latter-day Saints." Soon the entire family was baptized. Recently, one of the children, now a returned missionary, was married in the temple.

We still go to that beach every year, but

everyone knows that on Sunday our family will not be there to play. Instead, we will go to church and worship God with family members who join us—a group that is becoming larger and larger every year!

When we look back on those years and think about the choice we made, we thank God for helping us have the courage to do what was right and to teach our children to do the same. We don't have the slightest doubt that that decision strengthened our children as well as our extended family. It gave us the Lord's promised peace, played an important role in the conversion of family members, and blessed us with a satisfaction not found in alternative Sunday activities that do not fill the soul.

I testify that joy and blessings come from worshipping God on His holy day—including blessings we cannot now see. And I testify that "happy is that people, whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 144:15). ■

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