

BUT FIRST, ABIDING

A Devotional Meditation on Tetzaveh (You Shall Command)

Exodus 35:1-40:38; Ezekiel 45:16-46:18; Mark 2:23-28; John 15:1-11

Albert J. McCarn

March 14, 2026

When a Christian leader as highly regarded as Charlie Kirk writes a book about Christians observing the Sabbath, it's reasonable to ask why. As Charlie himself says, "I desire to bring all humanity back to God's design to rest for an entire day. To cease working, to STOP, in the name of God."*

It's easy to go straight from here to the old argument that keeping the Sabbath, or Shabbat, is a Jewish thing that no longer applies to Christians. If we do that, though, we miss the deeper meaning behind this sacred place in time that God set apart for his creation. In fact, we miss something fundamental about our Messiah's intent for our relationship with him and with one another. It's the element of *abiding*.

Yeshua talked about that in his last conversation with the disciples before the cross. John reports that conversation like this:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

John 15:4-11 ESV

Abiding is the opposite of *doing*. We are created to do works, of course, but if those works are to be of lasting value and glorifying to our Creator, we first have to understand what He wants us to do, and then learn how to do it. It also helps to be rested and ready to take on the challenges of the doing. And while we're in the midst of the doing, we might need to know how to recognize God's communication so we know when he tells us to make adjustments. We can't do that unless we have become accustomed to hearing from the Lord, which is another benefit of abiding in him.

This is the consistent lesson of the scriptures. The first thing our original ancestors did was rest as the Creator rested. Having breathed them into existence, God walked with



Photo by Jon Tyson, June 13, 2025, [on Unsplash](#).

* Charlie Kirk, [Stop, In the Name of God: Why Honoring the Sabbath Will Transform Your Life](#) (Winning Team Publishing, 2025), xiv.

them in the cool of the day as they all rested from labor. That unhurried, undisturbed communion with him equipped Adam and Eve to embark on their task to subdue the earth as the first day of the week dawned. When we look at it this way, we begin to understand why Yeshua said the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

We might get the impression from reading the Gospels that the Sabbath is all about rules and legalism, and it was for some people in Yeshua's day. We point fingers at those Jewish leaders for their legalism, but then we establish a rule-based legalism of our own, only on Sunday instead of Saturday. The truth is, any religious observance more encumbered with human traditions than infused with God's Spirit can be nothing more than a legalistic exercise. That's why we have to learn the discipline of *abiding*.

Yeshua didn't make this up on his own. He simply reminded the people of his day what Moses taught. When we study Exodus, we see the emphasis God continually placed on the Sabbath. Even before the Israelites reached Sinai, God was commanding Moses to teach them not to work on the seventh day. In other words, to abide in him. If the people had taken that lesson to heart, they might have been content to abide in him the whole time Moses was on the mountain receiving the Torah. Instead, they got anxious and decided they had to do something, so they created a golden calf to worship as their image of God. That's why Moses had to go back up the mountain and receive the Torah a second time. When he returned, the first thing he did was to remind them about abiding:

Moses assembled all the congregation of the people of Israel and said to them, "These are the things that the LORD has commanded you to do. Six days work shall be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day."

Exodus 35:1-3 ESV

That part about being put to death is probably what we Christians get concerned about when discussion of the Sabbath comes up. It is a serious command, but what's more likely to happen is that those who disregard this solemn rest end up putting themselves in an early grave through anxiety and exhaustion. That's why our Creator is concerned about us taking time off for a whole day so we can recharge with him. As he said,

You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, "Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you."

Exodus 31:13 ESV

This is what Yeshua was explaining to his disciples. What better sign can there be of connection with our Creator than making it a priority to abide with him before we do anything else?