Lesson 2

Keeping God’s Day Holy

STEP 1  Life Need (5–10 minutes)
- Discuss different attitudes students have about church and Sunday school attendance.

STEP 2  Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)
- **Bible Study:** Compare the teachings of Jesus concerning the Sabbath with the teachings of the Pharisees.
  - Bible Adventures pp. 2–3, Bibles, “The Ten Commandments” Teaching Aid
- **Bible Review:** Discuss the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship. List ways God’s day can be special.
  - Bible Adventures p.1, pencils

STEP 3  Bible Application (5–10 minutes)
- **Memory Work:** Practice ways to keep the Lord’s holy day special.
  - Bible Adventures p.1, “All about Worship” Teaching Aid and reproducible—make copies before class, stationary and fun pens, floor pillows, Bibles, music, CD player; Optional: clipboards or large books

STEP 4  Life Response (about 5 minutes)
- Plan how to spend time with God.
  - Bible Adventures p. 4
- **Optional Activity:** Prayer journal assignment

Memory Verse

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.”
—Exodus 20:8

---

Unit 22 Theme:
Rules to Live By

Bible Basis:
God commands a special purpose for the Lord’s day (Exod. 20:8-11). Jesus shows the meaning of the Sabbath by letting His disciples pick grain and by healing a crippled man (Matt. 12:1-15).

Bible Truth:
The Lord’s day has a special God-centered focus.

Lesson Aim:
That your students will identify ways to honor God on the Lord’s holy day.

Understanding the Bible

Last week's lesson, covering the first commandment and the rich young ruler, began a unit of study about the Ten Commandments. This week we'll learn what Jesus teaches about the true meaning of the Sabbath.

At the time of today's story, Jesus’ fame was spreading (Matt. 9:26), and the Pharisees were upset by His teachings and what He was doing (Mark 2:16, 24). They were looking for some opportunity to accuse Him of breaking the Law. So when Jesus showed the true meaning of the Sabbath by letting His disciples pick grain and by healing a crippled man, the Pharisees were greatly upset. They felt that Jesus was going against all of their teachings about the Sabbath.

The custom of using six days of the week for work and keeping one day special for worship was established by God Himself (Gen. 2:3).

The word Sabbath comes from a Hebrew word meaning cease or rest. The Sabbath is a holy day, a day of special worship and rest from working, a day for spiritual and physical refreshment.

Early in Hebrew history, God taught His people to make the Sabbath special. When they were in the wilderness He sent no manna on the Sabbath, but He sent a double supply

—continued on next page
the day before. The people gathered and prepared their Sabbath food a day in advance.

By the time Jesus lived on earth, the Jewish leaders had added many of their own rules to God’s teaching about keeping the Sabbath holy. In fact, the true purpose of the special day had become lost in the confusion of rules. Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for people’s benefit (Mark 2:27). But all the extra, made-up rules made observing this day a real burden!

Jesus knew the Law, and He knew what the Pharisees were thinking. He knew these men were more concerned with keeping traditions than with showing love—the spirit of the Law—to God and other people.

Choose from these activities to do as students are arriving.

- Display “The Ten Commandments” Teaching Aid. You may use it as a review of the first commandment or a preview of the fourth commandment that is the focus of this week’s lesson.
- “The Ten Commandments” Teaching Aid
- Play a game where the students are to “keep the rules” by doing everything you do. Do several nonsensical or useless things such as keeping your left hand on the top of your head or wearing only one shoe. If students question this behavior, tell them “It’s the rule.” After playing the game for several minutes, discuss what makes a good rule.
- For Worship Time, use the song for this unit on the DisKit CD from the Creative Teaching Aids packet.
- DisKit CD, CD player

Worship will be more meaningful and personal to your students when they are actively involved in it. Here are some ways you can accomplish this in your classroom.

- Your students can be worship leaders in the classroom. Bring your recordings of African-American contemporary gospel artists and encourage your students to learn a new song during this month, and let them lead a worship time.
- To help a shy or quiet student pray, give him several pictures or items that can be used as prayer starters such as “Thank You, God, for . . .”
- If available, hand out information about missionaries and pray for them by name.

To active preteens, the term “day of rest” in connection with the Lord’s day may bring some negative things to mind. When they think in terms of keeping God’s day holy, they may think of all the things they can’t do: play ball, go outside, or watch television. Your students need to see the Lord’s day the way God intended it to be. They need to learn to look at it as an exciting weekly opportunity to concentrate on worshiping God and helping others.
Objective: That your students will discuss different attitudes about Sunday school.

Materials: Whiteboard and marker

To bring home to students the burden that the Pharisees’ Sabbath laws had added to God’s special day (in today’s lesson from Exodus 20:8-11 and Matthew 12:1-15), lead them in the following discussion.

Even though they may differ a lot, most families have rules. What are some of your family rules? (Some possible answers might include bedtime at a certain hour, helping with chores, keeping a bedroom clean, or doing homework.)

Why are rules needed? (They keep people in order, obeying them benefits us, and they are helpful.)

For many preteens, Sunday school attendance is a family rule and is required. Before class, write a list of adjectives on the whiteboard that could describe a family’s attitude before coming to Sunday school today (for example: happy, joyous, excited, grumpy, quarrelsome, boring). Refer to the list and ask:

What attitudes did you see at your house today about coming to Sunday school or church? (Let the students choose an attitude from the list or add another one.)

What might be the effect of these attitudes? (Those with good attitudes are benefiting from the time in Sunday school class and can help the others. Bad attitudes can hurt the class and take away from everyone learning.)

We react to a rule based on who made the rule and what we expect from obeying it. Most parents make rules because they know their children will benefit from obeying them. But some children may feel that their parents shouldn’t make rules for them to obey “just because”; they may obey simply because they are afraid not to and not because they feel they should.

If you come to church expecting to learn more about Jesus, you will benefit from the class. But if you are only here because you are obeying a family rule, you may not benefit as much from Sunday school because of your attitude.

Today we are going to learn what Jesus taught about making this day, the Lord’s day, special.
Objective: That your students will understand Jesus’ teaching concerning keeping the Sabbath holy.

Materials:
- “The Ten Commandments” Teaching Aid
- Bible Adventures pp. 2–3, pencils
- Bibles

God commands a special purpose for the Lord’s day (Exod. 20:8-11). Jesus shows the meaning of the Sabbath by letting His disciples pick grain and by healing a crippled man (Matt. 12:1-15).

The Pharisees felt they were more religious than other people because they kept strict rules. Most of these rules were made up, but the Pharisees believed their rules were equal to God’s rules. Let’s see what happened when the Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking a rule.

Bible Study

Once again, display “The Ten Commandments” Teaching Aid in a prominent place. Point out the command to keep the Sabbath holy. Have students turn to pages 2 and 3 in Bible Adventures, “A Day Set Apart.” Have someone read the first paragraph.

Have a volunteer read the first section of Scripture Spotlight, Matthew 12:1-2.

The Pharisees said no work was to be done on the Sabbath. What were the disciples doing that was like working? (They were harvesting a small amount of grain.)

Choose a volunteer to read the next Scripture Spotlight section, Matthew 12:3-4, and the transitional paragraph that follows it. Have the students find 1 Samuel 21:1-6 in their Bibles. Ask a volunteer to read the passage aloud.

How is this account like the one about Jesus’ disciples? (The disciples, like David’s men, were hungry and needed food. In the Pharisees’ eyes, the disciples were breaking the Sabbath laws. The rules quoted by the Pharisees were designed to prevent people from harvesting grain on the Sabbath and selling it for profit. Jesus and His disciples weren’t doing that; they were just satisfying their hunger.)

Have a student read the next transitional paragraph. Then ask the class if they know what Jesus meant when He called Himself Lord of the Sabbath. Bible Adventures touches on it, but you can expand on the idea. Besides saying that He had authority over the Sabbath, Jesus was also questioning the validity of the rules that the Pharisees had, over time, added to the Sabbath. He was saying, in essence, “I am God’s Son, and I am greater than the Sabbath and greater than all the extra rules you have added to the Sabbath.”

Have a volunteer read Matthew 12:9-12 as the class follows along in their Bibles.
Why did the Pharisees continue to question Jesus? (They were trying to trap Him into saying something wrong so they could get Him in trouble.)

How did Jesus respond to the Pharisees? (He reminded them that God’s law allowed people to rescue their animals if they were in trouble, so it was okay to help people.)

What does His answer mean? (People are more important than animals. God’s law allowed people to help others and do good on the Sabbath.) Explain to your students that one of the laws the Jewish leaders observed said that it was okay to heal someone on the Sabbath only if the person was in danger of dying before the next day. Jesus said no; it is good to help people however much they need it.

Have a volunteer read the transitional paragraph. The Old Testament had made provision for people to rescue their livestock even on the Sabbath. Jesus’ point was that if it was acceptable to help animals, how much more should we help our fellow human beings! Next, have a student read the final section of Scripture Spotlight.

Why do you think Jesus healed the man? (Jesus is very compassionate and loves to help people. But beyond that, He shows the Jewish leaders that He had the authority that He said He had. Jesus showed His power and His relationship to God by healing the man.)

How did the Pharisees respond? (They were angry and began plotting how they could kill Jesus.) Have a volunteer read the final paragraph from the Bible study. Remind students that we have the great privilege of spending time with God, and that to help us do that, He set aside one special day.

Bible Review

The Sabbath rest was intended to restore people and focus their attention on God. But the rules of the Pharisees had become stumbling blocks that prevented them from loving and worshiping God. Explain that the Pharisees had developed 39 categories of activities that were forbidden on the Sabbath. For example, no one could travel more than three-fourths of a mile on that day. Have your students turn to page 1 in Bible Adventures.

Read aloud the introduction on page 1 of Bible Adventures to your class. Your students may do this page individually or work as teams. The answers are:

Psalm 92:1—Praise the Lord and make music to His name.
Psalm 118:24—Rejoice and be glad.
Matthew 12:12—Do good on the Sabbath.
Acts 20:7—Come together and break bread.
1 Corinthians 16:2—Set aside money for God.
Objective: That your students will practice ways to keep the Lord’s day special.

Materials:
- Bible Adventures p.1, Bibles
- “All about Worship” Teaching Aid
- “All about Worship” reproducible—make copies before class
- Stationary and fun pens, floor pillows
- Music and CD player
- Optional: clipboards or large books

Memory Work
Read the Key Verse at the bottom of page 1 in Bible Adventures. Then explain that the Sabbath day in the Old Testament was from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Since Christ's resurrection, most Christian churches set aside Sunday as a day of worship because Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

In Bible times, almost all worship was centered around the synagogue or temple, and some activities could only be done by the Levites or priests. Certain people sang in choirs, played instruments, or took part in choral readings.

We still use some of the same items and ways of worshiping that were used in Bible times, but quite a few things are new or different.

What are some things that we may use in worship today that were not used in Bible times? (Puppets, videos, drama, art, creative writing, mime, organs, pianos, guitars.)

Times and methods of keeping the Lord’s day holy may have changed, but the focusing of our attention on God and our relationship with Him are still the same.

Provide a worship time by allowing students to have quiet time to enjoy being with God. Students can write, draw, read the Bible, pray, worship through song, and more. Arrange the area with large, comfy floor pillows, paper and pens to write or draw with (include clipboards or large books for a hard writing surface), Bibles, and a CD playing quietly in the background. Hang the “All about Worship” Teaching Aid for students to learn about ways we can worship God. Leave this area set up each week for students to spend quiet time with God processing the lesson. If possible, keep this area separate from the others or even in another room with supervision. Students may want to pray or read the Bible together. As long as they remain focused on God and don’t disrupt others, allow students to participate as they feel led. Make copies of the “All about Worship” reproducible page to send home with your students.
**Bible Truth:**

The Lord’s day has a special God-centered focus.

**Objective:** That your students will plan how to spend time with God on this Lord’s day.

**Materials:**

- *Bible Adventures* p.4, pencils

All the Pharisees’ laws made the Sabbath just a time of rules. Jesus showed them that God gave His people that special day to enjoy Him. God’s rules of the Sabbath were given to help us set aside time to be with Him.

Have your students turn to page 4 of *Bible Adventures*, “My Day with God.” Give them time to read the directions. Encourage them to finish the page by deciding with whom they will spend their time, when they will spend their time with God, and what they will do to make that time special. Give preteens a few minutes of quiet time to complete their plan. If any of the students are having a hard time coming up with ideas, give them some of your ideas to get them started.

Emphasize to your students that making an appointment with God is a serious promise. If we set a time to spend with a friend, that friend will be waiting for us. If we promise to spend a specific time with God, He will be waiting too. He wants to spend time with us. He loves us and wants an intimate relationship with each of us.

**Closing Activity**

Ask if anyone would like to share their plan. Be prepared to tell the students how you plan on spending some special time with God today. Pray as a group thanking God for giving us special days to worship Him.

**Optional Activity**

For this week’s prayer journal, make a list of things you can do on Sunday to honor God. This will give you a list of ideas you can use on any Sunday. Write a prayer asking God to help you honor Him first at all times. Don’t forget to write this week’s Key Verse at the top of the page and keep a list of prayer requests and answers at the bottom of the page.