

A Family Guide to

# Sabbath Nature Activities

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## Acknowledgements

I am deeply indebted to the teachers, students, youth leaders, authors, and friends whose ideas have slipped both consciously and unconsciously into my mind and surfaced here as my own. Through the years I have kept a file of clippings consisting of ideas gleaned from books, nature bulletins, nature magazines, any and every source, on ways to lead children and youth to God through nature. So many persons have influenced my thoughts that only eternity will reveal who they are. One thing is sure, the ideas in this field guide are not original with me.

If, by chance, the reader should discover one of his games or activities in just a little different form, it could be that he, too, has contributed to the contents of this book. May I express my deep appreciation to all the unknown persons who have given me so much in nature appreciation.

One person, now deceased, stands out above all others. Mr. Oren C. Durham, whom I met at Mount Aetna MV Camp in Maryland over 25 years ago, contributed more to the writing of this book than any other. From my file of his letters I quote, "I am personally richer when I share my treasure, either by writing or telling my experience and reactions or by giving nature specimens." You are the recipients of this dedicated naturalist's generosity, especially in *Designs of Nature* and *Spiral Symmetry*.

My sister-in-law, Betty Mayberry, from her collection of scrapbooks and nature books, especially the books she lent me, *Learning About Nature Through Games*, by Virginia W. Musselman, Stackpole Books, 1967, sparked ideas for Sabbath games and hikes.

Rutherford Platt's book, *This Green World*, Dodd, Mead & Co., 1945, contributed to the principles of phylotaxy. From the Nature Workshop Committee that produced *Nature, God's Other Book*, Southern Union Department of Education, 1957, I gleaned ideas for other activities. My daughter-in-law Julie, shared her childhood memories of happy Friday evenings.

My husband, Jay, who joins me in our desire to encourage others in nature appreciation, was my editorial advisor, speller, typist, and maker of the puzzles. Most of all, he is my encouragement and inspiration as we share our love for the Creator and His works and for each other.

Eileen Lantry

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## Part 1

### Why Planned Sabbaths?

#### YOUR CHOICE: LIFE OR DEATH

*I have found that on the Sabbath day many are indifferent and do not know where their children are or what they are doing.—Child Guidance, p. 533.*

Squeezing by their parents as they left the church door, the Carlson boys slipped through the parishioners congregated on the church steps and headed for the parked car.

“Wow, it’s hot! Sure’d like to get rid of this old tie and change into cut-offs and a T-shirt. But we’ll just have to suffer while they talk.” Ten-year-old Dale kicked the tire of his dad’s car in disgust as he glanced toward the church where his parents were engaged in a lively conversation with friends.

“Hope they don’t invite the Martins home again this Sabbath,” Don, two years older, commented. “Takes ages for Mom to get her fancy dinners on the table. Then after everyone’s stuffed full, they sit in the living room and talk and talk and talk. I get so bored! When the Martins leave, both Mom and Dad are tired and usually sleep for an hour or so.”

“Yeah, and when they wake up, they read the Review or a book they haven’t had time to look at all week.” Dale frowned.

Don sighed and carried on the conversation. “Sometimes they take us on a walk or drive someplace we’ve been a dozen times. As if that’s fun! You know, Dale, Sabbath is the dullest day of the week. I hate it! Any other day we have all kinds of things to do—school, music, sports, even chores around the house. But after Sabbath School and church, what’s there to do? We can’t watch TV, can’t play ball, can’t build our tree house or fort. The day is a dud!”

“You’d better be careful, Don. If Mom or Dad heard you say that, they’d really jump on you,” Dale warned.

“Well, it’s the truth, and you know it. Why don’t they do something fun with us for a change? During the week they are interested in what we do, but on Sabbath they either have company, catch up on sleep they missed during the week, or read. I get the feeling we’re interfering with their day of rest.” Don paused to think. His tone of voice as he continued was more wistful than bitter.

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“I wish Mom didn’t always say, ‘Boys, you’ve got a bookcase full of good books. Why not read them?’ or ‘You haven’t played those Bible games we bought at camp meeting for a long time,’ or ‘Have you read all the stories in the latest Guide?’ Reading is OK for a while, but who wants to sit and play Bible games all day? I can’t help watching the clock as I wait for sundown so we can cut loose and have fun.”

*The Sabbath—oh!—make it the sweetest, the most blessed day of the whole week. . . . Parents, above everything take care of your children upon the Sabbath.—Child Guidance, pp. 532, 533.*

*In His own day He [God] preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.—Education, p. 251.*

“OK, Dad. You promised you’d tell us our Sabbath afternoon surprise on our way home from church. What is it?” Tommy sat on the edge of the back seat as the family drove away from the church parking lot. “May I invite Cliff? He’s in the fifth grade, too; but since his dad isn’t a Christian, he won’t let him go to church school.”

“May I include some of my friends?” thirteen-year-old Dana spoke up.

“Wait a minute!” Dad threw up one hand in a gesture of fun. “Aren’t you going to give Mom and me a chance to explain our Sabbath surprise before we invite the whole junior and earlteen divisions to join us?”

“Will there be something for me to do that’s fun, Daddy?” Five-year-old Dicky, who sat between his parents, looked up into his father’s eyes.

“There is always a place for you, Dicky boy. You’re my partner, and the Sabbath activity this afternoon is something you’ll enjoy. Mother, you explain while I concentrate on driving home.”

Three eager children listened intently as Mother explained. “Daddy and I planned a new activity that can include your friends. Yes, Dana, invite your two best friends. Tom, you may call Cliff and his parents too, if they care to come.”

“After lunch we’ll all rest and read quietly while Dicky takes his nap. Then, about three o’clock, we’re going to Deer Creek Park where there’s a woods left pretty much as nature planned it. There we’ll make Bible dioramas.”

Dana’s face lighted up. “I know what dioramas are. In history class we make tiny scenes using objects and figures to represent a story in history. Sometimes we paint a background too. Will we do the same with Bible stories?”

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“Not exactly. We’ll use only materials from nature to make our Bible scenes. That’s why we are going to the woods where we can find moss, lichen, fungi, flowers, different leaves and bark, pine cones, and many other interesting discoveries to use in constructing our Bible stories. Each group of two or three persons will choose a Bible story and keep it a secret so the others may guess it later. You’ll have at least an hour to make your dioramas, but let’s wait for final instructions until everyone is with us.”

As they drove into the driveway, three excited children all talked at once suggesting many creative ideas they could make into tiny Bible scenes.

Mother interrupted with, “I need my helpers in preparing dinner.” She smiled as she heard Tom’s comment to Dana.

“You know why Sabbath is my favorite day of the week? Because both Dad and Mother spend time with us doing specially planned fun things. They make Sabbath seem like a party which always includes our family, Jesus, and other friends as well.”

After dinner Daddy took Dicky to his room for a nap. Just before Daddy turned to leave, Dicky asked, “Daddy, what will we find in the woods that will look like David’s sheep or Goliath’s sword?”

“I don’t know, Son, but there are lots of thrilling nature secrets in the woods just waiting for boys like you to find them.”

*The value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate. Whatever of ours God claims from us, He returns again, enriched, transfigured, with His own glory. . . . The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in God’s purpose they are indissolubly linked together.—Education, p. 250.*

Is Sabbath the most looked for, longed for, talked about day of the week in your home? Is Sabbath a day of delight, exciting, special and beautiful in the mind of each member of your family? Do your children join with the “sons of God” who shouted for joy when the foundation of the Sabbath was laid?

Or do they groan and grumble, thinking negative thoughts? Do they feel inhibited, restricted, bored, and unhappy waiting impatiently for the sun to go down and release them from what they consider drudgery?

Parents, the answer rests in your hands. Are you making faithful Sabbath observance easy for your children by planning special activities that occupy their creative minds and absorb their restless energy? Soon your children will face apostasy within the church and persecution both within and without. Are you preparing them to choose the token of divine authority, the seal of God? Are their little minds being filled with



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truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so that they will stand loyally for God when their playmates taunt them for observing the seventh, instead of the first day?

If you neglect now to plan each Sabbath wisely and well, Satan will move in with his well-thought-out plans. Your sins of omission, your indifference, are making impressions on your child's mind that could seal his destiny. If you have failed to fix in his life the principles of God's law, including love for the fourth commandment, will he have the inner stamina to stand for God when the Sunday laws make keeping the Sabbath a life or death issue?

*The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their families and interesting them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God and what He requires of us in order to perfect Christian characters and attain to eternal life.—Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 585.*

How can you give your children “correct views of the character of God?” Satan's whole purpose in this terrible experiment with sin is to perplex your minds concerning the purposes of God. In subtle ways your child is constantly bombarded by the media to doubt God. God is misrepresented by artful perversions until His true character is shrouded in mystery.

But out in nature, the simple truths and the loveliness of the Creator will counteract these devilish lies. What a privilege you have to point out the wonders of the earth and sea! You can awaken your children's thoughts to the goodness, love, power, and wisdom of God. Jesus Himself will join with you in arousing the latent capabilities of young minds and bodies. As their intellect is awakened, their imagination quickened, not only will your children think independently, but they will also be prepared to appreciate the beauty of God's word. You will be giving them a key to divine mysteries that do reveal the character of God.

*Parents, make the Sabbath a delight, that your children may look forward to it and have a welcome in their hearts for it.—Testimonies, vol. 2, p. 585.*

HELLO, GOD, HERE WE ARE

If you are like me, memory supplies hundreds of selfish Sabbaths, unplanned Sabbaths, dull, boring Sabbaths. After dinner on Sabbath the usual procedure went like this: If I had invited guests, the women congregated in the kitchen, the men talked in the living room. The children? Vaguely I knew they were around—in their rooms or outside.

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I could hear them, occasionally see them. If they weren't preschool children who chose to be near their parents, what were they doing or talking about? No doubt their conversation was as far from God as the example they had observed in the adults.

As the afternoon wore on, I became increasingly uncomfortable, wondering what the children were doing, until finally either my conscience or some disaster drove me to investigate. But did I have anything positive planned for the children, both mine and those of my guests? Or did I say something like this, "Now, children, remember it is the Sabbath day. Don't be so rowdy in your play. You know Jesus is sad when you act this way."

Momentarily the children would stop what they were doing, give me a "so what" look, and wait for me to go back to my guests so they could continue whatever they were doing without adult interference. Those with tender consciences may have wondered, "What can I do that makes Jesus glad?"

If the value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate, in just what way are you educating your children? Is it positive or negative? Have you educated them to think that the Sabbath is a very special time in which the entire family and the invited guests endeavor to get acquainted with God? Or, is it a day when the children have an opportunity to do whatever they can think of, just so they stay out of the way of the socializing adults? On Sabbaths when there are no invited guests, do you parents sleep and read and leave the children to their own devices?

Are you, by now, filled with thoughts of self-justification? "Both of us parents work. We have church jobs that are time consuming, a yard and garden to care for, repairs on the home or car, sewing and mending—our lives are filled with time-consuming tasks. When sundown comes on Friday, we are exhausted mentally and physically; final preparations before sundown have depleted our last bit of energy. Surely, we are entitled to one day of rest!"

Is that what the fourth commandment says—six days of labor, and the seventh is for—wait a minute—before you say rest, open your Bible to Exodus 20:8-11 and read it again. The only time the word "rest" occurs is referring to God resting, not you. And God wasn't worn out and tired from His creative work. Rest? No! Diversion? Yes!

The physical diversion, call it rest if you wish, is God's way of saying, "I have given you rest from sin, rest from guilt by being both your Creator and Redeemer. Now, let's enjoy each other."

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Just before Christ sealed your redemption and mine on Calvary, He declared, “It is finished”: Redemption is yours. Then He rested on the Sabbath, His mission accomplished. Long before Calvary, after He created our world, He rested, planning a day to celebrate creation, twenty-four hours each week for fellowship with the beautiful people He had made, a day when they would be listening as He explained His creative and redeeming power. This was the day when they could really get to know Him as the source of the abundant, happy life.

Even though sin has destroyed the face-to-face contact, God has preserved the family and the Sabbath to continue this communion with Him. His purpose to re-create His wayward children into His own image can become a reality. The Sabbath rest He planned is invigorating, stimulating, satisfying, thrilling—holy, blessed, and sanctified by His loving hand.

Are you still defensive, thinking you have no time to make plans for Sabbath activities, when every minute of the other six days is occupied? What are your priorities? Can you not find one hour to devise an out-of-doors Sabbath activity that would include your family and your guests?

Your guests—would they think you were odd? Invite them to share a very special Sabbath that includes more than food and fellowship. Ask them to enjoy the fun of a Sabbath activity in which both adults and children can be together with God’s second book—nature. Briefly suggest where you are going and what you plan to do.

If the invited guests make excuses or act reluctant, why not invite that family on another day than the Sabbath? Most Seventh-day Adventist parents will be greatly relieved; for they too have had a guilty conscience for misappropriation of the Sabbath hours, and they will be happy to join with your family.

What about older people who don’t have children? Unless they are on crutches or canes, they will be flattered to be included. If unable to participate, they may enjoy watching and sharing the fun vicariously. And they might be valuable contributors to what is going on. Your guests will go home with such happy memories of the Sabbath spent with God that they will be profuse in their expressions of gratitude. They might even try it themselves because of your influence. The parents will be thrilled at the closeness they felt to their own children, and the youngsters will be so excited to have the adults pay attention to them that they will feel a deeper love for their parents.

When your young children become teenagers, will the communication gap widen and problems increase? What is the God-

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given plan to avoid the sadness that so often comes from misunderstandings during this difficult time?

To those who have thoughtfully taught their children of God, using the illustrated pages from the book of nature, God has promised:

*By such associations parents may bind their children to their hearts, and thus God, by ties that can never be broken.*—Education, p. 257.

Do you love your children enough to give them yourself? You are more important to them than things that money can buy. Maybe you will have to forego some money-making project, skip some appointment you thought was important, prepare simpler meals, or sew less. The garden may grow a few more weeds, or the special project may take longer to finish; but your children will know you love them and really care about their relationship to God.

Here is His plan: *God's love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another.*—Ibid.

As the holy hours draw near, God waits for you. With exquisite care He arranges a perfect setting, blending the sunset colors, highlighting each cloud. He adds a cool breeze to relax you, knowing how rushed and weary you are after the busy day. He listens for the sound of your voices, your hurried footsteps. Does He wait in vain?

What is the greatest desire in the heart of God? Could it be His longing to be with you? That's the reason for the whole plan of salvation. Sin ruined the happy fellowship that God once enjoyed. Until sin ends, God cannot resume these face-to-face love dates. How He misses them! With an intense desire His loving heart yearns for this severed relationship. Until then He has planned a beautiful substitute, the Sabbath hours with Him in nature.

Week after week He sends His poignant appeal, "Come; I have so many beautiful surprises for you, so much to share. I made it all for you. But I need time to show you everything. There's so much that we could spend Sabbath together every week of your life and have only just begun—a foretaste of the discoveries through all eternity. Give your family an opportunity to get excited about these love gifts I have put everywhere in the world."

Parents, will your boys and girls be grown and gone from your influence before you plan your Sabbaths as time to introduce them to Jesus? Don't keep hurting Him, disappointing Him, ignoring His loving gifts. It is not too late. The next Sabbath isn't far away. You'll find the Creator of the universe waiting for you.

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As He did so long ago, Jesus bids you come and join Him in the cool of the day. Will you run to meet Him calling, “Hello, God, here we are”?

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### DIDN'T WE HAVE FUN, GOD?

“We’ve come, God, to meet You on the holy Sabbath. But we can’t see Your face. How can we learn to know You through nature? Our eyes and ears are dull and untrained. We’ve no background in natural science.”

Children will quickly see through your ignorance. Wiggly six-year-old girls and exuberant boys often are not impressed with poetic words like “The heavens declare the glory of God.” Eternal truths and wisdom don’t pop out of the earth, sea, or sky to impress hearts and minds who have grown up before the TV.

But listen! A compassionate, loving God speaks softly:

“Have you forgotten that I, the One who regulates the laws that give you sunlight, moonlight, and stars—the One who stirs the sea to make the roaring waves—will not reject you? I know your limitations, your needs. I understand you just as I do the secrets of nature. Long ago I promised that even if the heavens could be measured or the foundations of the earth explored, I would not cast you away. Can I not supply the strength, the power, the wisdom to do what I ask?”

On the day of your birth God gave you a billion-dollar transistor outfit complete with a magnificent five-wire built-in aerial. Knowing you couldn’t receive all He planned for you without it, He provided you with high fidelity stereo equipment. With it, you can enjoy the abundant life. Perhaps the equipment has been neglected, but He will help you get it back in good working condition.

To get best reception this priceless equipment must be out of doors. There He will help you tune out the commercials and non-essentials that have made your life dull and meaningless. So start by stopping. Yes, stop and be quiet. He can’t tune you in while you are rushing everywhere in a break-the-speed-limit hurry. Sounds simple, but it isn’t easy to follow His instructions, “Be still and know that I am God.”

On Sabbath afternoon take your family to the fields, the woods, the mountains, or the seashore. Go with your eyes wide open. Don’t just look—*SEE!* It takes time to see the tints of color, the variety of shapes and sizes in the beautiful world of nature around you. Examine the spirals in a spider web, the scales of a butterfly’s wing, the pistils and stamen of a wild flower.

Keep your ears cocked to hear the sounds around you. Stop to *LISTEN* to the music of the wind, the rustle of the leaves, the songs of the birds. Before, you may have considered these sounds background

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noise. You have heard without thought. Now, as you listen intently to new sounds, can you not hear God's voice?

Take time to *SMELL*. Train your nose to become aware of the odor of pine wood, the clean smell of new-cut grass, the pungent scent of crushed mint, or the fragrance of moist earth after a rain. So long you've missed the invigorating woody smells God planned for your pleasure. A hurried sniff will never do as you near a gardenia bush. You must pause and breathe the sweetness of His message of love.

Do stop to *FEEL* the softness of the leaves on the plants and bushes moist with dew. A passing, hurried touch cannot give you the thrill of distinguishing the tough, fibrous texture of asbestos-like sequoia bark from the satin smoothness of white birch. Reach out into the unknown world with both hands to feel the touch of God's love for you.

Here and there in the deep woods God has planted a gooseberry thicket, a cluster of wild strawberry or raspberry plants, or a blueberry patch. Choose a rock or a log and sit and dine at God's invitation, "O *TASTE* and see that the Lord is good."

Though long dormant, the five senses God gave you at birth will open doors of family togetherness. Share the creative thoughts that fill your minds as you stop to *SEE* what you are looking at, to *LISTEN* to what you hear, to *FEEL*, not just touch, the treasures around you. You need not know the names of nature's secrets to *SMELL* or *TASTE* their goodness.

Stretch out on the grass with your children. Use your God-given curiosity to enjoy the world from a bug's-eye view. You'll find it exciting to discover that to a caterpillar a blade of grass is like a tree, a pebble is mountain-size. Big things just don't show. People are just feet. Join in your children's enthusiasm at the rhythmic movement of the caterpillar's body. Share in their wonder, and let God speak to you of the importance of little things, of humility and simplicity. Too long you have ignored the lavishly illustrated pages of God's book of nature. Become involved in understanding His truths through the marvelous spectacle portrayed by His loving hand. But don't be surprised to discover that your children know more about stars, plants, insects, or birds than you do.

Must you go far to study nature? No. A naturalist, Lutz, found 1,402 insects in a vacant lot near his home. Another group of experts spent four years in research and were still discovering new kinds of animals in a 60 acre plot. One of the greatest classics of natural history, *Natural History of Selbourne*, was written by a naturalist, Gilbert White, on his

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home village. Any road or trail that leads to nature can open to you a vast field of discovery and enjoyment.

No longer will you go for just a walk or a hike. Now you will have a definite purpose. Perhaps next Sabbath you may plan to look for abandoned birds' nests. Maybe your boy will find the first one. The hike stops as all examine the nest for each type of building material. Carefully, very carefully, you pull the nest apart. Bit by bit you make separate piles of evergreen twigs, grasses, strips of bark, lichen, mosses, etc. As a family you try to - locate the sources of the building materials the bird used. Your twelve-year-old shouts, "Dad, I found a vine that matches the strips the bird used to bind the nest together!"

Your little daughter jumps up and down in happiness as she finds mosses or lichens that match those in the nest. Your search for the construction materials used by the little feathered engineer gives you an opportunity to marvel at the instinct placed in the small creature by its Creator.

Should your family be encouraged to collect nature-finds? Yes, if collecting is well planned and lawful. Follow principles of conservation. There is no value in hauling home a lot of specimens that will be thrown away. Nothing should be gathered that cannot be cared for or preserved. Encourage each child to start a collection box that can be divided into different sections. Plastic see-through boxes and bags are excellent.

Suppose you plan a hike to collect seeds. Later you will identify these nature travelers or examine God's intricate designs in seeds as you look at them through a magnifying glass. In one plastic bag put seeds with wings such as box elder, ash, or maple. In another put parachute seeds, which include dandelions, milkweed, catalpa, buttonball tree, and cattails. You'll find a large variety of seeds with hooks like burrs or beggar-ticks. Some seeds shake out, like poppies and columbine. But the children will have the most fun with pop-out seeds like jewelweed and violets. When they get home, they will especially enjoy watching the auger-like drills of wild geranium seeds moistened with water.

Yes, finding and collecting are a large part of the fun whether you choose shells, pinecones, oak galls, rocks, or acorns. Suppose your purpose for another hike is to find acorns or other nuts. You have found various sizes and shapes with and without acorn cups. Spread your collection out on the ground in a quiet place. Each family member uses a pocket knife to carve acorn faces or make acorn animals. With a tube of glue you brought along, add twigs, pebbles, seeds, burrs, or grass to create realistic creatures. What a happy Sabbath you can enjoy making



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Noah's zoo, Daniel with his lions, or David herding sheep. (See *Nature's Discards Made Beautiful*, p. 80.)

A warning! Planned Sabbath activities, as good as they are, will not result in lasting benefit or develop into a sustained interest unless both parents and children contemplate the wonders of the natural world throughout the week. Could you become a student of the Bible by opening it only once a week? Neither can you ignore nature six days a week and expect your family to be enthusiastic on the seventh. God had a very good reason for beginning the fourth commandment with that all-inclusive word, REMEMBER. The days between the Sabbaths are a good time to assist the children in organizing and identifying the nature treasures they have collected with the family on a planned nature walk. Simple field guides, a must as the interest grows, are suggested in the back of this book.

God never intended the Sabbath to be a day of idleness. True, He asked us to lay aside our secular business and selfish pleasure. But enjoyable, directed, planned, and profitable activities are part of His plan to make Sabbath a delightful day. There is no sin in getting so excited that you shout for joy and run with your children. In what better way can you honor your Lord than by appreciating to the fullest of your powers His created marvels?

The purpose of this book is to spark ideas that will enable each member of your family to receive the full share of the joys and blessings God has promised. Soon your Sabbaths will never be long enough. Instead of being bored, your family will wish that God had made every day of the week Sabbath instead of just one.

There is really no secret in making Sabbath a delight. Just *remember* it. *Plan* for it. Pray and talk about it often during the week. Make each Sabbath special, a day for a date with God, when His redemptive and creative power will transform you into His image.

Will your efforts be worth it all? Imagine hearing your child pray as the sun goes down at the close of the Sabbath, "Thanks, God, for the Sabbath. We had such fun together again today!"

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### FRIDAY EVENING IS SPECIAL TOO

Friday was very special to Julie. She knew that all her clothes must be ironed, her shoes polished, and her room cleaned before Daddy put on the soft Sabbath music to indicate that in half an hour the sun would be going down. Then all the family would meet in the living room for worship.

Julie enjoyed this last half hour. She hurried to finish up any last task before Daddy began “story time” at worship.

As the sun went down, each child picked out a favorite book from the bookshelf and joined the family in the living room. Sundown worship began with songs. Mother always led the music. Each song she pitched just right. They sang as many songs as they could remember, but the last song was always “Day is Dying in the West.” Julie loved this song the best, not because it was her favorite song, but because this meant that the stories were to begin.

Julie and Jimmy took turns. They would bring their favorite book and sit on Daddy’s lap. Daddy would open the book to the story that the child had selected and read as many stories as there was time for. Sometimes Julie could talk Daddy into reading four or five stories, sometimes only one or two; but when the book went closed with a big banging noise, that meant that Jimmy would have his turn, and Daddy would read from Brother’s chosen book. Both children liked to see how long they could get Daddy to read from their book, but for each the end of the reading was always the same. Daddy would say, “OK, that’s all for now.” He would close the book, making the big banging sound.

The house always smelled so good on preparation-for-the-Sabbath day, for Mother always baked eight loaves of crusty whole-wheat bread and turned them out to cool on wire racks. Mother explained that hot, new bread is hard to digest, so all day the smell of cooling homemade bread tantalized. Later in the afternoon Mother would boil a big pot of potatoes so that just at suppertime the potatoes would be steamy.

At Friday night suppertime Mother would cut the bread in large slices and spread across each slice a little mayonnaise. She peeled and sliced a large potato, steamy hot, and placed a slice on each piece of bread. Then lettuce, fresh, sweet onion, and another slice of bread was added, to make a delicious sandwich, called “the hot potato sandwich.” Julie always thought that such a wonderful sandwich should have a much more elegant sounding name, but Mother said that was what her mother had called it. To make the meal complete, cold creamy cottage cheese

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was added, with a glass of cold milk. Mother always made sure each meal was well balanced. Julie did not know what “well balanced” meant, but if they always tasted as good as Mother’s meals, they must be good for everyone, she decided.

At last it was time for bed. As Julie climbed into her clean, soft sheets, Mother always came to tuck her in and read to her the Sabbath School lesson for the final time that week. They rehearsed the Bible verse that Julie had learned and then said a little prayer to Jesus, asking Him to help Julie be good, and keep Mommy, Daddy, and Jimmy safe.

Before Julie dropped off to sleep, she loved to think about heaven. What would it be like to sit on Jesus’ lap and listen to Him tell stories? Would He give her a pet lion all her own? Imagine sleeping with a handful of flowers by her pillow that would be just as fresh and fragrant when she awakened in the morning. If heaven was to be better than home on Friday night, then it must be a very, very lovely place!

*Before the setting of the sun let the members of the family assemble, to read God’s word, to sing and pray. There is need of reform here, for many have been remiss. We need to confess to God and to one another. We should begin anew to make special arrangements that every member of the family may be prepared to honor the day which God has blessed and sanctified.—Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 356, 357.*

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### PRAY, PLAN, PURSUE

*Apart from Christ we are still incapable of interpreting rightly the language of nature. The most difficult and humiliating lesson that man has to learn is his own inefficiency in depending upon human wisdom, and the sure failure of his efforts to read nature correctly.*—Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 257.

Why this warning just as you are ready to enjoy God's book of nature with Him on the holy Sabbath?

Because He knows how prone humans are to depend on themselves and "go it alone." Our success depends on Jesus. He alone can teach us. We parents find it so hard to admit our ignorance, our mistakes. Let's quit pretending we know the answers. Our children can quickly discern when we are fakes.

Heed God's warning. Learn the difficult lesson that in humility there is power. God can and will change your inefficiency. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, He will make each Sabbath activity a new revelation of His glory. Pray! Pray much and often. Invite your entire family to pray during the week for the coming Sabbath. Pray before you begin each Sabbath activity; pray as you go, and pray when you have finished that your activities will have eternal value. Pray constantly. 1 Thessalonians 5:17. The lives of each member of your family will change because God has promised: "Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things which you have not known." Jeremiah 33:3. R.S.V.

Every nature activity, every nature game, every walk or hike in this "field guide" has only one purpose, to answer the prayer of Jesus: "And this is eternal life, that they know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17:3. R.S.V.

Knowing God is fun, satisfying, and exciting. Experience together that in His presence are "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore."

The following nature activities are not planned for any specific age group. Families seldom have children all of the same approximate age. It is possible to enjoy the same activity with junior and primary children, with primary and preschool, or even kindergarten and early teens. Parents, who know their own children best, can, with God's help, easily adapt the activities to fit the needs of each one. Even if the toddler cannot understand what his older brothers and sisters are doing, he will sense their joy of discovery. He will laugh and run with them and experience the delights of the Sabbath. Often these little ones understand much more than we think. You may be surprised how soon

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they will become part of the activities and games. Take them along on the Sabbath hikes and walks. Point out what their baby minds can comprehend, but at the same time, challenge their older brothers and sisters.

Do not be surprised if your children do not enjoy some of the activities. Try others. There is a wide variety. It could be that your lack of prayer and planning has spoiled the fun. It may take time to develop an enthusiasm for something that TV-conscious children have never noticed before.

So keep praying and planning and pursuing. God will reward you above all that you can ask or think. The God of nature always supplies in “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over.” Luke 6:37, R.S.V.

In family togetherness with Jesus, your children will be kept from many evils. Satan especially seeks to destroy the youth on Sabbath. How much better to prevent disaster than to salvage human wrecks! Claim Christ’s “precious and very great promises, that through these you [and your children] may escape from the corruption that is in the world . . . , and become partakers of the divine nature.” 2 Peter 1:4, R.S.V.

As your interest in nature grows and God’s second book combined with the first becomes a way of life, you’ll experience another startling discovery that will make you long for eternity.

He who studies most deeply into the mysteries of nature will realize most fully his own ignorance and weakness. He will realize that there are depths and heights which he cannot reach, secrets which he cannot penetrate, vast fields of truth lying before him unentered. He will be ready to say, with Newton, “I seem to myself to have been like a child on the seashore finding pebbles and shells, while the great ocean of truth lay undiscovered before me.”—Education, p. 133.

We may be ever searching, ever inquiring, ever learning, and yet there is an infinity beyond.—Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 261.