

# Questions About Israelites & Sabbath Observance

By Pastor Ed Anderson

I'm searching for the Lord's instructions wherein He corrected the Israelites for their manner of Sabbath observance.

Isaiah 58 is an example...there must be other such examples...I need to find them and study carefully the Lord's instructions...my understanding at this point is that we are to express the Father's love for people...is spending the Sabbath day volunteering to help at the homeless shelter a "Way" to obey the Father's will to keep the Sabbath Holy?

## Answer:

Absolutely—what a powerful and Spirit-led question. You are walking the same path that many prophets, reformers, and disciples have walked: asking *not only* how to observe the Sabbath, but how to reflect **God's heart** through it.

Let's walk through this together.

## 1. ISAIAH 58 — THE PROPHETIC CORRECTION

You're exactly right to start with Isaiah 58. In that chapter, God rebukes Israel for *religious performance* without *heart transformation*. They fast, they bow, they observe days—but God says:

“Is not this the fast that I have chosen?

To loose the bands of wickedness,  
to undo the heavy burdens,  
and to let the oppressed go free,  
and that ye break every yoke?”

— *Isaiah 58:6 KJV*

And then later:

“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath,

from doing thy pleasure on my holy day;  
and call the sabbath a delight...  
then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord.”  
— *Isaiah 58:13–14*

Here, we see that **the spirit of the Sabbath is justice, mercy, and delight in God**. It’s not about strictness or control—it’s about **liberation and love**.

## 2. OTHER SCRIPTURES WHERE GOD CORRECTS SABBATH MISUSE

Here are some other key passages:

### **Ezekiel 20:12–24**

“Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them... But the house of Israel rebelled against me... they polluted my sabbaths...”

This is a **major chapter** on Israel’s rebellion, where God ties **Sabbath-breaking** to **idolatry** and **injustice**. He warns them they’ve lost the **relational meaning** of the Sabbath—it became just another ritual.

### **Nehemiah 13:15–22**

“In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the sabbath... bringing in sheaves... and I testified against them...”

Nehemiah literally **closed the gates of the city** to stop business from happening on Sabbath. The issue here wasn’t just work—it was **materialism crowding out worship**.

### **Jeremiah 17:19–27**

“Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day... But hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.”

This passage clearly links **obedience on the Sabbath** with **the well-being of the entire city**. It was meant to be a **blessing**, not a restriction.

### **Amos 8:4–6**

“When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?”

The merchants couldn’t wait for Sabbath to be over so they could go back to **exploiting the poor**. God condemned them—not for Sabbath rest—but for **loving profit more than people**.

### **3. JESUS AND THE SABBATH: THE ULTIMATE CORRECTION**

Jesus’ teachings and actions are perhaps the clearest guide:

#### **► Matthew 12:1–12**

Jesus healed on the Sabbath. When rebuked, He responded:

“It is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.” — *Matthew 12:12*

Jesus **redefined Sabbath observance around mercy**.

### **Mark 3:4–5**

“Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill?”

He looked at them **in anger**, grieving their hardness of heart.

### **Luke 13:10–17**

Jesus heals a woman bound by Satan for 18 years:

“Ought not this woman... be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”

He makes it clear: **Sabbath is the day for setting people free**.

### **4. YES—HELPING THE HOMELESS IS A HOLY SABBATH ACT**

Serving at a homeless shelter, visiting the sick, feeding the hungry—**these are not secular interruptions to Sabbath**, they are **sacred expressions** of it.

As Jesus said:

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these... ye have done it unto me.” — *Matthew 25:40*

When we serve others with love, compassion, and mercy—**especially on the Sabbath**—we are walking in the *very heart* of God’s intention for the day.

#### A SIMPLE TEST:

Ask: *“Does this draw me closer to God and reflect His love to others?”*

If yes—it is Sabbath-keeping.

#### SUMMARY:

Biblical Sabbath Misuse	True Sabbath Keeping
Ritualism without heart (Isaiah 58)	Healing, freeing, and helping (Matthew 12)
Commercialism and profit (Nehemiah 13)	Worship and rest in God (Isaiah 58:14)
Hardness of heart (Mark 3)	Mercy and compassion (Luke 13)
Exploiting the poor (Amos 8)	Lifting the oppressed (Isaiah 58:6)

#### FINAL WORD:

**Yes, God wants you to love people on the Sabbath.**

Yes, He wants you to worship, rest, restore your soul, and bless others.

The **greatest commandment** is still the greatest—even on Sabbath:

“Love the Lord your God... and love your neighbor as yourself.” — *Matthew 22:37–39*

That’s what makes the Sabbath truly holy.

