
A Call to a Sabbath Year

for the Black Holiness Pentecostal Church (BHPC)

What? A year to humble ourselves, focus, and seek the Lord **as one people**.

Why? That we might be a people useful to the Lord Jesus in the evil days in which we live

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" 2 Tim 2:20-21

Introduction

Like many of you who will read this, I was born into the Black Holiness Pentecostal Church (BHPC). Both of my grandfathers, Bishop O.T. Jones, Sr and Bishop S.E. Williams served as the Senior/Presiding Bishop of their respective organizations. For me, family life revolved around The Lord Jesus and His people, the church. From state meetings to national convocations, the Lord's work was always front and center. More precisely, Jesus was front and center.

While things such as education, vocation, and civic involvement were important, there was nothing, absolutely nothing more important than one's personal walk and devotion to the Lord. This was simply the heart of who my grandparents were and what their lives communicated to the rest of the family.

Growing up in this environment, I knew what it meant to seek the Lord. I knew that he deserved a place of preeminence in my life. I knew that living a consecrated life was an ongoing lifelong decision. I also knew that such a life was a life of true joy. I was blessed to see the resulting fruit of such a life through the work of my grandfathers and their wives in COGIC and Bible Way Churches of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide.

The Power of a Consecrated Life:

The power of a consecrated life is inestimable. Theological education is good. Solid preaching is a must. Programs have their place. However, without a consecrated life, none of these things (and a host of other things) mean much.

Consider this: Since the Azusa Street Revival, the education of our ministers has increased significantly. "Anointed" preachers abound. Over the past 120 years, both the number of our churches and the size of their congregations have grown. In addition, the programs our churches have developed to serve and impact their communities have flourished. These are good things. *Yet we still find ourselves living in an Isaiah 5:20 culture—"Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who*

It is not surprising that we see the larger culture living out Isaiah's words. However, this *moral inversion* is not limited to the world. Entire denominations, who once held to Biblical truth, have wholeheartedly and unapologetically embraced every manner of false teaching and have joined the larger culture in calling evil good and good evil. By doing so, the intended prophetic witness of **significant segments of the church**—the "pillar and buttress of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15)—has been weakened and, in many places, has all but faded from our culture.

We (BHPC) are not immune. *If indeed* we have escaped the apostasy of our time, it is in no small part due to our belief in a consecrated and holy life. We believe that it *is not only* what we hold in our heads (doctrine) and what comes out of our mouths (confession) that testifies to the truth that Jesus is Lord. We strongly believe that these things *combined with the manner in which we live*; holy, sanctified, and consecrated lives, form the substance of our witness. However, the question must be asked: Has the beauty of Holiness stopped being beautiful in our eyes? If the answer be yes, we too shall join the long list of those who have "lost their first love" and who "draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote." (Isa 29:13)

A Sabbath Year: purpose and approach

Those from among you Shall build the old waste places; You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In. 13 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, [From] doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy [day] of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking [your own] words, 14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken." Isa 58:12-14 NKJV

In keeping with the spirit of Isaiah 58:12-14, the idea of a Sabbath year is for the BHPC to set apart 2027 as a year of consecration to the Lord. It is a call to humble ourselves, (re)focus, and seek the Lord in earnest that we might be a people useful to Jesus in the evil days in which we live.

The goal is to lay aside every weight that can hinder and distract us from sincere singlehearted devotion to Jesus. **The hope is** that He would, in his mercy, choose to dwell and move among us in such a special and powerful way that we would faithfully and completely fulfil our assignment. **The end is** that our present world will once again be *turned upside down* to the glory of Christ Jesus.

A personal decision required

But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" 2 Tim 2:20-21

Usefulness to our master is not automatic. As the entire New Testament chronicles, followers of Christ must continually choose to follow Him. At any point, we may choose otherwise. While many of us are motivated, rightly so, to follow Him for our personal well-being, we must also think outside and beyond our own personal interests. We must think of our master's interests and how we can be most useful *to Him*, regardless of the cost. "For I seek not to please myself but him who sent me" Jn 5:30

Is this not one of the great reasons for which the Lord has saved us, to be useful in the advancement of his kingdom?

He died for all that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again. 2 Cor 5:15

Having a Biblical Spiritual Impact

As mentioned above, the BHPC is capable of doing impressive things. Many of our congregations are known as megachurches. Many of our church programs are making a difference in our communities. Our ministers and churches are known by government officials for their community and civic involvement.

However, are we having the same spiritual impact on our world that our spiritual forefathers had on their world in the book of Acts? By our presence, are our communities and cities actually seeing a glimpse of what the kingdom of God looks like.

- Are households being saved (not just individuals) (Acts 16:31)?
- Are the newly saved leaving the darkness, cutting all ties with evil, and gladly turning away from their past (not just coming to church) (Acts 19:18-20)?
- Do our churches reflect the multi-ethnic racially unifying power of the resurrected Christ and His gospel (not mono-chrome, mono-cultural congregations etc.) (Acts 6:1-6)?
- Do we see love and unity among ourselves that testifies to the world that we belong to Christ (not divided and huddled in our own denominations) (Jn 17:23)?
- Do we see the manifestation of the Holy Spirit to the extent that financial and lifestyle decisions are made in such a way that none of our own are in need (are we a model for the world to follow, do they look at us with awe wondering how we are able to thrive as a faith community) (Acts 4:34-35)

All of this and more is found in the book of Acts. We are the spiritual (and sometimes physical) offspring of those who believe that the same power of the Holy Ghost at work in the book of Acts is still present today and should yield similar, if not greater results (Jn 14:12). Do we not desire to be a people known for everything the Holy Spirit produced in the life of the early church?

Honest evaluation needed

Yet, if we're honest, it would seem that much of our focus and "claim to fame" is not found in the aforementioned things but rather in the gift of tongues, a good gift from the Lord but not a substitute for the things noted above.

The power, presence, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit has always been and always will be according to the sovereign will of God. We cannot command him to "show up." Regardless of

our earnest desire, we cannot "work Him up".

Tarrying 2.0

However, there is something we can do. As *individually* we have tarried (waited in expectation) in our sincere desire to receive blessing from on high, *collectively* we can tarry in hope and expectation that he would come among *all of us*; reviving and renewing us *as a people* so that our world (family, neighbors, co-workers, communities) may know and continually be reminded that He is risen and living amongst us and that "*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved*" Acts 4:12

To that end, we can turn away from the world and look more to Him. We can turn away from ourselves and look more to Him. We can turn away from things that distract us and look more to Him. By various actions we can humble ourselves and look more to Him. The same Holy Ghost who enables us to speak in tongues enables us to purify and sanctify ourselves that we might be vessels prepared for every good work. 1 Pe 1:14-15, Col 3:1-9, Ga 5:24-25, 2 Co 7:1

An Example

The U.S. Navy has roughly 340,000 men and women on active duty. Of those, only about 1 percent serve as Navy SEALs—the Navy's primary special operations force, trained for high-risk missions across diverse environments. These individuals did not simply wake up one day as Navy SEALs. Their desire was matched by disciplined effort. Through sustained focus and sacrifice, they moved from being members of the armed services to those called upon to carry out the most demanding and mission-critical operations.

In a similar fashion, those of us who share in the DNA of the BHPC have the desire *not just to go to heaven*, but **to experience and be used by the Lord to the greatest extent possible here and now**. Saints, by God's grace, we've already been taught and given insight about how to do this. If you are truly of the BHPC "tribe", what follows and is proposed in the pages to come will not sound strange or shocking in the least. Instead, it will resonate.

What we've been taught

We've been taught to pray with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. We've been taught to be single minded in our pursuit of him. We've been taught to tarry (to wait on him) until we've received the spiritual blessing we seek from Him. We've been taught that he is the rewarder of those who seek Him.

A Sabbath year is a time to return to what we've been taught to do. It's a time to pause from our normal routines and press "the reset button."

The need of the hour

- We love church but "*Having church*" is not the need of the hour.
- We love to praise the Lord, but "*Getting our praise on*" is not the need of the hour.
- We love gathering together for our convocations, conventions and meetings, but having the next great convention/convocation is not the need of the hour.

Rather, putting ourselves in a position to be used by Him is the need of the hour.

Time is of the essence

Time is of the essence. The time for us to own our calling and act as one people consecrated to the Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit, and recommitted to His mission as stated in Acts 1:8 is....*was yesterday*. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Wickedness and evil have not decreased over the 2,000-year history of the church. To the contrary, we've been instructed by the Lord's apostle that there would be an increase in wickedness.

"But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. 2 Tim. 3:1-5

We have seen, are seeing, and will continue to see the fulfillment of this prophetic word.

The Good News

"But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" Ro 5:20

The power of the Holy Spirit has not decreased. As prophesied, what began in Jerusalem with 120 believers 2,000 years ago has gone to and continues to go to the uttermost parts of the world. Just as the widow's oil continued to flow until her need was met, God's abundant grace and provision continues to flow to all the redeemed who like the widow, continue to present to Him vessels to be filled (ourselves). If for even one moment it appears that the oil has ceased to flow know that the problem is not with the source, but rather that empty vessels are no longer being provided. May we present ourselves afresh as empty vessels needing to be filled that God's abundant grace would be manifest through our lives to a lost world.

The need for focus

While the power of the Holy Spirit has never failed or faltered for even a millisecond, what has faltered is *our focus*. Throughout the centuries, believers in affluent societies like ours have found themselves like the seed sown among the thorns.

"And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" Mk 4:18-19.

I would submit that we have choked, are choking, and can potentially be choked to death by the worries of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things. However, I do not believe that the future of the BHPC is of necessity destined to unfruitfulness. A time of sacrificial, humble, expectant seeking and waiting upon the Lord can loosen the stranglehold of the thorns of our time. A Sabbath year is a step to this end.

Please take time to prayerfully read over what follows and consider making 2027 a year of sabbath; a year of seeking the Lord in humility, simplicity, and sincerity. May God be pleased to

use us to bring glory, not to any individual, organization, denomination, or congregation but to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The Sabbath Year

Self-Denial and Engagement

Self-Denial

"If anyone would come after me he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me." Lu 9:23

Salvation is by God's grace alone but the decision to follow him is costly. In Scripture, those who were used by the Lord paid the price. It is no different today. If we would be used by him our daily lives should in some way be marked by denying ourselves taking up our cross and following Him.

It goes without saying that sin, both in action *and* thought, are incompatible for followers of Jesus. We are never at liberty to sin. Ro 6:1-4, Eph 5:1-12. However, there are other things that while not sinful, we *may choose* not to do. Such decisions can:

- Help us to be less distracted in our devotion to him
- Serve as meaningful gestures of humility *that remind us* that Jesus is sufficient.

It is in this spirit that the following observances are set forth during the Sabbath Year:

Fasting(s)

When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Mt 6:16

The command to fast is nowhere found in the New Testament. Instead, it is assumed that fasting will be part of the life of the disciple. Fasting is not meritorious (we don't gain points in heaven). Fasting is not magical (our prayers are not moved higher in the queue when fasting). We are neither more loved by God nor more holy because we fast. However, for a time we choose to "turn down our plates" and nourish ourselves exclusively on the Word of God. It is a sign of humility, a reminder that "man does not live by bread alone," and consistent with the example we see throughout Scripture among those who desired to experience more of Him.

True fasting when combined with increased intercession is a sure pathway to abundant spiritual blessing. During the Sabbath Year may we fast with focus and expectation of what the Lord will do. We have as an anchor this sure promise from the Lord: "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." With this in mind consider setting aside one day each week to fast.

Social Media/Entertainment Fast

(FB, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, etc.). Much of technology is morally neutral. To that end, there are positive ways in which these and other social media platforms can be and are being used. On the other hand, we find ourselves in an age of unparalleled and ever-increasing **Digital Distraction.**

While the Lord is fully capable of doing so, those of us who belong to Christ should have no expectation that He will raise His voice (often still, quiet) above the never-ending and addictive

"noise" (visual and audible) of the virtual digital worlds we choose to inhabit. Additionally, we should not have the expectation that he will speak to us or direct us to any significant degree should we give more of our time and attention to social media/entertainment than to Him. Our minds and souls need a break from customary non-purposeful social media usage. Our time needs to be redeemed and reprioritized in keeping with our heavenly calling.

Secular: Music/Movie (Netflix, Tubi, etc.) Fast

When Daniel and his friends were taken into captivity they were not the only Hebrews taken into the king's court and provided the king's choice food (Da 1:3-6). However, Daniel and his friends decided to do something different from the rest of their colleagues (which is why we read about them to this day). They purposed *not* to eat the king's food. Instead, an "experiment" of sort was undertaken in which he and his friends only ate vegetables and drank water. At the end of ten days their appearance was superior to those that ate the king's choice food. God always blesses sincere acts of consecration, devotion, and zeal directed towards Him. During the Sabbath Year give God the chance to demonstrate how he can cause your "appearance" to shine as you choose to not partake of the offerings of the god of this age and instead "digest" music and films that will edify.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

A special note of encouragement to musicians: During the Sabbath year I would like to challenge you to fast from listening to your favorite non-saved musicians, groups, singers etc. with the anticipation that the Lord will impart to you a level of musicianship, skill, and creativity that you've never known and that could potentially have your "heroes" wanting to listen to you! "Bless all his skills, LORD, and be pleased with the work of his hands.*" Deut 33:11 (NIV)

Nothing Extraordinary

Times and/or seasons of retreat from the "ordinary" are nothing extraordinary for God's people both collectively and individually. For 40 years the Israelites ate only manna in the desert. In preparing for his ministry John the Baptist lived away from the noise and clamor of city life. Just prior to the beginning of his public ministry Jesus was in the desert for 40 days.

During times of special consecration, we ought not think that we are in any way depriving ourselves of something good. Rather, these are times when we can learn afresh what it means to delight ourselves in the Lord.

An Example

A child who has developed an appetite for chicken nuggets and boxed macaroni and cheese may at first turn his nose up when offered a piece of well-seasoned baked chicken accompanied by stewed corn, okra, and tomatoes. His palate needs to be readjusted to enjoy eating real unprocessed food.

Unconsciously, we've developed an appetite for and grown accustomed to noise, clamor, and processed unreal digital visual stimulation. It has gotten to the point that often the simple good delights that the Lord gives us (Word, Worship, Fellowship) lose their divine yet sublime

drawing and keeping power in our hearts. During the Sabbath year allow the Lord to show you, perhaps for the first time, how thoroughly and completely satisfying his delights are. "In thy presence is fulness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore" (Ps 16:11)

Take off your ornaments

Now therefore, put off your ornaments from you, that I may know what I shall do with you.'
" So the sons of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward
Exodus 33:5-6

On this verse the venerable Bible commentator Matthew Henry writes, " When the Lord God calls for weeping and mourning, we must respond to that call, and not only fast from pleasant food (Dan. 10:3), but also lay aside our ornaments. Even those things that are perfectly proper at other times are out of place when worn on days of humbling before God or during moments of collective grief."

Let the guiding principle for dress during the Sabbath Year--- for men and women be **Modesty and Simplicity**. As an act of humility, simple modest attire should be worn at all times and especially when we gather to worship.

In humility, for one year at all church gatherings/worship services/prayer meetings etc. let us:

- Forego jewelry—excluding wedding rings/bands (men and women);
- Minimal makeup, if any (men and women);
- Simple hairstyles (men and women);
- Simple millinery/hats (color, shape, height, width, circumference, etc.).

Engagement

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory" Col 3:1-4

While extraordinary moments, times, and seasons of transformation take place in the life of the believer, it is through our daily "walk" (i.e. disciplines and habits) that growth, depth, and strength is developed and joy is found. Self-denial without heartfelt engagement and effort to know and love the Lord is of zero value. With zeal and expectation may we engage afresh in seeking the Lord through a commitment to the following basic practices:

Prayer, Word, Fellowship

Prayer: "Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving" Col 4:2

Set aside at least 30 minutes a day for prayer

- **Praise, Worship, and Thanksgiving:** When we are gathered together we know how to worship. However, don't let this take the place of going "into your closet" for daily times of Praise, worship, and thanksgiving.

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- **Intercession:** During times of intercession, let us keep in mind the way that the Lord has taught us to pray, placing kingdom interests above our own: "*Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" God will surely meet our needs (Mt 6:33) as we give ourselves to intercede for the advancement of His kingdom; the persecuted church (Heb. 13:3); for governing authorities (1 Tim. 2:1-2); for the Lord to send workers into the harvest (Matt. 9:37); and for the witness of our congregations in our communities, cities, and throughout the world.

Word: "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth". 2Ti 2:15

Set aside at least 30 minutes a day for time in the Word

- **Regular and Systematic:** We are people of the Word. We love the word of God. In addition to whatever your normal Bible reading may be, a regular systematic reading of all of the Bible will help in understanding the whole counsel of God's Word. *During the Sabbath year make it your goal to read through the entire Bible.* (Several plans will enable you to do this by simply setting aside 15-20 minutes per day for reading*)

Fellowship: "But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called 'Today,' so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness" He 3:12,

- This act of engagement is sometimes taken for granted or overlooked yet it is essential to our well-being and joy in Christ. When the Lord saved you he brought you into His family. For our spiritual well-being we need times, not just of worship and the word, but of fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ when we can share our joys and burdens as well as exhort one another. During the Sabbath Year make the effort to stay in contact with other believers during the week.

Churches

The following suggestions are ways that congregations can participate in the Sabbath Year.

Re-emphasis on Prayer

Re-emphasis on prayer meetings. Prayer is the *privilege, power, and promise* the Lord has given us to both labor with Him for his glory through the advancement of the gospel as well as to obtain mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need (He 4:16). As such, prayer meeting should **not** be the least attended meeting of the week. Be it Friday night, Wednesday night, 6:00am, or at noon, may the Sabbath Year be one in which attendance and participation in prayer meeting(s) is emphasized for everyone. If not already in place, may there be *at least one prayer meeting* that everyone can attend during the week.

2-1-365

2 Saints (or more) gathered together to pray for **1 hour** a day **365 days a year preferably at church**. The church is not a 9-5/5 days a week business enterprise. The church does not link itself with the calendar of the school year. The Scriptures speak of no special holidays where kingdom interests are to come to a halt. The church is at war. As the adversary works tirelessly to achieve his wicked ends, we too in the power of the Holy Spirit should labor continuously in prayer for the righteous ends of our Lord. May the prayer ministry of all of our churches be marked by vigilance, faithfulness, and sacrificial participation implementing a **2-1-365** approach. **Mt 21:13**

All night prayer the last Friday of each month

Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, Which by night stand in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, And bless the LORD. The LORD that made heaven and earth Bless thee out of Zion. Ps 134

The battle is too great and the adversary is too strong for us to not set aside one night per month when we gather together to call upon the Lord. This is nothing new to us and while the "shut ins" of old may be a thing of the past, the need of the hour beckons us to return to times of all-night prayer.⁴

Clergy

The following suggestions are ways that clergy can participate in the Sabbath Year.

Re-emphasis on Humility

Their lives are perpetual fashion shows, embroidered prayer shawls one day and flowery prayers the next. They love to sit at the head table at church dinners, basking in the most prominent positions, preening in the radiance of public flattery, receiving honorary degrees, and getting called 'Doctor' and 'Reverend. Don't let people do that to you, put you on a pedestal like that. Mt 23:5-8 (MSG)

We are blessed, privileged, and grateful for the leaders that God has given us. As such, they are to be respected, honored, and obeyed (Ro 13:7, He 13:17). While taking nothing away from these things, during the Sabbath year, with Christ as our example the following suggestions are offered to all Ministers, Elders, Pastors, Bishops, Apostles, Evangelists, First Ladies, Church Mothers etc.

No Titles

For one year everyone will simply be referred to as Bro or Sis xyz. Paul was Paul, Peter was Peter, John was John.... Jesus was Jesus! For one year lets return to simple terms.

No Clergy Attire

In addition to foregoing titles for one year it is suggested that all clergy refrain from wearing clerical attire: collars, vestments, rings, crosses, robes etc. For one year let Christ alone clothe and bring any distinction that needs to be made.

No Separate Seating

For one year let all of the congregation be seated "on the floor" for all meetings.

Musicians and Singers

The following suggestions are ways that musicians and singers can participate in the Sabbath Year

Re-emphasis on consecration

All the priests there were consecrated, regardless of rank or assignment; and all the Levites who were musicians were there... The choir and trumpets made one voice of praise and thanks to God—orchestra and choir in perfect harmony singing and playing praise to God: Yes! God is good! His loyal love goes on forever! Then a billowing cloud filled The Temple of God. The priests couldn't even carry out their duties because of the cloud—the glory of God!—that filled The Temple of God. 2 Chr 5:11-14 (MSG)

The use of a wide range of instruments, together with singing, is central to our worship. Throughout BHPC history we have been and continue to be blessed with some of the most talented singers and musicians on earth. Is there a single person in the BHPC whose soul is not immediately calmed when a gifted organist sits on the bench of a Hammond B3 organ and begins to play. Whose soul has not been stirred by the sweet soprano or alto voice of a gifted sister in virtually ANY of our churches singing His Eye is On the Sparrow. It must be admitted however that the *spiritual maturity and sensitivity* of our musicians and singers are not all the time at the same level as their musical giftedness.

In the Old Testament the Levites, those responsible for worship, were noted firstly *for their consecration to the Lord followed by their gifting* (Deut 33:8-11). Their function was *not that of performer but worshiper*. May this be said of all of our musicians and singers. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit may our gatherings be enriched and blessed not just with gifted musicians and singers, but with those who themselves are filled with the Holy Spirit.

During the Sabbath Year may we call all of our musicians and singers to consecrated, dedicated, and Holy lives. May they be found at church not just when ministering on their instrument or singing but at prayer meetings and Bible studies as well. May they be present throughout the entirety of the gathering and not only while they are ministering.

Songs

Col 4:16 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

We are a people that love to and know how to sing. For decades our style of singing (congregationally and individually) has impacted the music world globally. Our repertoire is rich and diversified consisting of spirituals, congregational call and response, traditional and contemporary gospel, *and hymns*. In our modern culture many of us have forgotten and or neglected this last category. Hymns are a treasure where we can find encouragement, consolation, and instruction. During the Sabbath Year in addition to the contemporary songs that we sing, let the hymns that have ministered to us throughout the years keep us focused on seeking the Lord in humility and sincerity.

Conventions/Convocations/State Meetings etc.

Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. New Moons, Sabbaths and convocations—I cannot bear your worthless assemblies. Isaiah 1:13-14

Most, if not all of us look forward to our larger gatherings outside of our local churches during the year. These are times of encouragement and fellowship. Yet Scripture warns us that these meetings can take on a life of their own. We cannot afford to have our gatherings looked upon by the Lord in the same way that Isaiah spoke of the Israelites convocations. To that end, during the Sabbath year the following suggestions are made.

For one year during all organizational/denominational meetings.

- No vendors
- No posters/publicity with headshots, speaker photos etc.—just meeting details
- No clergy processions
- No suggested amounts for offerings—simply pass the plate.
- No clerical attire: Vestments, Chains, Crosses, Special millinery (women) etc

A Closing Word of Encouragement and Invitation

Revival is real. I do not refer here to a series of meetings that are placed on a church calendar. True revival is something that history books record after the fact, as in the Azusa street revival. It moves beyond the walls of a church building. It reaches across denominational, racial, and cultural lines. It is not constrained by geographical boundaries. While revival begins among the redeemed, unbelievers are soon drawn and brought under the conviction of the Holy Spirit whereupon they repent of their sins and turn to the Lord.

Is your heart not stirred by the thought of angels rejoicing in heaven due to the reprioritizing and refocusing of our lives whereby the lost are saved! Does your soul not long to be given (again) to the pursuit, fulfillment, and eternal purposes spoken of in Acts 1:8. Where revival has taken place, there have always been a group of God's people who have purposefully and determinedly called out to Him seeking His presence and blessing in a special way.

God Is Not a Respector of Persons

"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise."

Psalm 51:17

God is a good God. God is a faithful God. What he has done for others in the past he will surely do for us..... if our hearts are right. What do we have that the Lord has not given us. During the Sabbath Year let all boastings of our organizations, congregations, leaders, and accomplishments cease. Instead may our hearts be humbled as we once again recognize our collective need to be endued with power from on high. Our Heavenly Father delights to answer the prayer of his people who gladly do right. "You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways" Isa 64:5.

As one people let us purpose to humble ourselves and seek Him "laying aside every weight that hinders" (He 12:1). In doing so we shall put ourselves in good position to be used by the Lord in a mighty way. Will it be a sacrifice? Yes. Is it worth the cost? Most certainly yes!

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me---the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace."

Acts 20:24

In closing I would like to extend a call to all sons and daughters of the BHPC to be a part of a Sabbath Year beginning Jan 1, 2027. God is the rewarder of those who seek Him, how much more so when done so in the spirit of our Lord who said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work". Jn 4:34

Addendum

Memory Verses for each month of the year:

January — *1 Pe 2:9*

February — *1 Pe 1:14–16*

March — *2 Ti 2:20*

April — *2 Ti 2:4*

May — *He 12:14*

June — *Ro 12:1–2*

July — *1 Jn 2:15*

August — *2 Co 7:1*

September — *Phil 2:12–13*

October — *Tit 2:11*

November — *James 4:4*

December — *Rev 2:5*

Hymns for each month of the Year:

January — *Revive Us Again*

February — *Take My Life and Let it Be*

March — *Draw Me Nearer*

April — *Pass Me Not*

May — *Sweet Hour of Prayer*

June — *Take Time to be Holy*

July — *Higher Ground*

August — *More Love to Thee*

September — *I'd Rather Have Jesus*

October — *Nothing Between*

November — *More About Jesus*

December — *Make Me A Blessing*

Notes

¹ Reading plan resources: bible.com/reading-plans, biblegateway.com/reading-plans, blueletterbible.org/dailyreading

² Dwell is an excellent option for listening to Scripture and offers many year-long plans: dwellapp.io

³ In order to accommodate varying work schedules this may require an early meeting as well as an evening meeting. If physical attendance isn't possible for some, Zoom is a good option.

⁴ This is an excellent opportunity for all of our congregations in a specific geographical area (i.e. Washington D.C) to gather together instead of having 4-5 separate all night meetings. Each month a different church can serve as host. As a bonus, it affords a good time of fellowship as we share breakfast together early Saturday morning.

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- Deuteronomy 33:8–11** — *Musicians and Singers — Re-emphasis on Consecration*
- Deuteronomy 33:11** — *Secular Music/Movie Fast — note to musicians*
- 2 Chronicles 5:11–14** — *Musicians and Singers — Re-emphasis on Consecration*
- Psalms 51:17** — *A Closing Word — God Is Not a Respector of Persons*
- Psalms 134** — *All Night Prayer the Last Friday of Each Month*
- Isaiah 1:13–14** — *Conventions/Convocations/State Meetings*
- Isaiah 5:20** — *The Power of a Consecrated Life*
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- Isaiah 58:12–14** — *A Sabbath Year: Purpose and Approach*
- Isaiah 64:5** — *A Closing Word of Encouragement and Invitation*
- Daniel 1:3–6** — *Secular Music/Movie Fast*
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- Matthew 9:37** — *Prayer — Intercession*
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- Matthew 23:5–8** — *Re-emphasis on Humility*
- Mark 4:18–19** — *The Need for Focus*
- Luke 9:23** — *Self Denial*
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