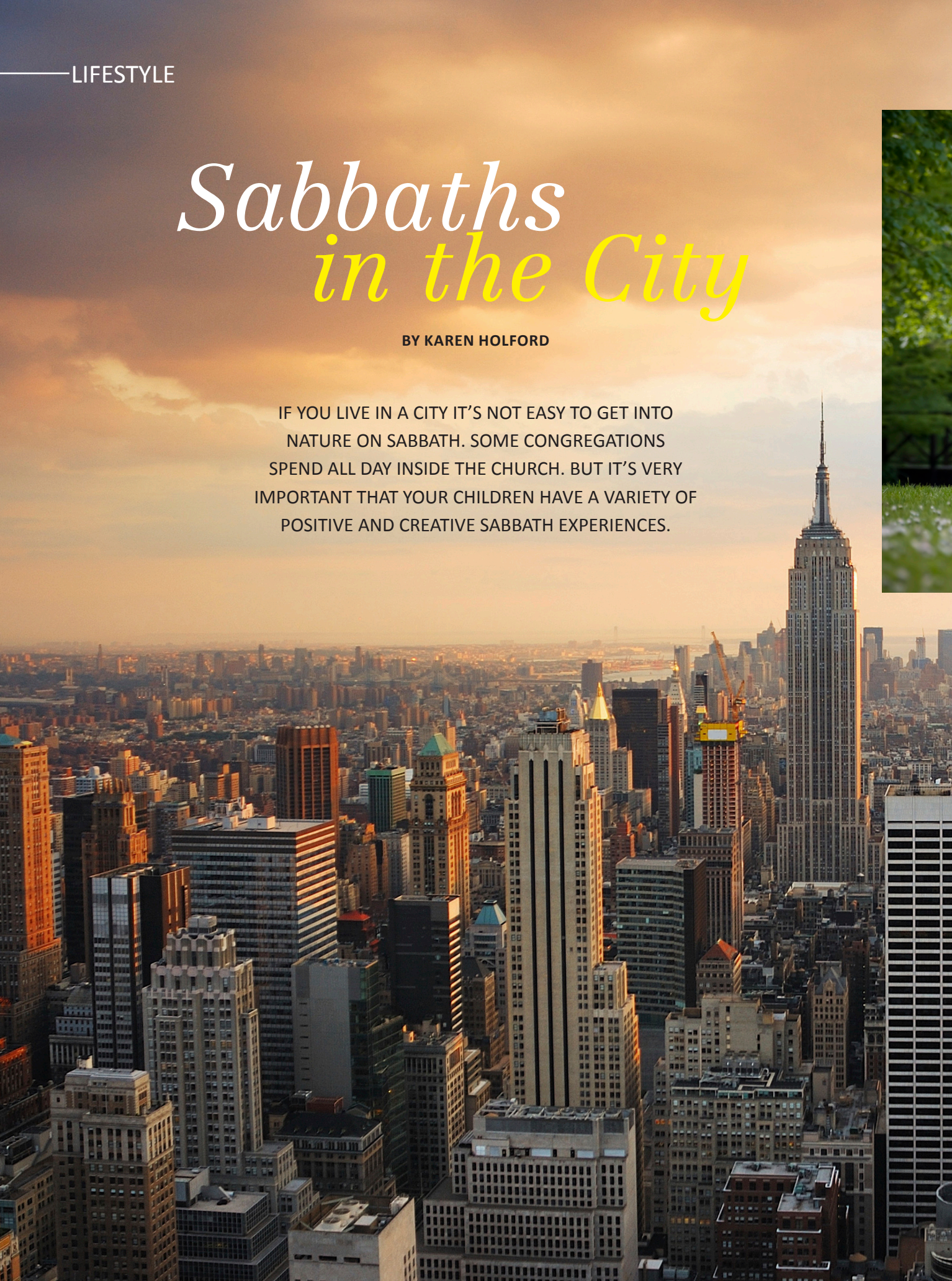


Sabbaths in the City

BY KAREN HOLFORD

IF YOU LIVE IN A CITY IT'S NOT EASY TO GET INTO NATURE ON SABBATH. SOME CONGREGATIONS SPEND ALL DAY INSIDE THE CHURCH. BUT IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOUR CHILDREN HAVE A VARIETY OF POSITIVE AND CREATIVE SABBATH EXPERIENCES.





DIFFERENT CULTURES have different ideas about appropriate Sabbath activities, so choose the ones that meet your needs or adapt the ideas to suit your context. Invite other families to join you so they have happy Sabbaths also! Pray that your city Sabbaths can be an inspiration and a witness. Here are some ideas for Sabbaths in the city:

PARKS AND PATHS

- Ask your city's information center about the best city walks. Sometimes there are pretty paths in unexpected places, like along canals or through leafy neighborhoods.
- See how many different insects you can find under the bark of a decaying branch.
- Go on a scavenger hunt. Look for anything that reminds you of God's love, His character, or any of the Bible stories.
- Do a Bible plant search: Print a list of all the plants in the Bible (try this

list: www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/plants.html) and see how many you can find. Photograph them, make leaf and bark rubbings, etc.

- If your city has a zoo or urban farm, consider an annual pass so you can visit free at any time. Then you can create appropriate Sabbath visits to experience with your children, studying animals and nature and maybe even completing requirements for Pathfinder honors.

PARACHUTE PRAISE!

- Purchase a colorful play-chute (a parachute designed for children's play). One Adventist church in England uses this to witness to children in their local parks.
- Choose a play-chute to suit the size of your group and invest in a small book of parachute game ideas to help you understand the potential of parachute play.
- With a little creativity you can turn many action songs into parachute activities (try "Jesus' Love is Very Wonderful").
- Use parachutes to tell Bible stories (such as when Jesus calmed the storm), play Bible games, pray, and learn memory verses.
- Doing parachute activities in a park usually attracts other children to come and play with you. Perhaps your stories, songs, and games will help them to learn about Jesus?
- For some basic ideas visit <http://ministry-to-children.com/parachute-games>

CHALK TALK!

- Take along your sidewalk chalk and draw lovely sidewalk "posters" or encouraging Bible verses with colorful borders.

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- Look at Christian t-shirt designs for creative inspiration: www.religioustshirts.co.uk

HELPING

- Visit your local volunteer agency and ask them about ways you could help as a family. Some volunteer opportunities make ideal family Sabbath activities, allowing you to help your community, teach your family how to serve, and share God's love.
- Choose activities you feel comfortable doing on Sabbath. Some families clear garbage from vacant lots and plant flowers instead, walk dogs for disabled people, check the condition of local pathways, count the kinds of birds in a park, and so on.

ART GALLERIES & MUSEUMS

Before Sabbath, visit a gallery and locate paintings and pictures that are based on Bible stories, then:

- Make a picture treasure hunt, using Bible clues and a map of the galleries to help the children find the best Bible story paintings.
- Write down titles of the paintings so that each letter in the title is on a different numbered dash/line. Use these numbers to make a code that spells out a Bible verse.
- Choose one painting from a familiar Bible story. Visit the painting with your family, read the Bible story together, and look at the picture.
 - How true is the picture to the story?
 - What might each person in the picture be thinking?
 - What does this picture tell you about God?
 - What do you like best about the picture?
 - What do you think is the most important message the artist is trying to say?
 - Invite everyone to draw their own picture of the Bible story. How are they different from or similar to the artist's painting?
- Some museums have appropriate sections for Sabbath activities. Check your local natural history museums and use their children's activity trail sheets. See if you can find an animal, stone, insect, etc., beginning with each letter of the alphabet. Marvel at the way God created each of them.



- Visit churches and chapels in your city. Some are open for visitors, and you can learn a lot by visiting old churches. Find the interesting features in each church and explore them together. Discuss what each church tells you about God's love.

WORD SEARCH

- Choose a verse or passage from the Bible that you or your family want to learn. Write or print out the passage on a small card that you can carry with you as you walk.
- Go for a walk anywhere in the city that is safe and look for the different words in your verse. They may be on billboards or on street signs and names. For difficult words just find the letters or groups of letters to form the words you need. You can also photograph any objects in your verse, such as trees, homes, or hearts.



*Visit your local
volunteer agency
and ask them about
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- Either tick off the words and letters as you find them or photograph the words and letters so you can make a collage poster of the Bible verse.

PRAYER WALK

- Walk around a neighborhood close to your home. Pray for each house or apartment as you pass.
- You can keep on walking and pray a sentence or two aloud with your eyes open.
- Be friendly and chat with people you meet.
- Use clues from around each house or neighborhood to inspire your prayers for the people who live there: are there children, older people, disabled people? What do they need?

CITY PRAYER

- Create a thank you prayer for your town or city. Thank God for all the things you're thankful for in your city that begin with each letter of the alphabet in turn.

For more creative Sabbath activities you might enjoy *100 Creative Activities for Sabbath* by Karen Holford, Pacific Press, 2004. **7**

Many of Karen's ideas come from the time her husband was pastoring a church in downtown London—while they had three young and lively children!