

Renewable Rhythm – Sabbath

June 2011 – Let's catch up where we left off.

Last month I stepped on the mound, gripped the seams of the cowhide, and pitched a question to you—a big question. It went like this: **Is it possible to be more passionate, more energized, and more productive for the Kingdom...a year from now?**

Ring a bell? Hope so.

The backstop (to carry the baseball theme a bit further) to this big question is to embrace the truth that in God's economy of life and leadership the focus is not simply SURVIVAL. Nor is it SUSTAINABILITY. But rather, it is to accept His invitation to a RENEWABLE rhythm to life and leadership.

From there, I briefly ushered three "faithful friends" to center stage—three spiritual practices that God is using in my life to move me closer to this renewable rhythm. Sabbath. Solitude. Calling.

So let's talk about SABBATH.

It will be good to start with a definition, making sure we are on the same page. While Wikipedia offers a few helpful ideas, let me roll out a description of Sabbath that I have been tinkering with over the past several months that I believe gets to the core. It goes like this:

Sabbath is the spiritual practice of taking a weekly 24-hour period of time that is devoted to God for the purpose of rest, renewal, and relationship where things that you've "got to do" give way to things you "get to do".

Sabbath is not the break we're allotted at the tail end of completing all our tasks and chores, the fulfillment of all our obligations. It's the rest we take smack-dab in the middle of them, without apology, without guilt, and for no better reason than God told us we could.

—Mark Buchanan

I'd like to unpack this definition, but before I do, can I make an observation? In the circles in which I run, I find the practice of Sabbath to be more the exception than the rule. Do you? I found it quite revealing while leading a workshop on this topic a few months ago, to learn through an anonymous survey that less than half of those in attendance—all of them ministry leaders—had an established pattern of Sabbath.

I don't think this is what God had in mind...

A quick study of the Bible will reveal that Sabbath-keeping is more than a suggestion; it is a directive, a commandment. (If you need a little convincing, check out Exodus 20, where you will find this truth tucked away with nine other non-negotiables).

In celebrating Sabbath, I look for that which renews and restores, being careful to avoid any checklists or templates. This can include a wide range of engagements. Some of my favorite Sabbath activities include reading on a variety of topics, taking a long walk, or pursuing a couple hours of solitude where I take the time to listen for the divine whisper. It also includes spending unhurried time with my family (especially my wife) and close friends, simply enjoying the gift of their presence. No agenda to accomplish. No schedule to keep.

But what I am discovering most about Sabbath is the SPIRIT that attends it. In many ways, Sabbath is a short and sacred window of time where the “got tos” of life surrender to the “get tos”. It is a time when the ever-present, ever-pressing demands of life are stacked on a shelf that simply reads “NOT today”.

Do you have Sabbath factored in and featured in your life? Does it occupy a RESERVED section on your Outlook calendar? If not, I challenge you to give it a two-month test drive. At the end of that time, I guarantee that you will start to discover for yourself that there IS a renewable rhythm to life and leadership. And that you can honestly say, I DO believe that a year from now, I can be more passionate, more energized, and more productive for the Kingdom.

Lord, I confess that I'm a latecomer to Your generous invitation to Sabbath. Forgive me. But I also confess, I am beginning to discover the gift that it is...and how You have hard-wired my heart for it. You have set me on an irreversible course...and I am grateful. Thank You!