

Rock Solid The Gift of Sabbath

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 find 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.

I would like to share a few thoughts regarding the first on this list, Sabbath.

Here is how I would describe Sabbath:

Sabbath is the spiritual practice of devoting one day of the week to God for the purpose of rest, renewal, relationship, reflection, and recentering where things that you've 'got to do' give way to things you 'get to do.'

In my candid observation, I find the practice of Sabbath to be more the exception than the rule. Do you? I recently learned that less than half of all ministry leaders have an established pattern of Sabbath.

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

Parenthetically, my theology informs me that Sabbath for the new covenant follower of Christ is a gift, not a command; and as such, serves as a reminder of the goodness and grace of our Father. I love the way that Mark Buchanan captures this in his must-read book *The Rest of God*: *"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."*

In celebrating Sabbath, I look for what 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, 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 and close friends, simply enjoying the gift of their presence. No agenda to discuss. 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."

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Do you have Sabbath factored in and more importantly, 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 because of taking time for Sabbath as a regular rhythm of my life.