

Communicating with Your Church, Friends, and Supporters about Your Sabbatical

You could communicate Practically, Corporately, and Theologically about sabbaticals to your church and friends.

PRACTICALLY

The messenger is the message in Christian work. If we do not embody the message, the morals, and the model, then a sabbatical, an extended time of rest, reflection, and realignment, could be needed. A person in a secular role can have an affair, struggle with an addiction, or be distant from God, and still be effective. But in a Christian ministry, this would be hypocritical.

The pace of life in the US is accelerating. The pace for this generation or this time in history is faster than the last generation. With every generation, we need to figure out fresh ways to deal with the pace of life. Too much of a fast pace over too long a period leads toward burnout. Every leader experiences this and wishes there was a way out.

Below are some thoughts on burnout and busyness:

Life in overload - life without margin - stress without recovery - physical/emotional exhaustion and spiritual dryness = burnout- when you start to resent your calling, something is wrong.

Busyness + no unhurried time to think, pray, listen, be in Word = barrenness (no fruit)

CORPORATELY

For sixty-five years The Navigators did not allow staff to take sabbaticals. In 1998 Navigators initiated a policy to change our corporate culture; all staff were strongly encouraged to take a 3-6-month sabbatical every 7-10 years. We believe and have experienced that it pays us and them dividends in the long run. This is part of being good stewards of the resources God has given us. Our people are our greatest resource.

Sabbaticals in the Navigators have usually been focused on healing (i.e., burnout, recovery, woundedness, etc.) or development (i.e., study, cross-training, etc.).

THEOLOGICALLY

Any sabbatical is a cultural application of the biblical principle of Sabbath--regular times of no regular work. Though there are numerous verses on Sabbath, there is nothing in the Bible on sabbaticals per se.

Two passages that have spoken to many are:

Gen 1-3 - Interestingly, the third thing God blessed was rest (2:3) and the third thing God cursed was the work of man's hand (3:17-19). Now God blessed rest and cursed the work of man's hand. Our nature is to get the things of God backward. Today we bless work and curse rest. That is not the way God did it.

Lev. 23 & 25 – We don't want to be put under the law, but, interestingly, God laid out a lifestyle for His people. In Lev. 23 and 25 God lays out the Sabbath day, the appointed times/feasts to the Lord, the Sabbatical year, and the Year of Jubilee. Notice God intended that there should be regular periods of no regular work as a lifestyle for His people.

The greatest gift you can give the world is your intimacy with God.