

COMMUNICATING ABOUT SABBATICAL



Here are some thoughts on how to communicate *practically, corporately, and biblically* about sabbaticals to your church and friends.

PRACTICALLY

In Christian work, the messenger is the message. If we don't embody the message, the morals, and the model, it's probably time for a sabbatical: an extended time of rest, reflection, and realignment. Someone in a secular role could 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.

Also, the pace of life in the U.S. is accelerating. With every generation we need to figure out fresh ways to deal with the added pressures. Moving too fast over too long a period of time leads to burnout. Every leader experiences this to some extent and wishes for 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

Busyness → no unhurried time to think, pray, listen, be in Word → barrenness
(No fruit) Burnout: when you start to resent your calling, something is wrong

CORPORATELY

For 65 years The Navigators did not encourage staff to take sabbaticals. In 1998 we initiated a policy to change our corporate culture; all staff are 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 (burnout, recovery, woundedness, etc.) or development (study, cross training, etc.).

BIBLICALLY

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

Two passages that have spoken to me are:

GENESIS 1-3

I find it interesting that 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). God blessed rest and cursed the work of man's hand. Our nature is to get the things of God backwards; today we bless work and curse rest. That is not the way God did it.

LEVITICUS 23 & 25

I don't want to put us under the law, but it is interesting that God laid out a lifestyle for His people. In these verses 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.

Hope these thoughts are helpful. The greatest gift you can give the world is your intimacy with God.