



JULY

SABBATICAL MONTH

AT WEST COBB CHURCH

REST. RESTORE. RENEW.

A GUIDE TO REST

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WEEKLY STUDY GUIDE FOR SABBATICAL MONTH

PURPOSE: TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH A MONTH OF REST, RENEWAL, AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING, DRAWING FROM BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICAL ACTIONS.

OPENING: THE BENEFIT OF SABBATICAL

IN OUR FAST-PACED WORLD, REST OFTEN TAKES A BACKSEAT TO PRODUCTIVITY AND BUSYNESS. YET, THE CONCEPT OF SABBATICAL—ROOTED IN THE BIBLICAL SABBATH—IS A REMINDER OF THE PROFOUND BENEFITS OF STEPPING AWAY FROM DAILY ROUTINES TO SEEK GOD, REFRESH OUR SOULS, AND RESTORE OUR RELATIONSHIPS.

CONSIDER THESE WORDS FROM WAYNE MULLER, AUTHOR OF SABBATH: FINDING REST, RENEWAL, AND DELIGHT IN OUR BUSY LIVES: “A SUCCESSFUL LIFE DOES NOT RESULT FROM ENDLESS WORK. A SUCCESSFUL LIFE IS ONE THAT CAN BE INTERRUPTED AND STILL REMAIN WHOLE.” SABBATICALS GIVE US THE CHANCE TO EXPERIENCE THIS WHOLENESS.

IN LEVITICUS 25:4, GOD COMMANDS THE ISRAELITES TO LET THE LAND REST EVERY SEVENTH YEAR: “BUT IN THE SEVENTH YEAR THE LAND IS TO HAVE A YEAR OF SABBATH REST, A SABBATH TO THE LORD. DO NOT SOW YOUR FIELDS OR PRUNE YOUR VINEYARDS.” JUST AS THE LAND NEEDED REST TO REMAIN FRUITFUL, SO DO WE.

MODERN RESEARCH SUPPORTS THIS ANCIENT WISDOM. STUDIES SHOW THAT INTENTIONAL PERIODS OF REST IMPROVE MENTAL CLARITY, EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING, AND PHYSICAL HEALTH. MORE IMPORTANTLY, SABBATICAL CREATES SPACE FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL—A TIME TO HEAR GOD’S VOICE WITHOUT DISTRACTION AND TO REALIGN OUR PRIORITIES WITH HIS PURPOSE.

LET THIS MONTH BE AN INTENTIONAL STEP TOWARD EMBRACING GOD’S RHYTHM OF REST AND RENEWAL.

WEEK 1: UNDERSTANDING THE PURPOSE OF SABBATICAL

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: GENESIS 2:2-3, EXODUS 20:8-10

“BY THE SEVENTH DAY GOD HAD FINISHED THE WORK HE HAD BEEN DOING; SO ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE RESTED FROM ALL HIS WORK.” (GENESIS 2:2)

REFLECTION:

- GOD ESTABLISHED THE RHYTHM OF WORK AND REST FROM THE BEGINNING. SABBATH AND SABBATICALS ARE GIFTS FOR RESTORATION AND COMMUNION WITH HIM.

- HOW HAS BUSYNESS AFFECTED YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND OTHERS?

PRACTICAL ACTIONS:

1. SET YOUR INTENTIONS: WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS FOR THIS SABBATICAL MONTH. WHAT AREAS OF YOUR LIFE NEED RENEWAL?
2. DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT: LIMIT TIME ON DIGITAL DEVICES AND COMMIT TO UNINTERRUPTED MOMENTS OF PRAYER.
3. SABBATH PRACTICE: SET ASIDE ONE DAY THIS WEEK TO CEASE FROM ALL WORK. REFLECT ON WHAT REST FEELS LIKE.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU THAT GOD RESTED? HOW CAN YOU MODEL THIS IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

WEEK 2: EMBRACING REST

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 11:28-30

“COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO ARE WEARY AND BURDENED, AND I WILL GIVE YOU REST.” (MATTHEW 11:28)

REFLECTION:

- REST ISN'T JUST PHYSICAL; IT'S SPIRITUAL. JESUS INVITES US TO RELEASE OUR BURDENS AND FIND REST IN HIM.
- WHAT BURDENS DO YOU NEED TO SURRENDER TO GOD?

PRACTICAL ACTIONS:

1. REST AUDIT: EVALUATE YOUR WEEKLY SCHEDULE. IDENTIFY TASKS OR COMMITMENTS THAT DRAIN YOUR ENERGY UNNECESSARILY.
2. CREATE SPACE FOR RENEWAL: SPEND 30 MINUTES EACH DAY IN SILENCE OR REFLECTIVE PRAYER.
3. ENJOY GOD'S CREATION: TAKE A WALK OUTDOORS AND MEDITATE ON THE BEAUTY OF HIS HANDIWORK.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- HOW CAN REST DEEPEN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?

WEEK 3: RENEWING YOUR MIND AND SPIRIT

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ROMANS 12:2

"DO NOT CONFORM TO THE PATTERN OF THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND."

REFLECTION:

- RENEWAL INVOLVES ALLOWING GOD TO RESHAPE OUR THOUGHTS, PRIORITIES, AND HABITS.
- HOW CAN YOU CREATE MENTAL AND SPIRITUAL SPACE FOR GOD'S TRANSFORMATION?

PRACTICAL ACTIONS:

1. SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: CHOOSE A PASSAGE TO MEMORIZE AND MEDITATE ON THROUGHOUT THE WEEK (E.G., PSALM 23).
2. DECLUTTER YOUR MIND: JOURNAL YOUR THOUGHTS DAILY. RELEASE STRESS AND DISTRACTIONS BY LAYING THEM BEFORE GOD.
3. RECONNECT WITH LOVED ONES: SET ASIDE TIME FOR MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILY OR FRIENDS.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- WHAT PATTERNS OF THE WORLD HAVE INFLUENCED YOU? HOW CAN YOU ALIGN YOUR MIND WITH GOD'S TRUTH?

WEEK 4: BUILDING NEW RELATIONSHIPS

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:42-47

"THEY DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES'S TEACHING AND TO FELLOWSHIP, TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD AND TO PRAYER."

REFLECTION:

COMMUNITY WAS CENTRAL TO THE EARLY CHURCH. BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS STRENGTHENS OUR FAITH AND REFLECTS GOD'S LOVE.

- WHO HAS GOD PLACED IN YOUR LIFE FOR THIS SEASON?

PRACTICAL ACTIONS:

1. HOST A MEAL: INVITE SOMEONE NEW FROM CHURCH OR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD FOR A MEAL AND FELLOWSHIP.

2. SERVE TOGETHER: FIND A SMALL WAY TO SERVE ALONGSIDE SOMEONE ELSE, WHETHER AT CHURCH OR IN THE COMMUNITY.
3. PRAY WITH A PARTNER: CHOOSE A PRAYER PARTNER FOR THE WEEK AND PRAY DAILY FOR EACH OTHER'S NEEDS.

DISCUSSION QUESTION:

- HOW CAN YOU BE INTENTIONAL IN BUILDING AND SUSTAINING CHRIST-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS?

CLOSING REFLECTION

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 40:31

"BUT THOSE WHO HOPE IN THE LORD WILL RENEW THEIR STRENGTH. THEY WILL SOAR ON WINGS LIKE EAGLES; THEY WILL RUN AND NOT GROW WEARY, THEY WILL WALK AND NOT BE FAINT."

- HOW HAS THIS SABBATICAL CHANGED YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON REST, RENEWAL, AND RELATIONSHIPS?
- WRITE DOWN THREE COMMITMENTS TO CARRY FORWARD FROM THIS EXPERIENCE.

RESOURCE SECTION: BOOKS ON SABBATICAL AND REST

1. "COME THIRSTY" BY MAX LUCADO
EXPLORES HOW TO FIND RENEWAL AND SPIRITUAL REFRESHMENT BY CONNECTING DEEPLY WITH GOD.
2. "SABBATH: FINDING REST, RENEWAL, AND DELIGHT IN OUR BUSY LIVES" BY WAYNE MULLER
A PRACTICAL AND SPIRITUAL GUIDE TO RECLAIMING THE SABBATH IN YOUR LIFE.
3. "THE REST OF GOD: RESTORING YOUR SOUL BY RESTORING SABBATH" BY MARK BUCHANAN
ENCOURAGES READERS TO EMBRACE REST AS A WAY OF HONORING GOD AND EXPERIENCING PERSONAL RENEWAL.
4. "RHYTHMS OF REST: FINDING THE SPIRIT OF SABBATH IN A BUSY WORLD" BY SHELLY MILLER
A PRACTICAL AND PERSONAL EXPLORATION OF HOW TO FIND REST IN THE MIDST OF LIFE'S BUSYNESS.

5. "AN UNHURRIED LIFE: FOLLOWING JESUS'S RHYTHMS OF WORK AND REST" BY ALAN FADLING
FOCUSES ON ADOPTING JESUS' PACE OF LIFE AS A MODEL FOR SPIRITUAL AND PHYSICAL REST.

6. "EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY" BY PETER SCAZZERO
DISCUSSES HOW REST AND BALANCE ARE KEY TO LIVING AN EMOTIONALLY AND SPIRITUALLY HEALTHY LIFE.

IDEAS FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY DURING SABBATICAL MONTH

1. COFFEE AND CONVERSATION GROUPS
 - HOST SMALL GATHERINGS AT LOCAL COFFEE SHOPS LIKE OCTANE COFFEE OR DANCING GOATS. ENCOURAGE GROUPS TO MEET WEEKLY FOR CASUAL CONVERSATIONS.
2. FAMILY PICNICS AT PARKS
 - ORGANIZE FAMILY-FRIENDLY PICNICS AT PIEDMONT PARK, CENTENNIAL OLYMPIC PARK, OR KENNESAW MOUNTAIN NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK. INCLUDE GAMES AND GROUP ACTIVITIES.
3. HOBBY MEETUPS
 - CREATE INTEREST-BASED GROUPS, SUCH AS HIKING ON THE EAST PALISADES TRAIL, COOKING CLASSES, OR BOOK CLUBS, TO CONNECT THOSE WITH SIMILAR PASSIONS.
4. DINNER FOR EIGHT
 - ORGANIZE SMALL DINNER GROUPS WITH EIGHT PEOPLE EACH, ROTATING HOMES WEEKLY. ENCOURAGE MEMBERS TO INVITE SOMEONE THEY DON'T KNOW WELL.
5. SPORTING EVENTS
 - ATTEND ATLANTA BRAVES, ATLANTA UNITED, OR HAWKS GAMES AS A GROUP. ALTERNATIVELY, HOST CHURCH PICK-UP GAMES OR SPORTS NIGHTS.
6. COMMUNITY SCAVENGER HUNT
 - CREATE A FUN SCAVENGER HUNT THROUGH DOWNTOWN ATLANTA OR NOTABLE AREAS, PAIRING MEMBERS TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS.
7. DAY TRIPS
 - PLAN GROUP OUTINGS TO PLACES LIKE STONE MOUNTAIN, THE GEORGIA AQUARIUM, OR A WINERY TOUR FOR ADULTS
8. TESTIMONY NIGHTS AND DINNER
 - HOST EVENINGS WHERE MEMBERS CAN SHARE PERSONAL STORIES OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS, FOSTERING VULNERABILITY AND CONNECTION.

THE VALUE OF FASTING

FASTING IS A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE THAT DRAWS US CLOSER TO GOD BY TEMPORARILY SETTING ASIDE EARTHLY COMFORTS TO FOCUS ON PRAYER AND RELIANCE ON HIM. IT DEEPENS OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LORD, HELPS CLARIFY HIS WILL, AND BRINGS SPIRITUAL BREAKTHROUGHS (MATTHEW 6:16-18, ISAIAH 58:6-9). WHEN PAIRED WITH PRAYER, FASTING ALIGNS OUR HEARTS WITH GOD'S PURPOSE AND POWER.

SABBATICAL MONTH FASTING SCHEDULE

WEEK ONE: PRAY AND FAST FOR LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

- FOCUS PRAYER: LIFT UP THE PASTORS, LEADERS, AND STAFF OF WCC. PRAY FOR THEIR WISDOM, HEALTH, AND SPIRITUAL STRENGTH AS THEY SERVE.
- FASTING OPTIONS:
 - FOOD FAST: SKIP MEALS OR FAST FOR THE ENTIRE DAY, DRINKING ONLY WATER OR CLEAR LIQUIDS.
 - SOCIAL MEDIA/TECH FAST: DISCONNECT FROM TECHNOLOGY FOR 24 HOURS TO FOCUS SOLELY ON PRAYER AND REFLECTION.

WEEK TWO: PRAY FOR VISION AND SERVICE

- FOCUS PRAYER: ASK GOD TO REVEAL HIS VISION FOR WCC AND HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE MISSION AND VISION. SEEK CLARITY ON YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND SERVICE.
- FASTING OPTIONS:
 - DANIEL FAST: EAT ONLY FRUITS, VEGETABLES, AND WHOLE GRAINS, AVOIDING MEAT AND PROCESSED FOODS.
 - WORD FAST: COMMIT TO SILENCE OR INTENTIONAL SPEECH, FOCUSING ON LISTENING TO GOD AND BEING MINDFUL OF WORDS.

WEEK THREE: PRAY FOR EVANGELISM AND GROWTH

- FOCUS PRAYER: PRAY FOR WCC TO BE A LIGHT IN THE COMMUNITY, WINNING PEOPLE TO CHRIST AND HELPING THEM GROW IN THEIR FAITH.
- FASTING OPTIONS:
 - FINANCIAL FAST: REFRAIN FROM UNNECESSARY SPENDING AND DEDICATE TIME TO PRAY FOR GENEROSITY AND STEWARDSHIP.
 - COMFORT FAST: GIVE UP A PERSONAL COMFORT, SUCH AS COFFEE, SWEETS, OR FAVORITE ENTERTAINMENT, AS A REMINDER TO DEPEND ON GOD.

WEEK FOUR: PRAY FOR NEW LEADERS

- FOCUS PRAYER: PRAY FOR GOD TO RAISE UP LEADERS WITHIN WCC TO FILL MINISTRY GAPS AND STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH'S IMPACT.
- FASTING TYPE:
 - PRAYER WALK FAST: PAIR YOUR FAST WITH A PRAYER WALK AROUND YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, CHURCH, OR LOCAL PARK. INVITE A FRIEND OR GROUP TO JOIN YOU IN PRAYING FOR LEADERSHIP AND GOD'S PROVISION.