

February 2011
E-newsletter

SABBATH FOR CHURCH WORKERS

What was God thinking of, commanding a Sabbath? I help to create Sabbath for others; I don't have time for one myself. Doesn't God know how busy I am this time of year, how much I have to do, how hard it is to keep track of all of the schedules? Volunteers, on whom I am counting for ministry this fall, choose this time to let me know that they can't do it. Children and youth, slotted into classes and choirs and small groups, let me know they will be miserable if I don't change them to be with today's best friend. People have access to me 24/7 by email, voice mail, Facebook, and Twitter. Demands on my time cover every waking moment – and then some.

So, what was God thinking of? God wasn't tired after six days of creating. God wasn't trying to ruin your fun by claiming your time and attention. God wasn't giving you just one more rule to live by, one more hoop to navigate.

So, really, what was God thinking of? God was thinking of you ... and of

- God's love for you
- God's desire to be in relationship with you
- Your need for rest and restoration, for pausing to reflect, for savoring the joyous things in life, for delight
- Time for you to experience the abundant life Jesus came to bring
- Recharging you before being sent back into the world in loving service in Jesus' name

What is Sabbath? It may be Sunday ... or any of the other six days of the week. It may be a day (or week or month or a few minutes) or it may be one deep, intentional, God-filling-you breath. It is an intentional time to slow down, to step out of the torrent of life rushing past, to be still, to be in the presence of God, to be with those you love, to savor silence and beauty and good food and delight, to emerge refreshed.

Why Sabbath? God knew we'd burn out, lose focus, worship other gods, slight our relationships if we didn't practice Sabbath. It is one of the ways God cares for us.

Where do you experience Sabbath? Lying awake in bed for an extra ten minutes on Saturday morning and luxuriating in it. Worshipping with others in home or congregation ... any time at all. Joining beloved family and friends at the dinner table to savor delectable food and the even more delicious time together. Perhaps it is on a tranquil lakeshore as dawn evaporates the mist or a snow-filled woods as animals scamper and scurry past. Or, perhaps you light a candle and curl up in a familiar chair to read and ponder and pray a verse of scripture.

So, how could you make this happen, in this uber-busy ministry season?

- Make a list of the little things that are Sabbath rest to you. Closing your eyes for 20 minutes. Calling a close friend. Listening to a favorite piece of music in the car. Stepping outside for five minutes, just as the sun rises. Watching a beloved child sleep.

Praying Anne LaMott's two favorite prayers: "Thank you, thank you, thank you" and "Help me, help me, help me."

- Put it on your calendar ... and be as faithful about keeping the appointment for Sabbath, as you are about going to your dental appointment.
- When you feel frantic and as though everything is urgent, assess it. Is it urgent? Do you really need to be in a hurry? What will happen if you let the parent with two preschoolers check out ahead of you at the grocery store?
- Smile.
- Practice appreciating everything.
- Remember, THIS is your life. It doesn't begin when you are done with all of your tasks, have recruited all of your volunteers, reply to every email, or pay off your mortgage. Give thanks for all this day holds.
- Build some margins in your life. If it takes 10 minutes to drive to the next meeting, give yourself 20 ... and feel the peace that floods you, when the adrenaline ebbs.
- You are modeling a life in Christ ... and so many are watching. Live a life that you'd like others to emulate, that makes you credible when you encourage others to remember the Sabbath.
- Jesus promised to be with you always. Claim that promise now.

So, what was God thinking? God was thinking of you. Won't you open your life to receive God's gift of Sabbath?