**BENEFITS OF SABBATICAL**

**YFC Staff Experiences**

*“Very refreshing. Great time to reflect and refocus. Haven't solved all of life but made good decisions and several changes.”*

*“It was such a blessing to have the space to spend extended time each day with Jesus so I could really be filled and challenged. I came into my sabbatical really tired and in need of a break and I came back refreshed and ready for another year of ministry. After the sabbatical I felt more in love with Jesus and knew him in some very new ways.”*

*“The luxury of no schedule is a rare treat that I am still grateful for.”*

*“A new commitment to Sabbath rest every week and Sabbath moments every day; I never understood this before.”*

*“A deeper intimacy with Jesus and a love of silence and solitude.”*

*“I came back to a mess in the office. I don't think I would have made it had I not had a sabbatical prior to this. God knew what I would need even more than I did.”*

*“Perspective. New social media habits. Greater commitment to not overdoing it. And maybe a heightened sensitivity to the signs.”*

*“Rest! Re-ignited passion and confirmed commitment to the mission. Family that gets all of dad and husband for extended time. Home projects done. Memories made. Hopefully insight from the training time.”*

*“Scored huge points with my family. It gave me the energy and renewed purpose to do this another 7 years. It gave me time to think big thoughts and not just go 90 miles per hour.”*

**Sabbatical Overview** (Navigator’s Sabbatical Guidelines Excerpt)

**What is a “sabbatical”?** We are not talking about a vacation but rather disengaging from normal ministry and leadership involvement for a period of time to allow for soul rest and serious evaluation of life and ministry. It is a time to make space to hear God.

Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message) – “*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

**But what if I don’t feel tired?** While physical rest is an important component of a sabbatical, this time is more importantly about slowing down, removing yourself from your normal routines in order to make space to hear God in a new way. It is amazing that when we slow down our adrenaline driven bodies, our souls and physical strength have a chance to catch up – and we might realize how tired we are from the duties of ministry.

*CAUTION: IT IS BETTER NOT TO TAKE A SABBATICAL THAN TO DO IT INCORRECTLY!*

Without a proper understanding of sabbatical and preparation and helpful oversight, the experience can result in potential lost, expectations dashed, and opportunities missed. Hope deferred makes the heart sick(Proverbs 13:12).

Especially if it is not your habit to take a weekly Sabbath, expect to feel stressed as you transition into the rest phase. Change is always stressful.

To prepare, read the rest of this article and as desired, the other articles found at www.training.yfc.net/sabbaticals. Contact the YFC Sabbatical Director and choose a Sabbatical Advisor.

**FIVE SABBATICAL PHASES**

**Sabbatical Phase I** – Release & Relinquish: Exiting from leadership roles and ministry responsibilities

During this first phase, you disengage from ministry and leadership responsibilities, if necessary, get needed funding, and draw up a plan for your sabbatical. Choose a Sabbatical Advisor (prerequisite - they have taken a sabbatical). Typically, this phase starts 3-6 months before the sabbatical begins.

At the beginning of Phase I, your Sabbatical Advisor helps you and your spouse develop a sabbatical plan. Begin by meeting with your supervisor to get his/her input. Your plan revolves around your identified priority needs and the following inventories found on page 46 and following of The Navigators *Sabbatical Guidelines: A Season of Renewal*: http://www.navigators.org/www\_navigators\_org/media/navigators/events/Sabbatical-Guidelines-PRT.pdf

* Role Fit Inventory
* Burnout Inventory (as needed)
* Personal and Marital Survey

Once you (and your spouse) identify your priority needs, your Sabbatical Advisor works with you to come up with possible resources and action steps. You then create a sabbatical plan draft that includes your funding plan, priority needs, action steps, and other resources. Your Sabbatical Advisor and supervisor read the draft and give you input and suggestions.  The sabbatical plan is an initial framework for direction, based on your priority needs. *It’s a dynamic tool that can be tweaked throughout the sabbatical process*. Early phases often have more detail than later phases. A copy of the finalized sabbatical plan should be sent to your Sabbatical Advisor

**Questions your Sabbatical Advisor will ask you:**

1. How are you feeling about disengaging from the ministry?
2. Are you worried about losing financial support while on sabbatical?
3. How’s your funding?
4. How have other staff and friends reacted when they learned about your sabbatical?
5. How does your spouse feel about your sabbatical?
6. Since drawing up your sabbatical plan a couple of weeks ago, have you had any further  thoughts? Do you still believe it reflects your priority needs and desires?
7. Does the starting date for Phase II: Rest and Recovery still seem realistic to you?
8. What excites you most about your sabbatical?
9. What are your priorities for the next couple of weeks?
10. What can I do to help you?
11. How can I be praying for you?

**Sabbatical Phase II** – Rest & Recovery: Establishing Margin & Managing Pace of Life

It isn’t unusual for staff on sabbatical to have trouble letting go of the ministry. Some don’t quite believe it’s really okay to step out. It’s important that you and your Sabbatical Advisor make sure ministry commitments have been handed off or finished. During this phase, be sensitive to feelings of isolation or lack of significance. Often, staff who are no longer “doing ministry” struggle with their identity. You should be out of regularly scheduled YFC ministry but not out of fellowship.

It’s also common for staff to treat their sabbatical as another Type-A frenzied activity. As you consider your sabbatical inevitably extra ministry opportunities will pop up. The guiding principle is, “Keep the sabbatical the focus.” Extra opportunities should be examined individually and cautiously. Generally, we suggest you make a full break from ministry activities.

“Rest” in this phase doesn’t mean ceasing from all activity. Rather, you pull back from ministry activities and (where possible) other areas of stress. This gives you room to explore and discover what God wants to say to you, what relaxes you and what restores you emotionally.

**What Others Have Done During This Phase To Rest:**

* Duck hunting
* Reading novels
* Started fly-fishing
* Sleeping more
* Playing softball
* Gardening
* Home projects (enjoyed seeing tangible results and working with their hands)
* Travelling

**Questions your Sabbatical Advisor will ask you:**

1. How would you define or explain rest?
2. Do you feel that you’re resting? What rests you?
3. Are you experiencing any obstacles to rest?
4. Have you noticed significant changes in your eating or sleeping habits?
5. What things are stressful for you right now? Can anything be done to remove or reduce  them?
6. How’s your relationship with your spouse? With your children?
7. What are your thoughts since our last meeting?  What kinds of feedback are you getting from others? Do you think they understand you?
8. Is your sabbatical going the way you expected? How so?
9. What are your priorities for the next two weeks?
10. Is there something I can do to help you?

**Phase III** – Reflect & Refocus: Experiencing God & Self in New or Deeper Ways

This is the work phase of the sabbatical. During this phase, you should be asking the question*, Lord, is there anything You want to say to me?* God speaks to us in a variety of ways. You should consider how God has spoken to you in the past and position yourself to hear His voice. Extended time alone with God for reflection is the focus of this phase. This is the time to go after whatever it is you want to pursue.

**What Other Staff Have Done During This Phase:**

* Extended times alone with God
* Getaway to a retreat center
* Written a personal development plan
* Developed a “Marriage Partnering Plan”
* Focused on Emotional Healing
* Journaled what God is teaching
* Read books of interest
* Crystallized personal passions
* Received counseling
* Met with a Life Planner

**Questions your Sabbatical Advisor will ask you:**

1. Are you aware of anything that would hinder God from speaking to you during this phase? (Busyness, unforgiving spirit, conflict, unhealthy habits, unconfessed sin, etc.)
2. Is there anything that would be helpful to discuss?
3. What things are currently stressful for you? Can anything be done to remove or reduce  them?
4. How’s your relationship with your spouse/children?
5. Is there anyone particular who is speaking into your life?
6. Is your sabbatical going the way you expected? How so?
7. What are your priorities for the next two weeks?
8. Is there something I can do to help you?

**Phase IV** – Realignment: Empowering for Maximum Contribution

This is the application phase of the sabbatical. During this phase you want to answer the question, “What changes in life and ministry should I make as a result of hearing from God in the Reflection Phase?” This might involve changing your ministry role or you may want to change how you’ve been handling your current ministry role – what realignments do you need to consider?

**What Other Staff Have Done During This Phase:**

* Reviewed and reaffirmed their calling
* Updated their resume
* Received input from sabbatical advisor
* Received counsel from friends and staff
* Visited possible ministry locations
* Entertained options with various entities
* Completed Debriefing Questions
* Developed a plan for what to do differently in their role

**Questions your Sabbatical Advisor will ask you:**

1. With what you’ve learned in the last phases, are there any adjustments needed in your life or ministry to reflect your design and desire more accurately?

1. What do you sense God has for your future?
2. If you lack clarity about the future, what specific steps might you take to see more  clearly?
3. Can you describe your perfect job? Be sure to include elements or functions you  consider essential. Also pinpoint those that should NOT be your primary responsibility.

**Phase V**- Re-Entry & Re-Engagement: Re-Engaging at the right pace

At the beginning of this phase, be aware that your pace of life will increase, and that transition is stressful. Expect emotional disorientation and spiritual warfare as you re-engage.

**What Other Staff Have Done During This Phase:**

* Formally end sabbatical with a celebration event sharing what they’ve learned and a time of “dedication prayer” with those on their support team, Sabbatical Advisor with a (preferred) in-person gathering, or Skype call, Conference call, mass letter or email.
* Resumed ministry responsibilities half time for the first month.
* Set up accountability relationships to help with changes they want to make in life and  ministry.
* Coached ministry and teammates on their desired changes.
* Scheduled no major responsibilities for at least the first 4 months.

**Questions your Sabbatical Advisor will ask you:**

1. What changes have you experienced as you’ve re-engaged?
2. What help do you need as you re-enter ministry?

**Helpful Tips and Lessons Learned:**

1. If you have school-aged children, consider taking a sabbatical during the school year rather than summer.
2. It’s okay to sleep more.
3. This is not a sabbatical from life. Expect to spend time on family responsibilities and daily living tasks.
4. Plan for your spouse to have sabbatical time as well.