

## Taking Sabbath

Lately I've felt like my boundaries are way too squishy. I have so many blessings in my life but I don't enjoy them as much as I could, because everything feels so crammed together. As a working mom, my mind is always asking, "What do I need to do next? Laundry? Dishes? Work? Email?"

My husband suggested, "Maybe you should take a Sabbath."

What a concept! I grew up in the Bible Belt where "Sabbath" had a very specific meaning. Everyone went to church on Sundays. Later, as an adult in Los Angeles, I also became aware of how Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath, a little differently from how I did as a kid.

But what I realized recently is that I can take a self-created personal Sabbath, and give it my own meaning. For me, that would mean, at the very least, not thinking about what I need to do, but rather -- what do I want to do?

Or -- can I just *be* without having to *do* anything? Is that even possible?

There is this expression I heard recently on a podcast: *time affluence*. The idea is that, for so many of us, the feeling of being without time and constantly in a rush is a huge stressor that causes anguish and enormous problems in our lives. Time affluence is the opposite -- it's simply the feeling that you DO have plenty of time. That you're *wealthy* with time!

And you can create time affluence in your life *if you set aside the time for it*. You can look forward to your designated time-affluence time. That's your Sabbath.

It doesn't have to be an entire day. For me, it could easily just be, say, 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays, spending easy, fun time with my husband and my boys, maybe going outside, reading, playing games, painting with water colors ... but not thinking about all that's "undone" from the previous week.

I spoke with someone yesterday who says he takes a silent day each week, and that's *his* Sabbath. Mine wouldn't be silent, but it would definitely be disconnected from all my routine busy busyness.

So you can choose what you want on your own Sabbath, and the time you want to devote to it. It can be just for yourself, or it can include family and friends.

The key is to give a different *texture* to your time. Maybe your everyday life feels like tweed and you need a day of satin. If your days are too clock-oriented, take a break from looking at clocks. If your world tends to be noisy, find some quiet space. If you work alone all the time, reach out to friends. If you're always driving your kids around town, stop driving for a day.

Just take a pause from your normal routine. Ask yourself: What is the contrasting *texture* to my day-to-day life?

Or better yet: *What is my soul missing?*

Take the space to *feel what you're feeling*. Don't just numb yourself with distractions. I know it can actually be frightening to just sit with yourself and feel what's really going on – believe me, *I know!* – but that's how you invite in the possibility of more joy, and a deeper experience of life. That's how you get to experience peace in your heart. And life becomes more vibrant when your nervous system is settled and you're not hypervigilant all the time.

And ... of course (you knew I was going to say this, right?), please let go of constantly, compulsively checking your phone and email.

I could do a whole blog post about how electronic devices impact our modern lives and maybe I will some day, but for now I'll just state some basics. There's a ton of research out there that correlates levels of emotional distress with the amount of time people use their phones. *Anyone* who uses a cell phone can benefit from a practice of turning it off more often. Or just go for a walk without your phone. I promise you, it will be a different kind of walk.

I will say this too. There is a lot of *coercion* implicit in our relationships to our phones, even if it doesn't seem that way consciously. It may seem like "community" – all that sharing of photos with friends, text messages, videos, etc. but there is also the feeling that you have to be "on call" and responding all the time. Am I right?

People use devices to satiate their needs, but in fact *they themselves* are being used! Every time you log on and click on *anything* you can be sure that someone somewhere is collecting data about you, and selling it to someone. So ... on your Sabbath, take yourself off the market for a while!

Does that sound hard? What exactly do you think you're going to miss? Is there an itch inside that you're scratching when you check your email? If so, maybe stay with that itch. There is freedom in that. You'll see.

Set up an automatic email response, or a general notification to everyone: "I'm taking a break day. I'll get back to you tomorrow (or as soon as I can)."

It's amazing how quickly we can shift into a new perspective when we're intentional about it. I took a little "mini-Sabbath" just last night. I poured myself a little glass of wine, put my feet in these little spa treatment bags I love that exfoliate my feet and make them all soft, and I turned on my favorite TV show. Just like that, I felt like a little girl again!

Now I don't necessarily need to pamper myself on my Sabbath, but just doing something different from what I generally feel compelled to do is enough.

The pith of it for me is that I don't want life to go by too quickly. I have kids and I don't want to look up one day and see they're going to college and I didn't spend the quality of time I wanted to spend with them, and with my husband.

There is a saying that people who live their life without an eye on death are not really living, so I want to live in a way that is mindful of the whole spectrum of life. When your life is nearly over, what would you like to look back on, and remember having taken the time for? I know I'm going to die some day. So I want to be present for this amazing life I have now.

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So each month, I will suggest a little challenge that you can experiment with. You don't have to commit yourself to it forever, but just play with it, and see where it leads you if you're moved to do it. You may find it beneficial. Who knows? It may even be life-changing.

This month I'm inviting you to join me in creating a Sabbath for yourself. It doesn't have to be for an entire day, or even every week – just whatever works for you.

And please let me know how it goes!