

Sabbatical Guide

Why:

Sabbaticals are vital to those in full time ministry. Sabbaticals are not a vacation or furlough/ home assignment, but rather a focused and guided period of time to “disengage from normal ministry and leadership involvement to allow for serious evaluation of life and ministry”. (taken from Navigators Sabbatical Guideline)

This also provides the opportunity for spiritual renewal and rest as well as focused growth and development both personally and professionally.

When:

Ideally, a sabbatical should be preventative and proactive, not responsive to burn-out or exhaustion. Realizing though that both can occur, the right time to take a sabbatical can be assessed in 3 categories:

1. Considering a transition in ministry and/or life (ie. Retirement, moving locations, new marriage, taking a leadership position, or switching a ministry focus.)
2. Burn-out or exhaustion in your area of service, calling, or location has occurred.
3. If you have not taken a sabbatical within the past 7-10 years of service.

How

If you are considering a time of sabbatical begin by talking with a supervisor/leader, and refer to your field's policy manual on this procedure.

Obtain permission to take a Sabbatical and determine how long the sabbatical will be.

Based on the reason for a sabbatical the timeframe can vary.

At least a month at minimum, but typically sabbaticals last from 3-4 months,, but some people may need up to a full year.

What

A sabbatical should be a guided process and can be summarized in 3 phases:

Pre-Sabbatical – In the months prior to Sabbatical

- Obtain permission for Sabbatical
- Submit written request if mandatory
- Determine the purpose of your Sabbatical
- Determine how current job responsibilities will be handled while you are away and by whom
- Write Sabbatical Plan (See Appendix A on Ideas and Resources for Sabbatical Planning). Make sure to include time for rest, family, spiritual listening.
- Gather a Support team.
See Appendix B for how to form a Sabbatical Support team.
- Find a counselor to meet with through the Sabbatical process.
See Appendix E for suggested Counseling centers (worldwide) and online resources.
- Find a Sabbatical Coach (if desired).
See Appendix F for suggestions if a Sabbatical coach is desired.

Sabbatical – Journal major lessons learned and insights gained

- Decompress/Debrief-“Disconnect from work and normal life”
- Restoration- “Doing something you want to do”
- Reflection – “Lord, is there anything You want to say to me?”
- Refocus, Realign – “Lord, am I doing what I should be doing? What changes in life and ministry should I make?”

Re-entry – Slowly enter back into work responsibilities. (Depending on length of time gone this might look be considered “part time” for the first week or two. Do NOT rush back into responsibilities)

- Meet with supervisor and necessary staff to debrief what has happened in you. This may include discussion about change in ministry or position.
- Meet with supervisor and necessary staff to debrief what has happened at work while you were gone
- Make changes in personal schedule and work responsibilities to align with insights gained
- Arrange an accountability partner to make sure alignment is followed