

Sabbatical Suggestions and Ideas

Decide before you enter the actual Sabbatical time how much time you will give to each of these “periods”. (This can be worked out with a sabbatical coach and this is one of the benefits of having an advisor or coach to walk with during this process)

Below are suggestions for how the time for each stage can look:

Period 1: Decompress/Debrief

Suggested amount of time: **one month-6 weeks**

During the decompression period, you are learning to disconnect from work completely. **You might be surprised how hard it is to stop working**, to stop being needed every moment of the day by those you minister to. In this phase, you may feel sick, lonely or lost. This is quite normal.

Take time to have a formal debriefing. Ideally this is done away from where you live.

**Some home offices with OM offer debriefing. Contact your home office to see if this is a possibility or if they have suggestions of someone in your mother-language who would be able to offer a debriefing.*

A list of suggested debriefing/retreat centers is provided under **appendix C**

Period 2: Restoration

Suggested amount of time: **3 weeks-5 weeks**

Get away from current location (includes lots of physical and mental rest)

May include counseling or spiritual healing if necessary

In this second period, you are now free to enter into true rest with God.

You become more comfortable with *being, rather than doing*, as the source of your identity. That doesn't mean you sleep all day though!

Plan for this phase of sabbatical by: taking trips to places you've wanted to visit, doing creative projects, enjoying being with family or friends, reading, taking time to do enjoyable activities, etc.

*Is there an instrument you always wanted to learn to play? Maybe you could take an art class, write poetry, or design a treehouse for your kids. During this rest and restorative phase, **don't***

schedule too much. A few creative and fun activities that are “life-giving” are what this period calls for.

A List of retreat centers or vacation centers for missionaries is provided in **Appendix C**.

Period 3: Reflection

Suggested amount of time: **1 month- 6 weeks**

Include extended time alone (meditation, quiet space to consider what God wants to say about your current job responsibilities)

The third period is a time to hear from the Lord about the future.

*What is God wanting to speak to you about for the next season? (Be careful not to start working on those things, but just listen to Him. You may want to include times of *retreat* where you practice spiritual disciplines such as *silence* and *solitude*.)*

You can split this third phase into **two segments** if you would like:

1. Half of the time **listening**: think about going on a silent retreat during this time. Work with your Sabbatical coach and/or support team to listen. Ask questions that may help with self-reflection and areas growth is needed. Questions related to your ministry, personal life, passions, calling. Take this time to listen to God and others you trust.

A list of possible questions can be found in Appendix G

2. Half the time **learning** something new. *What would you love to learn more about?* This may be something related to your personal life, family or a hobby. Or it could be related to your ministry.

Some suggestions: healthy boundaries, organization with home schooling, investing in TCKS, building a healthy team, singleness, etc.

Period 4: Refocus/Realign/Prepare for ReEntry

Suggested amount of time: **2 weeks- 1 month**

This period is devoted to begin the process of assessing what is next as you look towards re-entry for ministry.

How do you align yourself with what you have learned during this sabbatical and how will it affect your direction for the future?

Will you return to your current position, ministry, place of service?
Is it time to move on to something or somewhere new?
If you stay what changes need to be made in your schedule?

It is suggested to have an accountability partner or coach to process these questions with. We need to spend time contemplating them for ourselves, but also have someone we trust speaking into our life and situations.

(If not for the entirety of the process at least for this portion make an effort to seek out a coach, mentor, or accountability partner to discuss refocusing and realigning with.)