

Reflections on Our Sabbatical Leave

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I thought perhaps the following personal reflections on the benefits of our sabbatical leave might assist you and your leadership teams as you consider the prospect of the same in your local setting. I also felt it might provide some personal insight to your Team Leader...

Rest – By definition, this is the essence of sabbatical. Until I took this time to “sit down” I did not realize how very physically, emotionally, and spiritually weary I was. One might consider it a “good tired,” marked with a satisfaction of accomplishment, but none the less, the weariness was real and was demanding a time for refreshment. We feel rested.

The “Helium Effect” – Sabbatical leave afforded me the opportunity to rise above the daily grind of ministry and refocus on the Main Thing, which is the Mission of God and the role He has ordained for me in that mission. This is the basis for sound vision-casting.

Self-Discovery – Every person is uniquely created and formed by God, and we are all wired differently. Part of success in ministry is found in discovering just how God has made me, and then responding accordingly. For instance, I have always had a great love and need for meaningful interaction with people. My best work and energy comes from such interaction. Sabbatical leave afforded opportunity to affirm that important piece of self-discovery in my solitude. It also forced me to practice one of the disciplines of a good leader, the discipline of solitude.

Learning and Recharging – For those of us who are constantly called upon to give ourselves away, time for personal recharging and learning become critical. The extended leave gave me time to study, read, pray, and listen to the Holy Spirit. It refueled my commitment to be a lifelong learner, and to be a leader of a learning organization. I don’t want to be reflected in Mark Twain’s infamous observation when he said, “The man died at 30 and they buried him at 60.”

The Joy of Addressing the Postponed – We all have that list of things that we intend to address “someday.” These months provided opportunity to accomplish a good number of things on my personal list, both recreational and in the arena of self-development. I read a good deal, spent time on the water, traveled, and spent time alone. Oh yes, there was also the “honeydew” list.

Releasing the Team – As leaders we must come to understand the art of healthy team formation and true delegation. Extended leave is one of the ultimate tests of how well we have done in preparing those around us to lead. I am delighted to say that our Network Leadership Team responded marvelously! Perhaps this says as much about the high quality of leadership to be found in each member of the team as it does about the Team Leader’s role. In any case, releasing the team was a success in my view!

Family – I spent a good deal of quality time with family, and it was deeply gratifying. Our family understands, and is deeply committed to vocational ministry in response to the call of God. None the less, the extra time to focus upon one another was a blessing. It is so typical to be stricken by the tyranny of times’ passage as we observe our grown-up children and exclaim, “Where did the time go?” The icing on the cake for the family aspect of our sabbatical culminated with the birth of our first grandchild, Isabella Ann, on October 8.