

“Sabbatical Slack Tide”

Main Points – Sabbatical Slack Tide

Title: Reflections on Sabbatical: A Season of Renewal and Transition

Sermon Summary: Pastor Rob shares his experiences from a recent three-month sabbatical, emphasizing how God used this time to refresh, heal, and prepare him and Pastor Christie for a new season of ministry. He discusses the importance of stepping back to gain perspective, unpacking emotional and spiritual baggage, and being open to God's sovereign guidance. The sermon highlights the transition from a season of incoming blessings to one of outflowing ministry, encouraging the congregation to find their place and pace in God's plan.

Key Points:

- The importance of sabbaticals for pastoral renewal and church health
- God's sovereignty in orchestrating experiences for growth and healing
- The need to revisit and process past experiences for emotional and spiritual health
- Transitioning from a season of receiving to a season of outflowing ministry
- Setting new boundaries and commitments for personal devotion and writing
- Shifting roles towards more fathering and mothering in ministry
- Anticipation of new connections and opportunities for the church beyond local boundaries

Scripture Reference:

- Zechariah 14:8-9 - Living waters flowing out from Jerusalem

Stories:

- The story of working construction and learning to step back for perspective
- Encounters during the sabbatical, including meeting a motorcycle tour guide named Tim
- The experience of fixing the sound system at a conference with Dutch Sheets
- Finding old prophetic words and dreams while unpacking boxes
- The analogy of the "slack tide" representing the current transitional phase
- Personal reflections on writing for the local newspaper and the final article written

Small Group Study Guide – Sabbatical Slack Tide

Small Group Guide: Reflections on Sabbatical and New Seasons

Key Takeaways:

1. The importance of stepping back to gain perspective in life and ministry
2. God's sovereignty in ordering our steps, even during times of rest
3. The value of revisiting our past to celebrate God's faithfulness and find healing
4. Embracing change and vulnerability as we enter new seasons
5. The significance of maintaining a strong devotional life and spiritual disciplines

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Rob mentioned the concept of "slack tide." How do you see this applying to your own life or our church community right now?
2. The sermon emphasized the importance of knowing your "place" and "pace" in God's kingdom. How do you discern these in your own life?
3. Pastor Rob shared about emotional healing he experienced during the sabbatical. Have you ever had a similar experience of unexpected healing when you stepped back from your normal routine?
4. How do you typically respond to seasons of change in your life? What helps you embrace vulnerability during these times?
5. The sermon touched on the idea of the church moving into a season of "overflow." What does this mean to you, and how might it look in practice?
6. Pastor Rob mentioned setting boundaries for his devotional time. How do you protect time for your own spiritual growth amidst busy schedules?

Practical Applications:

1. Take some time this week to reflect on your own history with God. Write down key moments of His faithfulness to you.
2. Evaluate your current spiritual disciplines. Is there an area you feel God calling you to strengthen or change?
3. Consider your role in the church's "overflow." What gifts or talents do you have that God might be calling you to use more actively?

4. Practice vulnerability in your small group by sharing an area of your life where you're experiencing change or feeling challenged.
5. Set a specific goal for your devotional life this week (e.g., waking up 30 minutes earlier for prayer, journaling your reflections on scripture).
6. Reflect on the "place" and "pace" God has for you right now. Pray for clarity if you're unsure, and discuss with a trusted friend or mentor.

Prayer Focus:

Thank God for seasons of rest and renewal. Ask for His guidance as individuals and as a church community in this new season. Pray for open and vulnerable hearts, ready to change and move with God's leading.

Discussion Questions – Sabbatical Slack Tide

How might taking time to 'step back' from our daily routines and responsibilities enhance our spiritual perspective and relationship with God?

In what ways can revisiting our past experiences and memories, both joyful and painful, contribute to our spiritual growth and healing?

How can we discern the difference between God's timing for change in our lives versus our own desires or societal pressures?

What does it mean to you personally to have a 'vulnerable heart' that is open to God's shaping and direction?

How might the concept of 'slack tide' apply to spiritual seasons in our lives, and how can we best utilize those moments of transition?

In what ways can we balance the need for personal spiritual devotion with the call to serve and minister to others?

How can we as individuals and as a church community prepare ourselves for new 'outflows' of ministry and purpose that God may be initiating?

What role do you think 'spiritual fathering and mothering' plays in the growth and development of a church community?

How can we cultivate a willingness to embrace change and transition in our spiritual lives, even when it feels uncomfortable or uncertain?

In what ways might God be calling you to 'unpack' certain areas of your life or past experiences for the purpose of future ministry or personal growth?

Devotional – Sabbatical Slack Tide

Here's a 5-day Bible reading plan and devotional guide:

Day 1: Embracing God's Sovereign Plan

Reading: Jeremiah 29:11-13

Devotional: Just as Pastor Rob's sabbatical journey was sovereignly orchestrated by God, our lives too are part of His grand design. Sometimes we may feel lost or question our path, but God promises that His plans for us are good. Today, reflect on how God has been guiding your life, even in unexpected ways. Are there areas where you need to trust His sovereignty more? Take time to seek Him wholeheartedly, knowing He will be found by those who earnestly search for Him.

Day 2: Finding Rest in God's Presence

Reading: Matthew 11:28-30

Devotional: The importance of dedicated time with God was emphasized in the Pastor Rob's renewed commitment to morning devotions. Jesus invites us to come to Him and find rest for our souls. In our busy lives, it's easy to neglect this vital spiritual practice. Today, consider how you can create space for uninterrupted time with God. What distractions or commitments might you need to adjust? Remember, true rest and refreshment come from abiding in His presence.

Day 3: Embracing Change and New Seasons

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Devotional: Pastor Rob spoke about entering a new season and the challenges of transition. Life is full of changing seasons, each with its purpose. Some seasons bring joy, others sorrow, but all are part of God's plan. Reflect on the season you're currently in. What might God be teaching you through it? How can you embrace the changes He's bringing, even if they're uncomfortable? Trust that God is working in every season of your life.

Day 4: Flowing Out in God's Purpose

Reading: Zechariah 14:8-9, John 7:37-39

Devotional: The image of living waters flowing out was central to the Pastor Rob's vision for the church. Jesus promises that rivers of living water will flow from those who believe in Him. This speaks of the Holy Spirit's work in and through us. Consider how God might want to use you to bless others. Are there gifts or experiences He's given you that could be a source of refreshment to those around you? Ask God to fill you afresh with His Spirit and to use you as a channel of His love and grace.

Day 5: Healing and Restoration through Remembrance

Reading: Psalm 103:1-5

Devotional: Pastor Rob's journey involved revisiting past memories, both joyful and painful, leading to healing and restoration. God often uses our memories to remind us of His

faithfulness and to bring closure to unresolved issues. Take time today to reflect on your own journey with God. What blessings can you recount? Are there painful experiences you need to bring before Him for healing? Thank Him for His redemptive work in your life, knowing that He renews your youth like the eagle's.