

THE SABBATH LIVING INITIATIVE

An invitation to practice Sabbath together as a seminary community

Problem

In the Ten Commandments, God gave us the gift of Sabbath rest. This day of stopping, resting, and coming into the presence of the Lord benefits everyone—men and women, laborers and professionals, professors and students. For thousands of years, society stopped one day in seven; only in the last few decades has the Sabbath gone missing. In the context of seminary life and mission, many of our graduates leave seminary ill prepared for the demands of our 24/7 world. The result: clergy burnout, unhealthy family relationships, and leadership fatigue.

Proposed Solution

The Sabbath Living Initiative calls the seminary community to reclaim the gift of Sabbath rest. Rather than following a strict set of rules, we encourage people to rediscover Sabbath rhythms and experience the benefits of holy rest.

Structure

Each participant or family will be asked to make a 14-week commitment (Lent through Pentecost Sunday) to practicing Sabbath one day a week. Groups will be intergenerational when possible, with 12-15 people per group. The preferred meeting time is Sunday for two hours (e.g., 5pm-7pm), during which fellowship and a potluck meal will be shared. Time will also be set aside to pray, play, and work through the joys and struggles of developing Sabbath practices. Groups will meet in homes or on campus. Each group will be given copies of the *24/6* book and DVD to help guide their journey.

Leadership

Group leaders will complete a short orientation and be introduced to resources, including the www.sabbathliving.org website and *24/6* DVD, that will facilitate an environment of learning by doing. Leaders will be encouraged to meet monthly to share experiences and support one another.

Tracking Progress

Before and after surveys will capture changes in Sabbath practices and the effects of Sabbath rest on physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Communications

Participation will be invitational, with e-mails, announcements at chapel, notices on the website, and informational posters providing sign up information.

Timeline

Spring/Summer

- Meet with key members of Cabinet to discuss Sabbath Living Initiative. Appoint VP-level point person to lead the Initiative.
- Establish Sabbath Living team consisting of a Vice President, the Dean of Chapel, several Spiritual Life faculty members, resident advisors, and student leadership. The purpose of this team is to create grassroots support within the seminary community.

Fall

- Share Sabbath message with Board, faculty, and staff, as appropriate.
- Distribute copies of *24/6* book to seminary community at all campuses, as well as to select alumni and online students. Blessed Earth will donate these resources.
- Host Sabbath Chapels. (For example, at Asbury Timothy Tennent, President; Ellsworth Kalas, President Emeritus; and James Thobaben, Dean, School of Theology and Spiritual Formation, have been invited to give the Sabbath chapel sermons.)
- Host workshops. Topics may include:
 - Burnout Prevention God's Way
 - Keeping Sabbath as a Family
 - Sabbath Keeping and MinistryWorkshops will be free and open to the seminary community.

January/February

- Invite Seminary community to participate in the Sabbath Living Initiative from Lent through Pentecost Sunday.
- Work with Communications Department to share Sabbath-keeping testimonials.
- Establish small groups and train group leaders. Distribute initial surveys.
- Identify group leaders and hold orientation.

February-May

- Groups of 10-15 practice keeping the Sabbath in community from Lent through Pentecost Sunday. Groups will share a meal (funding provided for a weekly roast or equivalent) and discuss the joys and difficulties of Sabbath keeping. Participants will be invited to place a votive ("Sabbath light") in their window.

Summer 2015

- Conduct follow-up surveys. Solicit feedback from group leaders.