

Sabbath Retreat Overview -2011

The teaching and value of a biblical Sabbath is something that has faded from the vocabulary and lives of true believers in the recent decades. But as the world continues to speed up with innovation and technology, the need to slowdown gets greater and greater. Nowhere is this more evident than in the lives of pastors and their churches. With burn out and divorce rates equaling those of the general public there is an obvious need for something¹. That something is a return of the biblical Sabbath.

Jim and Lois Anderson know the importance of this truth first hand. Jim and Lois have learned from their personal experience how the demands of ministry can push you to the very edge of your personal boundaries and, sometimes beyond. Jim lived the same lifestyle that a majority of Christians, especially pastors, often follow. He tried to be all things to all people while striving to do more at the expense of his health, personal relationships, and his walk with God. The consequences of this lack of healthy boundaries can all too often result in moral and ministry failure. The answer according to Andersons is a return to the practice of a biblical Sabbath.

Several times each year, Jim and Lois host Sabbath Rest Retreats at beautiful Timber Bay Retreat Center (www.timberbay.org) on Whitefish Lake in northern Minnesota. Set in the northern pines, Timber Bay is a rustic yet well apportioned facility that serves the Sabbath ideal well: quiet, restful, comfortable. Some may ask "What will I do there?" A usual retreat starts as softly as a gentle rain on Sunday evening with a time of fellowship and light snacks by the fire while the guests and leaders get acquainted, decompress and disconnect from the world for a while. On Monday morning, after a light breakfast, the group begins learning the Sabbath concept from Jim and Lois. Throughout the day the Andersons unpack the Sabbath as they share from many biblical examples as well as their own life and ministry experiences. Their sessions are intermixed with meals and breaks for personal reflection and fellowship. The sessions continue until evening when the group returns to a time of conversation, prayer and occasional spontaneous worship.

Tuesday morning starts with breakfast followed by a short briefing culminating with an opportunity to take the Sabbath teachings for a "test drive" by having an actual Sabbath experience in the beautiful surroundings of Timber Bay. The guests are released for three hours to meet with the Lord and practice what they have learned. After this time, they regather for lunch at Noon and lunch is followed by a debriefing and a final teaching session. A typical retreat is finished at about 3:00pm on Tuesday.

If the "typical" retreat schedule or location does not fit the needs of a particular ministry leadership team, Jim and Lois have been know to take the Sabbath Retreat "on the road," altering the schedule and location to better suit a particular ministry. Jim has even taken the Sabbath Rest message to Russia and Nairobi, Africa.

You may be asking, "Does Sabbath really make a difference?" In answer to that question, hear what some who have attended a Sabbath Rest Retreat have to say about the experience and the practice of a regular Sabbath:

"I love being a Pastor. I really do and I realize that I do not always feel this way. Pastoral ministry can be very difficult at times. It can be emotionally draining, time consuming, physically demanding, and sometimes it can crush me spiritually. In seminary we were counseled that in times that are difficult to 'keep on keeping on.' As a Pastor we were to remember our call from God. The primary thing that keeps me, or reminds me of that call the most is the connection I experience with Him

¹ <http://www.pastorburnout.com/pastor-burnout-statistics.html>

during my regular Sabbath time. Right now in ministry that is very important to me but there are other benefits as well."

Dennis Wadsworth, Senior Pastor
Hope EFC in Fertile, Minnesota

"I invited my entire leadership team and staff to participate in a Sabbath Rest weekend with Jim Anderson. It worked out so well to bring Jim and his staff to a camp nearby so that we could maximize participation from our team. I recommend this approach as it has helped my elders better understand the importance of a healthy pastor and staff team. Additionally, I have seen the prayers at our staff meetings deepen as a result of implementing the weekly Sabbath Rest. The value of such a weekend cannot be overestimated."

Marlin Mohrman Sr. Pastor of
Morris EFC, Morris, MN

"Jim, I can't tell you how much I enjoyed our "Sabbath Rest" morning on our staff retreat weekend. I can honestly say that I have never experienced anything like it before, I was truly refreshed. I have passed on the material to my wife and we are going to start practicing it. God Bless you, your family and your ministry."

Jeff Gagnon, Executive Pastor/Missions
Brooklyn Park EFC, Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

Lastly, here is an extended testimonial of the Sabbath change as seen over a few weeks:

October 13, 2010

Sandie and I want to thank you again for the Sabbath-rest teaching & retreat. I did a Sabbath-rest in the very early hours of Tuesday AM and I loved it. I can't believe I have missed this concept in my life and ministry. I have reviewed all the notes from the retreat, read some of your book and read some of Heschel's book as well. I spent time walking and praying and not being guilty and enjoying God's presence in ways I haven't been able to do for many years. It is amazing to me how "thinking about it differently" and "seeing God's purposes differently" from how you have ever viewed them makes literally a world of difference. I think that if I had understood this about two years ago, I would not be in the burnout I am presently in. But it is probably true that if I wasn't in the "condition" I am in I would not have been as open to attending the retreat and hearing the teaching

October 25, 2010

I am doing better – since practicing the Sabbath-rest. I am actually loving this new understanding of Sabbath and have been amazed at how fruitful it is. I believe God does "bless" keeping the Sabbath – even in the more "abbreviated" form of a four-hour time block. I do so appreciate your teaching on this foundational truth. I can't believe I have missed it for so long in ministry. I also am realizing why a daily devotional time is not a substitute for Sabbath -rest. May God continue to bless you as you help us pastors with this truth that so many of us have missed.

By the way, I shared a summary of the material you presented to us at the Retreat with a Senior Pastor's Affinity group I am in. I was amazed how each man related to the need for Sabbath-rest but does not practice it (one guy does a monthly day of prayer – but doesn't always get it in).

November 10, 2010

I am continuing to "do" my "Sabbath Rest" time each week. I am finding it more and more refreshing, more and more blessed, more and more "important" to my life and to my walk with the Lord and my service for Him. I just have to thank you – God has used you in my life in a wonderful way and do deeply appreciate what you have taught me and continue to teach me through your book. I have read your book once and am on the second trip through it really "reading and studying" it this time through. As I have said before, I can't believe I have "missed" this fundamental and foundational truth in my life. I am ashamed and astonished that this is so but am delighted to have found it – even at this time in my life of ministry.

Terry Kern, Senior Pastor

First EFC, Bismarck, ND

Is you are interested in attending a Sabbath Rest Retreat, check the NCD calendar for upcoming schedule retreats or contact Kelley Johnson, Kelley.johnson@frontiernet.net