

May 05
Jeff Brown

My wife, Sheryl, and I will be married 12 years this Summer. We have a wonderful marriage and have enjoyed raising four beautiful children together. Their ages are 2, 4, 6, and 8. Whenever people say, “How many children do you have?” or “What are their ages?” I tell them: “Four kids. Two, four, six, eight, who do we appreciate?” MOMMY and DADDY! J They usually throw in a comment or two about what a busy household we must be. They sometimes say, “I bet they really keep you running!” I can’t deny they really keep us running, but we have also sought to intentionally set aside time for ourselves as a couple and individually on a weekly basis for SABBATH REST.

As a pastor, one of the things that is most challenging, especially as a church planter, is the issue of FINDING TIME TO REST. I’m no expert when it comes to how to get all the tasks done each week and honor God in the process, but I am deeply committed to running the race for the long haul. Jim asked me to share a few thoughts about how a young couple with four young children can experience Sabbath and rest in our weekly routine. (We’re still young if we’re mid to late thirties, right?!?! J)

One of the things we had to evaluate at the beginning when we were setting this pattern for Sabbath rest was HOW CAN WE BOTH GET SOME ALONE TIME EACH WEEK and HOW CAN WE GET SOME TIME ALONE TOGETHER? We’ve come up with a plan that works very well for us and we’d encourage you as fellow pastor couples to consider this idea too if it fits you.

We determined first that I would take a day off each week for the purpose of Sabbath rest and would not compromise it under any circumstance. If you believe that you and your spouse deserve and even NEED a day a week to replenish yourselves, here’s a few thoughts that have worked well for us.

I enjoy my alone time with God most in the mornings. Sheryl enjoys her alone time with God in the evenings after the kids go to bed. We decided that I would take my 5 hour Sabbath time from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and would be left in the house alone for those five hours every Monday! Talk about a GIFT! I am NEVER alone in the house otherwise! J When I assist Sheryl in getting our two oldest ready for school and our youngest two dressed and into the van with a bag of cereal and a sippy cup, she commits to driving our kids to school and then taking the other two out for the morning away from the house, usually grocery shopping at a larger store in a larger town nearby. I sit in my living room with breakfast and coffee in hand and pray, reflect, read, relax and ponder and sometimes even just SIT and do NOTHING. I usually take a walk or exercise as well during that time because I need it and also because it clears my mind. Sheryl returns to feed the kids some lunch and then puts our youngest two to bed for a nap about 12:30 p.m. and I am refreshed and have enjoyed being alone with God just for me.

Here begins our DATE TIME. We spend from 1 p.m. to about 2:30 p.m. alone at home with our youngest kids sleeping. We read, talk, and discuss various family issues. We intentionally listen and focus on one another. We find that because our kids go to bed and stay in bed for naps, we are able to really relax at home together and give each other our undivided attention. We choose many times to read a book about marriage—maybe only a chapter or so, and reflect on how we’re doing. Sometimes we problem solve or talk about our finances. Because it’s our date time every week, we have flexibility to use the time as we like without paying a sitter.

Sheryl takes off late afternoon about 4 p.m. and I take all four of my kids for the evening. I am generally at home with them (we find that most conducive to their stability, homework, music lessons, etc.) and Sheryl LOVES TO ESCAPE! JJ She spends the entire evening from 4 p.m. on until she wants to come home (which is often quite late) and enjoys reading, journaling, praying, working on her Bible study

lessons and even spends some of those evenings at a local scrapbooking store where she cuts and glues and talks with other women. Once in awhile she meets a friend for dinner out and just enjoys time with a dear friend. I truly enjoy spending the entire evening with the kids. They have my undivided attention and we usually have a nice dinner, wrestle and then read some “Little House” before bed.

I love the way we give our Mondays to ourselves as a gift. We aren’t perfect at it, but we’ve found that there isn’t anyone else who will fight for it on our behalf. WE HAVE TO! We must value our own personal rest and restoration so highly that we guard Mondays as a day for God to meet us, restore us and encourage us as we begin each new week! Especially as young families with small children, we must invest in our own Sabbath rest with God to be the parents and the spouses we desire to be. Thank God for rest! I hope these ideas are helpful and feel free to call me if you’d like to talk more specifically about how Sabbath rest CAN fit into your active lives in ministry! God bless you!

Jeff Brown
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