

Sabbatical Plan and Prayers for Bro. Carl

I cannot express the gratitude, love, and depth of emotion that I feel towards my church family for providing this sabbatical for our pastors and specifically me and my family. I was thinking about it and I am pretty confident that I have not taken time off for two Sundays in a row (outside of surgery) since I have been in ministry or a part of ministry, which is most of my life, if not all. What a blessing and a privilege to serve in a church that would love its ministers in this way. Thank you all.

I feel that in this season of my ministry I am in need of inspiration and strength, power and passion, rest and revival. I find myself longing to follow the call of Jesus when he told the disciples in Mark 6:31, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” I do this. My time of devotion, prayer and scripture reading has become an absolute balm to me in the last couple of years. Yet I find I want more, need more. I feel I am on the cusp of a breakthrough when life rolls in and I move on. I long to delve into the truth of Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

I have been told the purpose of a Sabbatical is rest and renewal primarily, and other desires like education or research should be secondary. I appreciate the heart and intention of our church. When consulting with others about my plan for my sabbatical, I was encouraged to think of what brings me peace, what rejuvenates my soul, what invigorates my energy and passion. I immediately think of high mountains, deep waters, and open spaces. I have had a spiritual connection to nature, or I guess I should say that I feel closer to our God when I am separated from the world and admiring His creation. As a child I spent most of my free time in the woods exploring. I continued this hobby into adulthood and can remember many important conversations with the Lord and pivotal decisions that were made in the solitude of the outdoors. Like David, I see the Lord in nature. It is amazing to me the peace I feel when I see the great wilderness, majestic peaks, or reflective water. The Creator’s presence overwhelms me. I feel like I reconnect to the ‘fountain of life’ and find rest and refuge when I spend time hiking, meditating on the Lord, reading scripture, praying without ceasing. I especially love it when I get to have some of that kind of time with Tara. She loves the outdoors and thrives when we get to spend time together exploring. When I see her relaxed and happy, it is contagious and healing to my soul. A few years ago, I was approached by a retreat center in Montana and invited to visit with Tara for a week disconnected from the world. They encourage quiet time to rest and read, hike and explore. I plan to go there with Tara. Tara has always wanted to see Glacier National Park. So, I plan on flying us to Montana, renting a car, spending 3 days visiting the park, then spending 6 days at the retreat—totally disconnected from technology and immersed in prayer, reading, scripture, and nature.

Due to the distance of our families, most of our time off has been spent with my wife’s family and is very rarely spent with just my wife and children. So, when I return from Montana, I plan to spend time focusing on my youngest son, Jacob, who is 15 and needs some time with his dad. We have planned a camping trip for a few days to bond.

As far as study and professional development, I have been studying the need and effects of prayer and scripture in our worship and look forward to having time to search out answers and direction from the Lord. To that end, I am currently reading the latest textbook from Dr. Joseph Crider: Scripture-Guided Worship. He is a leader in our field of ministry and the Dean of Church Music and Worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. It is my plan that I will study his book during my Sabbatical, and we have an appointment to discuss how to implement his ideas into our current circumstances and worship style.

For the remaining time, approximately two weeks, I will worship with a couple of local churches, and I plan rest and to follow the advice of RT Kendall. He was asked after 70 years of ministry what his advice would be to his younger self and to young ministers today. He said, "Know your Bible and pray a lot. God wants you to know His Word and His ways". I want to delve into scripture without interruption and to pray through my thoughts without an agenda or time limit.

If you are inclined to pray with me and for me, I have a few requests:

- My prayer is that this time will deepen my faith, enhance my worship, reset my priorities, and fill my cup with love, gratitude, energy, passion, and insight that I can bring into my ministry at NHBC.

- I pray that my wife and family will feel special and important and vital to my heart and our ministry and truly loved and appreciated by their Husband/Dad

- I am seeking the Lord's guidance about my continuing education and special projects he may have for me.

- Pray for the several leaders and staff in our church as they work hard to cover my position and to bring you God-honoring worship. We have some wonderful things planned; I will truly miss being here.