



# The Gift of Sabbath

*This Lent your family is invited to explore Sabbath as a way of being, outside the demands, expectations, and economics of ordinary life. Sabbath is a gift, a means of resistance to the culture of NOW, a halting of the dramatic anti-neighborliness to which our society is madly and uncritically committed. By our practice of Sabbath, we may recover a full sense of self. Use the Sabbath practice suggestions below individually or as a family. Additional Sabbath resources will be posted weekly on the Faith at Home Blog, NorthbrookUMC.org.*

*February 18: Resist Shame. Stand for forgiveness.*

How often do we add to our calendars out of guilt or shame? This week, offer forgiveness for the times the schedule has become overloaded and the times family members have snapped at one another over the stress of the calendar. Together, identify family & individual activities that are renewing. Start by making a list of things that you do to relax. Then, sort these activities into those that offer **escape** (mindless internet scrolling, for example) and those that are **restorative – feeding our hearts and souls**. Block out family time for these restorative activities. Sabbath doesn't need to be a certain day of the week or a certain length of time. Sabbath helps us to resist the pressure to fill every moment of our time. Visit <https://www.parents.com/fun/activities/5-mindfulness-activities-you-can-do-as-a-family/> for restorative activities to try as a family.

*February 25: Resist worry. Stand for gratitude.*

How often do we worry about the future, robbing ourselves of peace in the present? This week, practice gratitude for the good things God has provided in this moment. Release worry through Sabbath moments of mindfulness. If you have five minutes, take a walk, write a thank you note, or listen to music. If you have one minute, close your eyes and breathe, do some stretches, or give a hug. For more one and five-minute suggestions, download the Sabbath Cards from Traci-Smith.com: <http://www.traci-smith.com/sabbath-notecards-helping-families-rest-spiritual-practice-faithfulfamilies/>

*March 4: Resist Perfection. Stand for Compassion.*

How often does technology tempt us with a false sense of what a perfect life looks like and sow seeds of division, rather than compassion, between friends and family? This week, find some device free time as a family. Search out connections IRL (in real life). Up for a challenge? March 9-10 is a national day of unplugging from technology – a perfect opportunity for finding Sabbath. Be sure to discuss how it felt to take a break from screens. Learn more at: <http://www.sabbathmanifesto.org/>

### *March 11: Resist Scarcity. Stand for Abundance.*

How often do we hold tightly to our time and possessions because we are afraid that there isn't enough? Competition drives our work and our schools. Living abundantly is about acknowledging that God has provided more than enough, provided we pay attention not just to what we need, but what others need as well. This week, search for ways to live abundantly by give to others. Find time to spend with someone seeking company. Find ways to give to those who have material needs – homeless shelters are always in need of basic items like socks. Donate what you are no longer using to a worthy cause. While counterintuitive, giving to others shows us the way to live abundantly.

### *March 18: Resist Guilt. Stand for Peace.*

How often do we feel guilty about the ways we spend our time? Sabbath doesn't magically remove our feelings of guilt or shorten our to do list, but rather creates a "structure to hold it all," a place in time where we can find peace. Mary Ann McKibben Dana compares sabbath to a "cathedral in time," a structure of sacred moments ([player.vimeo.com/video/74475980](http://player.vimeo.com/video/74475980)). This week, name the most important building blocks of Sabbath for you and for your family: time with loved ones, time in nature, stillness, unplugging technology, practicing gratitude, blocking off time in your calendar... What Sabbath practices will you continue after Lent? What new Sabbath practices would you like to try? How does practicing Sabbath help you connect with yourself, those around you, and God?

#### *Additional Lent & Sabbath Resources:*

***Making Room: A Child's Guide to Lent and Easter*** by Laura Alary - presents Lent as a special time for creating a welcoming space for God. Other books offer excellent ideas for going through the Lenten season with children, but *Make Room* uniquely connects its projects to the story of Jesus. Simple and practical activities such as baking bread, having a neighbor over for dinner, uncluttering your room, and watching less TV become acts of justice and kindness, part of a life of following and imitating Christ, and a way to make room for God in our lives and in the world around us.

***Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time*** by Mary Ann McKibben Dana- "Life felt like a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle with 600 pieces." So writes MaryAnn McKibben Dana in the introduction of her book. As she considered her family's frenetic suburban existence--a relentless list of work, errands, carpool, dishes, email, bills, yardwork--she knew something had to change.

***Sabbath as Resistance*** – by Walter Brueggemann - Brueggemann calls out our 24/7 society of consumption, a society in which we live to achieve, accomplish, perform, and possess. We want more, own more, use more, eat more, and drink more. Brueggemann shows readers how keeping the Sabbath allows us to break this restless cycle and focus on what is truly important: God, other people, all life.

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Written for Northbrook United Methodist Church, [NorthbrookUMC.org](http://NorthbrookUMC.org)

by Christine V Hides, Director of Ministries with Children and Youth