

Young Adult Sabbath Retreat Opening Session

In our fast paced lives, we recognize the need for Sabbath but many times we are unable or unwilling to create the space needed to honor the Sabbath in meaningful and rejuvenating ways.

Sabbath is not a quick-fix to a harried lifestyle. It is not a temporary solution to the underlying need for rest and renewal. Instead, it is a deeper connection to that which gives us rest and nourishment for our bodies, minds and souls. Often times we do not have the opportunity to identify and get in touch with what is causing our need for Sabbath. We can become so removed from recognizing our stressors that they begin to reshape our lives into a new “normal” – one that is filled with aches, pains, fatigue, and other physical, emotional and spiritual turmoil. This imbalance invades our lives and out of exhaustion or desperation, we find ourselves longing for some sacred time.

At this point, the speaker can illustrate or narrate a time in his/her life that was desperately in need of Sabbath.

This time together is a time for you to become more balanced in your life. It is a time to return your focus to God and the life-giving experiences God wants you to have. During this time, you will give up those things that take away the attention between you and God and focus on what needs to happen both during this time and when you return home.

God created you to be the best person you can be. God also desires you to be balanced in those things that relate to your physical, emotional and spiritual well-being. God does not want you to be stressed out perpetually or in physical pain or find yourself with too much to do and too little time. Sabbath refers to the opportunity for you to rebalance your life and refocus on your priorities. It is about reconnecting with God. This means that you can be intentional about the ways you choose to practice Sabbath. While there are many definitions of Sabbath, there are also many different practices or expressions of Sabbath.

Some people think of Sabbath as physical time apart from something such as work, family, television or school. Some think of Sabbath as a particular action that can return you to harmony such as exercises like yoga, taking a walk or even going to bed regularly at a “decent” hour. Sabbath can also be looked at as a way of life, a pattern that becomes a lifestyle that routinely draws you back to God.

Sometimes practicing Sabbath is an individual task, one that helps you connect intimately with God. Other times, Sabbath is a communal act where the presence of God can be seen or felt through other people and a shared experience.

There are things that Sabbath is not. Sabbath is not meant to be viewed as a competition with other parts of your life. It is not the same thing as a “vacation” and saying that you are taking a Sabbath as opposed to a vacation can cause confusion. Sabbath is not always about getting away from your surroundings although such retreat can be helpful. And in our busy life, it is more

directed or intentional than just “vegging out on the couch”. Sabbath is about Being with God and with others.

At this point, the speaker can talk about some things that they do to create Sabbath in their life. They might also talk about practices they have tried that have not worked for them.

Sabbath practices can vary over the course of your life depending on your life stage or circumstances. Sometimes it can take a while to find what works for you and remember that what works for someone else might not be what works for you. Keep in mind too, those things you might not naturally be drawn to could be what are most helpful as a Sabbath practice. For instance, an extroverted person might not naturally be drawn to walking the labyrinth but may find that it is what helps keep him/her centered. And if not, it was a good chance to find out more about what he/she likes and doesn't like. A word of caution: do not give up on a practice right away because it doesn't “feel right”. Developing these practices is part of the journey of discovering Sabbath for yourself. One suggestion is to set a time limit on how long you will try a practice. Allow yourself to have freedom in the process of choosing spiritual practices.

Some of the practices that you will experience in your time here will be individually based and others will be communally based. Feel free to follow where God is leading you.

Again, the practices and expressions of Sabbath are to reconnect with God. They can help you rejoice and celebrate God's presence in your life. It can make you a healthier, happier person.

Think about the questions that you were asked during the reflection time. What about Sabbath are you intrigued by? What causes anxiety when talking about Sabbath?

This time is for you. It is a time to take up something or put aside something. It is time for you to reconnect with God and simply BE.