

## Key ideas in Sabbatical Planning

1. Stating one to three major goals you'd like to accomplish (or whatever you choose - no magic number here). These can be as simple as regaining ministry perspective, discovering a fresh touch of God, stepping away to see the church and your leadership of it from a distance, etc.
2. Laying out a plan. This will help you make the most of the time, and keep you tracking. Most of us in ministry are so schedule/people oriented (driven??) that when faced with a large block of uncommitted time, we eventually lock up. Perhaps not for the first few weeks, but shortly thereafter! The plan can be as simple as taking a sheet of paper and using the "8 R's" as a template:

**Relax    Recreation    Rest    Renewal    Revival    Rethinking    Refocusing    Return**

Under the columns (or groups of columns...Relax, Recreation, Rest might have some combined activities, for example), lists what you'd like to do. Trips, books, seminars, church visits, family trips, etc. Involve your wife in this as well; generally our ladies have better insight into our needs than we do! Also, engage the family as much as possible in the planning and taking of sabbatical. Certainly plan out some alone time, as God generally speaks best in times of solitude. And don't feel you need to be extremely detailed in this - in other words, don't make the planning an overwhelming activity!

3. Identify a trusted person to serve as a mentor/director. This does not need to be a counselor/counseling type of thing. It can be a friend (not from church) who can speak into your life. Review the plan with him, and plan to meet once a month for a "reality check". Perhaps someone from the pastors' group with which you meet? If you're not certain, I may have some suggestions for you (once you get a plan in place, I may have some suggested resources to help fulfill it as well).
4. Engage the church where possible. They should not be constantly encroaching on your time, but simple things like sharing an abbreviated version of the plan with them, giving them a prayer guide to be praying with you as you go, occasionally sending reports back on what's happening, God sightings, etc. Also, plan a reentry strategy - some time of report to the church. This could be a written document, a "town hall meeting", a coffee time, etc. This whole experience can be a real teachable moment for the church - they all need their moments of sabbatical times; perhaps not as structured but just as intentional. You are paving the way for a new tradition in the life of the church.