

FOR
SABBATH'S
SAKE

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Embracing
Your Need for
Rest, Worship, and
Community

J. DANA TRENT

 UPPER
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FOR SABBATH'S SAKE: Embracing Your Need for Rest, Worship, and Community
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For Judy and Gail, two little girls who refused
to go to the movies on the sabbath,
and
for you who long for sabbath—may you find rest,
devotion, and community in these pages.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Q-Tips and Botox

CHAPTER TWO: Sabbath Roots

CHAPTER THREE: Sabbath, Culture, and an Economy of Frenzy

CHAPTER FOUR: A Different Calling

CHAPTER FIVE: Sabbath as Rest

CHAPTER SIX: Sabbath as Worship

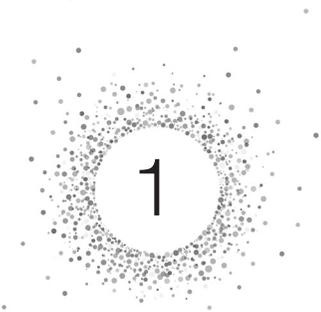
CHAPTER SEVEN: Sabbath as Community

CHAPTER EIGHT: My Sabbath Journey (What I've Learned So Far)

CHAPTER NINE: Crafting Your Sabbath Plan

APPENDIX: Sabbath Resources

NOTES



1

Q-TIPS AND BOTOX

The Sabbath is a day for the sake of life.

—ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL, *THE SABBATH*

Last week, I lost a Q-tip in my ear.

I'd been making the bed, rehearsing lesson plans, brushing my teeth, and mindlessly bobbing a cotton swab in and out of my head. I was already ten minutes late for work when I saw the asymmetrical stick in the trash can. I bent over and felt a tickle. An awkward ear selfie revealed that the cotton tail had disappeared into my skull.

Oh well, I thought. *It's not really that big of a deal. It's not like it's going anywhere.*

I texted my husband, Fred, as I sat in traffic, and he called me immediately.

"Is the *entire* Q-tip stuck in your ear?"

"Nope. Just the end thingy."

"The what?"

"The tail thing, the cotton thing, the swab thing, the whatev—"

"You need to go to urgent care *immediately*," he said. I could hear him typing in the background.

"Like, right now? I've got to teach."

“Go!” he urged. “You can’t just leave a Q-tip in your ear. You could lose your hearing.”

“What?” I asked.

“Hearing loss! You could lose your hearing!”

“Huh?”

“Call me when you’re done,” he said and hung up the phone.

I recruited the college librarian as an emergency substitute teacher for my freshman composition class. An hour later, a physician’s assistant removed the fluffy culprit.

“You need to slow down,” she sighed, shaking her head. “Read this.” She handed me a compulsory brochure on how to prevent foreign objects from becoming lodged in facial orifices—a guide for parents whose toddlers shove rocks up their noses.

My students clapped when I returned to campus. I’d survived *another* ridiculous disaster. Just two weeks prior, I’d forgotten how to conjugate irregular verbs in my mother tongue.

“I have *readed* your essays,” I said to twenty-five perplexed college students. They were used to my flustered self—always stressed out and often distracted—but that semester had been particularly bad for me. I was working four part-time jobs in three counties, frequently interrupting lectures to retrieve a silver tube of peppermint essential oil to roll over my brow bone. The oil usually dripped into my eyes, rendering me temporarily visually impaired. Students giggled while I taught with my eyes closed. I used the oil so often that my students began calling it my “crack stick.”

Stressed Out

I am a *migraineur*, a fancy term for people who experience the sensation of ice picks being shoved into their brains. Nearly thirty-five million Americans suffer from migraines, creating a multibillion-dollar industry to treat them. My migraines are caused by nearly anything: light, food, smells, weather changes, hormone fluctuations, too much sleep, too little sleep, screen watching, and intense conversations. Most recently, the status of my illness progressed to *chronic migraine*, meaning I spend half my life feeling like I have an ax in my head.

“Lighten up,” people suggested, chalking up my condition to perfectionism and spreading myself too thin. For them, the solution was easy. But I’d tried everything: relaxing, praying, meditating, over-the-counter medications, prescription medications, acupuncture, acupressure, yoga poses, herbal steam baths, ice therapy, heat therapy, a diet consisting of fresh leaves and air. Cinnamon paste often covered my forehead, and I swallowed tablespoons of Sriracha with a lemon water and pink Himalayan salt chaser. The peppermint “crack stick” was acceptable in public; the suspicious brown substance smeared on my face not so much.

I continued to work my jobs, to care for my mother suffering from dementia, and to provide volunteer pastoral care because I felt I had to. My chronic migraine diagnosis urged me to take on more. I didn’t want to be viewed as weak or compromised by my health. I put on a stoic face, but all I wanted to do was die in a cold, lavender-infused basement.

At the height of my condition, my neurologist suggested I participate in a clinical study comparing the effects of two FDA-approved chronic migraine medications: Topomax, an anti-seizure drug, and Botox. Famous for its nearly eight hundred medical uses, Botox (botulinum toxin) is known most commonly for its wrinkle erasing. When used for migraines, both Topomax and Botox ease the frequency of chronic migraine, ideally putting the patient’s condition into “remission.” The study would offer me access to free medication and careful monitoring. I was sick enough to try anything, including donating my head and time to science and exposing myself to possible botulism poisoning.

The study randomized me to Topomax first, which works brilliantly for many but terribly for others. For six weeks, I powered through, determined to make the anti-convulsant medication my Holy Grail. I lost ten pounds (not a bad side effect) but lived with constant tingling in my hands and toes, forgot my own language, suffered from a perpetual cold, and became depressed. Later, when I’d discontinued my use of the drug, I heard a neurologist interviewed by National Public Radio call Topomax “Dopomax,” citing its massive list of side effects, including cognitive impairment.

Deciding that the side effects far outweighed any reduction in migraines, the clinical study coordinator switched me to Botox. I would receive thirty-two injections quarterly in my neck, scalp, temples, and forehead. According to the research, I’d either have fewer migraines and

the wrinkle-free forehead of a twenty-year-old or continued migraines and facial paralysis. Hoping for my miracle cure, I muddled on.

After several rounds of Botox injections, my migraine severity and frequency decreased. Episodes that typically rendered me useless occurred less frequently. I was not cured, but my life felt less interrupted. I began to see an existence beyond being sick.

My chronic condition meant I needed continued medical treatment, but I also knew I needed to lean into another way of life. Living through Topomax's side effects made me realize I was rejecting self-care in favor of fighting physical decline and depression with avoidance and busyness. But those weren't holistic solutions. My migraines had always been less severe during seasons of my life when I was *both* on the correct medication *and* calm and connected—more attuned to my soul, God, and community. In addition to the clinical study, I needed a spiritual elixir too. Instead of forcing myself into a Wonder Woman costume, I needed to make time for rest. Medicine works best in tandem with balancing the human essentials: enough sleep, nutritious foods, and stable homelife. I needed to get my condition under control while seeking meaningful connections with God and others. The symptoms—migraines, depression, busyness—were indications of something larger. The chronic condition that dictated my days became an invitation to find peace and purpose beyond deadlines and success.

I remembered times when I wasn't so stressed—a time when weekly replenishment hadn't been so out of reach. Two decades ago, when the world was much different, time felt slow and limitless. I had no migraines; each week, I had spent many guilt-free hours with no worldly goal in sight: daydreaming, reading, resting, crying, praising, praying, fellowshiping, gathering, and moving toward the Divine. Time had been my most abundant resource. Back then, I seemed to know its medicinal value.

Sabbath Girls

High Point, North Carolina, has been home to the famous biannual furniture market since 1906. Internationally renowned, it is the largest industry trade show in the world, with 11.5 million square feet, boasting two thousand exhibitors and seventy-five thousand attendees per year.

The market is not open to the public; no one outside the trade is allowed within its halls. But during one 1950s market season, my Great Uncle Seldon secured Sunday admission tickets for his wife, my Great Aunt Frances, whom Uncle Seldon called “Miss Fronsus,” and her sister, my Grandmother Evelyn. The two rural women were delighted. They crafted a plan: They would take my mother and her older sister, Gail, to the thirty-five-cent Sunday matinee, and then they would attend the market and drool over exclusive home furnishings.

“Girls, mother and Aunt Frances are going to the market this afternoon. We’re going to drop you off at picture show.” My mother and her sister were puzzled. It wasn’t the reaction the adults were expecting.

“Girls, we thought you’d be *delighted* to see a movie today,” Grandmother Evelyn urged.

“But we *don’t* go to the movies on Sundays,” the girls said, confused.

“It’s all right just this once because Aunt Frances and I have special tickets to the market.”

Judy and Gail, the youngest of my Grandmother Evelyn’s five children, stood their ground, respectful but unwavering. “But we *don’t* go to the movies on the sabbath,” they repeated, reciting the commandment they’d been given on so many Sundays of their lives. They knew the Genesis Creation story—a rhythm of six and one, work and ceasing.

“Girls, it’s okay just for today. Your Uncle Seldon got us these special tickets. Go on now, get in the car.” But the girls wouldn’t budge, and Grandmother Evelyn and Aunt Frances never made it to the furniture market.

The adults, after all, had taught their children that the sabbath was the Lord’s Day, not theirs. Its hours were holy, which meant no movies, no card games, and no dancing to records on the side porch. It was a day different from all the rest—a time for ceasing from any labor and worldly activity one might do the remaining six days of the week. Only church, acts of service, family visits, and resting were permitted.

The ladies watched their once-in-a-lifetime chance of attending the market evaporate before their eyes, thanks to two little girls who’d learned their Sunday school lessons a little too well.

Easy Like Sunday Morning

The women on both sides of my family had learned the “church first” mantra from their mothers, staunch Christian women from another era. In generations prior to mine, though people still worked themselves to the bone, American culture was more conducive to ceasing from labor and consumption on Sundays. Anyone who grew up in a small town remembers when merchants rolled up the sidewalks on Saturday night. In my mother’s and grandmother’s eras, gas tanks and liquor cabinets had to be filled on Saturday, and errands were completed ahead of the Lord’s Day, even for people who weren’t particularly religious. In that time, Sunday school—not youth soccer leagues—heralded the new week. After church, tables were dressed in fine linens and china. Families were coaxed into the rhythm of a slow, shared meal. People talked with one another, face-to-face, before a feast with enough cholesterol to flip the food pyramid. Eye contact was abundant, liquor was sneaked, town gossip was shared, and children exhausted their patience waiting for something interesting to happen. The TV was silent; no video games or iPads vied for kids’ attention. Cell phones and the Internet didn’t exist. Sweet gospel hymns at Sunday Vespers rounded out the day, and the week was off to a stellar start.

Grandmother Evelyn labored over her Sunday supper fixings Saturday night so that when the sabbath arrived, the only work she did was place a hen in the oven before church. Occasionally, she invited friends to her Sunday meal, but mostly the day was for family time. Afterward, she shooed her husband and five children away for the only respite she had all week: reading the newspaper on the couch, the only time her family members ever saw her put her feet up.

In keeping with ceasing from her labors, Grandmother Evelyn nicknamed her Sunday evening meal “Every Man for Himself.” This meant her dependents had to battle it out for the lunch leftovers. It was the only meal she didn’t prepare all week. By evening, she loaded her five children back into the station wagon for church services and visits to the county home, where the despondent waited for cheery company to arrive. Grandmother Evelyn trained her offspring to deliver love and smiles to these elderly shut-ins because Jesus had commanded them to do “for the least of these.”

Some Sundays, Grandmother Evelyn took my mother and her siblings down country back roads to visit their grandmother, my Great-Grandmother Jettie, who also made a lunch fit for royalty. Once the table was set, Grandma Jettie covered her dining room table with a bed sheet to keep the flies away, and the children were invited to sneak pieces of deep-fried goodness when they arrived. The meal and family stayed all day; there was no urgency for refrigeration or goodbyes.

During their afternoons there, Grandma Jettie would station herself on the front porch, where she rocked and crocheted. She accepted visitors, and her grandchildren sat with her one by one, amused by her ability to drink an entire carton of glass Pepsi bottles in several hours. Later, when diabetes took hold of Jettie's body, she moved in with Grandmother Evelyn and the children. By age eight, my mother's nursing career began by learning to administer Jettie's insulin shots.

Life in the 1940s and 1950s had its ups and downs; the world was both a mess and bursting with seeds of progress. There was bounty and poverty, war and peace, understanding and prejudice. No matter what happened outside the home, one truth remained for the Trent Family: They lived by strict sabbath rules. No one made any Sunday plans unless they involved God or family. With some modern adaptations in place, I spent my early life following the same guidelines.

Glory Days

In 1980, my newlywed parents migrated from Ohio to Los Angeles to conceive their "California Girl." Because of fertility issues and a doctor's advice, my parents decided they needed warmer weather and less stress. On the way to California, they saw a rainbow, which they took as a sign. My mother delivered me eighteen months later, just after her forty-first birthday. A pink, Hollywood movie stub was mailed to relatives, announcing my birth.

My mother and father believed I was destined to live a glamorous life of LA fame. But the recession and poverty forced them out of California and back to places familiar and cheap. I was only three months old when we arrived in Dana, Indiana, to live in a trailer adjacent to my grandparent's house.

My first six years were spent in Dana and Clinton, whose combined populations could fit in a small high school football stadium. My parents divorced before I was seven, and Mom and I moved to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, her home state, which I considered an upgrade since the town boasted more than one grocery store inside the city limits. But my earliest sabbath formation began in my namesake, a township with a slow pace.

Let My Day Begin with Saraluia

My first sabbaths spent in Dana were with my midwestern paternal family, who lived and worked in the cornfields of rural Indiana. My paternal grandmother, Dorothy, was a WWII veteran and nurse. She and my Grandfather Richard had shuffled their three rowdy boys to the Dana Community Bible Church, which they had help charter in the 1950s.

After my parents divorced, I returned to Indiana each summer to live with my Grandmother and Grandfather Lewman (whom I called G and GL). They made me and my cousins, Britainy and Erin, keep the same rhythm my father and his brothers had known as children.

G and GL woke early on Sundays and dressed to the nines. They turned on the TV preachers as they prodded their three granddaughters to get ready, patiently waiting for the appointed hour. Grandfather laid out quarters for us girls to place in the offering plate. Grandmother let us spray ourselves with her Chloé perfume and apply strawberry Chapstick at her vanity table.

Dana Community Bible Church's Sunday school began at "9:30 *sharp!*"—an actual song I'd been taught that I'm convinced was composed as propaganda to get children and families to church on time. As I arrived, I'd belt: "9:30 *sharp!* 9:30 *sharp!* I will be at Sunday school 9:30 *sharp!*"

My cousins (who are like sisters to me) and I thought church was fun. Answering Bible story questions correctly meant retrieving a plastic prize from an enormous cardboard box decorated with biblical wrapping paper. We'd rehearse song lyrics written on poster board to sing before the sixty-person congregation at the start of "big church." We knew these church songs as well as we knew "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and we took poetic license in keeping them entertaining. The church's original organist, a woman named Saralu, played as we sang loudly and off-key.

“Let my day begin with alleluia . . .” Only we substituted *Saraluia* for *alleluia*, breaking into fits of giggles.

Church then, before we knew its purpose, was a jovial affair, a brilliant tactic to make certain that kids and parents *wanted* to be in the pews. The Lewman Family itself took up two, large orange-fabric ones. After the children sang our (adapted) songs, we stood with my aunt, my uncle, and G and GL as the five-person choir led us through Jesus hymns. We shouted them out, trying to keep up with Grandmother Dorothy’s charming but froggy voice, which was low and boisterous. During scripture readings, Britainy, Erin, and I passed notes on the bulletin, and we couldn’t contain ourselves when Grandmother snored through the sermon. After services, we returned to G and GL’s for lunch, or they drove us across the Wabash River to Montezuma, where we ate roasted potatoes and strawberry fluff at Janet’s Restaurant.

In the afternoon, G and GL napped in the living room with newspapers on their chests. The girls and I tiptoed out the garage door for long bike rides to the outskirts of Dana, which was only 0.3 square miles. On warm days, we swam in Uncle Jon and Aunt Phyllis’s pool. We entertained ourselves for hours, and a sabbath afternoon could stretch out infinitely. Those slow Sundays, when no one was absorbed in electronics or running here and there, feel lifetimes away. A delicious midafternoon nap felt like an entire night’s worth of sleep. We invented games with bikes and sticks, indulging in the luxury formerly known as boredom.

Junior Sabbatarian

From Dana Community Bible Church onward, I was raised as a sabbatarian. At age six, when my parents divorced and my mother and I arrived in Chapel Hill, a small, intellectual town whose churches were more high-brow than my corn-town “Saraluia” songs would have allowed. Binkley Baptist Church became our new sabbath home. Mom worked weekend night shifts as a nurse, so she made certain my babysitters got me to church as much as possible.

My mother and I lived in Chapel Hill until the early 90s, when Mom went broke and we needed a soft (and free) place to land. Her hometown of Reidsville was the perfect fit. I was twelve when we began attending

First Baptist Church, Grandmother Evelyn's parish. First Baptist Church is where I learned once again to lean into the boredom of a Sunday afternoon, knowing that youth group activities were only hours away. Sundays brought respite from the Monday through Friday flurry of homework, peer pressure, and school drama. Any childhood inattention I had during service was attributed to daydreaming about crushes rather than worrying about anything that needed to get done. Even when I was sick, skipping church left me uneasy, like I'd missed a dose of medicine for the week.

I spent my teen years in a wood-paneled bedroom on Main Street, kissing magazine cutouts of Keanu Reeves and dancing to the 1993 Salt-N-Pepa album, *Very Necessary*. I'd do nothing for the sake of nothing for hours and had no extracurricular activities outside of worshiping Jesus. Any social plans I made were sacred ones, and my Swatch watch ensured I never missed the half-mile commute to church.

Like the Dana Community Bible Church, First Baptist Church Reidsville was the hub from which my life radiated. Grandmother Evelyn had brought her five children up in the church since "Cradle Roll," a Southern term for the church nursery. My mother returned as the prodigal daughter with her own little one in tow: divorced, broke, and starting over at the age of fifty-three.

Thanks to my aunts and uncles, we had a roof over our heads, a family that supported and loved us, and, most of all, faith. My mother's saving grace was the Baptist church, and she repaid her gratitude with Wednesday and Sunday faithfulness, never once suggesting we stay home so she could rest her tired feet. Her dedication to her Christian faith had not faltered since the days of the High Point Furniture Market.

Where Dana Community Bible Church and Binkley Baptist left off, First Baptist picked up. It became my hot spot—not just because the youth group had a bumper crop of boys but because there was also *nothing* else better, free, or more enticing to do.

China Grill

The cultural shift of the 1990s meant that my family no longer took part in large, home-centered lunches after church. More women worked, and families ate out after church. Cultural norms no longer urged businesses

to close on the sabbath. It was profitable to stay open, and consuming seven days per week became our American duty. Resting, after all, does nothing to increase the Gross Domestic Product.

Each Sunday after church, I begged my mother to take me to one of the two exotic culinary establishments in town: Monterrey Mexican Restaurant or China Grill. We couldn't really afford to eat out, but doing so meant that the hours between worship services and youth group felt shorter, and I longed for the time when we returned to church.

After lunch, my mother rested, her body weary from standing all week in the nursing clinic of our county's public health department. Now that I am an adult working multiple jobs, I don't know how she managed as a single parent. She kept up with all our finances and ensured our clothes and dishes stayed clean with no washing machine or dishwasher. Despite being spread thin, she made time to steer me toward a life of faith instead of rebellion. It would have been far easier for her to do otherwise.

My mother took me to church on Sundays and Wednesday evenings for youth events, joining the adult chancel choir so that we could be on the same schedule. She became one of our Baptist church's few female deacons, while also establishing a church plant for Spanish-speaking members of our community. Like her mother, my mother wanted me to see the importance of living the gospel. For my mother, sabbath was the only relief from the dread of another work week and a back-breaking list of to-dos. At church, she found fulfillment and enrichment, the only time she was comforted by our simple but difficult existence.

My Reidsville maternal family also made certain I joined every children's and youth program. By ninth grade, I'd been selected to sit on a search committee for the next associate pastor, who would lead the youth. Pastor John Daugherty ultimately became a mentor, surrogate father, and a key partner in my own ordination. And though he was a busy clergyman amid cultural change, he too became a model of sabbath.

John and his wife, Phyllis, had two daughters, one of whom was my age. She and I became close friends. As a result, the Daugherty family gave me access to their family life, and I was privy to what it meant to be clergy on the other side of the ministry curtain. I saw how exhausting but ultimately rewarding pastoral life could be for ministers. I also saw how they worked themselves to the bone, cherishing sacred Sunday afternoon hours before they had to go back to work. After lunch, Pastor John changed from his

pressed grey suit into his sweats, napped in his chair, and then transitioned seamlessly back to the hallowed sanctuary Sunday evening.

Before I could even name it for myself, church taught me that Sundays were different. As I grew older, I forgot the rhythm and ritual that Sunday created for worship, food, family, rest, stillness, and solitude. But the lesson was still deeply ingrained in me, all because two sisters had stood their ground, keeping and passing on the values they'd been taught: They did *not* go to the movies on Sunday.

The Young and the Restless

My husband, Fred, and I are no different from American's privileged residents. We have the basics covered: shelter, food, and health care. We have obligations: jobs, caring for my elderly mother, keeping up with domestic duties. We toil on computers seven days a week, our electronic devices keeping us constantly "on" and accessible. We hardly have time for spiritual practice, cultivating and maintaining relationships, and truly living—and we don't even have responsibility of caring for children.

Even so, if we want quiet time in daily lives, we must rise as early as 4:00 a.m. to get it. After a short chat with God via our devotional practices, prayers, and reading, we retreat to our respective laptops, typing the days (and weekends) away. If we're not careful, each day looks the same; nothing distinguishes the ordinary from the sacred.

Both my maternal and paternal families taught me about the solid marker between the mundane and the auspicious. Until my twenties, Sundays had been sacred days full of wonder. Somehow and somewhere, I'd forgotten about the joy of Sunday school songs and the excitement of youth group crushes—two elements that brought me into the fold of sabbath and lulled me into deeper devotion and practice. As an adult, sabbath no longer held this place in my life. I'd fallen into the trap of using the Lord's Day to catch up on. When I was in seminary, I had worked Sundays in the parish; as a professional, the weekends were reserved for accomplishing all the projects I hadn't finished during the week.

Since marrying seven years ago, Fred and I began spending Sunday mornings on work projects, running errands in the afternoon, and doing

chores in the evening. Our church attendance is spotty. A few years ago, I began, for the first time, to understand why people didn't go to church on Sunday. As a middle and high schooler, I never understood why anyone would skip the weekly practice that offered new life. I was aware that many folks *had* to work on the Sundays, as my own mother had been a weekend nurse. That made the sabbath all the more special when she landed a weekday job, and we could finally attend church together.

Now, in my mid-thirties, even as an ordained clergyperson, I resent how and why someone decided that Sunday at 11:00 a.m. *had* to be the most auspicious sabbath hour to gather for devotional worship. Worship at that hour means losing a large chunk of young Americans with children who nap at that time or who simply don't want to sacrifice sunny weekend hours. Once we drive to church, worship, eat lunch, and attend a church committee meeting or two, the day is nearly gone.

In the days when time *felt* more abundant, Sunday worship made more sense because we were less pressed for breathing room. Globalization, jobs, the 24/7 marketplace, email, heavy workloads, and caregiving all contribute to our feeling suffocated by obligations, and it's no wonder Americans are saying, "No, thanks" to the one thing they feel can be removed from the to-do list. They already have plenty of to-dos.

Even when Fred and I attend do worship, I worry about unfinished tasks while I am supposed to be praising God. Under the guise of taking sermon notes, I brain dump my anxiety into scribbles on the bulletin. Liturgies meant to invite me into what Celtic spirituality calls the "thin space" trigger panic of what's been left undone. While the church sings, "I come to the garden alone while the dew is still on the roses," I make a mental note to purchase Mother's Day flowers. When the ministers offer prayers of the people, I jot down names of those I haven't reached out to whose pastoral care I am responsible for on a volunteer basis. A sermon on Jesus' acts of social justice fill me panic, and I think it my duty to start a vegetarian soup kitchen. By the benediction, I'm totally overwhelmed; I've completely given up on having any meaningful time with God, and I've assigned myself with a new set of tasks. Sabbath and church services, therefore, become an unwelcome obligation instead of spiritual fill-up, a time of stress and anxiety instead of a time to reconnect with God.

You Can Lead a Horse to Water

Sabbath is in my muscle memory, springing forth from my deep roots in rural North Carolina and Indiana. I only need to return to the well—and actually drink the water.

A few years ago, Fred and I traveled nearly to the equator to find sabbath, isolating ourselves from the world by taking shelter in a remote jungle ashram. At Madhuvan Monastery in Costa Rica, I rode a horse for the first time in my life. She was 105 in horse years, with milky eyes and seasonal allergies. “Sweet Baby Girl” and I spent two hours together, climbing untrodden jungle paths, fearing for our lives.

When Fred and I returned Sweet Baby Girl to her stable at noon, she stopped twenty feet short of the covered barn. We were all hot, tired, and thirsty. The horse’s work was done, and her oasis was in sight. But she wouldn’t budge. I pulled her reins, flapped my arms, and jumped around.

“Water! Water!” I shouted, hoping to coax her out of the sun. She stood her nearly one-ton ground. Fred even fetched the bucket and brought it to her snout. She stubbornly bucked the offering.

“I guess you really can lead a horse to water, but you can’t make her drink,” I finally said. The Central American sun beat down on us, and the cool water remained untouched at the horse’s feet. We were three pilgrims on a path—two human and one equine—each knowing what it’s like to need something so basic but to be too stubborn to take it.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Think of a time you had a “Q-tip moment.” How does stress, busyness, or a chronic illness affect your ability to be present and mindful?
2. How did you define sabbath as a child? What did it mean to your family? In what specific ways did you observe the sabbath?
3. How has your concept of rest, worship, and community changed from when you were a child or teenager?
4. How has the world (social norms and expectations, culture, economics, and community) changed since you were a child or teenager?
5. If you attended church as a child, what was your favorite part of worship?
6. Describe your weekends or days off from work. How do you spend your free time?
7. How has church changed for you over the years, if at all? How difficult is squeezing in time for worship and fellowship?
8. Describe a time when you felt like a horse led to water, but you wouldn't drink. What were you resisting? Why?
9. If you could change one thing about your Sundays or your sabbath practice, what would it be?

Join the sabbath revolution by taking a sabbath selfie! In *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of “A Course in Miracles,”* Marianne Williamson writes that “as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.” Take a photo of yourself—or a selfie—while engaging in a sabbath practice (rest, worship, or a community gathering). Share the photo on social media and include #forsabbathssake in your post. Give yourself and others permission to enjoy the gift of sabbath!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. J. Dana Trent is a graduate of Duke Divinity School and an adjunct faculty member at Wake Technical Community College where she teaches World Religions. Dana is an ordained Baptist clergywoman, an award-winning author, a speaker, and a workshop facilitator. Her work has appeared on Time.com, *The Christian Century*, *Patheos*, and *Sojourners*. Her second book, *For Sabbath's Sake: Embracing Your Need for Rest, Worship, and Community*, will be released October 1, 2017, by Upper Room Books. She lives in Raleigh with her husband, Fred, a devout Hindu and former monk. Their Christian-Hindu interfaith marriage is chronicled in *Saffron Cross: The Unlikely Story of How a Christian Minister Married a Hindu Monk* (Fresh Air Books, 2013). She enjoys napping with cats, eating vegetarian food, and teaching weight lifting at the YMCA.