

Talk About Transformation! from the ministry desk of Steve Macchia

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Personal Reflections

Remember the Sabbath

"The root idea of Sabbath is simple as rain falling, basic as breathing. It's that all living things – and many nonliving things too – thrive only by an ample measure of stillness. A bird flying, never resting, is soon plummeting. Grass trampled, day after day, scalps down to the hard bone of earth. Fruit constantly inspected bruises, blights. This is true of other things as well: a saw used without relenting – its teeth never filed, its blade never cooled – grows dull and brittle; a motor never shut off gums with residue or fatigues from thinness of oil – it sputters, it stalls, it seizes. Even companionship languishes without seasons of apartness. God stitched into the nature of things an inviolable need to be left alone now and then..."

From Mark Buchanan, *The Rest of God*

Sabbath has been a topic of discussion among our young leaders at Gordon-Conwell recently. In fact, we are devoting retreat days this winter to focus on this important spiritual formation topic. As I've prepared for these experiences, I've been reminded in my reading, praying and reflecting how many times I break the Sabbath. Or, better stated, I've been humbled by how lightly I take the command to keep the Sabbath holy. I'm guilty as charged...maybe you are, too. Marva Dawn, in her book *The Sense of the Call*, gently reminds her readers that "keeping an entire day as a Sabbath and learning a Sabbath way of life are especially important for the wholeness of all those who serve God, the Church, and the world." Her four themes of Ceasing, Resting, Feasting, and Embracing are worthy of our consideration. Sabbath days and Sabbath lifestyle and Sabbath mindsets are needed today, so that we can "rest in Christ's commitment to lead, guide and provide for us every day of our lives in every circumstance" (Scott Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*).

Coming Alongside

In this coming year, we will hit a few significant milestones as a ministry. One major step forward is in the establishing of our first Spiritual Leadership Community. Co-led by Diana Bennett and yours truly, we are inviting a dozen leaders who have previously attended a Soul Care Retreat to join us on a year-long journey together. We will bookend our year on retreat, sandwiched in between with full days of conversation, prayer, and reflection. We will cover topics such as listening prayer,

rule of life, discernment, reflection, spiritual friendship, spiritual autobiography, a biblical understanding of spiritual formation, etc. We will seek to hold one another accountable to placing these formation practices into the center of our personal and ministry lives. We are anticipating a rich fellowship among the participants, with a genuine hope that communities like this will be replicated in years to come.



Rev. Dr. Steve Macchia, D.Min.
Founder and President

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Another milestone in 2007 is SELAH, our Certificate Program in Spiritual Direction. Coordinated by Susan Currie, this training initiative will begin in the fall and last for two years. Designed around 6 residential retreats, we will grow from the wisdom and experience of the Church, through readings in the “classics” of spiritual formation, and the instruction in the learned practices of spiritual direction. Selah is intentionally Trinitarian in theology (paying attention to how God the Father is actively shaping a person’s life through the Holy Spirit in ways that form them ever more deeply into the image of Christ), intentionally contemplative in style (characterized by an attentive resting in

Christ’s presence in the direction time, noticing the movement and activity of the Holy Spirit), and intentionally Biblical in grounding (drawing our understanding of God and His ways from the pages of Scripture).

We continue to come alongside leaders and teams in a variety of ways...Soul Care Retreats, Soul Care One-on-One’s, Team Care Retreats, and Team Care Intensives.

Visit www.LeadershipTransformations.org or call toll free 877-TEAM-LTi for more information on these services.



Recommended Resources

The eagerly anticipated release of our Church Health Assessment Tool (CHAT) has already brought several new churches into the LTi family. Officially launched last month, CHAT is now fully operational online and available to serve you and your church! CHAT is a listening tool for church leaders who are interested in having a “heart to heart conversation” with every member of the congregation. It’s a 72 question assessment based on research with thousands of churches and individuals. Over the past decade, this survey has been used by hundreds of churches – but in its original paper form (which required labor intensive tabulation from the church). The newly revised online version (the only tool of its kind!) is completely automated and comprehensive, giving users the opportunity to get a holistic view of their church’s health in 30 days or less. The survey questions are biblically centered and based on the cross-denominational, principle-based traits from *Becoming A Healthy Church* (BakerBooks, 1999/2006).

CHAT is both easy to use and cost-effective. Since it’s web-based, all surveys can be completed in as 20-25 minutes from the convenience of home or office. CHAT also tracks the responses of the congregation and leadership team separately for direct comparison. Best of all, CHAT

does all the work but the church is in the driver’s seat from start to finish via our Pastor’s Console. At the end of the data collection window (dates chosen by the church), an easy to read, full color report is sent directly to the church contact’s email inbox. This user friendly report will clearly identify the strongest areas of your church as well as the soft spots, discrepancies between congregation and leadership team responses, participant demographics, open-ended comments from the participants, and suggested next steps which will empower you and your leadership team to make needed adjustments for increased ministry health and effectiveness.

CHAT is unlike any other resource available to the Church today – check it out at www.HealthyChurch.net and recommend it to your church leaders...it’s the best way to listen intently to your leadership and congregation!

Check out our newly updated website for additional resources for leaders and teams:

www.LeadershipTransformations.org

Here you will find the full complement of ministry services and resources LTi is currently providing our constituents.

CHATSM

QUICK.
CONVENIENT.
COST-EFFECTIVE.
AN HONEST
DIAGNOSIS.
A HOPEFUL
PROGNOSIS.



www.HealthyChurch.net

- *Becoming A Healthy Church* (available in English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese and Thai), Baker Books, 1999/2006 – a Baker Bestseller!
- *Becoming A Healthy Church Workbook*, Baker Books, 2001
- *Becoming A Healthy Disciple*, Baker Books, 2004
- *Becoming A Healthy Disciple Small Group Study and Worship Guide*, LTi, 2004
- *Becoming A Healthy Team*, Baker Books, 2005 – a Baker Bestseller!
- Free pdf's for your ministry use
- E-newsletters and ministry updates
- Meet the LTi Team...in picture-perfect smiles!



LTi Staff Team

Renewal Yearnings

In closing, let me encourage you once again to prayerfully consider your view (and treatment) of the Sabbath. I've already mentioned three books in my opening that I urge you to read. However, it's the biblical text that invites our prayerful reflection...read the following passages as you wrestle with the challenge of keeping the Sabbath holy:

Genesis 2:2-3
Exodus 20:8-11; 31: 12-18
Deut. 5:12-15
Isaiah 56:2; 58:13-14
Matthew 12: 1-14
Mark 2: 23-3:6
Luke 6: 1-11
John 5: 1-18

"In a nutshell, the sense of our call is that God's Kingdom reclaims us, revitalizes us, and renews us and thus reigns through us before others, on behalf of others, sometimes in spite of others, and always with others. When we grasp this sense of our call, we are set free for a Sabbath way of life: a profound resting in the Kingdom's grace instead of a perpetual struggle to 'do our work'; an endless ceasing, by grace, of those attitudes and actions and attachments that hinder the Kingdom's reign; an exuberant feasting that radiates the Kingdom's

grace-full splendor; an ardent embracing of the Kingdom's gracious purposes." From Marva Dawn, *The Sense of the Call*

Choosing a Sabbath way of life means saying yes to God's delightful invitation to "Come, all you who are weary and heavy-laden. Come, and I will give you rest. Come join me here." Let's join the Lord of the Sabbath and cease...rest...feast...embrace all that He delights to give us by His abundant hand of love, mercy and grace.

Your Brother and Friend in Ministry,

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