

Extracts

Principle 6: Sabbath

I commit to rhythms of rest and renewal through the regular practice of Sabbath and resist a culture of busyness that measures my worth by what I do.

*The idea of rest as resistance is a counternarrative to the dominant story. Protest and resistance don't look one way. . . It's centering joy when pain and oppression surround you daily. It's living in your truth, even when your heart trembles at the thought of being vulnerable. It's napping when the entire culture calls you lazy. It's sleeping when you have been told by capitalism that you aren't doing enough. It's honoring a day, or week, a second for Sabbath. It's re-imagining what Sabbath can look like. —Tricia Hersey, *Rest is Resistance**

Howard Thurman counsels us to find these holy pauses throughout our days: “One could not begin the cultivation of the prayer life at a more practical point than deliberately to seek each day, and several times a day, a lull in the rhythm of daily doing, a period when nothing happens that demands active participation.” I invite you to imagine Sabbath moments woven throughout your days. Moments when you intentionally rest for even a few minutes, simply paying attention to your breath.

Sabbath is not a doing, but a way of being in the world. It calls to us again and again to return to the still place within, to rest in the presence of the Beloved, and to know ourselves as loved simply for who we are. In those spaces of rest comes renewal, with dreams for new possibilities. As a culture we face so many issues that feel impossible to tackle in meaningful ways. One way to begin is to allow enough space for visions to enter, to step back and see what happens when we slow down our pace first.

Several years ago I read this quote by Thomas Merton from his book *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* and it stopped me in my tracks.

The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence.

Merton's words are directed toward people working for peace and justice. He describes the ways in which we participate in our culture's push toward productivity as a form of violence to our bodies and spirits. There are physical impacts, the way we push ourselves can lead to serious health complications. There are social impacts; we are always feeling overwhelmed and do not have the time to sit and reflect upon complex problems of our lives. We begin to lose the sense that we can do anything constructive to address larger social issues. There are spiritual impacts, our spiritual life becomes focused on another form of doing rather than being in the presence of God. Even with prayer, it can become another thing to get done.

I am blessed with close friends who are Jewish and I have been invited many times to a Friday night Shabbat dinner. Together we light candles, sing blessings, break bread, and welcome in the gift of this sacred time to rest. We remember what it is to be free. It was this friendship and experience that inspired my husband and I to claim our own Sabbath practice. We are not always successful, I too get caught up in the compulsion of getting things done. This is why we always begin again in any practice. Every time we fall away, we return.

During Sabbath we enter into rest and stillness, releasing our doing, and offer ourselves a time to integrate the blessings and challenges of the week into our psyches.

April Yamasaki describes Sabbath as not just an act of self-care, but community care: “Sabbath was not self-care in the narrow sense of the word but was about more broadly caring for the community and for creation . . . Instead of individual soul care, the Sabbath addresses a community of souls in the context of doing good and caring for community and creation.” The practice of Sabbath weaves us back to our principle of community and how we are called to see ourselves as intimately interrelated. It is good to pause and rest together.

