



What can Sabbath look like?

Rhythms of Rest

This is a transcription of a conversation between Lori Ferrell and Tim Austin. You can [listen to it here](#).

Tim Austin:

This is a conversation infused with grace, wisdom, and inspiration to walk in the freedom God has for each one of us. Lori Ferrell is a wife, mother of two boys, and a spiritual director. Her passion is to invite others into rhythms of rest and to know themselves as fully known and fully loved. So thanks again for joining me. And let's pick up where we left off with Lori Ferrell.

Lori Ferrell:

Just like you were saying, we could offer a few of these baby steps in the listeners' spiritual practices, and what activities might help people see Sabbath beyond ... I don't know what people bring to Sabbath. I know there could be baggage and there can also be people out there listening that are definitely on this journey and exploring different needs. But I think if they're caught in that place where there's baggage or it doesn't breathe new life, or they don't hear it with excitement, then maybe we can help them give some ideas.

Tim:

That's great. Let's do that. And before we do that, Lori, can I go back to something you had said? And I'd like our listeners I'd like you to share this, if you could. Because you said when you in a season of burnout where you heard this invitation of rest for yourself, and it was hard; you said because there were others around you who were also tired and, and what, you know, sometimes we're looking at other people's perceptions or we feel a pressure in a group setting or a community setting. Tell me about that. Just to kind of unpack that a little bit.

Lori:

We were living in a smaller country attending a little international fellowship. So at the end, when we were about to leave and take our sabbatical, I mean, each time somebody left in that country, we all had an opportunity to go up and share like, what was next and where we're headed. And a lot of times people would say, "Well, we're going back because of this happening." Or, you know, it's, there's a lot of reasons that take people home, but I hadn't really ever heard someone stand up there and say, "We're going to take a sabbatical." And so when we got up and we were invited to share, and I was feeling embarrassed to be like, "We're tired, we're going to leave for a sabbatical." In a way, it was like, oh, how can I receive this invitation when I look around?

And I see so many people that are weary, I'm not the only one in this room that feels weary. And that doesn't mean that sabbatical is the only answer for that. But it was very much hard for me to not feel guilty, like I'm bailing out or something; but it was like, God was saying, "Trust, receive this invitation." And with that God



was opening something up to say, "If this invitation isn't for you then who is it for?" Um as if I maybe can read rest and think, "Well, that's for so-and-so, but not for me." And sometimes I do think, oh, well, so-and-so can have that, but not me. And God was, "Lori, this time I'm inviting you. And I want you to receive this because this invitation is for all of us, but if you can't receive it for you, then how can you say it's for everyone?"

That was definitely a big step of like, I don't know, courage to say that in front of a group of weary people though.

Tim:

Some of our listeners may be feeling some of that pressure around them. You know, if they're in a team setting or community setting a church setting where a lot of activity is taking place and there's a lot of weary souls around them. Sometimes work and ministry get to be almost competitive, you know? And I think in those times we need to step back and say, it's not about who can be the last one standing. Right? Because we can be standing, but we can be completely unhealthy, you know? Emotionally, mentally, physically spent, and that's not where we want to end up. We want to end up in a good place. And so these sustainable going back to practices, and I think this is a good place to, just, to, to talk about some of those steps people can take. So why don't you start us off with that?

Lori:

Yeah. So I think that the steps well, there's just so many; I guess one thing I want to reflect before I move on is just that not everyone's story is the same. Because I'm very cautious when I share that, that I don't want to say, "Well, if you're one of those people listening and you feel near burnout, or maybe you're not using the word burnout, but you definitely feel weary you should . . ." I think taking a year off for sabbatical or even six months, it's not everyone's next step. So I think we all have to take that with God and wrestle out, "What is it that I'm being invited towards?" And God's creative and when He invites us into rest, I just trust that for each of us, God knows who you are, who I am, who the listeners are and what you need to be rested. So none of this is meant to be like you know, if you're this, then this is what you need. I just want the listeners to hear that. What are those things that can maybe be those little first steps? Is that what you're ready to share?

Tim:

Exactly. You know, what are some things we're noticing? And I'll just maybe just say this for me personally as I've transitioned and am on this journey of discovering what Sabbath and rest means for me. I've been asking the question, "What is life giving to me?" So for me, I love nature. I have to get outdoors. Even if I go through a day, sitting in front of my computer screen and rarely look outside the window, because I'm so engrossed in the, work and I am not taking notice. There is something about using all of my senses to experience, especially spring time. I try to have some buffer space in between online meetings so that I can at least step outside and pause and notice you know.

It's not a Sabbath day. I do that differently, but they are "Sabbath moments," I guess you could call them, where I can just step outside, feel with my hands touch something in the garden, you know; put my feet on the ground and look up into the sky. Whatever I need to recenter and refocus on God and the beauty of His



creation ultimately. And so I find moments to pause, that have helped me as I've been asking myself the question, "What is life giving?" Short walks, even where, when I need to just let go of things, I do, I have an app that helps me to pause. It's just a one-minute, John Eldridge has an app. It's a one minute pause. You can do a three-minute, one minute, five minutes, but, it's a great little thing that just helps me to, to, to enter into a brief moment of rest. And so sometimes those times are brief. And so that's kind of the journey I'm on now. I don't know what, what would be a life-giving for you, unique to your season and your situation you're in?

Lori:

Yeah, well, I have a similar kind of app on my phone called the Centering Prayer App. So the practices I find that brings rest for me is just setting an alarm. It has different time settings that you can decide. And so I try to do that daily. And it's not something that I do cause I should, it's really truly a practice that I've found is restful and I look forward to and it's just a way of being with God. So people that aren't familiar with centering prayer it's there, they can look it up and see more what that is, but there is an app also that explains it. And like you, I definitely find that nature is restorative. So getting outside and going for a walk not necessarily trying to break a sweat. I mean, I do cause I'm in Florida; but being where I can see trees green hear birds, something that is not like the cement or busy or in a car. So anything that engages me bringing me to this present moment. That might even just be, like you said, a moment pause, like you step out between two clients. And so for me, I noticed taking deep breaths that are very intentional, helped me to ground this moment.

Tim:

And even the exercise that we did incorporating the deep breaths with some meditation on scripture, a short verse or passage. Yeah. Great ways to step back and pause to recenter and focus when we tend to, and even, even those short moments are, are ways to help us not forget, you know, going back to that remembering piece, you know. I think it's, I think what we're talking about here is Sabbath and rest with freedom; knowing that there's creativity, God invites us into this, knowing how uniquely He's designed and what season we're in and what is going to be life-giving for us in this time and place. And, and so there's, there's a freedom here to explore and to practice things, which I would love to encourage our listeners to try out and try out an app that we mentioned here on the podcast or one of these exercises a bit, if it doesn't work for you, that's fine. But try something out, give it a little time and see if, see if it works, see if it becomes life-giving and a sustainable practice for you, you know, along this, along this journey.

Lori:

Yeah, for sure. It's definitely trial and error and I've also heard that just even senior life has seasons since, so something might be restful for a season and then you might find it's not really restful anymore. And it's okay to, when we notice that to decide, I'm not going to do that anymore. I'm going to try to find something else even tied up with, well, that was restful last week and I don't understand why it's not helping me. So even approaching it with a more playful or free attitude that can just say, oh, okay, let's try something else.

Tim:

Good, you know I think I'm kind of thinking of, of distinguishing between what's life giving and what is, what are activities that we do to kind of step back or to disengage that are more like coping mechanisms or things that numb us to reality. And of course binge-watching is one of them, you know, there's a lot of other things



that could be you know, forms of numbing out and, and escaping overeating and yeah. Did lots of different things ways we could do that. We're not saying that like a little binge watching, isn't something that, you know, we can't do, but we're looking at more specifically what, what are some things that really feed the soul and impart true rest, you know, into our lives that that's the same is sustaining and life-giving so any other thoughts on that, Lori, as far as practices?

Lori:

Yeah. I mean, just going off, you're saying the numbing or the life draining versus what's life giving what's rest truly restful. And really, it just comes down to noticing, you know, the fruit of that time. And so if you come out of something and just sort of like, wow, I just really disconnected from life and maybe even feel more grumpy or tired or after watching a lot of movies or even reading a good book and yet just finding yourself grumpy, I think we can notice our reactions and our dispositions afterwards to notice. Hmm. You know, it's not bad to do those things, but just, maybe noticing. If I need rest, then maybe I need to get out and do something that actually is going to rejuvenate or bring life. And, you know, this time I chose something that was more in the not numbing or like checking out kind of category. We need those that we will continue to do both, but yeah, today we're definitely talking about what is restful, what is producing that fruit of "I feel restored. I feel like myself and how God's made me to be."

Tim:

Yeah, absolutely. Another practice for me. I think that I'm, I'm learning to lean into is the practice of gratitude in my own life. And just a noticing again, I think it's, like you said, taking notice of the things, so many things that I can be grateful for, even in a messy or hard or challenging life season you know, and taking notice and then in my solitude, in my times of quiet being able to just yeah. Or breath prayers, even just thank you, Lord. Yeah. I'm so grateful. And so, so privileged in so many ways. Gratitude is another one that for me. So these aren't, you know, it's not rocket science, it's just really like, again, again, taking notice and then stepping into some, trying something, experiment, I love what you said. We, you know, just kind of a playful creativity and approach to this whole area of, of rest and Sabbath.

Lori:

Yeah. I think that for some of us Sabbath, we might think, oh, I need to go to church. And then I need to journal and I don't know, do nothing or something. But actually a friend of mine who's a philosopher loves the topic of play. And she did a class last summer that I took. And it was so fun because she was just talking about play and the art of play and the philosophy of play. And it really got me thinking, yeah, play is where we're not trying to be productive. Children are not engaging in play in order to be productive. Children are not playing in order to define who they are. And so play is a way of resting and it's experiencing God's joy and delight, which is a big part of rest and knowing our identity.

Tim:

Yeah. And there's so many ways, you know are your hobbies, the things that you do, are they rest, do you feel invited into rest when you're doing those? Like I feel very much like when I'm out in my garden now, if I go out there and there's just, if I've let it go and there's just too many weeds and it's just, that will drive me crazy. So I do have to kinda keep on top of things, but when I can just step into the garden for a little bit and get hands



dirty, pull a few weeds and see how things are going out there and cultivate the ground a little bit, then that's life-giving for me. And that's a time when I, when I feel like I do enter into some Sabbath rest. So yeah, like you said, it's not necessarily doing nothing,

Lori:

Right? So I think some of the other things that might be like where the creative process of what, what does restful just, I think what you said, being outdoors and some people like to mountain bike. I know my husband finds that to be a restful thing to go mountain biking or to go surfing. So those kinds of activities can be very restful for some people. And for some that might not be what they want. I also think celebration and feasting are words that could be, you know, invite us into this idea of Sabbath. What did the Israelites do? They ate. The part that was missing is that they weren't cooking. I mean, really that's, you know, that's a hard thing for us because, I mean, I'm not saying you have to be legalistic about it, but probably back then where cooking, there's no fast food, there's no quick fixes for that. God's really inviting them to really get, to have the benefit of let's eat this together. Let's be together around a table or whatever that looks like and the enjoyment, but not the work and the labor intensive part. But in our culture, I mean, we don't have to be like all legalistic about this, but it's the invitation to feast together. And I know during COVID that's the thing, we're all, I think we're all looking forward to doing more of in the near future is being around tables with people. Again, I know I've missed that.

Tim:

Yeah. And that's part of celebration and yeah, that's a good reminder. So there's so many things like you're saying, you know, just so many ways that we can practice rest and Sabbath. So maybe our listeners can think about some potential practices, things that are life-giving. Where would you suggest they take it from here? Maybe, you know, and I know people are in different seasons and stages and in terms of where they're at in this whole area of rest, but where could someone start? Who says, who's just kind of saying I'm totally out of practice or I've never really, I've never really put together some intentional practices for my life, some daily or weekly rhythms and routines, where, where, where do we start?

Lori:

I think the biggest part of starting is giving ourselves permission. So I would just, just to make note of it, it does take that courage to believe that we really are able to rest and to take a break from our work. And even if that's for 30 minutes, so giving ourselves permission to do that. And then I would just say, do it in baby steps. If you aren't one who has had rhythms of rest in your life, like every, you know, whether that's Sunday or Monday, I mean, it doesn't need to be on Sunday, but you know, that idea of the Sabbath day, if that feels impossible right now, why not just allow yourself to have a portion of a day. And so it might look like, okay, this week I'm going to try to set aside two hours. And even that, if that feels like too much, then let's dial it back to, is there something you could do for 30 minutes?

And for some people that might send what was 30 minutes, but 30 minutes, if that's more than what you're doing, that is something. Yeah. So first just giving yourself permission to take that pause in your week. And I love that. I think you mentioned it earlier, but rhythms of rest. And so building rhythms of rest, whether that's little rhythms in our day you've got that little app you said from Eldredge. So that helps someone to have a



rhythm, like at two o'clock a minute, take a two minute pause or on Monday morning, I'm going to take a 30 minute, whatever I know for me as a Mom before, COVID when you could actually have these times to do these kinds of things. And when I was still living overseas, I could go for a one hour massage and it would only cost \$7. And so on Monday when my kids went off to school, though, that became like my Sabbath rhythm, because where my kids were home, that's not a Sabbath time. I just found myself on Monday mornings. Okay. I'm not going to try to be productive today. I'm not going to try to figure out what do I need to do? I mean, I do need to go get groceries, but I'm going to start with giving myself permission to do this self-care.

Tim:

That's a great encouragement. Just start with giving yourself permission. And as we take these small steps, we might find that we want more and we need more. And, you know, we can grow, we grow into it, just like any practice. And we can come guilt-free, we can come to God in this and approach rest guilt-free because it's his invitation to us. And it's not a reward for work done and accomplished. And all the boxes checked it's to come right in the middle of all of that, you know? I like what Charles Spurgeon says; he says, "Rest time is not wasted time. It is economy to gather fresh strength. It is wisdom to take leave in the long run. We shall do more by sometimes doing less." And that was Charles Spurgeon, a great preacher and, and very prolific a writer and, and in terms of his sermons and everything. But, but that's just a great encouragement, I think, for all of our, all of us to, as we wrap up here, Lori any last words for our any final words for our listeners today, as we wrap up the episode here. I think this is just going to be so, so valuable for, for those who come to this episode in terms of getting some tips and resources and encouragement around the theme of rest.

Lori:

Yeah. I feel like we've said so much, just like what more there is so much more, but I just, I really pray that any of the listeners out there, wherever you find yourself, you can just allow yourself to notice what's risen up in this podcast. And just trust that God is for you. And even if that journey might look different or slower or faster, or in a different place altogether. But I do think that God wants to invite us all into this experience of knowing ourselves as the beloved.

Tim:

It's such a great note to wrap this up on I hope that you are sensing a personal invitation from God to enter into rest. How can you build some simple and consistent rhythms and routines into your days and weeks, which are truly restful, which are truly life-giving if you're really not sure how to answer that question, start by making a list of activities that you find life-giving and those activities that you find draining, then start to calendarize intentionally those a life-giving activities into your days and weeks as components of rest.

