

Elder Sabbaticals

"Then, besides all this, I have the daily burden of my concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my feeling that weakness? Who is led astray, and I do not burn with anger" (2 Corinthians 11:28-29 NLT)?

In 2 Corinthians 11 Paul recounts many of the challenges he faced as an apostle. After listing some pretty dramatic moments like being stoned, shipwrecked, and ambushed by bandits, he talks about the daily pressure that comes with church leadership.

When someone in the church is struggling with a weakness, the concerned church leader feels it. When someone in the church is led into sin, the church leader often has to deal with anger that arises from what is happening.

Anyone who has served as an elder can identify with Paul's "burden of concern." Our elders are very involved in helping our members through times of weakness. They are on the front lines of the spiritual battles that are raging when members are led astray into sin. And while our elders happily serve with love and joy, make no mistake; the burden can be very heavy.

Our elders and ministers recently discussed having an opportunity for our elders to enjoy a "sabbatical." A sabbatical for our elders is a time for them to take a break from the "burden of concern" for the church. A time to recharge. A time to reflect. A time for renewal. A time to be refreshed. Remember, *even God rested*.

During these sabbaticals, our church family is asked to pray for the elder. Lift him up with thanksgiving to God. Ask God to provide rest. Ask God to renew his strength. Pray for God to bless his introspection and self-reflection. And ask God to recharge him for future ministry. Participation in sabbaticals and the length of the sabbaticals will vary and be flexible.

I am excited about this opportunity for our elders. I pray God will use it in a powerful way to bless these men. I'll close by confessing, I probably don't express my thankfulness for the service of our elders as often as I should. Would you join me in making their work a joy by expressing your thanks, respecting the sabbaticals, and lifting up to God all of our elders?

Thanks be to God for our elders!

-- Bob Clark