

THE ABUNDANT PATH

LEARNING TO WALK IN CONTENTMENT, FULFILLMENT AND HOPE

Field Guide



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Welcome to *The Abundant Path* series.

You're here because you long for deeper spiritual growth. Or, you're here because you were nagged into showing up (I'm so sorry). Either way, welcome to the journey.

You rarely recognize important moments or transformational seasons when you're living them. I didn't realize that in the Summer of 2014, the Lord was luring me into a journey that would shape my life in meaningful ways. The thoughts I will share with you over the coming weeks are from my lived experience.

This journey I've been on, which I'm calling *The Abundant Path*, has helped me overcome struggles with anxiety, insecurity and despair. It's helped me walk in contentment, fulfillment and hope. It's given me a framework to identify and face challenges in my relationships with others and God. And, it's given me a deeper love and appreciation for Jesus, the Spirit and the Father.

My hope for you:

- You will identify and overcome core areas of struggle
- You will deepen your love for Jesus
- You will engage in biblical exercises that expand your heart for God
- You will understand the Scripture and watch it come to life
- You will find this series to be real and practical
- You will deepen friendships with others on the journey

This field guide is designed to provide you with key thoughts along *The Abundant Path*. You'll notice some icons that identify the type of thought you're encountering:



Scripture Thought: God's Word is our guide. You might consider rereading the Scripture thoughts throughout the week. Write or print them out and put them on a mirror or in your phone for when you'd otherwise check social media.



Discussion Question: A prompt for dialogue in your group and for consideration after you leave.



Abundant Thought: Shift your mindset to the mindset Jesus possessed.

It's going to be a good experience. Welcome, and I'm so glad you're here.

Gratefully,

Tommy Brown

Pastor for Spiritual and Community Formation

Centering Prayer: *Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and deliver me from evil* (Psalm 51:10; Matthew 6:13).

Last week, we learned:

- Sabbath comes from the Hebrew *Shabbat*, which means “to cease or desist.”
- Two reasons for Sabbath observance: (1) God rested at creation and (2) God liberated the people from slavery. So, God invites us to rest and to be free.
- We learned: (1) Sabbath existed before the Law; (2) Sabbath is a gift; and (3) Jesus practiced Sabbath.
- We learned that Sabbath is a practice that reminds us we are not the Source, so we cease striving.



Themes of abundance and self-restraint stand at the heart of the sabbath tradition in the creation story. The story portrays a created world fundamentally benevolent and able to produce enough to sustain prosperous human life. This theme of natural abundance is coupled, however, with a theme of self-restraint. By God's own precedent, rest is woven into the fabric of the universe. Periodic self-limitation, deliberate relinquishment of the power to work the world and thereby control it, is, by Sabbath example, a cosmic principle. Indeed, by its placement in the creation narrative, sabbath rest is portrayed as the climactic cosmic principle, that by which the universe finally coheres (Rabbi Jonathan Lord Sacks).



Why is it difficult to practice Sabbath?

Sabbath is a Gift for Our Time

- The mindset with which you approach Sabbath seals the deal for you. Is it a chore or a gift?
- Isaiah 58:13-14: *You shall call the Sabbath a delight.*
- *In the most general sense, the numerous Sabbath laws are an expanding network of minute details deriving from several basic concepts, which eventually create an almost Gothic structure made up of thousands of tiny and meticulously fashioned details clustered around the original form (Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz).*
- How did we arrive with such detail? The Jewish leaders had to answer some questions, such as: (1) When does Sabbath begin and end? (2) What is work?

(1) When is Sabbath?

- In the Jewish mind, Sabbath begins on Friday evening and ends on Saturday evening.
- Gen. 1:3-5.
- Ideally, the Sabbath is a 24-hour period on the same day each week.
- The spirit of Sabbath is that you set aside a day of rest because you trust the Lord and you want to receive the gift that Sabbath is. As with all gifts, you can leave them unopened.

(2) What is work?

- What is work for one person is not for another.
- Three Elements of Sabbath: (1) Worship; (2) Fellowship and (3) Food/Feasting
- Three Sabbath criteria: (1) Does it bring rest and relaxation? (2) Does it bring delight or enjoyment? (3) Does it give you a sense of holiness or sanctity?



What is one thing you never get to do that you would love to do on Sabbath? What is one thing you'd love to be freed from on Sabbath?

We are drawn to the words of Jesus about abundant life and his peace that passes understanding, but often we don't know how to access them. The Sabbath is a concrete way to start, a practical and ancient solution to an enduring human need (Lynne Baab, Sabbath Keeping).



The sabbath is a gift for our time. Let's receive it.

Spend some time dreaming about what Sabbath might become for you and your family, if you live with others.

I highly recommend Lynne Baab's book *Sabbath Keeping: Finding Freedom in the Rhythms of Rest*.

Start Here: Pick a day and try to do one thing you never get to do and commit to cut out one soul-sucking thing from which you want freedom (e.g. cell phones, cooking, etc.). This will take planning and support. Then, try it for six months and adapt as you go.