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IT'S A PANDEMIC. ISN'T SOUL-CARE SELFISH?

JANEL BREITENSTEIN & GARRICK CONNOR

I wish burnout and I weren't on such snuggly terms. (And honestly, it gets worse in times of stress.)

But burnout and I are unfortunate buddies because activity and I are good buddies. Funny thing is, I'm burned out for all the right reasons, see?

I'm seeking to be a nurturing, all-in, all-there mom and wife. I try to be a robust, dependable freelancer and author. I aim to be an available, listening friend. I'm active in church and with their homeless ministry.

And now, when I don't have all that usual overcommitment--the kids are home. Work has kicked into overdrive because of COVID-19, as has my husband's job. I want to make memories with my kids; not just see me working all the time. So we need to be crafting... or something.

Aren't those great reasons to be completely depleted and resentful?

Let me put it another way: Was Jesus always walking around burned out?

WHEN THERE'S ALWAYS MORE TO DO

"There is always more we can do in ministry," Christopher Ash writes in *Zeal Without Burnout: Seven Keys to a Lifelong Ministry of Sustainable Sacrifice*.

"But God is not asking 'Can you do more?' He is asking 'Do you love Me?' Some of those extras are not always as vital as we think them to be."

Sometimes I don't view tasks as extras. As a missionary and mother of four, I know well there's always another basket of laundry to fold, another hand to hold.

But Ash quotes a fellow pastor and volunteer firefighter:

It's foolishness to ignore your limitations, try to be the hero, and cramp up, pass out, or have a heart attack while in a burning structure because you're beyond the limits of what God has supplied you with the capability of doing. It's a form of heroic suicide that is counterproductive because you're now no longer effective in fighting fire and the resources that were dedicated to fighting the fire are now dedicated to saving you.

Yet it's more than practicality that drives me.

I want to know the other half of the "chief end of man": not only to glorify God, but to *enjoy Him*. I want to drink deeply of the existence of which Shauna Niequist speaks in her book *Present Over Perfect*:

... a life marked more by presence and connection and less by exhaustion and competition...

Present over perfect living is real over image, connecting over comparing, meaning over mania, depth over artifice.

I've invited Garrick Conner, a licensed professional counselor, pastor, and marriage and family therapist, to help us explore some of the questions we sort through as devoted, exhausted followers of Jesus.

WHY DO YOU THINK SO MANY CHRISTIANS SUFFER FROM BURNOUT?

Garrick: I believe for many, burnout is yoked to approval. And the church, possibly more than any other organization, is often complicit in driving its most generous volunteers to burnout.

Many Christians work in jobs (or at home) where they are unhappy, unappreciated, and even emotionally and verbally abused. These individuals find safety and belonging in the

church and its ministries.

But left unchecked, unmet needs can pave the way for an addiction to approval. Churches run on volunteers, and their high needs can intersect with unmet emotional needs in ways that can become outwardly productive but inwardly toxic.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE TEND TO ASSOCIATE “SELF-CARE” WITH SELFISHNESS.

How does caring for ourselves—and these souls attached to our bodies—fit with Jesus’ command to deny ourselves (Luke 9:23)? Or what about, “in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3)?

Garrick: I think we do ourselves a profound disservice when we take certain verses and apply them liberally and universally.

The Apostle Paul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, “All things are lawful, but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”

Now to be clear, Paul is addressing the believer’s freedom when it comes to eating and drinking, faith and conscience. But in the context of self-care, sometimes the good of our neighbor is best served when we take care of ourselves first.

So many times as a pastor, I watch people burn out because they haven’t found a way, amidst rigorous demand, to take care of themselves. But those who don’t tend to their own basic needs for rest, nutrition, exercise, and spiritual renewal are more easily agitated, frustrated, and defeated. The odd, anxiety-heightened circumstances of this pandemic exacerbate that.

Sadly but surely, *it’s the people they’re caring for who catch the brunt of those negative emotions.*

DOESN'T THIS MEAN SELF-CARE OR SOUL CARE ARE OPTIONAL?

Shouldn’t we be following the “Jesus first, others next, yourself last” mantra?

So many of us have been told that if there’s an opportunity in front of us to help, this should take precedence.

Garrick: Our opportunities to serve will almost always be greater than our capacity. There are so many considerations that must be weighed in about available opportunities.

These include an accurate assessment of our current commitments, many of which are not official or exciting. Menial tasks such as grocery shopping, housecleaning, and transporting kids to activities must not be overlooked, because they all take time and energy.

It's also important to have a healthy understanding of your own giftedness and passion for the opportunity in view. It's far better to take on one or two commitments that we're uniquely equipped to do with enthusiasm than to take on four or five

Remember:

1. Churches are notorious for filling ministry opportunities with warm bodies.
2. All of us are far less likely to do with excellence those tasks and responsibilities for which we are only marginally equipped and interested.

WHAT'S THE PLACE OF EMOTION AND SPARE TIME FOR A HEALTHY CHRISTIAN?

Garrick: It's extremely important to listen to our bodies. Unfortunately, that's a learned skill that doesn't receive much priority in today's culture where busyness and overscheduling have become idols.

I think we owe much of the blame to modern technology and our seeming inability to leverage it for good while simultaneously limiting its control over us.

When we stop and look at the pattern God established, it's clear that even He rested. And He commanded we rest, too, on the seventh day of each week.

His instruction wasn't about control or even a felt need to rest; it was about loving care. He knows what is best for us and that we can't be in 'go mode' all the time and still function effectively.

For most people in modern-day America, solitude and contemplation are abstract concepts rather than concrete practices. It's like everything we do is in fast-forward, because we're just in such a rush all the time.

And now, this looks like rushing to get groceries, a general rhythm of driven fear, or extra tasks with the kids home.

We are hurried souls.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE UNSEEN DANGERS OF OVERCOMMITMENT? WHAT DYSFUNCTION CAN LIE BENEATH?

Garrick: I believe we all worship someone or something. Certainly God has created us for relationship with Himself and with others, but our culture has glorified busyness.

Our culture, in its own strange way, rewards us for busyness and overcommitment, conflating them with importance. Hence, if I'm not busy, then I must not be important or valued.

Something always has to suffer when we pile too much on our plates or bite off more than

So is the fallout. It shows up in physical problems like hypertension, lack of sexual intimacy, migraine headaches, and digestive issues—all exacerbated by stress. It also shows up in emotional problems like anxiety and depression.

From a purely spiritual perspective, busyness can point to a flawed theology that says "The more I work, the more worthy I am of salvation, forgiveness, and grace."

Such a works-based approach can set us up for a lifetime of chasing something that was never meant to be attained through our own efforts and pursuits, no matter how seemingly altruistic.

WHAT COULD EFFECTIVE SOUL CARE LOOK LIKE—IN BOTH DEEP TREATMENTS AND MORE SUSTAINABLE ADJUSTMENTS TO LIFE RHYTHMS?

Garrick: Effective soul care is one of those things that doesn't just happen. It requires regular attention and willful intentionality.

It's found in:

- a growing ability to identify those things that are life-giving versus those that are draining.
- establishing a regular pattern of connecting with God and with the most important people in your life—namely your family and closest friends.
- setting healthy boundaries with people who require more energy and availability than you realistically have to offer.

- setting limits on 24/7 technology that competes for your time and attention. As *Life's Little Instruction Book* counsels, "Don't allow the phone to interrupt important moments. It's there for your convenience, not the caller's."

For me, soul-care also involves giving myself the freedom to have some regular times each day that are unstructured—and guilt-free.

Yes, there's always something that needs to be done—laundry to be folded, bills to be paid, emails to be sent, supplies to be stocked, paperwork to be completed. But sometimes good, and even necessary, things have to wait because the better thing is to take care of myself.

It means that three weeks into my kids being home (which is totally possible), I'm not grouchy and spent. It means I'm doing things with my family or for others in need out of my health and genuine affection, rather than as a hollowed-out shell.

It means I can take the extra time here as time with God, enjoying Him.

One of the things I know for sure is that those who are looking to us for spiritual sustenance need us first and foremost to be spiritual seekers ourselves...

Then, rather than offering the cold stone of past devotionals, regurgitated apologetics, or someone else's musing about the spiritual life, we will have bread to offer that is warm from the oven of our intimacy with God.

Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*

HOW TO MAKE A SOUL CARE STAYCATION A REALITY—EVEN WITH KIDS

JANEL BREITENSTEIN

Spring break ... and now, surprise! Indefinite time with kids home. Some parents welcome it with open arms. Others feel like it's more bricks, less straw.

Chances are, this school year, you've been plugging along at a good clip. The kids are ready to do something fun--though admittedly no one will be hitting Disney or the slopes this year.

But maybe this exemplifies the split down your middle. *I want to have fun with the kids! Let's make memories! And on the other side? I'm not sure I have a*

drop of fun—or another car trip—left in me.

Time and space for soul-care sometimes feels impossible for parents. But what if you could have your Break-Cake and eat it too?

1. STEP BACK AND ASSESS

We've created a Soul-Care Assessment (page 16) for you to complete long before spring break. Take stock of what's going right and what you're longing for—of the gaps you feel most acutely.

Rather than working around your most



deeply-felt needs, take them into account. Could your limitations be something to celebrate and treat with sacred humility, rather than constantly shove further?

Pray about them, asking God to meet them. You might reflect on Him as Shepherd in Psalm 23, asking Him to lead you beside “green pastures” and “still waters.”

Keep in mind the old joke of the man stranded at sea. When a boat comes to his rescue, he refuses: “God will deliver me!” He answers the same to a helicopter sent for him: “God will deliver me!”

When the man dies of starvation, he asks in heaven, “Why didn’t God deliver me?”

A voice answers, “He sent a boat and a helicopter.”

In what ways might God be presenting your relief?

2. ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESSURES YOU FEEL.

In past (non-pandemic) spring breaks, has there been an urge to keep up with the Joneses and their energetic, wow-that-sounds-exhausting, quality-time-filled camping? Or their family cruise?

Or now, with COVID-19 closures, is a friend treating her kids to a surprise-a-day and a revolving craft table? Is a homeschooling friend wondering why this is a big deal for you? Are you a single dad who feels the need to compensate for the demands on his schedule ... though *man*, it’d be nice to have a day to yourself?

God asks us to consider ourselves with sober judgement (Romans 12:3). For example, what do I really have the

resources to do? He also asks us to not compare ourselves with other families (2 Corinthians 10:12). Jesus also modeled taking time for prayer and solitude, so His work and ministry could proceed from wholeness in His relationship with God.

For our kids, can we set rhythms of making spiritual space?

Recall, too, that parents around the world are struggling to feed their children on breaks from school. These families aren’t child-centered. You don’t need to feed a cultural sense of entitlement in order to make downtime meaningful.

We have an opportunity to teach kids about healthy rest, living within means (in terms of energy, too), and finding meaningful happiness right where we are (a.k.a. contentment).

3. PLAN COLLECTIVELY, WISELY, AND WITH MARGIN TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF YOUR FAMILY.

It’s hard to accommodate your youngest’s fixation on the loss of all soccer practices, your teenager begging to sleep in, and the animal magnetism of the novel that’s been calling your name, personally and with feeling.

But it’s easier if, as a family, you have key discussions ahead of time.

But hold your horses. First, chat with your spouse about each of your needs, hopes, and limitations.

Are you wanting connection time with the kids? A date-in with each other? A morning to sleep in, or a day to work in the shop? Get on the same page.

Planning a recent family getaway, my husband and I were both surprised at what activities flew or flopped in the family vote. Without that discussion, we could've spent a chunk o' change on some of the flops. And as a group, we shared more common goals than you'd think (e.g., vegging out).

Then, help set kids' expectations:

- Dad and I are feeling the burn of the schedule right now. And we're seeing that you guys could use some down time too. Plus, we're just limited in what we can do right now with closures and safety concerns.
- So we're trying to juggle what would be fun and make some cool memories and still create some time when we can lay low.

- That means we're not going to have a non-stop spring break of tons of activities
- Instead, we want to focus on the stuff that matters to each of us and work together to make happen what we can.
- If you're excited about an activity, you could help plan, or propose a way to make it happen—like looking for Groupons, or researching how much it would cost, or giving us a list of what you'd need from the store.

You could ask questions like these:

- What would a great spring break look like for you? Do you need rest? Are you hoping for fun? Are you wanting family time? One-on-one time with one of your parents?
- What's one reasonable, staying-here idea that (if it happened) would make your week?

TIP

Your kids need help to see beyond the desires of their pre-developed frontal lobes and to have valuable talks to evaluate what they really need. Maybe that kid struggling with anxiety could use a week to sleep in and not see friends. Maybe your child bouncing off the wall needs some strategic releases of energy each day so he doesn't send the rest of you to the funny farm.

4. GET STRATEGIC.

Set aside the “big rocks” each of you wants to accomplish—while acknowledging everyone may not get their hearts’ warmest, squishiest desires.

Think about the best ways to aim not just for quantity, but quality.

- You might try to have **an individual “date” with each child**. Since you may avoid dining in, maybe you’re grabbing a shake or smoothie at a drive-through and sitting at a park.
- **Give priority to scheduling time for spiritual rest, prayer, stillness, and listening.** This means actually put it on the calendar.
- **One or two “wow” activities for the week** can often grant a lasting impression of a fun, off-the-beaten-path week. Ideals? Using one of the much-easier-now squeeze-bottle kits of tie-dye (and probably still stocked at the store). Going to a meteor shower. Hanging up a sheet in the yard and borrowing someone’s (now Clorox-wiped) movie projector for movies on the terrace (at home), complete with family members’ favorite snacks. Family-made fondue for dinner one evening.
- If a schedule helps you plan, consider scheduling **one activity “slot” per day or every other day**—low-prep, no-prep, or kid-prep being key. I like this plan. Once I’ve set aside that time and agreed on that expectation with my kids, I’ve accomplished my top goal of connecting with my kids and making a memorable break where they felt

special. The remainder of the time, I can relax with more ease. I can model rest and rejuvenation for them.

- **See how much white space you can still leave in your schedule.** This is time set aside for *nothing*.
- **A day with childcare or relatives is A-OK.** One of my goals on kids’ breaks is to simply be present with them: to generally be around, not just for quantity, but for quality. If I’m there for quality moments, it’s just fine if I take a day to sit at a coffee shop and journal, go on a hike, or do something I love.

Someday, my daughter or son may be exhausted from parenthood. And in the recesses of memory, I’d like them to remember I took non-kid-centric time to listen to God—to enjoy Him and explore His world.

Even if they don’t remember that, maybe they won’t remember the stressed, snippy version of me. Maybe rather than an irritable mom running on fumes, they’ll see Jesus more in me as I operate out of His fullness in me, and a satisfied soul.



MARCH HOMECATION

IDEA CARDS

These low-key, low-prep staycation idea cards allow you minimal effort (or kid-directed effort!) with maximum togetherness. Maybe you'll pick one activity per day, and for the rest of the day, lay low.

So take a deep breath. Create some memories to last way beyond this week.



Family game night
(or tournament!)



Video-game racing



Read one chapter of a book
every night



Go on a hike



Let kids look up and plan for
an easy science experiment



Let kids "paint" with shaving
cream in the bathtub (just
don't get it in your eyes!)





Have a picnic at the park
(Give kids part of the responsibility of choosing items to pack)



Go swimming



Have a cooking competition



Have kids create a stop-motion Lego/doll video



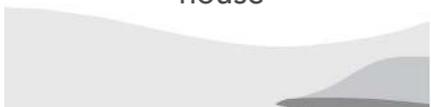
Grab an online tour: Can you visit a zoo, museum, or even the online White House or pyramids through your computer? Let kids Google their next virtual field trip!



Have a photo shoot in the backyard



Give kids a weeklong project to pick up and set down at will: Creating a scrapbook, online painting or cooking lessons, outfitting a tree house



Allow kids to find a craft idea and plan for it



Visit the local hobby store for a new project kids can work on all week.

(Don't be discouraged if enthusiasm ebbs and flows throughout the week.)





"Kids cook dinner" night



Ice-cream sundae night



Make fun food like fondue, sushi, or a taco or baked-potato bar



Let the kids put on a play (video optional). They can write their own, or base it on a book or a show. Don't forget costumes!



Build a fort. Let the kids sleep in it, and/or have a popcorn & movie night inside



Create indoor sets for role-playing. Line up chairs to look like an airplane or a canoe. Or get creative with cardboard boxes on hand.



Have a progressive dinner at restaurants in your neighborhood



Make cookies or muffins (bonus: with handmade cards) for someone



Wear pajamas all day
Bonus idea:
Family Nerf war



SOUL-CARE ASSESSMENT

0 = not me

1 = pretty much me

2 = definitely me

(If a question doesn't apply, leave blank).

A. MY BODY

1. I regularly receive a full night's sleep (7+ hours). _____
2. I eat regular meals. _____
3. I eat healthy. _____
4. I exercise regularly. _____
5. I enjoy regular sex with my spouse. _____
6. I reject pornography. _____
7. I do not regularly eat or sleep in excess. _____
8. I regularly seek preventative medical and dental care for myself. _____
9. I regularly seek medical care when something's wrong. _____
10. I spend time outdoors. _____
11. In my work, overtime is not a regular habit. _____
12. I don't work after dinner/early morning without allowing for other compensating times of relaxation. _____
13. I generally possess margin so that pieces of my life can shift when things go wrong or unexpectedly arise. _____
14. I don't feel like I am "always running." My schedule feels manageable, doable. _____
15. I have taken more than three days leisure time off work this past year for something I personally enjoyed. _____
16. I take a weekly Sabbath/day of worship and vocational rest. _____
17. If I have an ongoing medical condition, I do what I need to ensure long- and short-term health. _____
18. None of my relationships are physically abusive. _____
19. When I'm tired, I try to find a way to rest, even for a moment. _____
20. I am not addicted to any substance. _____
21. I accept the body God has given me. _____
22. I have healthy work/life balance (with "work" including "ministry"). _____

WHAT, IF ANY, PHYSICAL SIGNS OF STRESS AM I EXPERIENCING?

WHAT'S ONE AREA WHERE MY SPOUSE WOULD WANT ME TO IMPROVE PHYSICALLY? MY KIDS?

WHAT'S ONE AREA I FEEL MOST CONVICTED GOD WOULD WANT ME TO BETTER CARE FOR THE BODY HE'S GIVEN?

B. MY EMOTIONS

1. I usually know in advance whether an activity will be enjoyable/relaxing or draining. I make wise choices with my energy. _____
2. I continue to thoroughly, thoughtfully, and prayerfully explore difficulties from my past. _____
3. I don't feel a need to control my circumstances. _____
4. I have healthy ways of coping with anxiety. My anxiety doesn't usually feel overwhelming. _____
5. I have recently done something that feels brave. _____
6. I have someone in my life who I could call in a crisis, even in the middle of the night. _____
7. I frequently feel hopeful. _____
8. I'm not frequently angry. But when I am, I can respond with self-control and honesty about my contributions—and without punishing others or myself. _____
9. I can pace myself and my schedule well. _____
10. I frequently feel happiness. _____
11. When I feel stressed, I take time to discern whether I should push through or step back. _____
12. I frequently apologize and ask forgiveness when I hurt or offend others and God. (Confused how this is "soul care"? Apologizing and embracing our weaknesses requires humility and acceptance of ourselves as God's children. They cleanse our souls and release us from the chains of our own sin.) _____
13. When I feel sadness, I take time to acknowledge the value of what I've lost. _____
14. No emotions are "off limits" to me. _____
15. I have moments of stillness and/or solitude built into my day or week. _____
16. I regularly make time for a life-giving hobby that makes me happy. _____
17. I embrace my limitations. _____
18. I take time to learn something that makes me curious. _____

WHAT'S ONE AREA WHERE MY SPOUSE WOULD WANT ME TO GROW EMOTIONALLY? MY KIDS?

WHAT'S ONE AREA I FEEL MOST CONVICTED GOD WOULD WANT ME TO BETTER ACKNOWLEDGE AND CARE FOR THE EMOTIONS HE'S GIVEN?

C. MY RELATIONSHIPS

1. I have a valuable, mutually-fulfilling friendship with someone of the same gender. _____
2. I confide in my spouse. _____
3. I maintain healthy boundaries in my relationships. _____
4. I don't feel a need to please others in order to be loved. _____
5. My closest relationships love me for who I am, not what I do. _____
6. I feel emotionally safe and known in my marriage. _____
7. I am emotionally open with at least one trustworthy person. _____
8. I don't feel a need to control others. _____
9. I have friendships in which I feel known and emotionally safe. _____
10. I have friendships in which I can effectively and meaningfully care for others. _____
11. I feel comfortable asking for what I need. _____
12. I'm discerning, well aware of which people are trustworthy. I'm wise with whom I share my heart. _____
13. I speak up respectfully when I disagree or sense I may be taken advantage of. _____
14. I feel comfortable talking openly about my weaknesses and struggles in my close relationships. _____

15. In activities with friends or my spouse, we sometimes do what I would enjoy. _____
16. When I'm with people, I'm "present": fully engaged, undistracted. _____
17. I generally enjoy social activities. _____
18. I'm generally the same version of "myself" in varied social situations. _____
19. I make time for life-giving relationships. _____
20. My spouse and I make time for each other. _____
21. I take time to connect with my kids in effective ways. _____
22. I am not minimizing or ignoring conflict in my life. _____
23. With those in authority over me, I can still respectfully voice my opinion. _____
24. My relationships generally involve a healthy level of giving and receiving. _____
25. I don't have anything to prove. _____
26. I take time away from my phone. _____

WHAT'S ONE AREA WHERE MY SPOUSE WOULD WANT ME TO ALTER THE WAY I ENGAGE SOCIALLY? MY KIDS?

WHAT'S ONE AREA I FEEL GOD WOULD WANT ME TO MORE WHOLEHEARTEDLY RESPOND IN THE RELATIONSHIPS HE'S GIVEN?

D. MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1. I feel connected with God. _____
2. I address past or present suffering when I feel pain, exploring my soul's questions with God. _____
3. I feel God hears me. _____
4. I feel accepted by God. _____
5. I don't feel the need to hide from God. _____
6. I feel God's compassion. _____
7. I can sense God is for me. _____
8. I am learning the ability to know how God may be directing me or "speaking" to my soul. _____
9. I frequently find encouragement in Scripture. _____
10. I feel God loves me for more than what I do for Him. I don't serve so He'll be more pleased with me. _____
11. When I repent, I know God's forgiveness. _____
12. When I sin again in the same way, I still know God hasn't rejected me. _____
13. I respect God's rhythms of rest in my life. I embrace His opportunities for refreshment and renewal. _____
14. At my core, I feel loved by God. _____
15. Even when I don't get God, I feel a deep level of trust. _____
16. Even when I'm hurting, I feel loved and cared for by God. _____
17. I have taken time recently to be alone with God for an extended amount of time. _____
18. I frequently take time to nurture my soul in God. _____
19. My schedule has margin for me to listen to God. _____
20. When I realize sin in my life, I don't feel condemned. _____
21. I see ways God advocates for me. _____
22. I am surrounded by and intentional in a Christian community. _____
23. I've found activities and/or disciplines that help me experience more joy in and communion with God. _____
24. I actively address my own "pet lies" with truth from God's Word. _____
25. I regularly create time to listen to and engage with God's Word. _____
26. Worship feels like a "get to" rather than a "have to." _____



25 TIPS FOR AVOIDING MOM BURNOUT

JANEL BREITENSTEIN

1. Sleep may be more important than you think it is. Remember, God made it. Get some.
2. Mentally set a time on the clock when you will stop working and do something that replenishes you. If you need accountability, tell someone in your household and ask them to hold you to it.
3. Pray about every activity to which you'd like to say "yes." Ask God to uncover your motivations for a "yes," and pray about whether He would have you say "yes," too. Make sure your husband is on the same page, and when appropriate, invite your children's input.
4. Make a goal to spend a certain amount of time playing, cuddling, and/or generally enjoying your kids every week or every day. Though there will be other times to pursue some of your activities, their childhood is only now.
5. Politely say no.
6. Take one day a month or a week to "fast" from technology. Ask yourself if you really need to be that accessible.
7. Talk with your husband about reasonable limits for your kids' activities and the effects your decisions will have short and long term. Seriously consider the cost-benefit ratio, and pray together with open hearts about your schedule(s).
8. Ask for help when you need it.
9. Swap babysitting with a friend for one day. Consider taking part of the day as a spiritual retreat and part to do something you thoroughly enjoy.
10. Set up a regular date night with your husband.
11. If the "good" is the enemy of the "best," decide what you'll set aside (for example, that basket of laundry) for something more important (that game of Chutes and Ladders your kids have been begging to play or calling a friend).
12. What projects on your back burner would make you feel the most relieved if they were tackled? What friend might be willing to lend (or swap) her expertise in organizing, artistic skill, or childcare to help you dig out?



13. Politely say no. (In case you didn't read it the first time.)
14. Take a bath, eat something you really like, or enjoy the equivalent that causes you to slow down, savor God's goodness in this moment, and remember His sufficiency to fulfill what is necessary.
15. Slowly read Ann Voskamp's book, *One Thousand Gifts: A Dare to Live Fully Right Where You Are*.
16. Examine whether you have enough relational breathing room in your schedule to enjoy friends, extended family, your kids, your marriage, and your walk with God.
17. Rest one day a week. If it helps, make a few guidelines for yourself about what you won't do on that day (empty the dishwasher, cook, answer email ... whatever works for you).
18. When you feel your stress levels rising because of your task list, take 5 to 10 minutes and "go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father.
19. Trust God to provide other people to do some of the things that need to be done.
20. Observe the immediate and distant effects of your schedule on your kids. When they look back at their childhood, what will they remember? What will they know was most valuable in your home?
21. Memorize and meditate on verses like Psalm 23, 127:2; Matthew 6:31-34; Ephesians 2:10; and James 3:13-18.
22. Think about the things that you do to relax ... and whether they actually relax you. Do you know what rejuvenates you?
23. Politely say no. (You get the point.)
24. Create pockets of silence and rest in your life. Turn off the TV, the music, the computer, your phone. Use the time to simply, quietly be with God instead.
25. Ask God to help you listen to Him
Then practice, practice, practice.