

# Sabbath

*From Volunteers Exploring Vocation*

## Scripture reading

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work ... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it.

—*Exodus 20:8-11*

## Reflection

Practicing Sabbath is an important discipline, especially for volunteers. Barbara Brown Taylor talks about Sabbath as porch-sitting, being idle, taking time to say “no” to doing and “yes” to being. For volunteers engaged in intense work in the world, this time for being in the presence of God, acknowledging God, and resting our overworked brains and bodies is essential.

Read the excerpt below from *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor:

*In the eyes of the world, there is no payoff for sitting on the porch. A field full of weeds will not earn anyone's respect. If you want to succeed in this life (whatever your “field” or endeavor), you must spray, you must plow, you must fertilize, you must plant. You must never turn your back. Each year's harvest must be bigger than the last. That is what the earth and her people are for, right? Wrong god.*

*In the eyes of the true God, the porch is imperative—not every now and then, but on a regular basis. When the fields are at rest—when shy deer step from the woods to graze the purple clover grown up between last year’s tomato plants, and the Carolina chickadees hang upside down to pry seeds from the sunflowers that have taken over the vineyard—when people who belong to this land walk through it with straw hats in their hands instead of hoes—this is not called “letting things go;” this is called “practicing Sabbath.” You have to wonder what makes human beings so resistant to it ...*

Barbara Brown Taylor goes on to encourage us to make two lists on one piece of paper: On one side of the paper, list all of the things you know give you life that you never take time to do; then on the other side, make a list of all the reasons why you think it is impossible to do those things. She says, “That’s all there is to it. Just make the two lists, and keep the piece of paper where you can see it. Also promise not to shush your heart when it howls for the list it wants.”

### Questions

- What do you think of this practice of Sabbath?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- How might you begin observing Sabbaths more intentionally and regularly?

### Prayer

Thank you for your gift of time, and the ways you give us to order it. Remind us that you are the creator and sustainer of the world, that while our work joins yours, it is not our work that saves us. Give us rest, but more importantly, give us the motivation and desire to so govern ourselves that we incorporate rest into our regular routines. Amen.