

# Vacations & Sabbaticals: Getting Out of the Sprint-and-Crash Cycle

Brad Hambrick



rest



## Hebrews 4:9-11

“So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.”



# Faulty Mindset and Lifestyle

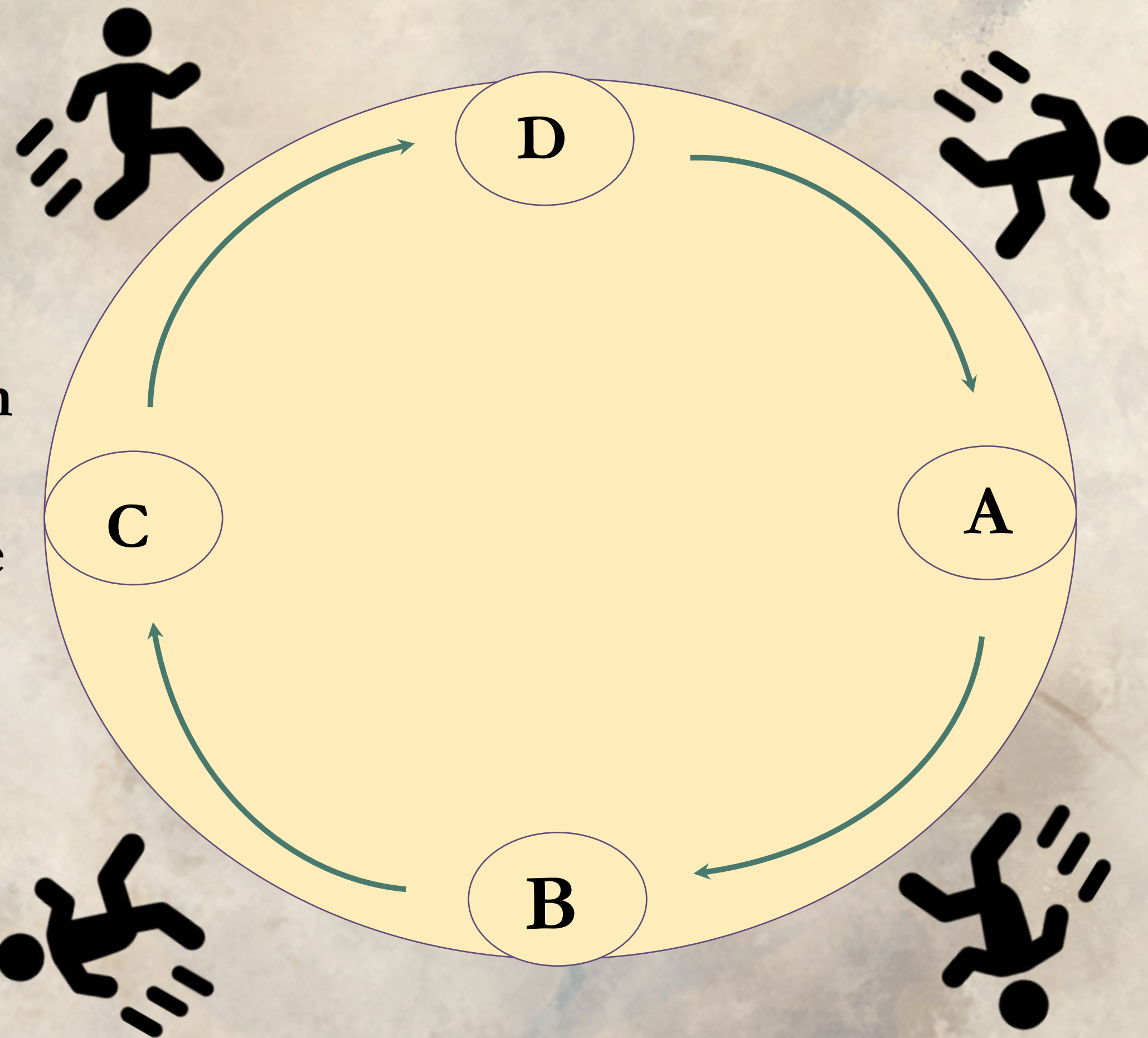
Let's put into words what we often think but rarely articulate, at least not with this much candor: *If I can just make it to [upcoming break], it doesn't matter that I am living unsustainably now. I'll rest then, and that will make up for it.* We sprint for as long as we can. Unfortunately, the only way we discover how long “as long as we can” is, is when we crash.



# Lifestyle Visualized

## Vacation

- D – New Years
  - Sprint – Jan to March
- A – Spring Break
  - Sprint – April to June
- B – Summer Vacation
  - Sprint – July to Nov
- C – Thanksgiving
  - Sprint – Nov. to Dec.

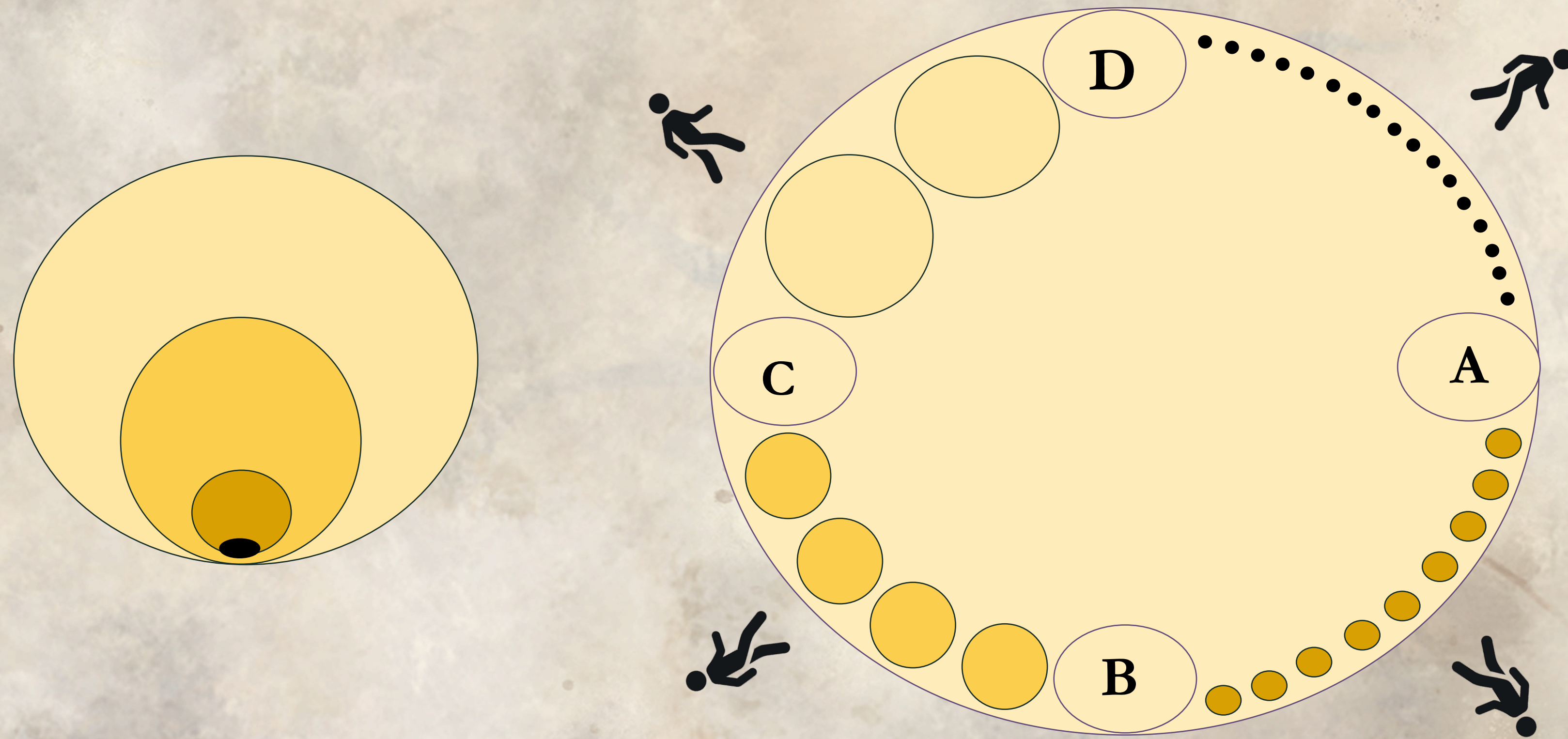


## Sabbatical

- Sprint – Years 1 to 10
- A – Spring Break
  - Sprint – Years 11 to 20
- B – Summer Vacation
  - Sprint – Years 21 to 30
- C – Thanksgiving
  - Sprint – Years 31 to 40
- D – New Years



# Alternative Visualized



## Icon Key

- Smallest Dots (D to A) –daily practices of rest and restoration
- Small Dots (A to B) – weekly practices
- Medium Circles (B to C) –monthly practices
- Large Circles (C to D) – annual practices



# Two Points and a Distinction

1. When it comes to rest, I should expect my smaller choices—daily, weekly, monthly—to make as much, if not more of, a difference than the big breaks—a vacation or sabbatical.
  2. If I did a better job of capitalizing on these smaller choices for rest, then I could be more strategic about stewarding larger breaks for restoration.
- Rest: We will use “rest” to refer to basic upkeep of our body and mind.
  - Restoration: We will use “restoration” to refer to times of refueling our passion for the roles and relationships central to our life. Rest does not guarantee restoration.



# Daily Practices

- In moments of stress, practice stillness and deep breathing.
- Make sure you eat healthy meals.
- Get outside or exercise.
- Allow your devotional time to be relational.
- Don't have mindless commutes.



# Weekly Practices

- Average 50 hours of sleep each week.
- Have reasonable expectations for your 168-hour week.
- Plan time with family and friends.
- Block time for personally enjoyable activities.



# Monthly Practices

- Have one or two highly intentional conversations.
- Manage a financial plan that works and track it.
- Identify points of stress, friction, or skill deficit.
- Reflect on your progress toward larger goals.



# Yearly Practices

- Use all your vacation days and use them intentionally.
- Share your work or ministry burdens up the org chart.
- Create mid- to long-range personal and family goals.
- Get an annual medical checkup.
- Take a spiritual inventory. **[Next Slide]**



# Spiritual Inventory

1. How would you rate your spiritual vitality and passion? How has that changed in the last year?
2. What are the areas of character growth or regression you've seen over the last year?
3. How has your theological understanding grown or changed over the last year?
4. What ministry skills have you grown or developed in the last year?
5. How have your closest relationships changed in the last year?
6. Are there areas of cynicism, doubt, futility, or bitterness that have developed in the last year?
7. How has your prayer life grown or regressed over the last year?



# **Are You Ready for More than Rest?**

- 1. Sign One: Nothing Feels "Small"**
- 2. Sign Two: Critics Invade Your Quiet Time**
- 3. Sign Three: Guilt Becomes Your Emotional Caffeine**
- 4. Sign Four: Sleep Isn't Replenishing**
- 5. Sign Five: Forgetfulness and Diminishing Returns**



# Vacation Planning

- **Step One: Decide what type of break this vacation will be.**
- **Step Two: Decide on your budget.**
- **Step Three: Select the “big rock” activities for the break.**
- **Step Four: Enjoy the break.**
- **Step Five: Give yourself a buffer day.**



# Sabbatical Planning

- Step One: Examine each area of life that needs a restorative influence on your break.
- Step Two: Decide on your budget.
- Step Three: Prepare your team for your absence.
- Step Four: Allow a few buffer days on the front end.
- Step Five: Periodically reflect on a few key questions.  
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- Step Six: Engage your sabbatical with gratitude rather than guilt or entitlement.
- Step Seven: Plan your reentry to work.



# Sabbatical Reflection

- How satisfied am I with how I've stewarded the last five to ten years?
- What is different about the season of life I'm entering from the one I'm completing?
- How healthy are my key relationships and how can I strengthen them?
- What do I need to change in my daily, weekly, monthly, and annual practice to steward my life better?
- How will I know if I've been a good steward of the next five to ten years?
- How have my job activities changed from what's on my job description?
- Who are the most life-giving people in my life and how do I prioritize time with them?
- What are the most life-giving parts of my job?
- If I don't make [blank] changes soon, I will deeply regret it. Make a list.
- Who should I talk to about these questions for my answers to be holistic?



# Closing Thoughts

Chances are, you feel like you have some planning to do. This hasn't been a paint-by-numbers discussion of rest and restoration. We didn't provide vacation and sabbatical templates for you to copy-paste into your favorite calendaring app. I gave you tools, questions, and practices to try on and be intentional with. Hopefully, that's encouraging. It means you can practice (i.e., rehearse, play around with) the things we've discussed.

A good plan doesn't have to be fail-proof to be beneficial. Even when a good plan fails (i.e., doesn't produce the desired results), the intentionality in the plan allows you to think strategically about why it didn't work and identify better options in the future. That's how I would encourage you to think about this material. Craft a good initial plan for rest and restoration. Enjoy it. Assess it. Tinker with it. Then continue to revise it as you strive to steward your life for the glory of God!