

Speak out!

**...in repentance and rest
is your salvation,
in quietness and trust
is your strength...**

Isaiah 30:15-a

The first two chapters of Genesis provide us with a wide-angle view into God's creativity and the wonders of His creation. Our Triune God brings the world into being as the divine Word is spoken and the Spirit hovers over chaos. The vast panoply of God's creation bursts forth: sun and stars, the depths of the seas and the expanse of the land, fruit trees and flying birds, grasslands and sea creatures, and human life.



Near the end of that creation account, we encounter a curious moment. After all God's creative work dubbed "good" and "very good," we read that "on the seventh day he rested from all his work" (Genesis 2:2). If God is so powerful, why did He need to rest? Is He tired, or is something else happening? As Scripture's story continues, we find God's creation example of work and rest provides structure for the life rhythm of humanity. The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5 call God's people to mirror the hard work of six days with a day of ceasing from work, known as the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is emblematic of many things for God's people. It signifies an admission of our human limitations, an expression of our belief that only God is Almighty, and a life of trust in God that makes space for rest and enjoyment amidst hard work. It is a day that reorients us to God and to ourselves. As pastor and author Eugene Peterson quipped, it is a day for "praying and playing."

One of the pervasive troubles of God's people in the Hebrew Bible is their inability to live out the Sabbath. Many of the prophets castigate them again and again for desecrating this day because it represents so much else about their real relationship with God. Isaiah declares:

"This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: 'In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.'" (Isaiah 30:15)

You and I are not that different in our tendency to push back against Sabbath and rest. In a culture bent on production and consumption, we easily believe everything depends upon us and that there is no place for rest. At times, even what we call "rest" is not truly restorative, but just one more thing to do or consume. The invitation of God is still there for all of us to live in a different way:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

Matt Erickson, Senior Pastor

The S's of Spiritual Disciplines:

This issue of *Speak Out!* looks into the story of how God is at work in and through the people and ministries of Eastbrook as they practice rhythms of rest. You will read stories that connect to the spiritual disciplines listed below, as well as some others. As Paul Sinclair states in his interview (pg. 5), spiritual disciplines in and of themselves are not the goal. Rather, they are tools we may use on our journey of sanctification as we work to become more like Jesus Christ.

- 1. Sabbath**—God's gift of regular and repetitive rest, given for our delight and communion with God. Sabbath is characterized by time for *being* in the midst of a life of *doing*.
- 2. Silence**—A regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise.
- 3. Solitude**—Scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God.
- 4. Secrecy**—Practicing the spirit of Christ reflected in hiddenness, anonymity, lack of display and the holding of confidences.



As a part of their weekly Sabbath practice, Pastor Matt and Kelly begin each Friday with a walk in nature, sometimes stopping to capture a photo of a particularly captivating scene. The cover photo of this winter issue of *Speak Out!* was captured by Pastor Matt on one of his recent Sabbath walks.

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Pursuing Sabbath with Bonnie Tesch

Learn from Eastbrooker Bonnie Tesch as she shares her story of being discipled by Christ through a weekly Sabbath

I was in an introductory Bible class at my first church in Iowa City when I first heard about Sabbath: a day of rest dedicated to God, His fourth commandment.

At the time, I was a resident in internal medicine working 60-80 hours a week, plus one or two weekends each month. A day of rest to focus on God sounded wonderful — but how could I do this? I spoke to my pastor, who said that Sabbath was not so much about a certain day, but rather carving out time in my schedule to rest and focus on God. With some effort, I was able to find a few hours each week to rest and even fellowship with other believers.

Several years later, I moved to Milwaukee, got married, and served in missions in Africa with my husband, Tim. Upon our return, we realized the strength of consumer-orientation in our culture, and made a conscious decision to not shop on Sundays. In his book *Sabbath as Resistance*, theologian Walter Brueggemann says, “Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the

commandments in our society... and it becomes a decisive, concrete, visible way of opting for and aligning with the God of rest.”

After we had children, it became more challenging to practice Sabbath and truly set that time apart. Our family consistently attended worship services, and we did not work on Sunday unless I was on call, but Sunday afternoon was more like a day off. We often used the day to catch up on housework or yard work.

We came to realize that being able to keep Sabbath is a gift. We need to be free and also have time off, something the Jewish people did not have for 400 years as slaves in Egypt. The second time God commands Sabbath, He reminds them that they are now free and can celebrate Sabbath together (Deuteronomy 5:15). These days, on Sunday, we enjoy walking outside celebrating God’s creation, and have recently started to become more intentional about spending time with other believers, as well as practicing hospitality.

Medical studies have consistently shown that taking time to pause and rest is healthy for our bodies. But as author Abraham Joshua Heschel says, Sabbath is not only good for our bodies, it is also good for our souls:

“Six days a week we wrestle with the world, wringing profit from the earth; on the Sabbath we especially care for the seed of eternity planted in the soul.”

Jesus Himself said, *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”* (Mark 2:27). ■

Bonnie and her husband Tim met at Eastbrook many years ago and recently returned to our congregation. They have been married for 39 years, and have two grown sons.



GETTING STARTED WITH SABBATH

- Set aside time for intimacy with God and others you love
- Rest in God one day per week (aim for a consistent 24-hour period if possible)
- Let go of to-do lists, competition, difficult conversations, and things that cause stress
- Practice restful activities: walks, picnics, naps, time with those you love, etc.
- Trust God for all that you are not doing on this day, acknowledging your human limits

Key Scripture: Hebrews 4:1, 9-11; Mark 2:27; Exodus 20:8-10

The Pause

Finding Rest in Intimacy with God

by Megan 'Mac' Littell

Sitting in silence in a room full of people can feel awkward, intimidating, or impossible. It asks you to leave your comfort zone. But practiced communally, this kind of stillness is a valuable spiritual practice from which we can all learn.

This is exactly the lesson Eastbrook students have worked on for the past few years. Every Sunday night, high school ministry participants have come to anticipate “the pause,” a period of silence during their otherwise interactive time together.

The pause bridges a time of musical worship and the message for that evening. It goes like this: leaders ask students to spread out around the room — they are invited to sit, stand, or lay down, whatever feels comfortable to them in the moment. The lights dim and Pastor Nic Fridenmaker, Eastbrook’s High School Ministry leader, directs the group through the practice. Some weeks it’s a welcoming prayer, sometimes praying through scripture, or simply a breathing exercise. The group started out spending three to five minutes in silence, and at the peak of this habit worked up to 10 minutes of silence.

The idea to bring this practice to Eastbrook's youth group stemmed from Fridenmaker's own experience practicing silence with a spiritual director. He introduced the pause in 2019 along with former Youth Worship Coordinator Gabriel Douglas, who says he loved seeing students encouraged to have more autonomy during this time of worship, which can often be very structured.

"The pause gives freedom to worship at any time in any way, as long as you are directing what you are doing to God and bringing God into that space," says Gabriel Douglas, now Eastbrook's Music Director. "As a music leader, I always want to fill the space, but maybe we can wait and see what God wants to do in [the silence]."

"It is really powerful because once you're able to give yourself time to let the noises in your mind calm down, at least for me, that's when God reveals stuff."

Students have really leaned into this practice. After initially introducing the pause for several weeks, the group skipped it once; students asked why — they missed it! This was confirmation to Fridenmaker of how God's Spirit was working through this time among the students.

"As a pastor, it's been super encouraging to see young people connect with an 'old person's discipline.'" he says. "You don't associate teens with silence. [you'd think] they only connect with 'hyper worship,' but that's not true! Our students are far more mature than we give them credit for."

The pause is also a practice that easily translates to other spaces in the students' lives. It can be done anywhere — in the lunchroom, at school, at home. It can be both a communal and an individual practice.

High school junior Samantha Eide serves both on the worship team and as a junior leader for Eastbrook's youth group. She says the pause has impacted her in different ways, so much so that she intentionally practices it on her own at home to focus on breathing and prayer, helping her feel closer to God.

"The pause definitely brought me peace after a long week," she describes. "[It's] an incredible way of learning how to stop and focus on God."

We have a lot to learn from our students, and the pause is one of them.

Most of us do not seek out silence, yet we all yearn for peace in the midst of the all-consuming noise that surrounds us constantly: conversation, notifications on our phones, music playing in the background, the sounds of traffic or our workplaces — or simply the busyness in our lives, the

expectations and schedules and racing thoughts that fill every moment. Our brains crave stimulation, so among all of this, silence may feel unproductive.

In her book, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, author Adele Ahlberg Calhoun provides an overview of many spiritual practices that draw us closer to God; here she quotes Susan Muto in her chapter on silence:

"[It] seems essential for our spiritual life to seek some silence, no matter how busy we may be. Silence is not to be shunned as empty space, but to be befriended as fertile ground for intimacy with God."

Thinking of trying your own spiritual practice of silence? Fridenmaker suggests starting small, maybe only a minute or two. Find a comfortable place. Before you enter into your intentional time, hide the things that make noise or might prove too distracting — put away your phone, take off your smartwatch, turn off the music. Not sure where to start? Try reading Psalm 23, then sit in silence for one minute, reflecting on what God being a shepherd means to you. If your mind wanders, gently bring it back by focusing on your breathing or on a phrase like, "God, You are my shepherd."

Like any new habit, consistent practice is key. Silence is a rhythm, and learning that rhythm of our own "pause" can help us connect with God.

Practicing silence is a way we can connect with God and find peace in the moments throughout our day, inviting us to tune out the noise and pay attention. It's about surrender, about being open to what God might be saying to us. Silence is not simply about being quiet; it is rest. Let's take a page from our youth and lean into the practice, finding rest in intimacy with God. ■

PRACTICE YOUR OWN "PAUSE"

- Set a period of time in which you don't speak or hear noises (other than nature)
- Drive or commute without the radio/music/podcasts
- Go on a personal silent retreat

Key Scripture: Habakkuk 2:20; 1 Kings 19:12; Revelation 8:1; Luke 5:16

GET TO KNOW AN EASTBROOKER: Paul Sinclair

by Jessica Eckert



Paul Sinclair has been coming to Eastbrook for almost nine years. During that time, he also served as our Missions Pastor for two years before retiring in 2018. He and Lisa, his wife of 43 years, reside hours north of the Eastbrook campus, but make countless trips to the city to continue to be part of the church community, as well as to see their children and grandchildren.

Before worshiping alongside us here, Paul served as a pastor of another church in the Milwaukee area as well as a missionary in West Africa for ten years. He loves to serve God in tangible ways, but more recently, he discovered the beauty of spending time in God's presence. Let's help make our big church feel smaller as we get to know Paul, and learn how he sets the table to meet with God.

How is retirement treating you?

The word 'retirement' I'm not crazy about. It is a transition from full-time paid ministry to unpaid ministry, which for me has looked like spending hours with my grandkids and mentoring men in prisons across the state.

You've worked in a variety of ministry roles over the years. How were you originally introduced to God?

I grew up in Kentucky and my family went to a Southern Baptist church. At age nine I accepted Christ, but I never understood the grace of God. I [developed] a fear of God, that He would judge me. The fear quickly turned to shame that I carried with me as a teenager, 20-year-old, and into my thirties. I was doing a lot of service for God while the shame drove me to sinful habits that began to cripple my ministry. In my own dark night of the soul, Father God embraced me with compassionate arms. Understanding the grace of God was my turning point. God got a hold of me like this [mimics hands holding his shirt collar] and said, "Paul, you may act as though the world depends on your service, but you are not needed outside of your need to be with Me."

How did you process needing to be with God in contrast to serving Him out of your own strength?

What I've wrestled with, because my personality is one of work and service, is that Christ calls us to serve Him, and be diligent, active, and passionate. God showed me that life apart from Him leads to death. My ministry, my marriage, my family was crumbling. His love in spite of it was His grace. I needed to be intentional in my time with Him.

How have you become more intentional with Him?

I have historically not been good at rest. However, rest is so essential to a person continuing to be able to breathe in God's unlimited, unmerited love and grace. The

idea of rest, for me [is like] I'm setting a table. When I sit down and take a meal, there's a spoon, plate, and cup. Spiritual disciplines help me to set the table to connect with Jesus. I have the ability to hear Him and I can respond to Him.

What spiritual disciplines help you set the table to meet with God?

I practice the five "S's": Solitude, Silence, Secrecy, Service, and Supplication.

What do these practices look like in your life?

I try to start the day with God. I read Scripture and pray because I desperately need the silence and solitude. Sometimes I put myself physically in a new space so that I'm not distracted by other things.

Years ago, a Christian psychologist encouraged me to work on a spiritual journal and to come up with a personal calling statement. It includes my purpose for living, core values, life vision, and the care of my physical body. I review it every week to make sure that the main thing remains the main thing and that I'm not getting into workaholic mode.

Can you say more about the discipline of secrecy?

In the past, I would use my service to seek man's approval. I have people-pleaser tendencies that I have to actively fight. Practicing the spiritual discipline of secrecy propels me to seek the Savior's okay only while doing things for and with God.

One service opportunity that really helped solidify this for me was frying chicken at a soup kitchen. Instead of being in front of the group preaching or something like that, I was behind-the-scenes preparing food for folks who hardly saw me. People were fed delicious food while I received nothing more than a shifted perspective, all glory to God. I was humbled.

I like to think of it this way: as I live my life out, with an audience of One, man's affirmation

must be secondary to His. Whatever actions that I do, do not need to be seen by others. They only have to be seen by God.

If you could give encouragement to someone beginning to incorporate spiritual disciplines into their life, what would you tell them?

When I started, I was really nervous. I thought, 'what am I supposed to do?' and quickly realized I needed to become comfortable with the uncomfortable. I'd say to start where you are and start small. You can make it a short piece of your time. Perhaps you open Scripture to meditate on it. You can read and be quiet, then you can ask God to speak and sit and wait. Make sure that you do not fill the space. God is present. He will speak.

I'd also say spiritual disciplines are not the goal. [They are tools] we can use on the journey to walk with God. We will always have a limp of some sort. The spiritual disciplines allow us to walk well with our limps. ■

Jessica Eckert is an early childhood nanny who has been an active member at Eastbrook since 2022, serving in the Food Pantry and behind-the-scenes with material preparation.

PRACTICING SOLITUDE

- Give God time and space that is not in competition with social contact, noise, or stimulation
- Practice spiritual disciplines alone: study, prayer, examen, journaling

Key Scripture: Mark 1:35; 1 Kings 19:11; Lamentations 3:28

PRACTICING SECRECY

- Find acts of service that you can render without letting others know what you have done or why
- Hold confidences
- Abstain from revealing your good deeds, talents, and qualities
- Become a safe place for others to share their secrets
- Celebrate the achievements of others without adding your own

Key Scripture: Matthew 6:6; Philippians 2:3; John 3:30



Cheri Meyer
EBA Lower School Principal

"I could not get through my day without my morning frothy espresso/Bible/journal time. I decompress in the evenings with a walk outside. Sunday as Sabbath is actually something I do try to honor, in terms of work. I am not legalistic about it, but it has been a real blessing to set aside this day for rest as much as possible. Overall, my phone may be the biggest hurdle to keeping stillness in life's rhythm!"



Dawn Schuessler
Preschool & K4 Coordinator

"At a recent conference I went to, a speaker asked: when you look at your life, what is a 'red card' and what is a 'green card'? I work every Sunday — and at this point in my life, Sunday morning is a green card for me for so many reasons. I'm with little kids, I'm able to welcome young families who are new to the church. Even though that's not a Sabbath of detaching, it's sort of the opposite — I'm connecting! But that's life-giving to me, in a different sort of way."



Lupe Dueñas
Senior Director, Ministry Services

"I don't have a Sabbath 'practice' necessarily. For me, rest means being able to get away and be quiet by myself. Sometimes I might read or watch something, but in general I'm happy with silence. I find it very healing and relaxing. Someone once called me a 'social introvert' — I didn't know there was such a thing! I love spending time with people, but having that time alone helps me recharge."



Jean Ewing
Receptionist & Finance Asst.

"This is new to me. A few months ago, the Lord directed me to rest. He showed me in big, block letters, R E S T. On a pretty regular basis I am 'early to bed and early to rise,' devoting 2 waking hours to gentle time with Him. I begin with instrumental music, or I'll ask Him for a song or word which I'll begin to worship with in song, and then Holy Spirit guides me in worship, meditation and thanksgiving. I ask Him questions and listen for answers. Scripture reading and/or prayer follow and then I continue my day in peace."



Gabriel Douglas
Music Director

"Right now, Sabbath looks like journaling on my days off. As much as I don't like solitude, I have found that solitude gives me the most rest to just exist, without any judgment or analyzing on my part. I am my own biggest barrier to keeping Sabbath — it sounds like such a simple and maybe cliché thing, but often times I do not sabbath because I value always being busy. Every time I take time to just sit in the quiet of just existing, I find I am my most rested and centered self."



Ndiloma Musa
AV Technician

"What Sabbath looks like for me is probably different from other people. Because of my creative nature, instead of solitude, I prefer to be active in one of my skill sets — either creating hip-hop choreography or skateboarding at the skate park. I find peace being able to let my mind rest and just go with the flow."

Winter 2023

Christmas Eve Services

Saturday, December 24 · 1, 2:30, 4 & 5:30 pm · WH/Online at eastbrook.org/athome

Christmas Day Service

Sunday, December 25 · 10 am · WH

Family Worship Weekends

Sundays, December 25 & January 1

2nd Tuesdays Worship & Prayer Night

Tuesday, January 10 · 7 pm · WH/Online

Lunch With the Staff (for Newcomers)

Sunday, January 15 · 12:30 pm · FH

2nd Grade Faithmarker

Saturday, January 21 · 9 am · Meet in Lobby

Small Group Launch

Sunday, January 22 · 1-2:30 pm · FH

Trinity Evangelical Divinity School Starts

Week of January 23 · TEDSmilwaukee.org

Winter Retreat (Grades 7-12)

January 27-29 · Fort Wilderness

East Asian Global Gateway

Sunday, January 29 · All 3 Services · WH

No Regrets Conference for Men

Saturday, February 4 · WH

Leadership Community w/George Yancy

Monday, February 6 · 7 pm · WH

Marriage Retreat

February 10-12 · Location TBD

Child Dedication

Sunday, February 12 · All 3 Services · WH

Eastbrook 101 Begins

Monday, February 13 · 7 pm · B229/Zoom

Journey to the Cross Service

Wednesday, February 22 · 6:30 pm · WH/Online

Lenten Devotional Begins

Wednesday, February 22

Dance Conference

Friday, March 3-Saturday, March 4

Find up-to-date information and more calendar dates online at eastbrook.org/calendar or inside your Eastbrook App.

Finding Rhythms of Rest in a Weary World

by Jessica Helfrich

We live in a world consumed with instant gratification and busyness. We are obsessed with accomplishments, and rest gets pushed to the back-burner. As I reflect on different times in my life, I see seasons when I've had a performance mindset. I have focused on all the things I was doing for God, instead of taking time to rest in Him. While doing things for the Lord have their place, our first and greatest commandment is to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"* (Matthew 22:37). We can better love Him and *"love our neighbor as ourselves"* (Matthew 22:39), when we are fully known by Him. We are fully known when we spend time resting in Him.

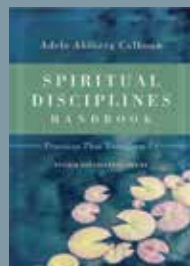
In Mark 6, just before Jesus feeds the five thousand, Jesus requests that the disciples rest. *"Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."* (Mark 6:31-32). The crowds arrived before they did, and Jesus fed the crowds before the disciples had the chance to rest. And then later, in verse 45, *"Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into*

the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd."

Jesus knew their need for rest. We have the same need as the apostles—to spend time with the Father and be refreshed through rest. We cannot most effectively do what He has called us to when we are not resting and being filled up by Him.

Rest looks different for everyone and can take on many different forms. It doesn't have to be a lack of doing anything but rather, doing what brings you life and energy. While there is a necessity for time alone with God, rest does not always have to be alone but can be with people you love. For me, rest looks like spending time in nature, seeing the Lord's goodness through His creation. It also looks spending time with a friend, playing games, reading a good book, and painting. For more about this topic, I recommend reading Ruth Haley Barton's *Sacred Rhythms*, chapter 2 on Solitude and chapter 8 on Sabbath. Brothers and sisters, let's rest and be rejuvenated by the Lord today. ■

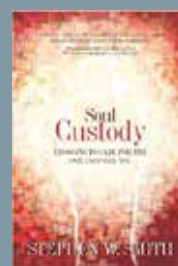
Jessica Helfrich is one of three year-long Ministry Residents serving at Eastbrook Church this year. She is serving in the areas of Adult Discipleship and Congregational Care.



Mentioned a few times throughout this issue, Adele Calohun's **Spiritual Disciplines Handbook** provides a vital reference book for many spiritual disciplines.



Ruth Haley Barton's masterful **Invitation to Solitude and Silence** will guide you through your own practice of solitude and silence with prompts at the end of each chapter.



Steve Smith's **Soul Custody** provides a holistic approach to beginning to care for your soul. For more: check out his podcast, **Potter's Inn Soul Care Conversations**.



The great poet Wendell Berry famously writes a poem each Sabbath. Many are collected in compilations such as this one, **This Day: Collected & New Sabbath Poems**.



A contemporary and friend of Brennan Manning, Fil Anderson's **Running on Empty** is a easy read, and a profound personal reflection on what happens when we do not rest.