

Something to Talk About

A conversation guide for church leaders

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Vacation or Accomplishment?

Note: This is one of a series of articles intended to facilitate and guide church leaders' conversations about significant issues that often are not talked about among pastors, boards, and church leadership teams.

Prior articles can be found at <https://efcawest.efcadistrict.org/church-leadership/> or <https://efcawest.efcadistrict.org/something-to-talk-about-archives/>.

Several years ago my wife Charlene and I were going to spend a week in Yosemite Valley – my favorite place on planet earth. A friend asked us whether we had any hikes planned for while we were there. I told them, before checking with Charlene who was standing next to me, that we did not and then said, “I may just sit on a chair in a meadow and watch the shadows on the cliffs. *I’m going on a vacation, not on an accomplishment.*”

Charlene then casually mentioned that she planned to hike to the top of Yosemite Falls – a strenuous 7.6 mile round-trip hike with all-day direct sunlight, innumerable switchbacks, and a 2,600-foot elevation gain that tops out at a fairly oxygen-starved, at least for a lowlander like me, 6,526 foot elevation. She added that she would be fine doing the hike herself if I didn’t want to go with her.

Yeah, right – like I would sit alone in a meadow while she made an epic hike without me.

That’s how I made it to the top of Yosemite Falls. And I’m very glad I did.

The juxtaposition of vacation and accomplishment stuck in my head, and it seems to emerge each year at the start of summer. There’s a lot of talk about vacations, but the plans I hear oftentimes sound much more like a list of accomplishments than the pursuit of rest and restoration.

I’m not anti-accomplishments, but I am pro-rest, too. I have come to believe that people whose work is leadership and/or teaching may possibly need rest, both mental and physical, *more* than those who do other work merely because the well of ideas, vision, ingenuity, innovation

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and the like tends to run dry unless we attend to it. In fact, that's the point of one of my favorite summertime book re-readings, *Soul Keeping*, by John Ortberg.

July is a good time to talk among ourselves about the rest and restoration we need and how we plan to go about it. Rest and restoration is something to talk about.

Here are some ideas for having a simple, pleasant, yet meaningful conversation about summer plans including rest and restoration.

- Invest some time in a conversation with your teammates about summer plans. Try to label the plans as vacation, accomplishment, rest, restoration, etc. If some of the team, like me for many years, do not have vacation leave in the summer, share whatever plans they may have whenever they might be.
- We are all wired differently. Share with one another what you do (or seek to do) to ensure that your "well" does not run dry. What do you do when tiredness comes or approaches in your physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimensions? What happens when your well starts to run dry?
- It has been said that we tend to use "busyness" as a badge of honor these days. How's your busyness doing? Are you at your limit, past your limit, or are your boundaries working?
- Leaders oftentimes share that their families sometimes get the crumbs from their schedules rather than the quality and quantity time they deserve from us. Singles in ministry may be aware of friendships in which they should invest but haven't. What might you be planning to do this summer to create a positive memory for your family and/or circle of friends?

Make this a fun, "light" conversation, not one of those emotional-downer accountability sessions. Have a glass of icy lemonade or tea together and relax. Enjoy a short time of sharing your hopes and dreams with one another. Praise God together for the gift of fellowship among brothers and sisters in Christ and the joy of serving the church in the ministry of leadership. We can get back to our accomplishing later.

A chair in a meadow in Yosemite Valley still sounds good to me. That's something to talk about.

Let us know if we can help and how your conversation goes.

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