

THE WINTER BREAK: Plans of Action and Paths to Rest

Three things leaders can do in December

- (1) **Take a break! Use the month of December as a “leadership sabbatical.”** Take a break from your regular c-group leadership duties for that month. However, just like taking a weekly sabbath requires preparation in the days leading up to it, so too you’ll need to work diligently in November in order to truly unplug in December. This document is designed to help guide in your preparation.
- (2) **Use your leadership sabbatical to build (or rebuild) a sabbath rhythm.** We’re not resting well if we simply replace the work of leading a community group with other work. We understand that due to the nature of the holiday season there are items being added to your calendar in December that you do not have in other months. However we encourage you to break December not just as a means of taking something off your plate, but also in order to help you build or rebuild sabbath rhythms. We do believe that this can happen, and should happen, even in this busy month. In order to guide you in that process of building or rebuilding sabbath rhythms, we would encourage you to read a chapter entitled “Practice Sabbath Delight,” in Peter Scazzaro’s book *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*. This chapter would be helpful for all group leaders, hub leaders, and community directors to revisit, reread, and process together each break. (We’ve made a PDF of the chapter available for you at bit.ly/practicesabbath.)
- (3) **Use your leadership sabbatical to take a thorough personal inventory.** All around us there are warning signs when things are not working properly. Cars, phones, computers, and many other items around us have signals to alert us when trouble is coming or near. Often times, we are not willing to acknowledge that we have warning signs in our lives that we ignore or dismiss. Most of us need the help of diagnostic tools and/or people to help us acknowledge and decipher those signs in our lives. We have provided you with PDFs of two self-assessments, customized for men and women. If you have access to a printer, it might help you to print off the self-assessment and work through it, marking and jotting down notes as you go. Please take the initiative to share your results with your male or female hub leader, so you can pray and process together. The men’s assessment can be found at bit.ly/realitycheckassessment, and the women’s assessment can be found at bit.ly/selfexamination.

Five things leaders can do in November

- (1) **Set a multiplication plan in place (where applicable).** The relaunch in January is an ideal time for groups to multiply. Getting all the logistics and pastoral concerns nailed down in November will make multiplication flow much smoother in January. Ideally, your people would know the plan for January before they are sent into December. If you are hoping to multiply in January or February, make it a goal to complete your multiplication plan by the end of November. Please make sure to review the multiplication resources, both from [Frontline](#) and from [Jeremy Linneman](#), and be communicating with your hub leaders about your multiplication plan as you go.
- (2) **Schedule your restart.** Before breaking in December, clearly communicate to the whole community group a hard restart date for early January. For example, “Our group will resume our regular gatherings on Tuesday, January 6th, at 6:30pm, at the Johnsons’ home.”



- (3) *Schedule a series of sabbaths.* Schedule a time on your calendar in November to sit down and prayerfully choose and set aside one day a week throughout the month of December to serve as a weekly sabbath. A weekly sabbath is: a day to pray and play, a day with no “have-to’s,” a twenty-four-hour block of time in which you, in the words of Peter Scazzero, “stop work, enjoy rest, practice delight, and contemplate God.” We understand that holiday travel can make this feel like an impossible task, but planning for rhythms of rest and margin in a season where most people are redlining could radically reframe your experience of the holidays.
- (4) *Create pairings of relational pursuit.* Pull in your assistant leaders and/or apprentices and set aside a time to sit down in person, or connect over the phone, and create “pairings of relational pursuit” for the month of December. Here’s what that might look like:
- In other words, minus the leaders, select roughly half of your group to serve as “pursuers, inviters, and hosts,” and then match each of them up with someone for them to pursue, invite, and host. You could match based more on support—fit, affinity, comfort-level, and chemistry. Or you could match based more on challenge—the opportunity to cross age or stage-of-life divides, background and culture divides, or divides of newness and seniority in the group itself.
 - The pursuers could invite the pursued to something as big as a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner, or something as small as checking in a few times over the course of the month.
 - Once you’ve matched everyone up, personally contact the pursuers, and ask them to commit to reach out to those you’ve assigned to them. For example, you might say, “Beth, although we are taking a break from formally meeting as a group in December, it’s important that we still connect with each other. With that in mind, would you make it a goal to spend time face-to-face with Ashley at some point in December?” If you want, to help them prepare, you could also send them the link to this 40 minute training on moving conversations one step deeper by aiming for the heart (bit.ly/aimingfortheheart).
 - One of the purposes of this pairing is also to make sure that no one is left alone for the holidays and that everyone is invited to celebrate with their spiritual family. If any pursuer hears that their assigned person will be alone for Thanksgiving or Christmas, it would be expected that they either invite them to join their holiday gathering, if possible and appropriate, or they contact someone in the group that they know will be home and would welcome them as a part of the family of God. No group member should be uninvited, but it is not your responsibility as group leader to host everyone yourself.
 - Lastly, if this sounds exhausting or overwhelming, the chances are there’s someone administratively gifted on your leadership team, or in your group as a whole, for whom contacting everyone, and helping facilitate this pairing and pursuit, would sound energizing and exciting! Enlist their help, and delegate as much of this initiative to them as possible.
- (5) *Commission people to throw a party.* Ask someone, or better yet, several people, to plan, extend invitations to, and host a party for the group some time in the month of December. Christmas sounds like the most obvious, but it could be a New Year’s party, a post Thanksgiving “Friendsgiving”, a traditional Christmas party, or all of it rolled into one. Encourage people to invite their neighbors, friends, and to invite their “three.” Jeff



Vandersteldt gives guidance on “partying with purpose” as a community group (bit.ly/missionalparties).

As leaders, you should fully delegate the party planning, and absolve yourself from all obligations related to the party besides showing up and enjoying good fellowship and missional friendship. Allow yourself to rest and receive, to be served by others. Remind yourself how much you love these people and how much you enjoy spending time with them. Remind yourself that you’re not in a transactional relationship with these people—where your significance is only found in what you can give them, whether that’s wisdom, counsel, support, prayer, or pastoral presence. Remind yourself that you are all adopted brothers and sisters of your heavenly Father, from whom all good and perfect gifts come. We are co-heirs and co-recipients with Jesus. We are fellow beggars in a bread line, and a kingdom of priests.

Three things group members can do in December

- (1) Focus on throwing one great party,
- (2) move towards whoever you’ve been matched with in a pairing of relational pursuit by your leaders, and, lastly,
- (3) move towards anyone who’s suffering, lonely, traveling, or otherwise vulnerable to temptation. Make sure no one is alone on holidays.

What if there’s a crisis in the group in December?

If care needs arise during your leadership sabbatical, you will need to exercise prayerful discernment as you decide how best to respond or step in. There isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach for how best to respond to care needs within your group when you are in a season of rest, so communicate well with your hub leaders if needs arise, so they can help you discern how the body as a whole can and should respond.

Additional thoughts for navigating the holiday season

- Family tensions are a tricky thing to navigate, and the holidays seems to bring all of those tensions and hurts together in unique ways. It is always important to be aware and have eyes to see where group members have struggles in these areas and to be honest about where you yourself have wounds too. Russell Moore has an excellent post about our hearts around holiday family tensions and I recommend everyone read it (and re-read it!) as needed this season—both for yourself and others (bit.ly/holiday-family-tensions).
- Finances can often be a tough tension to navigate, but especially as the holidays approach and there is more temptation to overspend as well as there seeming to be more “needs” pulling with travel expenses, hosting family, etc. This is a great time as leaders for you to live a good example of biblical stewardship financially, and also to be mindful of those families who overspend or are struggling financially going into this season. If you know that you have a family in need of guidance on either end of the spectrum, please make sure you inform your hub leaders of any conversations that you plan to have with families/individuals for guidance.

