



# Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time

*MaryAnn McKibben Dana*

Download now

Read Online →

# Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time

*MaryAnn McKibben Dana*

**Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time** MaryAnn McKibben Dana  
“Life felt like a 500-piece jigsaw puzzle with 600 pieces.” So writes MaryAnn McKibben Dana in the introduction of her book. As she considered her family’s frenetic suburban existence—a relentless list of work, errands, carpool, dishes, e-mail, bills, yardwork—she knew something had to change.

The family faced a choice: to continue at the same frantic pace or to fight back with a radically different way of being. They went radical. For one year, they committed to a practice of Sabbath-keeping. For a whole day each week, they set aside their doing in order to simply be. Work took a backseat to games, walks, Legos, naps, homebrewing, and leisurely contentment. The practice never got easier—the house was a mess, the kids still fought—but Sabbath became the one essential “to-do” each week.

With lively prose (“a fresh voice and energy” -Publishers Weekly), Dana documents the Sabbath experiment as a guide for families of all shapes and sizes. Each chapter includes tips to help you claim Sabbath moments—to see time not as an enemy to subdue, but as a friend to savor.

Part of the Young Clergy Women Project series.

## Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time Details

Date : Published August 1st 2012 by Chalice Press

ISBN : 9780827235212

Author : MaryAnn McKibben Dana

Format : Paperback 157 pages

Genre : Spirituality, Parenting, Christian, Religion, Faith, Biography Memoir, Nonfiction

 [Download Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment wi ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time  
MaryAnn McKibben Dana**

---

## **From Reader Review Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time for online ebook**

### **Alex says**

This is a little slip of a book but I'm glad to have read it. It was interesting to read a Christian take on Sabbath taking, especially from an author so aware and respectful of Jewish sources and practices. It also filled a gap the author noted, which was Sabbath literature featuring young children. Even though it reaffirmed that I do have specific beliefs about the Sabbath, the looseness with which the author approached Sabbath was inspiring to me, reminding me that, as ever, done is better than perfect.

---

### **Rosemary says**

This is a wonderful book for our "crazybusy" culture and those infected with "hurry sickness." The author, a Presbyterian minister, wife, and mother of young children, shares her own family's attempts to find sanity and peaceful approaches to time for a whole year. Church language is minimal -- the book is accessible to people without a faith background and those who consider themselves spiritual but not religious. The book's organization, by month beginning in September, makes it easy for most readers to take what they need for the day, week, or month -- but the lively writing, with humor and humility, may make it hard to put down. Highly recommend.

---

### **Judy Zimbelman says**

MaryAnn shares her family's experience for trying to preserve one Day a week for Sabbath. Her experimental year goes through some of the historical views of Sabbath and some of her experiences at a religious retreat center. But it shows the stress of family life and the hurriedness that our culture has created. It also showed the rewards from slowing down and being more intentional with work, play and relationships.

---

### **Jill says**

When I got this book & saw that it was aimed at a "family's" experiment in observing the Sabbath in the Suburbs, I thought, well, I'll read it but not much of it will apply to me. You see, I'm an empty nester & I live in the heart of Washington DC. Was I ever surprised? Of course there are wonderful stories about this young family & their adventures with slowing down for just 1 day a week. Parts of many of the stories made me laugh out loud. I loved the author's honesty about not doing this (observing Sabbath) perfectly. I tend to be a perfectionist about things & if I mess up, well then, I just scrap the whole thing. The author gave me permission to mess up & try again, without feeling guilty or like I've failed. One of the other things I liked about the book were the "hacks" at the end of chapters. These gave really practical advice on how to implement Sabbath in my own life. And 1 more thing, the Jewish & Christian theology was informative & practical & didn't deter this Unitarian!

---

## Jay V says

I'll admit upfront, I read this book because the author is a dear friend. As a non-theist single guy, I didn't expect it would speak to me. I was surprised when it did. I'm not sure the message I received is the one that was sent, but I learned from it regardless.

The book traces the Dana's one year experiment in keeping the Sabbath. MaryAnn writes about the very real challenge of carving out time each week for this busy family of five and the things they tried that worked and didn't work. This is not just a treatise on the value of the Sabbath but a rubber meets the rode report of what worked for them and what didn't. Written almost like a journal, it feels less like reading and more like a conversation with a wise neighbor. But all along MaryAnn also discusses her family's growing understanding of Sabbath, what it means for them, and their growing appreciation for the choices and sacrifices they've made to keep Sabbath.

The takeaway for me was making explicit time for what is important to you. MaryAnn McKibben Dana points out the many ways that our lives revolve around the next thing we have to do. Whether externally imposed (jobs, family) or internally mandated (I should be more productive, what am I missing out on) we are often over committed and focussed on getting it all done. For the Danas, Sabbath was a time to slow down, to be with family, to do the restorative, contemplative, and spiritual things that were important to their family. Whether you are a person of faith or not, there are things important to each of us that we are likely not taking time for. MaryAnn makes the case that while not easy, taking that time brings rewards greater than what is given up.

---

## Beth says

Every page is honest. There is no judgment passed, no soap box stood on. Her story invited me to witness her family in an intimate way while preserving family in her own way. The entire memoir is an invitation to consider sabbath in your own way, on hour own terms... With the clear conviction that sabbath is intentional,

---

## Anita says

This book is an honest month-by-month account of a family endeavoring to set aside time away from working and scheduled events and tasks. I appreciated the author's candor about which chores do and don't get done when a commitment to sabbath is made. As a full-time pastor, I appreciate her listing out the regular tasks of the pastor, whether full-time or part-time, and the time it takes to accomplish them. Well done.

---

## MaryAnn says

From Publishers Weekly:

Dana brings a fresh voice and energy to the familiar topic of time management as understood by people who would describe themselves as either religious or spiritual but not religious: Sabbath-keeping. Bringing the gift of self-awareness and irony, Dana notes that a four-minute difference in school bus rides ought not to prompt a letter-writing campaign from anxious parents. She also brings theological awareness of the historical practice and meaning of Sabbath-keeping. Dana writes in a distinct voice about making a

traditional religious practice meaningful to contemporary families.

---

## Gavin says

I'm an atheist yet found this book to be an essential guide to life. One doesn't need to believe in a divine Sabbath to understand the essential nature of taking time off from the hectic world we live in. I'd encourage families of all faiths and of no faiths to read and make use of this book's wisdom.

---

## Thom says

Although I checked it out of the library, I think I'll buy this one. It merits coming back to and checking up with. A fine mix of concrete tips, thoughtful theology and good stories. A great book for discussion.

---

## Leah says

This truly is a book [xii] "...for anyone who wants to learn to live at a savoring pace." Inspired by a visit to Iona, PC(USA) pastor MaryAnn McKibben Dana spent twelve months from September 2010 through August 2011 (literally) practicing keeping a weekly sabbatical day with her spouse and their three kids. "Sabbath" means to stop, to cease work and worry; keeping sabbath means bringing life back into balance by living fully and simply in this present, gifted "now," if only for 24 hours, 12 hours, or another measured segment of chronological time. Who does not need the sense and the reality of [117] "Sabbath [which] is about ... delighting in the sacred ordinary that's always around us ... being grounded in relationships and in place," along with the work of Sabbath, "Play without Purpose" [139]. Sabbath is about living here and living now.

The author writes and lives from a Christian perspective, but almost anyone of any or no religious, theological, or spiritual persuasion could benefit from taking twelve months to practice keeping sabbath one day each week. I loved the easygoing, easily readable pace of the narrative as it moved month by month beginning with September, the traditional start of the academic year. Your starting point "new year" could be the first Sunday of Advent, January 1, Lunar New Year, or any ethnic, cultural new year. Or invent and announce your own. MaryAnn has filled this book with useful examples from her own life, and brings dozens of relatable quotes from other writers, including Abraham Joshua Heschel, Henri Nouwen, and Wayne Muller.

Those of us familiar with the Hebrew scriptures know Genesis 2:2-3: "And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation." God calls us, and in the Spirit empowers us, to work as co-creators, co-re-creators of creation. But even more so, sabbath is for us because we no longer are slaves, no longer bound to labor and toil 24/7. Deuteronomy 5:15, "Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day."

Most of us attempt to "practice resurrection," to live "as if," "fake it till we make it." MaryAnn assures us [23-24] acting "as if" we've achieved the fullness and completeness of a full day of sabbath rest is not lying,

not pretending, but rather it is "an act of hope." You need this book, all of you out there, you need to read Sabbath in the Suburbs! But please don't take my word for it; get the book and start your own sabbath year for yourself!

---

### **Heather says**

My pastor mentioned this book in a sermon a couple of years ago, so I bought it, but never "had the time" to read it. I am so glad I finally did. I really, really loved this book. Rev. Dana's writing style was so relateable, and easy to digest. I learned that Sabbath isn't exactly what I thought it was, and that it is actually different for everyone. I found Rev. Dana's supplemental videos (at [www.sabbathinthesuburbs.com](http://www.sabbathinthesuburbs.com)) really helpful while I read. I read this book just at the right time -- it spoke to me on so many levels and I know that I will refer back to it over and over. I am looking forward to Rev. Dana's new book in May!

---

### **Ric White says**

I have been looking for a book like this for a while Practical, actual application for the Sabbath. There are some things here and there I disagree with, and I am disappointed in the author's recent blog post about her current view on Sabbath. However, it is a life that I don't live, so I will just take this book for what it is: a great kickstarter to a better lifestyle.

---

### **Ann says**

I absolutely loved this book. It is the first book about keeping the Sabbath that I have read that takes into account real life with real children. I loved the way the author pressed into finding a way to have Sabbath, even when life and activities weren't cooperating. She never gave up, just kept trying new things. Brilliant.

Here are my personal notes, with page numbers:

- 15 don't change your environment
- 18 The imperative voice is very anti-Sabbath
- 28 Parenting isn't repetitive. It's liturgical.
- 31 Focus on delight
- 34 Jesus manages to carve out time for the Sabbath, even though he had lots of pressing needs around him.
- 36 Map the boundaries (with questions for consideration)
- 37 What do you wish for your children when they are 21? This list is for you: do this as parents.
- 44 "I don't have time." Do any of us have time? Sabbath is the only tool in my arsenal for fighting back.
- 48 Baking bread. A shaggy loaf.
- 55 a study about how we are happier when we spend a little bit of money on an experience, rather than a lot of money on stuff.
- 56 Do whatever you want on the Sabbath, as long as it is slow. No rushing.
- 59 making pralines
- 63 finish things and tidy up on Friday night before Sabbath begins
- 67 Sabbath Hack: Kid Lists (a list of fun things to do on Sabbath) and Parking Lot (work things you think about but don't do on Sabbath)
- 75 novelty on the Sabbath. Build something if you don't do that kind of thing during the week.

- 83 when confronted with scheduling conflicts -- take it one week at a time and try out different solutions.
- 86 fasting from one thing. Technology is possible. Errands or driving. MaryAnn fasts from intellectual things on Fridays and does laundry.
- 93 walking slowly with child -- maddening but good
- 94 saying "yes" on the Sabbath (to children's requests) Improv rule of "yes-and"
- 97 Sabbath Hack: cheat once. Sell girl scout cookies but enjoy it.
- 101 (and previously) simple meals on Sabbath. Bagel Bites.
- 104 Sabbath Hack: Borrow from Looney Tunes. When looking at a mess, see what happened instead. (Like when looking at a chicken, seeing a roasted chicken or dollar signs.)
- 111 Easter picnic instead of big fancy meal.
- 116 Do you do birthday parties? (Sure, but I don't juggle!) And yes, birthday parties okay on Sabbath, but not buying gift.
- 121 Sabbath Hack: Do the Harder Thing. Prepare, pretend the car is a space ship, go somewhere. Sometimes it's easier in the long run to do the harder thing.
- 122 Kindle no fire. Don't be angry or harbor anger.
- 127 "I love you guys, but it was starting to feel like too many people in the car." On a technology/Facebook fast.
- 134 Letting go. The Persian flaw. Letting it go preemptively, "I'm not going to even try to do that." "Letting one thing go each day is a way of acknowledging that perfection will always be beyond me."
- 139 Play without purpose on the Sabbath.
- 148 Sabbath Hack: Embrace Scarcity. Holy scarcity -- there isn't ever enough time. Life isn't a puzzle to be solved. "Our hope is not in there being enough time but in there being enough grace to muddle through the scarcities of our days."
- 151 Karl Barth: "A being is free only when it can determine and limit its activity."

from her blog: The happiest people are those fortunate folks who have little or no excess time, and yet seldom feel rushed.

<http://sabbathinthesuburbs.wordpress....>

#### bibliography

How to Run a Traditional Jewish Household, by Blu Greenberg

An Invitation to Shabbat: A Beginner's Guide to Weekly Celebration, by Ruth Perelson

---