

A Ready Remedy: Countering Stress with Self-Care



Ministers of the Gospel know and realize that there are many forms of ministry found within the four walls of the church as well as outbound in our communities. Fast-paced and ever-changing trends in various ministry settings have broadened many leaders' horizons with attempts to keep up with the latest-and-greatest. Outwardly, many ministers worldwide see an increased need to seek new forms of church programming, networking opportunities, and digital technologies. Bi-vocational ministry is on the increase, with many facing challenges for balance of life, vocation, and family. These scenarios are compounded as ministers strive to work effectively among today's cultural worldview. This brings to light a need to pay close attention to an inward focus that empowers an outward balance toward sustainability, resiliency, and endurance for the long haul in ministry.

Thom S. Rainer, President of LifeWay Christian Resources in a prior article from Ministry Today noted various trends, cultures, and challenges affecting the American church today. Unfortunately, many church leaders and church members will elect not to change anything. The Barna Group reported on vital research in their book entitled, "The State of Pastors." Research showed that many need to connect with one another and their communities. Released statistics showed that one-in-nine pastors self-report as being at high risk to burnout; only one-in-five have excellent or good satisfaction with having true friends; and seven-of-ten of these high-risk ministers meet less than once a month with peers or a mentor. Turning the corner on 2020 and with the new norms surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, I continue to ask the question to many in collaboration, "At what cost will it take for you to commit to a serious focus upon your inward health and well-being which grounds one firmly toward onward success and vitality in ministry?"

Through a greater revelation in practicing the spiritual disciplines as outlined in Scripture, I continue to seek a deeper value of who I am in Christ. There is no lack of understanding in knowing that leaders spend endless hours meeting the needs of others. Many sacrifice self as they continue to strive to be present, responsive, informed, and effective. So,

other than taking breaks from the Lord's work, how can we as leaders prevent burnout? How can those of us who care for others best care for ourselves?

The pulse of change within our greater Church culture starts first with ourselves as leaders. Today, I urge you to action – To take a pause for an authentic and transparent inventory of self with an inner assessment designed to provide you with the forward-thinking stewardship that will sustain your mission. We know the mission remains for us to always love God and people via the vein of care and compassion regardless of time, location, culture or trend. But amidst life's challenges and the balancing act, how can we better care for ourselves? Can today's effective minister withstand the odds of ministry burnout and all that life throws at us? Do we as ministers and leaders value ourselves enough to take our own healthy dose of our own loving and compassionate medicine? I say yes! We can!

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