

LEADING SELF PASTOR WORKBOOK



**SOUTH CAROLINA
BAPTIST CONVENTION**

Leading Self is an investment in your life as a pastoral leader seeking to shepherd God's flock entrusted to you. Through an intentional journey of God's Truth and Wisdom from a trusted resource, you'll have the opportunity to apply what you learn to your specific needs and Context. Utilizing five intentional lessons we will seek to equip you to lead God's people to advance God's mission in your context.

Leading Self provides a strategic process to guide spiritual leaders to establish or enhance spiritual disciplines, increase self-awareness, pursue self-learning, develop accountability/support relationships, and follow healthy rhythms of life. Each lesson seeks to create the right conversations to equip and encourage pastors to reflect on their current leadership capacities and develop strategies for growing as a leader seeking to honor God with his life and ministry.

This workbook is intended to help you prepare for a pastor cohort guided by a facilitator to create discussion and coaching environments essential to further your learning and preparation to grow as a pastoral leader and be faithful to shepherd those in your midst.

Pastoral ministry is a marathon of personal development and sacrificial service to God's Church. So, set your pace and let's start the journey together for the glory of God!

May the Lord equip you and strengthen His Church through this resource and the faithfulness of men seeking to serve for God's glory.

Leading Self Pastor Workbook

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SESSION ONE

STRENGTHENING SELF-AWARENESS

Session Objective: To help ministry leaders consider their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual preparation as they seek to serve God's Church and avoid the issues that distract and disqualify leaders from their roles.

Overview

In his first lecture to his students, Pastor Charles Spurgeon addressed the theme of the 'Minister's Self-Watch.' Spurgeon not only knew great public success but spoke often of the private life that was the well spring of successful public power. .

“It will be vain for me to stock my library, or organize societies, or project schemes, if I neglect the culture of myself; for books, and agencies, and systems, are only remotely the instruments of my holy calling; my own spirit, soul, and body, are my nearest machinery for sacred service; my spiritual faculties, and my inner life, are my battle ax and weapons of war.”¹

Spurgeon's challenge to his students serves as a reminder for contemporary ministers to realize their fundamental pastoral duty is to first take care of themselves so they will be able to take care of their congregations. The Apostle Paul directed this same challenge to Timothy, “Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (1 Timothy 4:16)

The goal in this session is to emphasize that it is not selfish to pay attention to yourself. A pastor should be able to answer, “How are you really doing?” The issue is not the effectiveness of your ministry, nor your reputation with others, but who are you before God when no one is watching²

¹. Croft & Savastio, **The Pastor's Soul** (EP Books, 2018) 4.

².Ibid, 6.

Learning Path

- Objective 1: Increased awareness of the danger of failing to take care of yourself.
- Objective 2: Increased emphasis on establishing priorities to help you prioritize and protect the things you value the most.
- Objective 3: Increased resolve to take practical steps toward “keeping close watch over yourself.”

Session 1 Outcomes

1. Pastor will deepen his biblical understanding of the negative effects of failing to take care of himself.
2. Pastor will increase his emphasis on establishing priorities he values the most.
3. Pastor will resolve to take practical steps toward “keeping close watch over yourself.”

Required Resources:

1. [The Pastor’s Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd](#)
by Brian Croft and Jim Savastio
2. Leading Self, An Awareness Tool

Reflecting on Truth

Read John 15:1-11

Consider:

Jesus' metaphor of the "Vine and Branches" in John 15:1-11 reveals the importance of having a direct connection to Jesus. A branch is not a self-contained entity, and neither is a Christian disciple. Fruit bearing for the Christ follower is totally dependent on the direct connection to Jesus. Total dependence on a direct connection to Jesus is required for personal spiritual health and effective pastoral ministry.

A branch is not a self-contained entity, and neither is the Christian disciple. As a branch separated from the supply of nourishment cannot produce fruit, neither can the Christian. Fruit bearing for the disciple is totally dependent on the direct connection to Jesus.

Verse 14 concludes with the absolute connection between bearing fruit and abiding in the Vine. Failure to abide in the Vine cannot help but lead to failure in bearing fruit.

- Answer the following questions in your journal for personal reflection and in preparation for cohort discussions.
1. Which specific verse in John 15:1-11 speaks most directly to your current season of life, and why?
 2. What does "abiding in Christ" mean to you personally? What are the biggest distractions or obstacles that make it difficult for you to stay connected to Christ?
 3. How does the phrase "apart from me you can do nothing" affect your self-reliance?
Think of a practical example of how you stay dependent on Christ for fruit.
 4. Since spiritual fruit belongs to the vine (Jesus), not the branch (you), how does that change the way you view your successes and failures?
 5. In what ways have you experienced God "pruning" you to make you more fruitful?
How did God's "pruning" affect your attitudes, habits, or relationships?
 6. What is one practical step you can take this week to remain more dependent on Christ in your personal walk and in your pastoral ministry?

Considering Wisdom

- Read Chapters 1 - 4 of *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd*
 - Answer the following questions in your journal for personal reflection and in preparation for cohort discussions: 1
1. Consider again the implications of the three "I am ____" statements of pp.6-10. Why do you feel it is important for you to maintain a proper perspective to the "Who am I?" question as we seek to serve God's Church? (Chapter 1)
 2. Consider the statement, "Do not think that because you have sound theology and rich spiritual experiences or great giftedness or usefulness that you are exempt from watching over your heart" (p. 19). How are you most tempted to exempt yourself from watching over your own heart?
 3. Why is taking heed of your doctrine essential for you personally? (Chapter 2)
 4. What does "preserving in pastoral affections" look like for your life? (Chapter 3)
 5. Which do you find yourself investing more time, taking heed of yourself or the flock entrusted to you? Do you feel this is a healthy balance? (Chapter 3)
 6. Identify which of the four "It Matters" sections caught your attention most.
What additional comments would you add to the section for other pastors to consider? (Chapter 4)

Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Context

- Complete the Leading Self Awareness Tool provided at the end of this lesson and then return to answer the questions below in reflection and preparation for cohort.
 - Answer the following questions in your journal
1. According to the results of your Self Awareness Tool, which top three areas of your life do you need to keep a better watch on?
 2. What adjustments would be the easiest to make in your life and ministry?
List your top 2 or 3.
 3. What adjustments would have the most positive influence in your life and ministry?
List 2 that will make the most impact.

Your NextStep in preparation for your cohort:

1. Take 10 minutes of uninterrupted time to reflect on your spiritual vitality and commit to developing and strengthening a closer communion with Jesus.
2. Begin praying for God to increase your self-awareness and self-care to identify barriers to your spiritual health.
- 3 Be prepared to share some of your personal challenges in staying connected to Christ.

Want to explore this topic more? Consider the following additional resources:

1. Video: Watch [Your Life and Doctrine](#), Tony Merida, Pastor of Imago Dei Church Raleigh, Sep 25, 2018, @Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
2. Article/Podcast: [Boosting Your Emotional Intelligence](#) by Scott Ball, Malphurs Group

LEADING SELF

AN AWARENESS TOOL

Part I:

1. Please rate each of the categories on a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being the lowest
2. Add up the 5 scores in each category and record an average score on the line for each category.

Spiritual Life

Average Score

- _____ I am consistently growing in my knowledge and understanding of God and His ways.
- _____ I am walking in obedience to what I know to be God's best for my life, relationship, and ministry.
- _____ I am faithfully seeking God through my personal disciplines such as prayer, Bible reading, worship, etc.
- _____ I am seeing consistent growth in holiness and fruits of the Spirit.
- _____ I am consistently experiencing life impacting experiences with God through worship.

Marriage and Family

Average Score

- _____ I feel my relationship with my wife reflects the level of intimacy and growth that I desire.
- _____ I am faithfully shepherding my wife and creating adequate opportunities to nurture our marriage.
- _____ You and your wife have established healthy ways to communicate and address any personal conflicts.
- _____ I have healthy relationships with each of my immediate family members.
- _____ I am intentionally seeking to lead each member of my immediate family to reach their personal and spiritual potential.

Calling and Vision for the Future

Average Score

- _____ I am confident of God's call on my life to serve His Church.
- _____ I am maximizing my gifts and fulfilling God's call on my life.
- _____ I am fulfilled with where I am and hopeful about the prospects for the future with my ministry.
- _____ My vision for the future is a clear, encouraging, stimulating picture of the life I most desire.
- _____ I am successfully taking steps to accomplish the vision, plans and priorities I have identified for my life and ministry.

Stewardship

Average Score

- _____ I am content with God's current provision for my family.
- _____ I am pleased with my budgeting, savings, and retirement plans.
- _____ My financial spending accurately reflects my core beliefs and values.
- _____ I am a good steward with all my resources (money, possessions, time, etc.).
- _____ I am a generous and cheerful giver.

Social Life / Friends

Average Score

- _____ I am enjoying healthy, growing relationships with a variety of friends.
- _____ I regularly give and receive meaningful encouragement and affirmation.
- _____ I have structured important relationships to build healthy accountability into my life to help me reach my goals and be aware of blind spots.
- _____ I initiate regular activities or outings to facilitate healthy friendships and acquaintances.
- _____ I seek new opportunities to meet new people and build new relationships.

Rhythms of Life

Average Score

- _____ The pace of my life reflects my beliefs and core values.
- _____ My schedule/ calendar represents the healthy balance I desire for my life.
- _____ I regularly participate in hobbies that refresh me and encourage rest from my work.
- _____ I consistently build times into my life scheduled for rest and renewal.
- _____ Other people close to me would say I have healthy rhythms of work and rest.

Physical Fitness

Average Score

- _____ My physical condition honors God.
- _____ I am consistently pursuing the level of exercise and rest that I need.
- _____ I receive an annual physical checkup and seek to follow the doctor's instructions.
- _____ I have a plan that I follow in a disciplined manner in order to have the quality of health and energy I desire.
- _____ My diet reflects my beliefs and core values as a steward of my body.

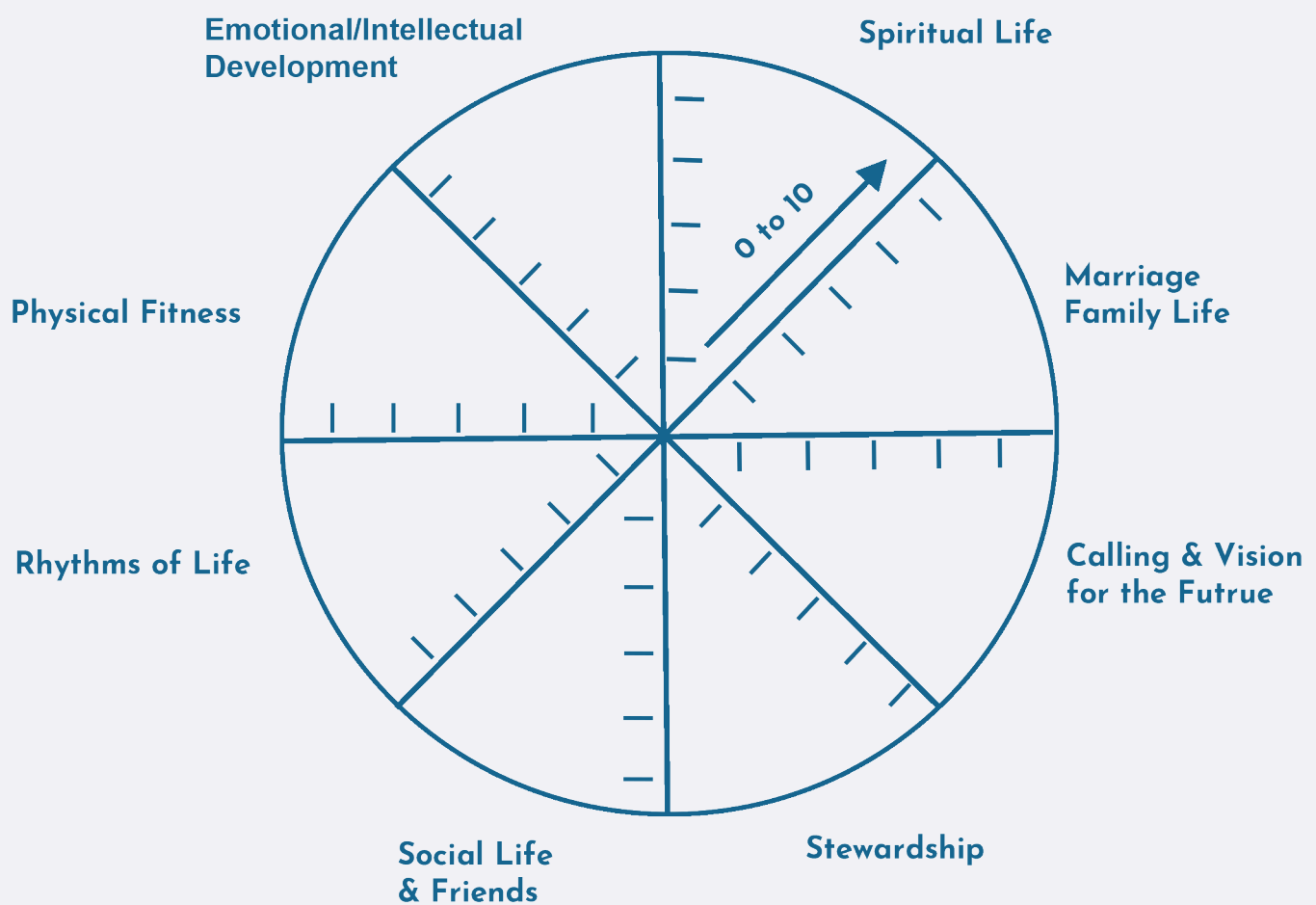
Emotional / Intellectual Development

Average Score

- _____ I have specific goals I am currently pursuing for mental wellness.
- _____ I am pleased with the balance and stimulation of my reading.
- _____ I am in the process of study and skill development for a specific growth goal.
- _____ I consistently look for and schedule growth experiences.
- _____ I am managing unhealthy emotions and laziness in ways that keep me striving for my full potential.

Part 2:

1. Using your score from each of the above categories, shade in the wheel to reflect your average score from zero to ten.
2. Return to the reflection questions (pg 4) to finish your lesson.



SESSION TWO

DEVELOPING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Session Objective: To encourage ministry leaders to move beyond surface acquaintances and establish close, life-giving friendships inside and outside their churches.

Overview

Authentic relationships are those in which others truly understand us. They are familiar with our strengths and weaknesses, and they still desire a relationship. They know the private details of our life, the things we are passionate about, and what makes us anxious. They know the real us that exists below the masks we often wear when we are “on stage” in ministry. They know our struggles, our private victories, and the things at the top of our prayer list. One way to describe authentic relationships might be any relationship where we know another fully and where we are fully known.

Genesis 2:18 reveals that it was “not good for man to be alone.” This passage is usually taught to demonstrate God’s blessing on a marital union. However, at a more basic level, this passage is a commentary that we were not designed to live without others who understand us and can share our troubles (Galatians 6:2-5).³

Pastors are not exempt from this need for authentic relationships, especially their need for both mentors and friends. Though his position within a community of faith presents more difficulty in creating close peer relationships, a pastor cannot choose to believe that somehow the blueprint for humanity does not apply to him.

³ Michael T. Wilson & Brad Hoffmann, **Preventing Ministry Failure**, (IVP Books 2007), 35

Learning Path

- Objective 1: Increased commitment to personally cultivate authentic relationships inside and outside the church.
- Objective 2: Increased awareness of the barriers that can prevent authentic relationships.
- Objective 3: Increased resolve to take practical steps toward broadening deeper relationships.

Session 2 Outcomes

1. Pastor will deepen his biblical understanding of love as the foundation of authentic relationships.
2. Pastor will increase his awareness of the barriers that can prevent authentic relationships.
3. Pastor will understand the practical steps that are needed to broaden deeper relationships.

Required Resource:

1. [The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd](#)
by Brian Croft and Jim Savastio

Reflecting on Truth

Read John 13:31-35

Consider:

John 13:34-35 records Jesus' "new commandment" to His disciples: to love one another sacrificially, specifically by the standard of how He loved them—with humility, selflessness, and unconditional care. This active, self-sacrificial love is the distinguishing mark, or badge, that identifies true disciples to the world. The novelty isn't the command to love one another which existed for centuries (Leviticus 19:9), but the standard of love—sacrificial, agape-style love—modeled by Jesus Himself (Philippians 2:1-11). This radical, selfless love for fellow believers is how the world recognizes them as Christ's own.

The Lord's command to love extends beyond the church to embrace all people. In fact, Jesus gave the world the right to judge whether or not someone is a Christian based on whether or not that person sincerely loves other Christians.

Francis Schaeffer writes,

The church is to be a loving church in a dying culture...In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture. Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon His authority He gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians.

(Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian*, 1970).

• Answer the following questions in your journal:

1. When you reflect on Christ's words "as I have loved you," what specific aspects of Jesus' love feel most challenging for you to offer in your relationships?
2. How does your willingness to receive love and help from your congregation—rather than just giving it - model the mutual "one another" love Jesus requires?
3. There are numerous godly friendships in the Bible: Elijah & Elisha, David & Jonathan, Ruth & Naomi, Paul & Silas, Jesus and the inner circle of Peter, James, & John.
Why do you think many ministers are reluctant to pursue deep, abiding relationships?
4. Are there unique factors in your current ministry that present barriers to close friendships?
5. What adjustments could you make to remove some of the barriers to making authentic relationships with Christian friends and with your family?

Considering Wisdom

- Read Chapters 5 - 7 of *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd*
- Answer the following questions in your journal for personal reflection and in preparation for cohort discussions:
 1. Find a quiet spot and take time to reflect on your spiritual "awakening" and your "pastoral awakening." (You may want to journal the events to help you reflect.) What feelings surface as you slow down and reflect on God's work in your life? Why might it be vital for pastors to remember these two awakenings often as they continue in ministry? (Chapter 5)
 2. Of the listed "qualifications", which do you need to strengthen most? Who in your life can you discuss this need with further? (Chapter 5)
 3. What does embracing your weakness look like during this season of your life? Be practical and specific. (Chapter 6)
 4. Reconsider the two love tests in Chapter 7. If someone were to ask your spouse about you using those two questions, how might she respond?

Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Context

1. Make a list in your journal of ten people you know on a personal level.
2. Review the list and indicate the depth of relationship for each of the ten names you listed using a scale of 1 - 5
(1 = superficial small talk, 3 = sharing opinions and beliefs,
5 = sharing deepest thought and needs without fear of judgement).
3. Highlight those on your list with whom you would like to have a deeper relationship.

Your NextStep in preparation for your cohort:

1. Be prepared to share one way a peer group, mentor, spouse, or close friend has assisted you in developing authentic relationships.
2. Begin praying for God to guide you in identifying barriers that prevent you from developing authentic relationships.
3. Consider developing a personal plan that will enable you to take practical steps toward broadening deeper relationships inside and outside your congregation.

Want to explore this topic more? Consider the following additional resources:

1. Video: Watch [Pastoral Friendships #7](#), by Brian Croft
2. Blog: [9 Dangers of an Isolated Ministry](#) by Dr. Chuck Lawless

SESSION THREE

MAKING ROOM FOR GOD

Session Objective: To challenge ministry leaders to evaluate their own spiritual vitality and develop a plan for establishing or enhancing spiritual disciplines.

Overview

Croft suggests pastors should take care of themselves by being aware of who you are, how you are doing, and why.⁵ Every pastor needs to keep watch on the state of his own soul by gauging his walk with Christ, his integrity, and his heart towards others.

Unfortunately, many pastors fall into several common temptations such as neglecting your need for rest and renewal, doing the work of ministry without allowing Scripture to complete its work in us, neglecting your relationships with your wife and family, or failure to pay attention to one's moral integrity.

Spurgeon warned his pastoral students with these words which are still worthy of today's consideration, "of these the worst is the temptation to ministerialism - the tendency to read our Bible as ministers, to pray as ministers, to get into doing the whole of our religion as not ourselves personally, but only relatively concerned with it... Brethren it is eminently hard to keep to this. Our office, instead of helping our piety, as some assert, is through the evil of our natures turned into one of its most serious hindrances at least, I find it so."⁶

The number of pastors whom we know have failed to watch over their lives is unfortunate. How many others are in danger yet still hiding it from public view? The Apostle Paul warns us of the dangers of drifting away from holiness and moral integrity, "let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). How are we, whom have been entrusted with the Truth and the care of God's flock, to remain steadfast in our pursuit of Christ and to finish the work He has called us to complete? This is the question we consider together.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ C.H. Spurgeon, **Lectures to My Students** (Zondervan Publishing House, 1954), 2.

Learning Path

- Objective 1: Increased commitment to personal practice of public and private spiritual disciplines.
- Objective 2: Increased self-awareness for soul care and barriers impacting personal wellness.
- Objective 3: Increased resolve for frequent means of public and private means of grace to sustain life and ministry.

Session 3 Outcomes

1. Pastor will deepen his biblical understanding and dependence on the private and public spiritual disciplines that are essential for spiritual health and effective pastoral leadership.
2. Pastor will reflect on the grace shown to them through salvation and a call to ministry to reinforce their commitment to ministry and personal worship.
3. Pastor will develop healthy sustaining practices for private and public means of grace.

Required Resource:

1. [The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd](#)
by Brian Croft and Jim Savastio

Reflecting on Truth

Read 1 Timothy 4:1-16 and 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Consider:

Dr. Chuck Lawless points out eight potential reasons why pastors may struggle with spiritual disciplines.⁶ Here are a few worth considering:

1. They were never taught how to do spiritual disciplines.
2. They equate ministry activity with spiritual disciplines.
3. They're not always the best time managers.

No one ever asks them how they're doing.

We've already considered how pastors should "take heed" of themselves (Go back and review Session 1), so hear the words of Paul to Timothy and consider your own discipline to grow in godliness. The question for every pastor is how can I maintain a vibrant relationship with God, a love for His Word, and a love for His people throughout the days of my ministry?

- Answer the following questions in your journal:

1. In light of verses 1-3, why is it important for you to "train yourself for godliness"?
2. Consider verses 8-10 personally. How is your training going? How could you better intertwine the disciplines of physical and spiritual disciplines?
3. Make a list of the things Paul exhorts Timothy to do in verses 11-16. Which are you doing well? Which one needs the most work this coming month?
4. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 again. What are the stated benefits of spiritual disciplines for you as a pastor?
5. Review your assessment of your spiritual life in session one. What is one action step you can take this week to start to increase one of your responses? Don't wimp out and write down a generic response. This is for you! What step could you take to be better "equipped" and more "complete" to fulfill your calling?

⁶ **8 Reasons Pastors Struggle** with Doing Spiritual Disciplines by y Chuck Lawless, posted August 14, 2024 (<https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/bptoolbox/8-reasons-pastors-struggle-with-doing-spiritual-disciplines/>)

Considering Wisdom

- Read Chapters 8 & 9 of *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd*
- Answer the following questions in your journal for personal reflection and in preparation for cohort discussions:
 1. Jim Savastio emphasizes two common challenges for many pastors, we need a pastor and we need a church. To what degree are these challenges a reality in your life today? What circumstance in your recent past made you more aware of either of these needs? (Chapter 8)
 2. How are you currently seeking to meet either of the needs mentioned in question #1? (Chapter 8)
 3. Reflect for a moment on your potential drift toward the "Park Ranger Syndrome"? Which of the mentioned symptoms do you currently notice in your life? (Chapter 9)
 4. Keeping hungry. Staying needy. Staying warm. Write a couple statements to summarize how are you really doing with each of these three exhortations from Chapter 9?

Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Context

Embracing private means of grace is about maintaining spiritual vitality through the private intake of God's Word, meditation, and prayer. Every pastor has the great blessing and benefit of laboring in God's Word and in prayer. But sadly, there is often a great disconnect between knowledge and practice in pastoral ministry.

- Answer the following questions in your journal:

1. How can you stay hungry and needy when the source of our grace is also the means for your livelihood?
2. Record a time when you felt like a Park Ranger or professional preacher. What steps did you take to renew your "craving for God"?

Your NextStep in preparation for your cohort:

Prepaire three things to bring into your cohort

1. One honest struggle with Park Ranger Syndrome you are willing to share.
2. One helpful sermon that preached to your soul recently.
3. One question you hope the group can help you think through.

Want to explore this topic more? Consider the following additional resources:

1. Video: Watch [Navigating The Pastor's Soul Care - Session #1](#), by Brian Croft
2. Blog: [The "What" and "How" of Spiritual Rhythms](#) by Michael Kelley

SESSION FOUR

FOLLOWING HEALTHY RHYTHMS

Session Objective: To remind ministry leaders of the importance of following an intentional, consistent, and alternating pattern of life, work, and rest to ensure sustainable ministry leadership.

Overview

Pastoral ministry is demanding, often requiring long hours, emotional investment, and spiritual leadership. In this context, it is crucial for pastors to intentionally cultivate a consistent rhythm of work and rest. This not only sustains their personal well-being but also models healthy practices for their congregations.

The principle of balancing work and rest is deeply rooted in Scripture. Genesis 2:1-3 describes God resting on the seventh day after creation, establishing the Sabbath as a holy day. Jesus himself regularly withdrew from crowds to pray and rest, demonstrating the importance of solitude and renewal (Mark 1:35-38). These examples underscore that rest is not merely a human need, but a divine design.

Rest is an act of trust, acknowledging God's provision and sovereignty. By intentionally resting, pastors demonstrate that their worth is not defined solely by their work, but by their relationship with God. Sabbath living is a declaration that God is in control, and that ministry is sustained by His grace, not by human effort alone.

Increasing a pastor's emphasis on developing a consistent pattern of work and rest is essential for personal health, effective ministry, and spiritual leadership. By teaching, modeling, and protecting rhythms of rest, pastors honor God's design, sustain their calling, and inspire their congregations to flourish in both work and rest.

Learning Path

- Objective 1: Develop an awareness of the importance of following a consistent alternating pattern of work and rest to ensure sustainable ministry leadership.
- Objective 2: Consider options for establishing priorities to help you develop a consistent, and alternating pattern of life, work, and rest.
- Objective 3: Identify practical steps toward following an intentional, consistent, and alternating pattern of life, work and rest.

Session 4 Outcomes

1. Pastor will deepen his biblical understanding of the importance of following a consistent pattern of work and rest.
2. Pastor will increase his emphasis on establishing priorities to help develop a consistent pattern of work and rest.
3. Pastor will take practical steps toward developing a consistent pattern of work and rest.

Required Resource:

1. [The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd](#)
by Brian Croft and Jim Savastio

Reflecting on Truth

Read Matthew 11:1-30

Consider:

The foundation for the balance of work and rest is established in the creation account found in Genesis 2:1-3. Here, God Himself models the rhythm of work followed by rest, setting apart the seventh day as holy. Then God's people are commanded to Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-10), reinforces this pattern and underscores the importance of ceasing from labor to focus on rest and worship, acknowledging God's provision and sovereignty. A balance that we today need to ensure a sustainable healthy ministry leadership.

Creating healthy rhythms for balancing work and rest has practical implications for daily life by encouraging believers to engage in meaningful work while also prioritizing rest and worship. Observing a day of rest, whether on the traditional Sabbath or another day, serves as a reminder of God's provision and a time for spiritual renewal.

Most importantly, Jesus invites pastors to Himself, not to a program, committee meeting, or checklist. Rest that comes from focusing on the person of Jesus rather than just the work of ministry.

• Answer the following questions in your journal:

1. When you think about Jesus' invitation to "come to Me," what do you think that practically looks like in your current season of life and ministry?
2. Ministry leaders often face exhaustion, anxiety, and discouragement due to relentless demands. Without intentional rest, burnout becomes inevitable. How serious do you take the threat of burnout when a work/rest rhythm is missing?
3. Consistent patterns of rest—daily, weekly, and seasonal—help pastors maintain their calling over the long term. What adjustments do you need to make in your work schedule that would help sustain your ministry longevity?
4. Jesus describes Himself as "gentle and lowly in heart." How does that description shape the way you approach Him when you struggle to balance a work/rest rhythm?
5. When pastors prioritize rest, they set an example for their congregations, showing that spiritual health includes honoring God's rhythm of work and rest. When was the last time you preached/taught on honoring God's rhythm of work and rest?

Considering Wisdom

- Read Chapters 10 - 15 of *The Pastor's Soul: The Call and Care of an Undershepherd*
- Answer the following questions in your journal for personal reflection and in preparation for cohort discussions:

When a pastor's schedule gets busy the rhythm of work and rest can be interrupted. Brian Croft identifies six physical health categories that have spiritual consequences for too much work and not enough rest. A pastor needs to be honest about: his eating habits, his sleep patterns, his weight gain, his need for friendships, his need for silence, and his need for rest.⁷ Croft raises awareness of the pastor's calling to care for his own soul, while caring for the souls of others.

Rhythm in work and rest is important to the physical and spiritual health of a pastor because rest is an act of trust, acknowledging God's provision and sovereignty. By intentionally resting, pastors demonstrate that their worth is not defined solely by their work, but by their relationship with God. A work and rest rhythm acknowledges that God is in control and that ministry is sustained by His grace, not by human effort.⁸

1. Brian Croft identifies six physical health categories that have spiritual consequences for too much work and not enough rest. What is one take-away you gained from Croft's appeal for pastors to take care of themselves?
2. What does caring for your soul look like in each of these six categories? Be practical and realistic.
3. In Session One you identified a few areas of your life that would benefit from intentional adjustments, what progress have you made over the last few months? What results have you observed?
4. Let's look closer at silence and rest. What current options do you have to embrace silence? How do you need to "fight" for your own needs for rest in the three areas mentioned in chapter 15?

⁷ Croft, *The Pastor's Soul*, pgs 85-118

⁸ Ibid.

Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Context

1. Review your calendar for a “normal” week or take a few minutes to record how you invested your time during a week. Be sure to include everything you did during your waking hours, work, and leisure.
 - a. How many hours were dedicated to ministry? _____
 - b. How much time did you spend with your family? _____
 - c. How much time did you spend on personal tasks/hobbies/leisure? _____
 - d. How much time did you rest? _____
2. In one word, how would you describe your work-rest rhythm for the last week? Month?
3. What is one false narrative you’ve believed regarding rest and work? How is it impacting your health? What truth do you need to believe that will replace this lie?

Your NextStep in preparation for your cohort:

1. Be prepared to share your most important/helpful takeaway from The Pastor’s Soul reading assignment.
2. Block out as much time as you can one day and do nothing but embrace silence and/or rest. Plan to share what obstacles you had to overcome to block out the time, what you did, and what kind of impact it had on you.
- 3 Plan your schedule for the next month making sure to include what you have learned about the importance of a work and rest rhythm. Be prepared to share the challenges you had to overcome to intentionally schedule rest each week and each day.

Want to explore this topic more? Consider the following additional resources:

1. Article: [The Beatitudes Are the Cure for Pastoral Burnout](#) by Chris Castaldo (Gospel Coalition)
2. Podcast: [The Rural Pastor Podcast - Episode 37 - Healthy Rhythms Part 1 of 3](#)
3. Book: [Rhythms: Moving From Surviving To Thriving In Ministry](#) by Andy Addis

SESSION FIVE

FINISHING WELL

Session Objective: To encourage ministry leaders to be lifelong learners in order to keep growing personally and leading effectively, finishing well by effectively carrying out God's purpose long-term. .

Overview

A cardinal coaching strategy for track and field trains athletes to "run through the tape." Especially at the end of a long-distance event, it is easy to allow fatigue to overcome your game plan for success and gradually slow down on the final leg of the competition. It happens more often in ministry than pastors are willing to admit. After years of preparing sermons, attending countless meetings, making innumerable visits and calls, it's easy to allow ministry fatigue to change your pace before you retire or transition or transition to something new. How do you run through the tape and finish well for an audience of One; the same One that called you to this journey years ago and is worthy of all our heart, mind, and strength. You aren't competing, or even entertaining an audience, you are remaining faithful until the end.

Paul's words remind us to "not get tired of doing good, for we will reap at the proper time if we don't give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us work for the good of all, especially for those who belong to the household of faith" (Galatians 6:9-10). In the presence of many witnesses, and our God who equips us for every good work, let's aim to make a highlight reel for the next generation to watch repeatedly as they reflect on a life well spent for the glory of God. Pastors, run through the tape until you see your Savior face to face.

Learning Path

- Objective 1: Develop a growing awareness of how to be better equipped to serve as a pastor of the Lord's church and complete your God-called ministry.
- Objective 2: Increased emphasis on establishing disciplines to help you develop steps that will enable you to reach retirement.
- Objective 3: Increased effort to explore the spiritual steps and disciplines that will enable you to fulfill God's calling and finish well.

Session 5 Outcomes

1. Pastor will deepen his biblical understanding of the importance of finishing well as a pastoral leader.
2. Pastor will increase his emphasis on establishing steps that will enable him to finish his pastoral ministry well.
3. Pastor will take practical steps toward developing a personal plan and spiritual discipline to complete his service in God's Kingdom.

Required Resource:

1. Article: [3 Things I Learned from a Pastor Who Endured for 70 Years](#) by David Schrock

Reflecting on Truth

Read Hebrews 11, 13:7-8

Consider:

The writer of Hebrews provides not only examples of many faithful followers, but also an exhortation for us to "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith" (13:7). Each of us has been influenced by other leaders who have shaped our faith and practice. Hopefully, most of those have finished well, but regardless of their perseverance, we can seek to do all we can to finish the race that has been set before us and influence others around us to do the same.

Maintain Growing	Develop a Learning Posture for Life	Empower Others to Serve	Leaving a Postive Legacy
1 Timothy 6:11-16	2 Timothy 4:13	2 Timothy 2:1-7	2 Timothy 4:6-8

A careful review would remind us how Paul set a good example for Timothy and for us. He finished well and through his writings, we have a practical example and instruction any pastor can follow. Consider the following four practical steps any pastor can take in developing a personal plan to finish well.

Maintaining a Growing Relationship with God (1 Timothy 6:11-16)

Pastors who finish well maintain a growing relationship with God, especially in the "fourth quarter of ministry." At retirement, a pastor's spirituality often shifts from "what I do" to "who I am." Being and doing are always involved in a pastor's life, but as a pastor ages, what he does becomes more rooted in who he is.

Developing a Learning Posture for Life (2 Timothy 4:13)

Leaders who finish well develop a learning posture for life from (1) the Bible, (2) life experience, (3) stories of successful people, and (4) mentors who are ahead of them in life's journey.

Empowering Others to Serve (2 Timothy 2:1-7)

Pastors who finish well know that life is comprised of a series of relationships. Therefore, they focus on relational empowerment in their own and in their follower's lives. They empower others through several mentor/protégé relationships, and empower others to lead by sharing God's resources. Whatever the designation—mentor, coach, counselor, teacher, sponsor, or role model—the effect is the same, a leader empowers others to lead, too.

Leaving a Positive Legacy (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

Paul's confession to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:6-8 has been a motivation for all pastors who desire to finish well.

Pastors who finish well understand that their ministry is not defined in a moment of time, or in a week, or a month, or even a year. Rather, ministry legacies develop over time. Leaders must think long-range knowing that the fruitfulness of life and ministry is determined by looking back over one's entire lifetime of service.

- Answer the following questions in your journal:

1. What is one concrete step you could take in the next 7 days to move toward a healthier finish?
2. What are you currently doing that will keep you teachable?
3. Who are you intentionally developing to carry responsibility after you are gone?
What do you want to be true about the church you serve after you're gone?
4. Who are the pastors/leaders you have known who finished well? What was true about them?

Considering Wisdom

- Read Article: [3 Things I Learned from a Pastor Who Endured for 70 Years](#)
by David Schrock

Pastor Schrock lists three attributes necessary for enduring in ministry that he learned from Pastor Lyons that illustrate Paul's instructions in 2 Timothy 2:1-7.

1. Single-Mindedness

When Paul considered ministry at the end of his life, he told Timothy: "No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him" (2 Tim. 2:4). Until his late 80s, Vernon traveled to conferences to learn and grow. He modeled the self-discipline necessary to avoid civilian pursuits and to keep his hands fixed to the plow.

2. Character

In 2 Timothy 2:5, Paul also declares, "An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." Here's his point: a pastor must serve according to the rules. His life must be marked by integrity and all those habits of heart that build a good reputation for Christ and his church. Truly, character is at the heart of an enduring ministry, and Pastor Vernon's life is marked by honesty, generosity, and humility. His commitment to know Christ and make him known is relentless.

3. Hard Work

Paul concludes his message to Timothy with a call for hard work: "It is the hard-working farmer who ought to have the first share of the crops" (2 Tim. 2:6).

Paul's understanding of grace is such that those who believe in God's sovereignty most tend to work hardest (1 Cor. 15:10). This is certainly the case with Pastor Vernon. As an "old school" pastor, he spent countless hours visiting people, listening to members, counseling couples, grieving at funerals, celebrating baptisms, and preaching the Word. By God's grace, he grew a thriving ministry, endured more than one church split, and sent out countless members to do gospel work—all before the advent of social media.

Applying Truth and Wisdom to Your Context

- Answer the following questions in your journal:

1. Which of the three attributes—singlemindedness, character, or hard work—do you believe is most neglected in your generation of leaders, and why?
2. Who are the “older pastors” or seasoned believers you intentionally look to for perspective and example? If you do not currently have these types of relationships, what obstacles are keeping you from developing them?
3. Pastor Vernon Lyons endured church splits, cultural shifts, and decades of ministry without modern tools like social media. What current pressures most threaten long-term endurance?

Your NextStep in preparation for your cohort:

1. Be prepared to share how someone in your life modeled what it means to finish well in ministry.
2. Be prepared to share what “finishing well” means to you. How much have you prepared to finish well?
3. Faithfulness is measured at the finish line but the way you finish well is determined by starting well, staying well, leading well, and finishing well. What natural connections do you see in these components? Where are you most vulnerable right now?

A Closing Challenge

As we conclude this cohort, the aim is not that we would leave with sharper ideas alone, but with settled convictions. The vision set before us is not a spectacular ministry, but a faithful one—a life of single-minded devotion to Christ, shaped by integrity, and sustained through patient, unseen labor. This is the kind of ministry that endures.

So, the challenge is this: **aim to finish your calling well.** Commit yourselves afresh to lives that can withstand time, suffering, and change. Seek out the wisdom of those who have gone before you. Embrace the work God does through faithful obedience. And trust that the Lord who calls you is the same Lord who sustains you – by His grace, for the long haul.

Want to explore this topic more? Consider the following additional resources:

1. Article: [Run Through the Finish Line](#) by Gary McIntosh
2. Book: [Finish. Period. Going the Distance in Ministry.](#) by Sonny Holmes

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2. Blog: 9 Dangers of an Isolated Ministry by Dr. Chuck Lawless
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1. Video: Watch Navigating The Pastor's Soul Care - Session #1, by Brian Croft
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqIBpXRgCGM
2. Blog: The "What" and "How" of Spiritual Rhythms by Michael Kelley
<https://churchanswers.com/blog/the-what-and-how-of-spiritual-rhythms/>

Session 4:

1. Article: [The Beatitudes Are the Cure for Pastoral Burnout](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/beatitudes-cure-burnout/) by Chris Castaldo (Gospel Coalition)
www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/beatitudes-cure-burnout/
2. Podcast: [The Rural Pastor Podcast - Episode 37 - Healthy Rhythms Part 1 of 3](https://theruralpastor.com/podcast/the-rural-pastor-podcast-episode-37-healthy-rhythms-part-1-of-3/)
<https://theruralpastor.com/podcast/the-rural-pastor-podcast-episode-37-healthy-rhythms-part-1-of-3/>
3. Book: [Rhythms: Moving From Surviving To Thriving In Ministry](http://www.amazon.com/s?k=rhythms+book+by+andy+addison&crid=H5KCY6X35WOX&s_prefix=%2Caps%2C162&ref=nb_sb_ss_recent_11_O_recent) by Andy Addis
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1. Article: [Run Through the Finish Line](https://biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2014/run-through-the-finish-line-doing-ministry-well) by Gary McIntosh
<https://biola.edu/blogs/good-book-blog/2014/run-through-the-finish-line-doing-ministry-well>
2. Book: [Finish. Period. Going the Distance in Ministry.](#) by Sonny Holmes

ADDITIONAL NOTES

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