

**A process and
conversation guide
for sending pastors,
church planters, and
teams**

STAYING HEALTHY





BY THE NUMBERS

STATISTICS THAT DEFINE LIFE FOR THE MODERN PASTOR

MOST PASTORS START EARLY ON THEIR PATH TO MINISTRY

More than half sense their calling between ages 14 and 21. Overall, 85% of pastors attended church as a child and 8 in 10 were part of a youth ministry.

A SENSE OF CALLING DEEPENS WITH TIME AND EXPERIENCE

Two-thirds say they feel even more confident about their calling today than when they first entered ministry.

IT'S NOT UNCOMMON FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS TO FACE DOUBT

1 out of every 4 pastors has experienced a period during their ministry when they significantly doubted their faith.

NEARLY HALF OF PASTORS FACE SOME SORT OF RELATIONAL RISK

43% of pastors are at high or medium relational risk, whether they are experiencing challenges in marriage family, friendships or other close relationships.

FAMILIES USUALLY WEATHER THE CHALLENGES OF MINISTRY

Pastors report greater marital and parental satisfaction than the general population, though half say their current church tenure has been hard on the family.

AS A COHORT OF LEADERS, PASTORS ARE GETTING OLDER

As other careers woo Millennials and older generations struggle to hand the baton to younger pastors, the median age of pastors has risen from 44 to 54 over the last 25 years.

MOST PASTORS ARE FARING WELL, BUT 1 IN 3 IS AT RISK OF BURNOUT

More than one-third of pastors are at high or medium risk of burnout, and three-quarters know at least one fellow pastor whose ministry ended due to stress.

PASTORS ARE NOT IMMUNE TO MENTAL HEALTH STRUGGLES

One in five pastors has struggled with an addiction - most commonly, to porn - while almost half have faced depression.

EVEN WHEN EARNING LESS, PASTORS THRIVE IN OTHER WAYS

Pastors earn below their educational level, but most feel financially secure. High relational, emotional, and spiritual satisfaction is found among those making less than \$40k a year.

WORSHIP HELPS PASTORS STAY RESILIENT

Pastors who experience meaningful worship at their own church are at lower risk of burnout, relationship trouble, and spiritual difficulties.

Statistics from a report by the
Barna Research Group entitled
The State of Pastors (2017)

www.barna.com

STAYING HEALTHY

We go day after day, crazy month after crazy month: worried, upset, anxious, troubled, fussing, worked up. Every stain, every school project, every dirty sink, every surprise guest, every surge of responsibility becomes a cause for great panic. To paraphrase Titus 3:3, we live as slaves to various chaos and envy, hassled by others and hassling one another.

-Kevin DeYoung in Crazy Busy

Too many people are experiencing overly busy lives and, hence, are overly stressed. They are marching to a beat, but not the right one. They are consumed with keeping up - keeping up with the ministry elite (whoever they are), keeping up with appearances, and failing miserably in doing so. It would be to their advantage to march to a better beat, a more fulfilling one, a more sustainable one. A rhythm like this can be had. But it doesn't happen by chance. Rhythm must be intentionally pursued.

-Eugene Wilson in Rhythm

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What does a personal plan for spiritual renewal look like?
- What is the cost of living or leading without engaging in spiritual devotions or disciplines?
- On a practical level, how does a church planter stay spiritually strong and sensitive to God?

HOW GOD LED THE PROPHET ELIJAH TO A PLACE OF RENEWAL

In 1 Kings 18, we observe the prophet Elijah at the height of his ministry. In a spectacular show of events, he challenged the false prophets of Baal and called fire down from heaven. He also spoke a word of faith and ended a national famine, and then ran faster than a chariot.

We find a statement that sums up his ministry and influence in this season in 1 Kings 18:46, "Then the hand of the Lord came upon Elijah..." In this season of Elijah's ministry, the hand of God was visibly upon him and everyone knew it.

- **In the very next season, however, everything changed.**

In his book, *Planting a Church Without Losing Your Soul*, Tim Morey writes about this transition in Elijah's ministry.

As chapter 19 opens, instead of finding Elijah elated and triumphant, we find him exhausted, discouraged, and fearing for his life. How can this be? How can one experience such a display of God's power in one moment, then turn around and doubt his power in the next?

Our church members might scratch their heads, but pastors have no problem relating to this story. Pastors routinely find themselves physically and emotionally spent come Monday morning, a phenomenon I've actually heard referred to as Elijah Syndrome. The adrenaline dump that follows a significant ministry event can leave one's mind and body feeling heavy and sluggish. Thoughts of discouragement and inadequacy seem to carry more weight. Anticipation of the coming work week can feel daunting.

Intuitively, I would think that only failures would drain us, while successful ministry ventures would be nothing but life-giving. Yet experience teaches us something different. Even good ministry can leave us depleted. (p. 12-13)

This sudden emotional transition represents the toll that an intense season of ministry has upon our souls.

Seeing Elijah in a state of "emotional drift," God steps in and brings him to a place of physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational renewal.

God renewed Elijah on a physical level (1 Kings 19:1-6)

God sent Elijah bread and water and encouraged him to eat and be nourished.

God renewed Elijah on an emotional level (1 Kings 19:7-8)

God sent food to Elijah the second time and affirmed the journey that Elijah was on. He reminded Elijah that he was serving a cause much bigger than himself.

God renewed Elijah on a spiritual level (1 Kings 19:9-12)

In a season of weariness, God called Elijah to a mountain where His presence and power were revealed. Here, God taught Elijah to stay sensitive to His "still, small voice."

God renewed Elijah on a relational level (1 Kings 19:13-18)

Elijah felt alone and isolated. He felt like he was the only one in the entire kingdom that had stayed faithful to God. In response, God informed Elijah that there were many in Israel who had not bowed to false idols. God then connected Elijah to other leaders in the kingdom to serve as relational support.

When we find ourselves in exhausting and discouraging seasons in ministry we must take time to pause and be renewed physically, emotionally, spiritually, and relationally.

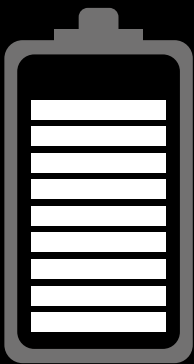
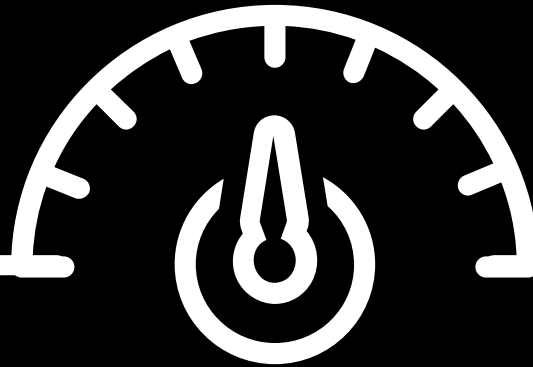
We must establish a sustainable pace and develop an awareness of and appreciation for each unique season. At regular intervals, we should "get away" to rest, reflect, and relax. Every once in a while, we must do things that we enjoy simply for the sake of doing them.

We must find a healthy balance between performing tasks that are draining and tasks that are life-giving. Likewise, we must find a healthy balance between people that may be draining and those that are life-giving.

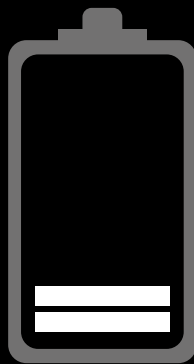
We need to maintain a family and friendship community in which we can retreat and find support and encouragement.

- Most importantly, we need to return to the mountain of God and be reminded of His power and presence.

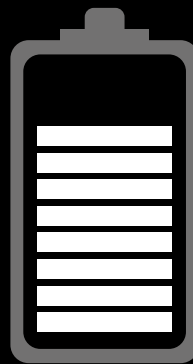
THE DASHBOARD OF MY LIFE



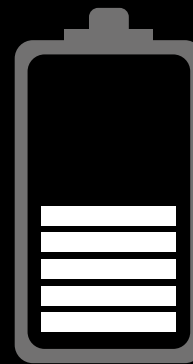
**PHYSICAL
HEALTH**



**EMOTIONAL
HEALTH**



**SPIRITUAL
HEALTH**



**RELATIONAL
HEALTH**

Since the beginning of creation, God established the practice of a Sabbath rest (Genesis 2:3, Exodus 20:8-11). In the beginning, having a Sabbath was not optional - it was a commandment. It was also "holy unto the Lord." It was a pre-scheduled time of renewal, restoration, and rejuvenation that God promised to bless.

Though we are far removed from the original days of creation, we are still in need of a regular, scheduled Sabbath rest when we take time to reset, recalibrate, and refill our physical, emotional, spiritual, and emotional tanks.

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23)

WHAT WOULD A PERSONAL RENEWAL PLAN LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR AND YOUR SPOUSE?

- What can you and your spouse do to keep your marriage fresh and vibrant?
- What can you do to prioritize your relationships with your children?
- What types of recreational activities does your family enjoy doing together?
- Do you maintain meaningful friendships outside of the context of your local church?
- What types of activities help you to recharge on a physical, emotional, spiritual, and relational level?
- How can you block-out time on your weekly and monthly calendar for spiritual enrichment?

MY WRITTEN PLAN FOR SPIRITUAL RENEWAL

To relieve the tension, stress, and frustration of ministry, I plan to:

My spiritual enrichment goal each day is:

My spiritual enrichment goal each week is:

To keep our marriage fresh, my spouse and I plan to:

As I survey my ministry calendar over the next 12 months, I plan to step away and recharge spiritually in the following ways:

To cultivate more meaning in my personal devotions, I plan to:

My three closest friends outside of the context of my local church are:

When I recognize burnout in my spouse, I plan to:

When I face doubt and discouragement, I plan to:

Over the next six months, my personal growth and development goals are: