

part 1 of 2—

Great Ways to Stay at Your Best

There is a time in every children's leader's life where he is pumped up and excited about what he is doing for the kingdom of God. Remember the feeling that burned inside that wouldn't let you slow down? But somehow too many of us run so hard that it seems the fire has become just a few glowing coals.

We have the awesome responsibility of shepherding children, their parents, their siblings, plus all of the workers who help us. The problem is that we often burn out.

Have you ever said to yourself, "I've missed my calling," or "I need a long break"? Or perhaps you've thought, "I need to find a new church," or "I should quit ministry."

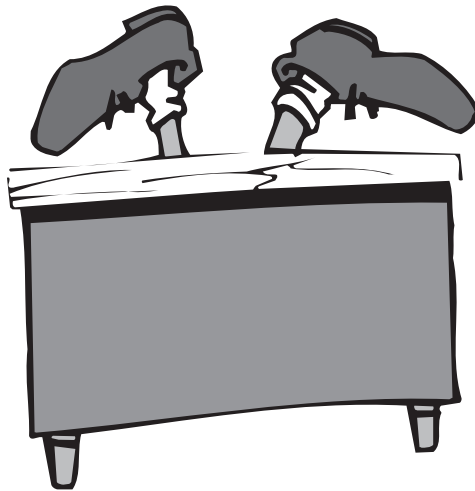
Sadly, many people leave the ministry for the wrong reasons and do not seek the face of God when it comes to matters of ministry burnout.

Perhaps the question that should be asked is, "How do I get back to my best?" Here are some tips to help you stay at your best in the ministry:

1. Go back to what God spoke to you about in the first place.



Ephesians 1:11: "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will."



In the beginning, God gave you a burden for kids. Think about that day you heard the voice of God deep in your spirit, and listen again to the call He placed on your life.

2. If you don't have a vision yet, get one!

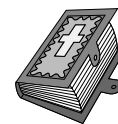


Proverbs 29:18: "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

You need a vision to survive in the ministry. The New Living Translation says: "When people do not accept divine guidance, they run wild."

A vision is simply the dream or idea that God has given you for your ministry. It will answer the "who, what, when, where, and how" of your ministry and its future. If you feel like you've been running wild lately, get a vision.

3. Have a plan for your vision.



Habakkuk 2:2: "Write down the revelation and make it plain."

Next, look at what it's going to take in the natural to see this vision come to pass. Write these ideas and methods down and get to it! Once you have a vision, put it on paper and work to see it accomplished.

4. Take a day off.



Exodus 20:8-11:

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work.”

It’s biblical to take a day off! A Sabbath is not just for

Sundays. It’s the day set aside each week for rest and devotion to God. Sundays cannot be a pastor’s day off, obviously. So pick another day off, and use it to rest and spend time with your family as you spend time with God.

Questions for Further Study—

1. Recall times when you have felt burned out in your ministry? What situations prompted that feeling? What can you do to make those situations less stressful?

2. What steps can you take to renew the vision God gave to you early in your ministry?



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Great Ways to Stay at Your Best

5. Put your priorities in order and keep them.



Matthew 22:37,38:
“Love the Lord your
God with all your

heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment.”

Your relationship with Jesus Christ should be your first priority, followed by your relationship with your spouse, then your relationship with your kids, then your job (if you're not in full-time ministry), followed by your ministry. Keep these priorities in order and don't compromise them. If you deal with the most important things first, everything else will seem to fall into place.

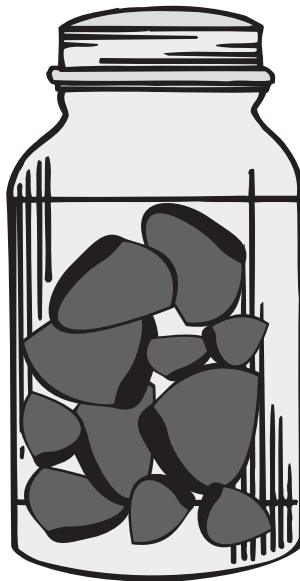
I'll never forget the illustration about a jar and the different-sized rocks and water. If you try to put the small stuff in the jar first—the sand and pebbles—you won't be able to fit all of the large rocks and water into the jar. You'll have a spill of water all over the place. But if you put the bigger stuff in first—the rocks then the pebbles, then the sand, then the water—you'll avoid the

spill. In other words, everything else will seem to fall into place if you prioritize.

6. Get others to help you.



Matthew 10:1: He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.



You can't do the ministry all alone! Jesus wouldn't do it all alone when He was here on earth, and neither should you. Recruit some people to help you

and delegate responsibilities someone else could do. This will free you to get your priorities in order and do the most effective work that only you can do.

7. Begin to manage your time.



Ecclesiastes 3:1:
“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven.”

Get a day planner. Use it to keep your calendar, your to-do lists, and your appointments. At the end of each day, consult your day planner and evaluate how your time was spent. Then make necessary changes to your schedule.

My favorite book on this subject is *Time Management for Dummies*, by Jeffery J. Mayer. Check your favorite bookstore where Dummies books are sold.

8. Learn how to minister out of an overflow.



Luke 6:45: “The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out

of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.”

Too many children’s ministers never learn how to feed themselves. As we grow older in Christ and begin to mature, we need to learn how to feed ourselves the Word of God. We are some of the few who never get to go to a church service with other adults. Here are a few solutions:

- ▼ Read your Bible on a regular basis.
- ▼ Get into a church service. (This is where having others to help you can come in handy).
- ▼ If you get into a church service, take notes on the sermon.
- ▼ If your adult worship service and sermons are audio-taped, set up a plan

to receive your pastor’s sermons so you can listen to them in your car.

- ▼ Order or buy other Bible teaching tapes or sermons on tape by like-faith teachers, preachers, and pastors.
- ▼ Get a good version of the Bible on tape or CD and play it in your car, while doing chores around the house, or when you’re out walking.
- ▼ Meet with others in children’s ministry by attending a fellowship meeting. If there isn’t one in your area, start one.
- ▼ If there’s another church in your area of the same denomination or same doctrine, find out if they are running any special crusades or revival services and attend one. (It will always be wise to ask permission from

your pastor on this one).

- ▼ Always start to study your children’s lessons early in the week. This way the Word of God and the lesson concepts will sink into your spirit. When you present this lesson on Sunday, you’ll be teaching from your heart.
- ▼ Stay connected to Jesus as much as possible. Keep before you a constant, consistent devotional life (i.e., prayer and feeding on the Word of God).

I am hopeful these hints will help you get back to your best as a minister to children—and a minister to God.

Questions for Further Study—

1. How do you keep your relationship with Jesus as a top priority in your life?

2. Are you good at delegating responsibility? If not, why not? What should you do to begin giving others more responsibility?