



**Keeping Your
Balance in
Life and Ministry**

... Finding your sweet spot in rural ministry



The Rural Church Pastors Network
www.ruralchurchpastorsnetwork.com

Welcome!!

We're so glad you have decided to invest a day of your life that has been designed to make an investment in you and your ministry!! The Rural Church Pastors Network arranges different events for rural pastors to focus on their personal health and wellbeing, and relevant ministry matters.

Today's theme is designed to help you find your 'sweet spot' in rural ministry by learning to keep a healthy balance between your life and ministry.

We invite you to keep in touch with us and visit us at:
www.ruralchurchpastorsnetwork.com

Relax – Unwind - feel at home – and let's have a great day together!

- Your RCPN Leadership team

Our Goals for the Course

- To provide tools pastors can use to find balance in their life and ministry.
- To offer hope and encouragement to pastors in doing well in life and ministry.
- To engage pastors in discussing relevant lifestyle issues they will 'own' and follow up through developing practical 'next step' plans.
- To encourage networking between pastors for continued contact and accountability.

Acknowledging the Need for Balance

What do you believe are the correct percentages for each question below?

_____ forced out or fired from ministry at least once

_____ feel inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.

_____ believe pastoral ministry impacts their family negatively.

_____ say they've experienced depression/burnout to the point they need a leave of absence.

_____ have serious conflict with a church member at least once a month.

_____ admit to having an affair while in the ministry

_____ admit that internet pornography is a current struggle.

_____ do not have someone they consider a close friend.

What do you believe is the most prevalent medical condition being treated by prescription drugs for pastors & their families at this time? _____

Consider:

Which facts/statistics surprise you the most and why?

Which facts/statistics don't surprise you the most and why?

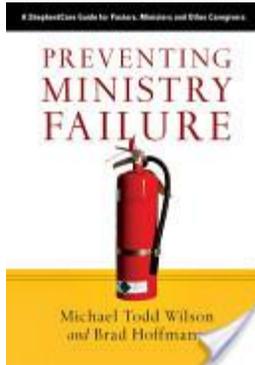
Which do you identify with the most and why?

Pastoral Lifestyle Questions

Think back to days in college/seminary... What did you assume ministry life would be like?

Which assumptions did you discover to be untrue or idealistic once you entered ministry?

Recommended Resource for Your Life and Ministry...



A Shepherd Care Guide for Pastors, Ministers, and Other Caregivers.

This is perhaps the most practical preparation guide a would-be minister could take, short of immersing themselves in an internship or meeting regularly with a mentor for assignments and accountability. Authors Wilson and Hoffmann have prepared an easy-to-follow and deeply convicting workbook for the one preparing for (or already involved in) ministry, and I am a better leader for having taken the time to go through it.

The workbook is organized into what the authors call their seven “Foundational Stones”: intimacy, calling, stress management, boundaries, re-creation, people skills, and leadership skills. Through each of these sections, the reader is faced not only with captivating, Scripture-oriented text, but also with some of the most personal, thought-provoking questions possible to open up their true self and to let that Scripture dig deep in one’s heart and mind. In the beginning, I certainly found myself not wanting to open up this way, and certainly not wanting to record any thoughts that came to mind. But as I progressed through the foundational stones, I realized that the more honest and open I was with the text, the more amplified the material became, and the more I learned.

This book will prepare anyone for the ministry, and will even give a heads-up to the few expecting to someday become 65-hours-per-week ministers. I recommend this book to anyone serious about confronting their hidden selves and takes the necessary steps to change themselves for the sake of the ministry.

The Uniqueness of Rural Ministry Demands

What are the greatest challenges you currently face in life and ministry?



Understanding Compassion Fatigue

Did you know that caring for people over the long haul can potentially negatively impact you as a pastor? When caregivers focus on others without practicing self-care, destructive behaviors can surface. Apathy, isolation, bottled up emotions and substance abuse head a long list of symptoms associated with the stress disorder now labeled: **Compassion Fatigue**

While the effects of Compassion Fatigue can cause pain and suffering, learning to recognize and manage its symptoms is the first step toward healing. www.healthycaregiving.com. This site has numerous resources for caregivers working in many professions.

What is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion fatigue has been described as the “cost of caring” for others in emotional pain. The helping field has gradually begun to recognize that pastors are profoundly affected by the work they do, whether it is by direct exposure to traumatic events or secondary exposure (hearing people talk about trauma they have experienced, helping people who are chronically in despair, or witnessing people’s inability to improve their very difficult life circumstances, or feeling helpless in the face of poverty, and emotional anguish.

The work of helping requires pastors to open their hearts and minds to those in their community – yet, the very process of empathy is what makes pastors vulnerable to being profoundly affected and even possibly damaged by their caring ministry if they don’t practice necessary self-care.

What is the difference between Compassion Fatigue and Burnout?

These two terms are complementary, yet different from one another. **COMPASSION FATIGUE** refers to the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when pastors are unable to refuel and regenerate emotional health. **BURNOUT** is a term that has been used a great deal to describe the physical and emotional exhaustion that pastors can experience when they have low job satisfaction and feel powerless and overwhelmed in ministry.

Burnout does not necessarily mean pastors have lost the ability to feel compassion for others. Burnout for some can be fairly easily resolved: changing ministry positions or locations can provide immediate relief to someone suffering from ministry related burnout.

This is not the case for compassion fatigue however. Its negative impact is cumulative over time and evident in our personal and professional lives. It is recognized as an ‘occupational hazard’ of working in the helping field.

It is important that you can clearly understand the contributing factors that lead to you developing compassion fatigue, and also because, the more we know about the problem, the more able we are to develop strategies to prevent/modulate the impact of what we experience.

What are some of the signs of Compassion Fatigue?

When pastors are overtaxed by the nature of their ministry of caring for others, they can begin to show symptoms that are very similar to those they are trying to help. Symptoms include: difficulty concentrating, feeling discouraged about the world, hopelessness, exhaustion, irritability, high attrition (leaving their position) and negative outcomes (dispirited, cynical attitude while remaining in ministry, boundary violations) many of which affect their ministry and create what helpers have called a “toxic work environment.”

The following are the 5 progressive phases seen in someone suffering from Compassion Fatigue

1. **Zealous Stage - early signs – life out of balance**
2. **Irritability Phase - oversell yourself but under perform – unrealistic expectations**
3. **Withdrawal Stage – Emotional Stage of inability to cope with reality**
4. **Zombie Phase – putting in time – checking off boxes but not being engaged**
5. **Pathology of Victimization Stage – just making it by – on the verge of ‘collapse’**

What factors contribute to Compassion Fatigue?

There are many reasons people develop compassion fatigue and burnout. Firstly, burnout is a result of a conflict between our values and our work, it is now understood as much more than simply being tired. Other factors can be broken down into two main categories: The individual and The Situation:

The individual: Your current life circumstances, your history, your coping style and your personality style all effect how compassion fatigue works its way through your system. Most pastors have other life stressors to deal with, both at home and at the church... let alone having to preach a sermon week after week after week. Pastors are not immune to pain in their own lives and in fact some studies show that they are more vulnerable to life changes such as marital conflict and difficulties such as addictive traits than people who do less stressful work.

The Situation: Pastors often do work that other people don't want to hear about, or spend their time caring for people who are not valued or understood in our society, Pastors also often struggle with the implications of modest salaries while trying to raise a growing family. Their ministry environment is often lived in isolation. Because ministry ‘never ends,’ pastors can eventually slip into compassion fatigue and disillusionment which leads to feelings of guilt and despair.

Ministry itself is also stressful dealing with people who experience chronic crisis, difficulty controlling their emotions, or parishioners who may not get better. Add to that the fact that pastors always are disappointing someone's expectations of what a ‘pastor’ should be... these are all difficult things for a pastor to deal with.

What can you do about it?

There is a lot pastors can do about it. Acknowledging it exists by reading this is a great step! Also remember that compassion fatigue is a process and generally so is healing from its effects. Some pastors can fully return to a restored well of emotional resources by simply taking a holiday, but many need to make life changes and put their own health and wellness on the list of personal priorities. Compassion fatigue won't go away by simply ignoring it. It takes a conscious effort to find restoration and renewal.

We look at strategies for dealing with compassion fatigue on three different levels, like the recycling model of reduce, re-use, and recycle. Self care should not focus only on stress relief strategies. Many pastors seen for counseling believe they are coping through running, sleeping well, eating well, taking vitamins, going for health check ups, reading for pleasure, etc. but find their efforts aren't making a difference.

We think like this because we have unrealistic expectations of ourselves that we should be able to do it all by ourselves and not suffer. For most of us this simply isn't true. We also need to **REDUCE** our stress, and that means cutting back on things in our lives that are stressful.

At the same time pastors need to work on stress **RESILIENCY**, which makes the stress that we are left with more tolerable. Stress relief strategies only work as prevention or as the final step once a pastor has reduced their current stress load and improved his/her resiliency.

What is stress resiliency? Basically it means learning to take time to 'enjoy life' and stopping to 'smell the roses.' When we are stressed our bodies are in a fight or flight mode and when in that mode our bodies cannot heal, we need to engage a system of relaxation so that our bodies can take a breather and start to heal.

What if those strategies aren't enough?

Compassion Fatigue and burnout can lead to very serious problems, usually involving a state of depression. When this happens you deserve to have help. Talk to your physician about options such as counseling – also look for support from others who are spiritually wise and who care for you.

What can be done to prevent Compassion Fatigue from occurring in the first place?

We believe that compassion fatigue is an occupational hazard in pastoral work and it is likely that we all have some degree of it going on at any given time. On a positive note, these findings have also led researchers to explore the most effective ways to improve the working conditions of pastors and in turn the quality of the service being delivered.

The recommendations for warding off compassion fatigue treatment occur at many levels: organizationally, professionally and personally.

Organizationally... realize that since ministry never ends, you need to set up a personal system of maintaining a balanced life. Learning to schedule your weekly rhythms of work, worship, and personal times need to occur. Are you taking a day off each week – if not – why not? Are you observing a Sabbath experience.... if not – why not? Andy Stanley states that when we don't live an organized life we end up cheating someone who deserves our time – and usually that person is our spouse or family.

Professionally... realize your own limits and don't fall prey to the 'super hero' pastoral stereotype many feel they have to maintain or live up to. Be realistic about your inability to be all things to all people, and seek to understand both your calling to ministry, and the practical outworking of a realistic pastoral lifestyle that is affirmed by your church leaders.

Also realize your role isn't to be lived in isolation, even if you find yourself in a remote location. You need to develop a circle of colleagues around you to offer support in your ministry experience.

Personally... realize at the end of life the Lord won't reward you for the size of your church or the number of sermons you preached. He desired to have a personal growing intimate relationship with you personally. Being too busy in ministry to maintain and develop a personal walk with the Lord isn't an acceptable excuse for the neglect of self-care.

What if I think that someone close to me is suffering from cf?

A helpful strategy is right in the name, have compassion! Unfortunately one negative effect of the work that has been done in this area is that some pastors have felt blamed for their compassion fatigue. They have received a strong message from their church, "if you feel burnt out, it means you are not taking good enough care of yourself". This can further silence people in pain.

Be kind and supportive and start small, it can be hard to hear that something you have been trying to hide is obvious to others. Talking about the effects of your ministry can be helpful.

Focus on the Family offers a **1-800 Clergy Care** line where trained counselors will offer free caring counsel over the phone.



Principles of Self Care... helping to create meaningful boundaries/rhythms.

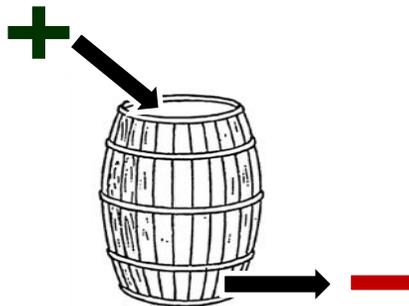
The Fulcrum Principle (unbalanced vs. balanced)



The principle addresses the need to determine balance in life and ministry. The basis of this principle is as follows: The 'FULCRUM' represents your heart (attention) and the STICK represents your life - not ministry vs. family - but all experiences in life and ministry. At times more demands will present themselves in one area or the other, ie. trouble within the family or – conflict within the church. Awareness is necessary to where your current pressure point is. (do a 'gut check!') Picture the fulcrum, stick, and issue in your mind. Slide the fulcrum towards that issue for a season and a sense of balance will result because when there is more weight (pressure/burden) on one end of the 'stick,' the fulcrum needs to be closer to that end to keep the beam straight... or your life balanced!

What is the greatest

The Rain Barrel Principle



The rain barrel represents your energy resource 'tank' that can be filled or drained by different elements or events in your life and ministry. Rather than managing your time – some suggest we need to manage our 'energy' (The thought is this: If you don't have the energy to use it, your 'managed time' is of no use to you!) Consider your current life and ministry experience... what fills (replenishes) and drains your 'energy tank' at this moment?

+ Top Three Barrel Fillers....

- Top Three Barrel Drainers....

Scheduling ... how to keep your day off from being an 'off' day!

COMMITTING TO A WEEKLY SCHEDULE WILL HELP YOU BALANCE LIFE & MINISTRY

Determining your priorities will help you keep balance in life and ministry. Here are a few suggestions on priorities.

- Time with God (Sabbath)
- Time with spouse
- Time with family
- Commitments to personal health & development
- Church responsibilities and commitments
- Other Commitments (ie community involvement)

Fill in your weekly schedule in this order of priority:

1. Commit to your "Sabbath/day off" (A consecutive 24 hour period can flow over 2 days)
2. Mark regular spousal/family commitments: any regular times your spouse or family needs you to be 'present'
3. Mark in regular work/church commitments: times you will be expected to be at the office, Small Group meetings, visitation, weekly meetings, events or lunches,
4. Mark in regular commitments outside Church: sports activities, community clubs or organizations you are involved in, etc.
5. Mark in your sermon prep times, lesson planning, phone calls, etc.
6. What about exercise? Personal reading and development? Meeting with other pastors? What do you do for fun???
7. Try to keep a balance of 14 segments for ministry – 7 for family – self, etc.

A week in the life of one of our rural pastor, Andy....

November 25 – December 1

	Nov. 25	Nov. 26	Nov. 27	Nov. 28	Nov. 29	Nov. 30	Dec. 1
ANDY'S EXAMPLE	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Morning 7:00 – 12:00	7-9 Practice Sermon 9:00 Membership Class 10:30 Service	Day off	>Sermon Research	>Staff Meeting >Sermon Outline	>Sermon creating	>Finish Sermon	Whatever is necessary to finish up things for Sunday
Noon - Lunch		Day off					
Afternoon 1:00 – 5:00		Day off		1:30 – 6:30 Class	1:30 – 5:00 Medical app.		
Supper		Day off					
Evening 6:00 - ?		Day off	1 st Lions 2 nd Ag Society 3 rd Lions 4 th Elders Meeting		Care Group 7:30 – 9:30		

A Balanced Week in your Life and Ministry ...

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Morning 7:00 – 12:00							
Noon - Lunch							
Afternoon 1:00 – 5:00							
Supper							
Evening 6:00 - ?							

Consider

1. Get your spouse to sign off in agreement with this schedule
2. Share your proposed schedule with church leaders
3. Who will hold you accountable to your weekly plans? _____

Reviewing our Day... How to Avoid Becoming a Statistic

Committing to 'Next Steps' – Getting practical about keeping balance

Next Step #1 - What I will focus on this week:

Next Step #2 - What I will focus on within a month:

Next Step #3 - What I will focus on within three months:

Who is your Lightning Rod & First Call?

I will invite the following person(s) to hold me accountable to my 'Next Step' commitments:

Case Study

Josh Kirk has just been extended a call to serve as the solo pastor of Deere Valley Bible Church. This will be his first pastoral charge.

Background: Josh & Erin Kirk

Josh is 24 years old and grew up in a small farming community. He went to Bible School for one year to please his parents, but while there two things happened: he sensed God calling him to be a pastor, and he met his wife. Both

Josh & Erin love rural life and for the two years that they have been married, they have talked and prayed and dreamed about serving a rural congregation. Now they get to live their dream.

Erin grew up in a pastor's home and loves to lead worship. She is a gifted musician and is certified to be a music teacher.

Both Josh & Erin love horseback riding and going to farm auctions. They plan to buy a "fixer-upper" house which they want in turn into a cozy home from which they can practice a ministry of hospitality.

Background: Deere Valley Bible Church

DVBC has been a part of the Deere Valley community as long as anyone can remember. The congregation is comprised of 80 people, of which half are retired. The DVBC leadership team is made up of two retired farmers, the forty-something manager of the local feedlot, and a teacher from the local high school.

The expectation of the congregation is that the pastor will do regular visitation, lead a mid-week prayer meeting/Bible study, oversee the children's and youth ministries, maintain the church office, and preach each Sunday.

Josh will be the twelfth pastor in the church's 75 year history and he follows a much-loved pastor who retired after 15 years at DVBC.

Josh will get one day off each week, two weeks of vacation each year, and can take off stat holidays if they don't fall on a regular day off. The salary package he has been offered works out to \$4000/month and this includes a modest benefit package and housing allowance.

Background: Deere Valley

Deere Valley is a somewhat economically depressed community of 2500 people and serves an area of 1500 square miles. The town has four churches, five coffee shops/restaurants, a school with 475 students, a retirement home, several stores and businesses, a feedlot, and the rodeo grounds.

The RCMP have a detachment at Deere Valley and fire protection is provided by a volunteer fire department.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

All of us were new to pastoral ministry at some point and we no doubt looked forward to serving Christ and the Church with effectiveness and in ways that brought blessing to those who served. Not only have we been shaped by those early experiences, but we have also acquired hard earned wisdom that would be invaluable to someone entering ministry, and particularly in a rural setting.

For the purposes of this case study, assume that you have become Josh's ministry coach for his first two years of ministry.

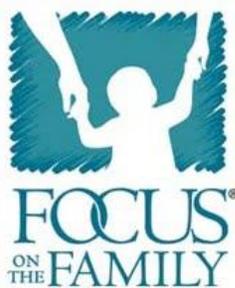
1. Given their backgrounds, what are some potential strengths that Josh & Erin bring to ministry in a rural setting?

2. What are some potential hazards that Josh & Erin need to be aware of as they begin ministry at DVBC?

3. Which elements in this particular setting need to be addressed *before* the Kirks accept a call to serve at DVBC?

4. What boundaries would you counsel Josh & Erin to put in place to ensure they maintain a healthy balance in their life and ministry?

5. What kinds of support should Josh & Erin establish as they enter full-time rural ministry?



The RCPN wants to express thanks to our Friends at Focus on the Family for their deep commitment to support and encourage pastors. Visit them at Focusonthefamily.ca for a full list of their resources. In Crisis and need immediate assistance? Call their confidential call-in counselling line at 1.888.5.CLERGY

Recommended Resources...

The Call by Os Guinness

The author does an excellent job of helping us to understand what we are *really* called to and why it matters.

Spiritual Leadership by J. Oswald Sanders

To my mind, this remains one of the classic treatments on pastoral leadership and in part because Sanders insists that pastoral leadership is essentially spiritual leadership - a point sometimes forgotten in the 21st century North American Church.

Brothers, We Are Not Professionals by John Piper

If you want to read a book which will enlarge your soul and expand your mind, you will enjoy this work by John Piper. Throughout this book, Piper works hard to draw us to a higher standard of practice as pastors. If we accept his insights, and incorporate them into our lives, that purpose will be accomplished.

The Power of Full Engagement by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz. The Free Press 2003.

The thesis of this book is that the secret to being able to perform at a high level on an ongoing basis is to manage energy, not time. They conclude that in order for us to be the best that we can be as leaders we must manage our own energy first and then in turn manage the organization we lead in the same way. They call the energy state that is required to do this “full engagement”. They propose that in order to have this type of energy we need to draw on and continue to fuel four areas of energy: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. They say that because the energy levels in all of these areas diminishes with both over and under use, we must learn how to replenish each of these areas and must balance energy use with periods of energy renewal. In order to increase our energy capacity we must learn push ourselves beyond our normal limits by training much the same way that athletes do, using interval training to help us expend and recover energy in a quicker manner. The key to this is develop what they call positive energy rituals or routines to help us maintain full engagement and to continue living at a high level of performance. (take a free energy performance survey with results at www.fullengagement.com)

The Leadership Summit 2005 DVD,

Sessions 7a The Mental Toughness of a Leader with Jack Groppe and 7b Action Steps for Monday with Henry Cloud. Willow Creek Association 2005.

Jack Groppe is Jim Loehr’s business partner and shares in a dynamic way many of the principles of the book listed above. Henry Cloud then gives some practical steps on how to make some lasting changes in our lives.

Encouragement for Leaders by David Roper

A series of short devotional thoughts to bring encouragement and challenge to leaders to live a balanced ministry and life.

Pastor To Pastor Resources – Focus on the Family provides a vast array of materials to support and encourage Pastors.... Visit their website at Focusonthefamily.ca

Walking with God - John Eldredge – A series of personal stories of what it looks like to walk with God over the course of about a year!

Working the Angles – The Shape of Pastoral Integrity (Eugene Peterson) Pastors are becoming a ‘company of shopkeepers’ preoccupied with image and standing... In this book Peterson calls the attention of pastors to the three basic acts of Prayer – Reading Scripture – and giving Spiritual Direction.

The Christian Atheist - by Craig Groeschel

While not a book on leadership or pastoring, a book that gets to the heart of what it means if we are truly desiring to live the Christian life we say we want to live. It is a very challenging book as it points a finger at ourselves in the many areas of life where we are saying we believe in Christ and then living like atheists - living like we don't really believe.

The Tangible Kingdom (Creating Incarnational Community) - by Hugh Halter and Matt Smay

This is a great book about being more missionary minded in our efforts as individuals, as pastors, and as the churches we are leading. It is in the urban context, yet most of what it talks about is about one on one and smaller communities. This transfers easily into our rural smaller communities.

Church Planter - by Darrin Patrick

This book is not just for church planters. It is a book for all who desire to pastor well. There are three main sections. Section one: The Man - is an incredible description of what the pastor is supposed to be like. Section two: The Message - helps clarify what it is that we are preaching. Section three: The Mission, talks more about how to do what we believe we are called to do.

Your Recommendations.... List resources you'd recommend in this area of life/ministry balance

God's Word to the Wise!



But they that wait upon the LORD
shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings as eagles;
they shall run, and not be weary;
and they shall walk, and not faint.
Isaiah 40:31

A joyful heart is good medicine,
but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
Proverbs 17:22

Love the Lord your God
with all your heart and with all your soul
and with all your strength.
Deuteronomy 6:5

Come to me all you who are weary and burdened,
and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you
and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble
in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
Matthew 11:28-29



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