



Staying Alive Spiritually

Sorting Out the *Perils & Pitfalls* of Doing Personal Ministry

I. What are some of the Unique _____ of Personal Ministry at _____ Range?

A. You're Going to be Tempted to Turn the Bible into a _____ – instead of food for your own soul

Deuteronomy 32:46-47 “...Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day... They are not just idle words for you—they are your life.”

B. You're going to be _____ of 'hydro-planning' through life and ministry

- You're moving _____... and everyone at church thinks you're great... but you have to live with yourself... and you know your spiritual wheels aren't really even touching the ground... and you're at risk... you're headed for a 'crash.'
- You're so focused on 'doing' that you've stopped giving any attention to who you're '_____,'

Timothy 4:16 “Watch your life and doctrine closely...”

- Your ministry flows more from who you _____ than what you _____... so if who you are starts to erode it's going to catch up with you eventually

I Corinthians 11:1 “Imitate me just as I also imitate Christ.”



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- A good way to stay _____... and to recognize the earliest signs of erosion... is to give yourself a regular spiritual ‘check up.’

Article by Fred Smith titled “Conducting a Spiritual Audit” – he asks 12 penetrating questions that I’ve used as an assessment to rate myself in 12 areas that can sometimes fall apart just below the surface.

- If you stop paying any _____ to your own soul you can morph into something radically different than a joyful, spirit-filled Christ-follower.
- And from that point there’s two possibilities: you’ll either get _____... or you’ll get _____, and neither one will attract anyone else to the Savior.

“The numb Christian is numb, not because he doesn't know what to do, but because he has done and done until he feels completely undone. Believing that he must either get on board with the industrious perfecting of his faith or resign himself to the fact that he just doesn't have what it takes to dance the industrious dance, he becomes either disheartened or cynical. Hanging his weary head, or perhaps steeling his cynical jaw, he goes through the agonizing motions of faith. With faith's imaginative nerve effectively severed, he lives a half-throttle life.”

Water from Stone, M. Wayne Brown, Page 32 & 33

C. You Can Fall into a ‘Worker-Bee’ Mentality... and Worship Gets _____ Out

Luke 10:38-41 “Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus’ feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.’ And Jesus answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.”

“Grace feeds on grace. If pastors (Counselors) are to dispense grace every time we turn around, then we need to take in grace the way runners take in carbs before



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a marathon. Jesus is our manna, our living grace, the bread of heaven. When we don't get enough of Christ we get spiritually lightheaded and weak in the knees. What's worse than weakness is that pastors (Counselors) who are not nourished by Christ's grace get crotchety, indifferent, or suspicious around God's people... [we] are nourished by Christ when we come to sit, like Mary did, at His feet. Christ nourishes us when we study the Scriptures and when we pray for strength and wisdom. He feeds us when we worship and come to the Lord's table, and when we overhear our own sermons and lessons (and counsel) as we speak them." *Pastoral Graces: Reflections on the Care of Souls* by Lee Eclov, p 131

Ephesians 2:8-10 "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."

Check out my book, *Gospel Treason*, for more help identifying personal idols that wreck effective ministry. See also website www.bradbigney.com for study guide, etc.

- Worshipping sons and daughters make an _____... 'Worker-Bees' get stuff done. There's a difference. I don't want to just get stuff done...

Paul never allowed himself to slip from worshipper to 'Worker-Bee' even while he was instructing and struggling it out in the trenches his heart would erupt with praise and worship.

I Timothy 1:12-17 is just one example...

¹² And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting *me* into the ministry, ¹³ although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief. ¹⁴ And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. ¹⁶ However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. ¹⁷ Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, *be* honor and glory forever and ever. Amen."



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Paul was never far from praise! _____, _____, and _____ mixed freely and easily with Paul.

- Aside from the Bible itself... a great book to read... and re-read is C.J. Mahaney's ***The Cross Centered Life*** – subtitled “Keeping the Gospel the Main thing.”

D. You'll be Especially Susceptible to _____ and _____

- When things are going well in your ministry – watch out for pride!
- Don't take the credit for it... don't be a glory-robber!

Isaiah 42:8 “I am the Lord, that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another...”

Isaiah 66:2 “... but on this one will I look; on him who is humble and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My Word.”

2 Chronicles 26 – King Uzziah

v. 5 “He sought God... and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him prosper...”

v. 7 “God helped him...”

v. 8 “... his fame spread...”

v. 15-16 “... so his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the Lord his God...”

There's nothing better than C.J. Mahaney's little book ***Humility ~ True Greatness***

- When things are not going well – watch out for bitterness!
- And don't think God can't be at work



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2 Timothy 4:14 “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.”

1 Corinthians 16:9 “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.”

Romans 12:21 “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

E. You’ll be Tempted to Turn _____ Ministry into a _____ Transaction

Wayne Brown writes, “... We would much rather be productive than personal. One gives us tangible results. The other threatens to force us, no doubt uncomfortably, out of ourselves. We gravitate toward the productive because it's much easier, much more within our control. The personal always involves another person-whether God or human-and that's when things get messy.” *Water from Stone*, M. Wayne Brown, Page 32 & 33

1 Thessalonians 2:7-8 “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.”

“I think the besetting sin of pastors [*we could insert ‘counselors’!*], maybe especially evangelical pastors, is impatience. We have a goal. We have a mission. We’re going to save the world. We’re going to evangelize everybody, and we’re going to do all this good stuff and fill our churches. This is wonderful. All the goals are right. But this is slow, slow work, this soul work, this bringing people into a life of obedience and love and joy before God.

And we get impatient and start taking shortcuts and use any means available... This impatience to leave the methods of Jesus in order to get the work of Jesus done is what destroys spirituality, because we’re using a non-biblical, non-Jesus way to do what Jesus did. That’s why spirituality is in such a mess as it is today.”
March 7, 2005, “Peterson on the institutional church,” Eugene Peterson in *Christianity Today*

F. You’ll be especially Prone to _____ & Spiritual _____



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- Bouts of unbelief – “Oh, they’ll never change! I’m wasting my time.”

Hebrews 4:2 “... but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.”

- Times of sheer emotional exhaustion

Elijah after Mt. Carmel (see I Kings 18 & 19)

Allow yourself to be human... *expect* to feel down...
spent... weak

Arrange your schedule accordingly

II. How Do You Keep the _____ Alive?

A. Keep Your Hand on the Pulse of Your Own Life and Priorities

The Bible shows us what our priorities should be...

1. Person of God (relationship with God)
2. Partner (if you’re married)
3. Parent (if you have children)
4. Parishioner (church commitment)
5. Provider (work / employment)
6. Player (hobbies / leisure)

B. Put the ‘Big Rocks’ in First!

- Once / month date nights with my wife
- Once / month family night with the kids
- When they were younger ‘Date with Daddy’



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- Daily ‘soul-feeding’ time (Quiet Time)
- Prayer days (6-8 times / year)

C. Keep Reading and Getting Additional Training

- Read at least one new book each year on counseling / ministry
- Attend the annual ACBC conference, Faith Baptist, or Grace Fellowship
- You’ll come back charged up all over again

D. Invite Others to See What You’re Doing

2 Timothy 2:2 “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

- Invite them to sit in with you to observe / pray
- Let them ask questions afterwards

E. Show Others How to Do What You’re Doing

Ephesians 4:11-12 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

- Do “**What Ifs**” with any ministry group that you’re in charge of leading

F. Learn to Ask Questions and Say ‘No’

- When people call in a ‘crisis’ ask “How long has this been bad?”
- Every Christian ought to read Ed Welch’s book ***When People are Big and God is Small***



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- Learn to deal with your ‘fear of man’ or it’ll ruin your marriage and family life

G. Learn What Refreshes and Recharges You... and Do it

H. Keep a Prayer Journal ~ so that You Can Recount God’s Faithfulness

Bibliography of Helpful Reading in this Area...

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