

SPIRITUAL ENERGY MANAGEMENT: AVOIDING PASTORAL BURNOUT
BY DEVELOPING A HEALTHY DEVOTIONAL LIFE

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Abstract

Experiencing occupational burnout is not uncommon in a society that lives to work, and the pastor is no exception to this. Given the “serve not be served” nature of the ministry, coupled with its specific and wide-ranging challenges, pastors are generally more susceptible to become burned out in the three major areas of life: physical, mental, and spiritual. In recent years, research has shown that when burnout is treated in a wholistic manner by considering each of those three areas, recovery and even prevention from burnout becomes more attainable. There is no shortage of resources concerning physical and mental care that include time management and stress reducing practices, many of which are readily available and beneficial. This thesis, however, will seek to explore the benefits of developing healthy devotional habits as a possible remedy for the increasing problem of pastoral burnout. This thesis will review the phenomenon of burnout and its causes, explore what Scripture says concerning spiritual care, explain how a wholistic approach to pastoral care can be of great benefit, and provide general principles regarding a strong devotional life that both pastors and lay members can apply in their lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| A Brief Excursus on Work and Stress | 4 |
| The Problem of Burnout | 7 |
| Introducing the Concept of Energy Management..... | 12 |
| What Does Scripture Say Concerning Energy Management..... | 17 |
| Focusing on Spiritual Renewal Through Devotional Study of the Word..... | 21 |
| Answering Objections to Developing a Consistent Devotional Life..... | 25 |
| Practical Applications and Encouragements..... | 27 |
| Conclusions..... | 31 |
| Bibliography | 34 |

Introduction

“So Pastor, it must be nice only having to work one day a week.” Pastors across many denominations have likely heard this statement at least once if not dozens of times during their ministries. It can be said in jest by a playful member, in envy by an overworked employee, or in spite by an embittered delinquent or prospect. However, it can be safely said that most pastors would likely state just the opposite. The work of the ministry dominates their schedules. It often monopolizes their time. Also, the work of the ministry is harder work than most lay people imagine.

The Apostle Paul was no stranger to the physically hard work of the ministry, and indeed the mentally hard work as well. Widely accepted as the greatest Christian missionary of all time, Paul recounts the hardships he endured on account of his ministry in 2 Corinthians 11:23-28:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.¹

This is an extreme example of the hard work involved in pastoral ministry. While pastors in America do not yet face physical danger such as what Paul endured, there is no denying that the ministry is hard work – late nights, difficult conversations, stressful situations – and the ministry is often long work. A study conducted by Fuller Theological Seminary in the late 1980s revealed that 90% of pastors work more than 46 hours per week.² However, according to a series of surveys spanning several denominations and thousands of pastors in 2009, 90% of pastors work between 55 to 75 hours per week.³ This is not to say pastors today work harder than pastors in the 1980s, nor is this a blanket statement that all ministers are overworked or overwork

¹ All Bible quotations are taken from the NIV 2011, unless otherwise noted.

² Fred Lehr, *Clergy Burnout: Recovering from the 70-Hour Work Week...and Other Self-Defeating Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 4.

³ Bill Gualtiere, *Pastor Stress Statistics* [article on-line] (Irvine, CA: Soul Shepherding, 2009, accessed October 24, 2016); available from <http://www.souldshepherding.org/2009/11/pastors-under-stress/>; Internet.

themselves. Rather, this statement serves to highlight the fact that not only are pastors in a highly stressful vocation, but that many pastors spend portions of their time under high amounts of job related stress.

Pastors across a variety of Bible-based Christian denominations would regard how God's Word defines and describes work to be true. But, from the following statistics collected from thousands of pastors across many denominations, it would appear that although pastors rightly associate hard work with gospel ministry, they are unable to adequately balance work *with rest* in their ministries, and the effects of that can be seen in other aspects of their lives:

75% report being "extremely stressed" or "highly stressed."

90% work between 55 to 75 hours per week.

90% feel fatigued and worn out every week.

70% say they're grossly underpaid.

40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.

78% were forced to resign and 63% at least twice, most commonly because of church conflict.

80% will not be in ministry ten years later and only a fraction make it a lifelong career.

100% of 1,050 Reformed and Evangelical pastors had a colleague who had left the ministry because of burnout, church conflict, or moral failure.

91% have experienced some form of burnout in ministry and 18% say they are "fried to a crisp right now."

70% says they have a lower self-esteem now than when they entered ministry.

70% constantly fight depression.

50% feel so discouraged that they would leave their ministry if they could, but can't find another job.

80% believe their pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families and 33% said it was an *outright hazard*.

80% of ministry spouses feel left out and unappreciated in their church.

77% feel they do not have a good marriage.

41% display anger problems in marriage (reported by the spouse).

38% are divorced or divorcing.

50% admit to using pornography and 37% report inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.

70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.

50% do not meet regularly with an accountability person or group.

72% *only study the Bible when preparing for sermons or lessons.* (Emphasis mine)

21% spend less than 15 minutes a day in prayer – the average is 39 minutes per day. 16% are "very satisfied" with their prayer life, 47% are "somewhat satisfied", and 37% are either "somewhat dissatisfied" or "very dissatisfied" (spending more time in

quiet prayer or listening to God versus making requests was correlated with high satisfaction).

44% of pastors do not take a regular day off.

31% do not exercise at all, while 37% exercise at least three or four days a week as recommended.

90% say they have not received adequate training to meet the demands of ministry.

85% have never taken a Sabbatical.⁴

It only takes one glance down those statistics to see how dangerously high, or dangerously low in some areas, the numbers are. One could argue that several of these statistics do not apply as much to Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) pastors as they do to Reformed and Evangelical preachers. It can also be argued that these particular statistics describe a “worst-case scenario” for clergy health – an argument that is not without support, as statistics on pastoral health can indeed have a wide range from study to study and the exact percentage in any given church body can only be estimated. However, it cannot be denied that at least some of these certainly apply to conservative Lutheran pastors as well.

In a 1999 study of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, Dr. Alan Klaas and Ms. Cheryl Klaas found that 20% of LCMS pastors were “severely depressed, highly distressed, and experiencing advanced stages of burnout,” while another 20% were moderately depressed and approaching burnout.⁵

Depression and burnout can be prevalent among pastors, and with good reason – being a pastor is difficult, stressful work. Pastor Rowland Croucher, an Australian minister and director of *John Mark Ministries* that serve clergy and their families, supplies several reasons for why the public ministry can be so stressful:

The reasons may be as numerous and unique as there are pastors. However, recent research is unanimous in citing the following problem areas: the disparity between (somewhat idealistic) expectations and hard reality; lack of clearly defined boundaries—tasks are never done; workaholism (“bed-at-the-church” syndrome); the Peter Principle—feeling of incompetence in leading an army of volunteers; conflict in being a leader and servant at the same time (“line-support contamination”); intangibility (how do I know I’m getting somewhere?); confusion of role identity with self image—pastors derive too much self-esteem from what they do; time management problems (yet pastors have more “discretionary time” than any other professional group); paucity of “perks”; multiplicity

⁴ Gualtiere, *Pastor Stress Statistics*.

⁵ Alan Klaas and Cheryl Klaas, “Clergy Shortage Study,” November 11, 1999 [study on-line], available at <http://cslmedia.org/DMin/Pubs/Forms/clergy%20shortage.pdf>.

of roles; inability to produce “win-win” conflict resolutions; difficulty in managing interruptions; preoccupation with “playing it safe” to avoid enraging powerful parishioners; “administration overload”—too much energy expended in areas of low reward; loneliness—the pastor is less likely to have a close friend than any other person in the community.⁶

Due to the impact pastoral burnout already has and will continue to have on the Christian pastorate while on this side of heaven, this thesis will delve into the problem of ministerial burnout and explore the concept of energy management as part of a wholistic health plan. It will study what God’s Word has to say on the subject of energy management before focusing on developing a healthy devotional life as a way to manage spiritual energy. Finally, this thesis will answer objections that may be brought against healthy devotional habits by the sinful nature, as well as offering practical applications and encouragements for both pastors and lay people in their devotional lives. In short, this thesis will explore the benefits of developing healthy devotional habits as a possible remedy for the increasing problem of pastoral burnout.

A Brief Excursus on Work and Stress

Before moving on, it should be noted that work, and the stress that accompanies it, is not inherently wrong. From the beginning of time, God desired that man should work for the glory of God. In Genesis 2:15, Moses describes the purpose for which Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden, “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” Paul labels the specific work of the public ministry “a noble task” in 1 Timothy 3:1, “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” The Greek *kalon ergon* is literally rendered “good work.”⁷

However, as a result of mankind’s fall into sin, all work would bring with it a sense of frustration. Moses recorded God’s words to Adam in Genesis 3:17-19:

To Adam he said, “Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’

“Cursed is the ground because of you;

⁶ Rowland Croucher, *Stress and Burnout in Ministry* (Place and date of publishing unknown) [essay on-line]; available at http://orgcministerial.netadvent.org/site_date/768/assets/0012/8705/STRESSANDBURNOUTINMINISTRY.pdf.

⁷ Irwin J. Habeck, “The Ministry – A Good Work” [essay online], available from <http://www.wlssays.net/files/HabeckMinistry.pdf>, 1.

through painful toil you will eat food from it
all the days of your life.
It will produce thorns and thistles for you,
and you will eat the plants of the field.
By the sweat of your brow
you will eat your food
until you return to the ground,
since from it you were taken;
for dust you are
and to dust you will return.”

It should also be noted that human labor by itself does not produce success either in life as a whole, and especially not in the work of the pastoral ministry. It is only God who blesses the labor of his servants and brings it to fruition. In Psalm 90:17, Moses seeks the blessing of God on the work of his people, “May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands.”

Furthermore, God not only establishes and blesses the work of his people, but he has also established rest from that work. When establishing the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, God declares in 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, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath Day and made it holy.

Of course, the purpose of God establishing the weekly Sabbath was primarily spiritual – to serve as a shadow of the eternal rest the Messiah would bring for God’s people. However, it should not be ignored that God wished for his people to refrain from physical work on the Sabbath as well.

A portion of the Prayer of the Church from the Service of Word and Sacrament in *Christian Worship* uses the phrase, “Gracious God and Father, we praise you for the countless blessings, which we receive from your hand: ...the good of work and the gift of rest”⁸ to highlight that rest from labor is just as much a blessing from the Lord as the labor itself. Reformed pastor Kevin DeYoung writes in his book *Crazy Busy*, “But according to the Bible, both work and rest can be good if they are done to the glory of God. The Bible commends hard work (Prov. 6:6-11; Matt. 25:14-30; 1 Thess. 2:9; 4:11-12; 2 Thess. 3:10) and it also extols the

⁸ *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993), 32.

virtues of rest (Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15; Ps. 127:2). Both have their place. The hard part is putting them in the right places.”⁹

This would be an apropos time in which to discuss stress, which accompanies work and manifests itself in two basic ways: eustress and distress. In a conference paper for the South Atlantic District of the WELS, Rodney Busch defines stress as “a syndrome caused by pressure. Pressure is a problem that demands a physical or mental adaptation on our part. Pressure is in the given situation to which the body is forced to respond – the response is the stress.”¹⁰ With this definition in mind, it is understood that stress is almost constantly present. For example, physical stress is present during exercise, and mental stress is present when making even a trivial decision.

However, not all stress is distress (negative stress), although most people generally associate the word stress with its negative connotation. Humans also regularly experience eustress (positive stress) such as the nervousness that accompanies a groom on his wedding day. In fact, Dr. Daniel Friedland, the keynote speaker of a 2013 symposium on stress for the Colorado Health Foundation, stated, “If you have high stress, you’re not going to perform very well, but if you’re bored, you’re not going to perform very well either.”¹¹ For optimum performance, human beings need the right amount of stress. Lloyd Rediger, director of the Office of Pastoral Services for the Wisconsin Conference of Churches, likens stress to rain:

Stress is deceptive in another way. In popular usage it is seen as a negative force, but stress is not all bad. It is something like rain. It can be valuable and nurturing. Stress is valuable in that it keeps us functioning and alert to action and danger. Just as too much rain can be devastating, so also too much stress can overwhelm our resources.¹²

Not only are there two varieties of stress, there are two factors regarding the intensity of stress. The intensity with which one experiences a situation or handles a task is the true culprit in stress-related issues, not the stress itself. Intensity can be either horizontal or vertical. Horizontal intensity is applied over a long period of time and to a variety of tasks and emotions. One

⁹ Kevin DeYoung, *Crazy Busy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishing, 2013), 92.

¹⁰ Rodney Busch, *Burnout: A Pastor’s Perspective* (presented to the South Atlantic District Pastor-Teacher Conference, Pompano Beach, FL, 1984) [essay online]; available at <http://www.wlssays.net/files/BuschBurnout.pdf>; 1.

¹¹ Daniel Friedland, transcript from his keynote presentation, The Colorado Health Foundation, Fall 2013, available at <http://coloradohealth.org/print.aspx?id=6438&url=http://coloradohealth.org/yellow.aspx?id=6438>.

¹² G. Lloyd Rediger, *Coping with Clergy Burnout* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1982), 19.

possible situation involving horizontal intensity may be earning an advanced degree while working full time. Vertical intensity is the intensity applied to one stress factor so that this one task or emotion is given large amounts of energy for a relatively brief time and repeated whenever this task or emotion is present. An example of vertical intensity could be an intense period of elevated busyness such as tax season for an accountant or, keeping in the realm of the clergy, the Lenten season.¹³

Stress affects different people in various ways, including pastors. In his senior thesis regarding the impact of physical exercise on the pastor and his ministry, Pastor Nathan Loersch stated, “Stress can have many adverse effects on pastors. And stress, if left unchecked, can take a wonderful pastor down a rough and tumble road that could lead to burnout, which could very well mean the end of that man’s pastoral ministry.”¹⁴

The phenomenon of clergy burnout has been described as “a widespread experience that the church is interested in addressing to support and retain its leaders.”¹⁵ Doctor Terry Swicegood, a Presbyterian minister, goes so far as to say, “The greatest crisis the institutional church faces at the beginning of the third millennium is [one] marked by clergy burnout, dropout, and kicked out.”¹⁶ These observations underscore the emerging importance of burnout.

This paper will define what burnout is, account for why pastors are particularly susceptible to burnout, explain a possible method to combat the effects of burnout, and offer a plan of action that will accentuate the importance of a sound spiritual connection with God for the overall health of the pastor. This paper does not seek to downplay any other methods of stress relief or different methods of managing the plethora of demands of the called worker such as exercise and nutrition, time management, sleep patterns, or incorporating time to relax both mentally and physically. For the sake of brevity, this paper will focus only on the specific benefits for combatting burnout brought about by a strong spiritual relationship with God through a healthy devotional life.

¹³ Rediger, 20-21.

¹⁴ Nathan Loersch, “The Impact of Regular Physical Exercise on the Pastor and His Ministry”, March 2015, [essay online], available at <http://www.wsessays.net/files/Loersch.com>.

¹⁵ Laura K Barnard and John F. Curry, “The Relationship of Clergy Burnout to Self-Compassion and Other Personality Dimensions,” *Pastoral Psychology* 61:149-163, 21 May 2011 [journal on-line]; available from <http://link.springer.com/journal/volumesAndIssues/11089>; accessed 12 October 2016; Internet.

¹⁶ Jackson W. Carroll, *God’s Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 159.

The Problem of Burnout

Perhaps a definition would be the most pertinent way to start this discussion on burnout. The term “burnout” itself is relatively new. Herbert J. Freudenberger, a New York psychoanalyst and leading writer in the field of burnout, is credited with coining the term in his 1974 book *Burnout: The Cost of High Achievement*. He defined burnout as “the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one’s devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results.”¹⁷ Duke University professor of psychology John F. Curry and graduate student Laura Barnard add to Freudenberger’s general definition in a study concerning the relationship between burnout and other personality dimensions, “Burnout refers to a decline in energy, motivation, and commitment and occurs when high expectations for achievements do not come to fruition despite devotion to a cause or way of life, especially in contexts of low pay and poor recognition for efforts.”¹⁸ There are other definitions that vary slightly, but perhaps it is best defined by former WELS pastor Rodney Busch, “Whatever it is called or contrasted with, however, it is generally agreed that burnout is physical and psychological exhaustion related to chronic, unrelieved pressures.”¹⁹

While the terminology is relatively new, the phenomenon of burnout has always existed in this sinful world but has only recently drawn the attention of psychologists. Just as “shell shock” from World War I was gradually researched and eventually grew into the field of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), so also burnout has been researched ever more thoroughly in an attempt not only to diagnose the condition, but to treat and prevent it. Rediger writes, “Burnout itself is not new, but identifying the syndrome and understanding the increasing stress of modern living shows us we need to give this condition some attention.”²⁰

Certain professions are more prone to burnout. Elizabeth Jackson-Jordan, assistant director for the Clinical Pastoral Education Program of the Carolinas Healthcare System, stated, “Burnout is a risk for persons in professions that are predominately other-focused due to the

¹⁷ Herbert J. Freudenberger, *Burnout: The Cost of High Achievement* (New York: Anchor/Doubleday, 1980), 41.

¹⁸ Barnard and Curry, 151.

¹⁹ Busch, 1.

²⁰ Rediger, 11.

difficulty with balancing self-care and the care of others and can impact the helper's ability to remain emotionally invested in his or her helping work."²¹ Clergy in particular are susceptible to burnout not only because they are in an other-focused vocation, but also because of the demands and stresses that generally accompany the pastoral ministry. Doctor David Olsen, director of the Samaritan Counseling Center in New York state, and Doctor William Grosch, director of a psychiatric clinic of Albany Medical College, describe the multifaceted challenges of ministerial work thus:

Clergy burnout is a concern of all religious denominations. Meeting the constant demands of visitation, pastoral counseling, administration, preaching, teaching, facilitating church growth, as well as being expected to be an expert in crisis intervention, leaves many clergy feeling inadequate, exhausted, frustrated, and frequently questioning their call to ministry.²²

Similarly, Rodney Busch states his reasoning why burnout may be especially dangerous to Christians in general and called workers in particular:

Christians to the degree that they are involved with other people are particularly susceptible to burnout. They expend great amounts of energy in helping others. This susceptibility becomes intensified for called workers. Our ministry focuses on giving and sharing rather than on receiving. So in an attempt to meet all the demands placed upon them, to rise to all the expectations, pastors become workaholics. They feel they have to attend every meeting; take part in every decision; and "make it all happen."²³

Paul Tripp, professor of pastoral life and care at Redeemer Seminary in Dallas and executive director of the Center for Pastoral Life and Care under the auspices of the Association of Biblical Counselors, goes even further in describing the uniqueness of the stress involved with the pastoral ministry, "Why do so many pastors report being overburdened and overstressed? ...Why is the ministry life of so many pastors shockingly short? Perhaps we have forgotten that pastoral ministry is war and that you will never live successfully in the pastorate if you live with a peacetime mentality."²⁴

²¹ Elizabeth Ann Jackson-Jordan, "Clergy Burnout and Resilience: A Review of Literature," *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 67, March 2013 [journal on-line]; available from <http://pcc.sagepub.com/>.

²² David C. Olsen and William N. Grosch, "Clergy Burnout: A Self Psychology and Systems Perspective," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 45, no. 3, Fall 1991, 297-304 [journal on-line]; available from <http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=099f19a7-732d-4e16-80b4-f0b65bf9f503%40sessionmgr4006&hid=4207>; Internet; accessed 28 September 2016.

²³ Busch, 1.

²⁴ Paul Tripp, *Dangerous Calling: Confronting the Unique Challenges of Pastor Ministry* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 97-98.

According to Rediger, burnout among clergy manifests itself in a variety of ways – physical, emotional, and spiritual. Physically, there may be weight change, an exhausted appearance, sleep pattern disruption, low energy in general, motor difficulties such as lack of coordination, tremors or twitches, frequent headaches or gastric upset. Physical symptoms of burnout may also include hypochondriacal [sic] complaints or a loss of sexual vigor.²⁵

Emotional symptoms of burnout in pastors may be shown as well: apathy toward the ministry, a loss of creativity, paranoid obsessions, constant irritability or worrying, loss of humor or a development of “gallows humor.” Some pastors experiencing burnout may make sporadic efforts to act as if everything is normal. Loneliness and hopelessness may be present, as well as the inability to be playful or show interest in diversionary activities or excessive crying.²⁶

Spiritual symptoms of burnout may also be seen in pastors. There may be significant changes in moral behavior or drastic changes in theological statements, a decline in prayer life or devotional discipline, or one-track preaching and teaching. A pastor may become cynical or lose his joy in spiritual endeavors, perhaps even lose his faith in God, the church, and his people.²⁷

Now it should be noted that having some of the above characteristics is also common for a person who is tired, discouraged, or bored. Having only a few of these characteristics does not indicate a person or pastor who is burned out. Rather, it is the depth, the pervasiveness, and the combination of these characteristics that indicate burnout.

An important factor in answering why clergy are more susceptible to burnout than other professions is a psychological phenomenon called the Messiah complex or God complex. Because public ministers function as God’s representatives to the people, speaking in God’s place, the temptation to *put* oneself in God’s place is certainly present.²⁸ This is not to say that any WELS pastors would deliberately set themselves up on the throne of judgment. The Messiah complex manifests itself more subtly, usually by persuading the pastor to ignore the limitations he has as a human being. Lloyd Rediger speaks especially to this aspect of the Messiah complex:

We [pastors] pretend we can actually take over responsibility for another person’s life, marriage, family, faith, or for a congregation’s growth in grace. We pretend that our marriages, families, and financial affairs will not fail like anyone else’s when we don’t

²⁵ Rediger, 15.

²⁶ Rediger, 15-16.

²⁷ Rediger, 16.

²⁸ Olsen and Grosch, 299-300.

give them appropriate attention. We pretend that we can go on and on without proper rest, change of pace, exercise, nutrition, and spiritual nurture, and that there will be no consequences. We pretend that, because we are in this noble calling called ‘the ministry,’ we somehow become free of human limits (‘...you will be like God...’).²⁹

The ignorance of human limitation that accompanies the Messiah complex can occur with any pastor. This happens not always because of a negative issue, but because most pastors enter the ministry with the high aim of leading their congregations to compassionate ministry, committed evangelism, and holy living to the best of their ability. As they seek to accomplish this, they simply get caught up and forget that these aims are brought to fruition not by their power but by God as Zechariah 4:6 declares, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” Pastor Emeritus Daniel Deutschlander addresses the Messiah complex in *The Theology of the Cross*:

The central and most compelling temptation [to put ourselves in God’s place] is that which is common to us all when we are young. We focus way too much on self. The passion of youth, including a passion for good and noble things, is often, whether consciously or unconsciously, *self* centered (sic), rather than *Christ* centered. And so:

- If *I* don’t get this mission to grow, everybody will blame *me* when it fails or closes.
- If *I* were a better preacher, people would listen and come; *I* must be doing something wrong or *I* would be more successful. How come they don’t like me?
- Maybe it will work if *I* tell more funny stories in the sermon; maybe then they will like *me* and listen to *me*; perhaps less about repentance and more about – well, about anything else will work.
- Maybe if *I* am not so strict in doctrine and practice, maybe if *I* give a little here and a little there, *I* will grow this church faster; we can get around to the “tough” stuff later when they are more mature and like *me* well enough to listen to it.
- Yes, maybe if *I* don’t ruffle too many feathers, the officials of the district and the synod will see what a fine pastor *I* am, and *I* will finally get a call to a place that will really appreciate *me*.

Oh, how clever the devil is! As he plants these weeds in the pastor’s soul, he throws dust in his eyes, so that our young curate still imagines that his heart is pure and his goals are noble. What, however, is the reality? ...He is forgetting that Jesus did not call him to be successful or popular, but to be faithful – consider the examples of John the Baptist, or all the prophets, or St. Paul.

To put it another way, he is forgetting that there is only one means of grace – the gospel in Word and sacraments – and there is only one Savior of the world. The pastor is not the means of grace; he is the trumpet, not the tune. It is the sound of the gospel that converts and preserves faith. As important as the trumpet is, it is the tune of the gospel

²⁹ Rediger, 29.

that accomplishes everything. He is not a second messiah either, as though it were his responsibility to save the world by his efforts, his eloquence, his personality, his charisma.³⁰

Thus far in this paper, statistics and professional research as well as pastoral observations have portrayed burnout as an epidemic that is ravaging the pastorate of many denominations. However, research done by Jackson Carroll, author of *God's Potters*, indicates that there are two sides at play in the discussion of burnout's extent among ministers of the gospel:

The data suggests that the problems [of burnout] are not as widespread or bleak as some reports maintain. Even so, they should not be ignored, because they can have a significant negative impact on clergy, their congregation, and their families. Dispirited, drained clergy foster dispirited congregations, whose energy for ministry and mission is likewise drained. And the reciprocal is also true: dispirited and contentious congregations increase the likelihood that a pastor's commitment and satisfaction with his or her work will flag. Thankfully, these do not seem to be the situations in which a majority of clergy find themselves. Most would agree with John Newton, who famously said that while being a pastor can be at times 'the worst of all jobs,' it is also 'the best of all callings.'

While burnout may not be as widespread as previously thought by some studies, it is nonetheless an issue that should be on the minds of pastors as they are not immune to its effects. Burnout is a real danger to both pastor and flock, and can be devastating to a congregation or church body if taken too lightly. Just as burnout stems from a complex combination of factors, it also affects the pastor's whole being in a complex manner. For this reason, symptoms of burnout are often grouped into three separate categories: physical, mental or emotional, and spiritual. To only concentrate on one of these categories is to ignore the other two. All three must be taken into account for a positive result to become more attainable. Therefore, in the matter of possibly healing and preventing burnout, a more wholistic approach must be taken. Before this paper delves into the spiritual aspect of pastoral care, it will first provide an explanation as to how energy management is an integral part of wholistic care for the pastor.

Introducing the Concept of Energy Management

Time management is a well-known entity to all different professions and companies, and rightfully so. Time is a resource and blessing from the Creator, and he desires that it be used

³⁰ Daniel M. Deutschlander, *The Theology of the Cross* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2008), 202-203.

faithfully to his glory. For this reason first year students at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary are instructed within the opening weeks of the school year concerning the basic principles of time management. Throughout their years at the Seminary, time management is constantly emphasized as a primary method in completing different projects and assignments well and in a timely manner.

Those who have been trained at the Seminary know that this is sometimes an incredibly difficult task. This author cannot speak authoritatively about the pastoral ministry, but it would seem that life as a pastor can seem impossibly busy as appointments and visits, teaching and counseling, synodical or conference committee work, and weekly worship routinely fill up the pastor's calendar. Add to that family and social time, and it seems as though there will never be enough hours in the day to fulfill all these duties.

Coupled with the busyness of ministry is the fact that American society is somewhat addicted to busyness. Kevin DeYoung writes in *Crazy Busy*, "Americans lead the industrialized world in annual work hours. Our annual hours have increased from 1,716 for the average worker in 1967 to 1,878 hours in the year 2000."³¹ Time is a fixed commodity – twenty-four hours in a day; seven days in a week – and only so much can be done in a certain time. In their book *The Power of Full Engagement*, Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, describe life in modern America as such:

We walk around with day planners and to-do lists, Palm Pilots and BlackBerries, instant pagers and pop-up reminders on our computers – all designed to help us manage our time better. We take pride in our ability to multitask, and we wear our willingness to put in long hours as a badge of honor. The term *24/7* describes a world in which work never ends. We use words like *obsessed*, *crazed* and *overwhelmed* not to describe insanity, but instead to characterize our everyday lives. Feeling forever starved for time, we assume that we have no choice but to cram as much as possible into every day. But managing time efficiently is no guarantee that we will bring sufficient energy to whatever we are doing.³²

Since the world is a place of limited time, Loehr and Schwartz began to study energy management as a way to boost productivity – the highest state of which is something they call "full engagement." They began their career in the field of energy management by first working with professional athletes, but soon moved on to other high performance professions, and today

³¹ DeYoung, 23.

³² Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 3-4.

their work is primarily in business – executives and entrepreneurs, yes, but most recently with teachers and clergy.³³

After years of evaluating measurable results in both athletes and office workers, they have reached several thought-provoking conclusions, the most pertinent of which is that the performance demands most people face in their everyday work environments dwarf those of any professional athletes they have worked with. This is not as anomalous as it seems though. Those in the work force are expected to be at peak performance for eight to ten hours a day, forty-eight to fifty weeks a year, over the course of a forty to fifty year career. Athletes on the other hand train for ninety percent of the time in order to perform at their peak for the other ten percent. Most athletes enjoy a four to five month off-season, and have a career span of five to seven years. Pastors of course fall into the first group. In their book, Loehr and Schwartz answer the question, “How am I supposed to fulfill my duties to the best of my abilities for such an extended period of time?” Their answer is simple in nature, yet complex in reality: manage your energy effectively.³⁴

Effective energy management or full engagement is based on four principles, outlined below. Take note especially of principles one and four since these will have the most to do with the purposes of this paper.

1. Full engagement requires drawing on the four separate but related sources of energy: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.
2. Because energy capacity diminishes both with overuse and with underuse, we must balance energy expenditure with intermittent energy renewal.
3. To build capacity, we must push beyond our normal limits, training in the same systematic way that elite athletes do.
4. Positive energy rituals – highly specific routines for managing energy – are the key to full engagement and sustained high performance.³⁵

The concept of separate but related sources of human energy may seem foreign, but it has been supported by others such as William Hulme, a professor of Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counseling at Luther Northwestern Seminary, who writes concerning the affect of stress on the entire human being: “The interrelationship within the human being of body, mind, and spirit characterizes this distinctly human form of stress. The body and mind can become the dumping

³³ Loehr and Schwartz, 8.

³⁴ Loehr and Schwartz, 8-9.

³⁵ Loehr and Schwartz, 9,11,13,14.

ground for the spirit's frustrations. The blocking of our personal needs undermines our mental and physical health."³⁶ One must take Hulme's wholistic approach to pastoral health with a grain of salt, however. His definition of wholistic incorporates both theological principles and scientific findings, and while he states "religion forms the theological base from which the findings of science can be interpreted,"³⁷ it appears that some of the conclusions Hulme draws allow the social sciences to rule over Scriptures. However, for the most part his wholistic approach aligns well with Scripture.

Concerning wholistic care for those who are still training for public ministry as well as those already in the field, research done at Trinity Lutheran Seminary suggests that those who attempt to deal with stress by intervening in only one of the dimensions of life, such as physical, rarely find a long term solution to the problem.³⁸ In fact, the rate of relapse into old ways and unhealthy habits is remarkably high when it comes to stress management – sixty to eighty percent.³⁹ The conclusions drawn from this research state:

While additional research is needed to confirm our impressions, we believe a *more* appropriate response to stress requires attention to *all* the dimensions of our humanness: physical, mental, emotional, and social. . . . However, a truly *adequate* response to a stressful pace in learning and life requires that we attend not only to *all* the dimensions of

³⁶ William E. Hulme, *Managing Stress in Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1985), 27.

³⁷ Hulme, 134.

³⁸ In the winter of 1980-81, students at Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, were reporting, as they had in the past, high levels of subjective stress. As part of its self-study for an Association of Theological Schools accreditation visit, the seminary authorized a "Pace Study" to inquire into seminarian stress and its implications. The research design was based on a (w)holistic [sic] model which had proved useful in exploring other critical life situations.

Conceptualizing the categories of the American Medical Association in this way, with the interdependent "L" served to remind the researchers that all the dimensions of humanness are interrelated. Therefore, a multidimensional protocol to measure stress was needed. Christian anthropology, however, required an additional step. From a religious perspective, stress raises issues that have to do with theological as well as personal integration. In the (w)holistic model, the interdependent "L" stands not only for the interrelation of the dimensions, but also their integration. "L" is, of course, the middle letter of the word "value", but Judeo-Christians also recognize that *El* is a Hebrew name for God, as in Beth El, the house of God, or Isra El, the people of God. For believer, then, the model is a mnemonic for reflection on the theological implications of significant life experiences, including stress, and the "God-question" implicit in the problem of pace.

These (w)holistic assumptions of interrelatedness and integration led to the development of a six page questionnaire, based on the model, and the utilization of four objective tests. The questionnaire and tests were administered to all students on campus on the day designated. The original study of students was supplemented by mailing the Pace materials to all the previous year's graduates, and by in-depth personal interviewing of a random sample of Trinity graduates and spouses over the previous three years. All responses were anonymous, and the confidentiality of the interviews persons was protected.

³⁹ Reported at a stress seminar at the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association (Washington, D.C., August, 1982).

our humanness, but also to the question of our identity in Christ, our personal integration as a child of God, and our relationship integration as Christ's people, the church.⁴⁰

Another proponent of wholistic self-care especially for pastors is Roy Oswald, a former pastor in the Lutheran Church of America and at the time of this book a senior consultant at the Alban Institute based in North Carolina. In his book *Clergy Self-Care* he makes the claim that modern medicine focuses too much on the individual systems in the body (specifically physical and mental) which leads to a lack of knowledge about the total health of an individual. Because of this, much is known about illness but very little is known about *preventing* illness. He claims that individuals need to take responsibility for their overall health, which includes staying healthy physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually.⁴¹

Lloyd Rediger also supports a more complex approach to burnout, since he too recognizes that burnout itself affects the entire being:

The pattern of experiences and characteristics we are calling burnout involves the body, mind, and spirit – the total person. (I do not intend body, mind, and spirit to be technical categories here. I simply use them to indicate the most commonly understood categories of personhood.) When a person is burned out, she or he is incapable of functioning at more than a minimal level in any of these three categories.

The need for a wholistic methodology for burnout treatment and prevention is not only seen by professionals studying clergy, but also by certain clergy themselves. In 2009, an analysis of interviews with eighty-eight United Methodist ministers indicated that clergy wellness is still a crisis that can be improved “only by a comprehensive effort to address the variety of unique conditions that affect the physical, mental, and spiritual health of clergy.”⁴²

All of these wholistic approaches to health seek to fulfill the different needs of the human being. These approaches also come as a reaction to overly simplistic treatment of burnout in the past. Olsen and Grosch write, “Too often burnout is approached simplistically with seminars on better time management, or advice on relaxing more, or the need for hobbies. While these

⁴⁰ Gary L. Harbaugh and Evan Rogers, “Pastoral Burnout: A View from the Seminary” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 38, no. 2, June 1984, 99-106 [journal on-line].

⁴¹ Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* (Durham, NC: Alban Institute, 1991), 15,16.

⁴² Jackson-Jordan, 1.

suggestions may be helpful, they fail to deal with the underlying issues that produce burnout, which are far more complex.”⁴³

Many of those listed above who support a wholistic approach to burnout prevention include “spiritual” as a category (so to speak) of the human being that requires attention in order to heal burnout. However, the definition of “spiritual” is either defined in a way that is incompatible with Scripture, or it is not defined and left for the reader to plug in their own definition. For example, Loehr and Schwartz define “spiritual” in a completely non-religious sense:

Fundamentally, spiritual energy is a unique force for action in all dimensions of our lives. It is the most powerful source of our motivation, perseverance and direction. We define “spiritual” not in the religious sense, but rather in more simple and elemental terms: the connection to a deeply held set of values and to a purpose beyond our self-interest. At the practical level, anything that ignites the human spirit serves to drive full engagement and to maximize performance in whatever mission we are on. The key muscle that fuels spiritual energy is character – the courage and conviction to live by our values, even when doing so requires personal sacrifice and hardship.⁴⁴

With various definitions of similar natures inundating literature that seeks to help treat and prevent burnout, the pastor must read critically and evaluate the effect a non-Scriptural definition of “spiritual” has on the outcome of such treatment and prevention. In fact, since so much of the secular and religious literature concerning burnout is based more on biological and social science, this thesis will now intentionally study what God’s Word says about stress, burnout, and energy management.

What Does Scripture Say Concerning Energy Management?

God’s Word depicts two sides of energy management – negative and positive. On the negative side, Scripture portrays God’s people manifesting the external signs of burnout, particularly those in roles of leadership such as Moses and Paul. On the positive side, God not only sets an example of how to prevent spiritual dryness, but he motivates Christians through the gospel message to actively deepen their connection with him through prayer and meditation. This

⁴³ Olsen and Grosch, 297.

⁴⁴ Loehr and Schwartz, 110.

portion of the paper will first describe various negative experiences people on the pages of Scripture have had with burnout before considering the positive example God provides.

Moses, Israel's leader during the Exodus, has at least two instances during his ministry wherein he demonstrates signs of possible burnout. In Exodus 18, Moses' father-in-law Jethro visits him, and after seeing the amount of time and energy Moses dedicated to settling disputes between various Israelites, Jethro has these words to say: "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone" (Ex 18:17,18).

What must be understood here is this: scripturally speaking, there is nothing wrong with Moses' actions here. Judging cases was an obligation of the leaders in Ancient Near East culture and can be seen in the Egyptian court system that allowed Moses and Aaron to approach Pharaoh directly. Also, because the people were coming "to [Moses] to seek God's will" (Ex 18:15), Moses likely took this burden upon himself because as prophet he was the primary conduit to inform the people of God's will in their disputes. What was troubling to Jethro was the frustration felt by those whose cases could not be heard with the time available, coupled with Moses' exhaustion from throwing too much of himself into this work. So Jethro advises forming a hierarchical judicial system so that "you [Moses] will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied" (Ex 18:23). Jethro saw that Moses was expending too much energy in one area of his responsibilities and sought to help correct the imbalance.⁴⁵

Moses again in Numbers shows how the stress of leading the stiff-necked and ever-grumbling nation of Israel took its toll on him. After the people's complaints over the manna had reached its threshold, the Lord was angry and Moses was troubled (literally "in the eyes of Moses [the people's actions were] evil") to the point that in Numbers 11:12,14 he speaks to God:

Why have you brought this trouble on your servant? What have I done to displease you that you put the burden of all these people on me? I cannot carry all these people by myself; the burden is too heavy for me. If this is how you are going to treat me, put me to death right now – if I have found favor in your eyes – and do not let me face my own ruin.

Moses is incensed at the people for making his role as a leader an unbearable one, and also at God for assigning him this overwhelming burden of leadership. One commentator points out,

⁴⁵ Douglas K. Stuart, *The New American Commentary: Exodus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 414-419.

“At this point in his leadership ministry, Moses faced a crisis of faith and dependency, preferring death as a favor from God rather than continue to have the responsibility of directing such a rebellious rabble.”⁴⁶

It may be going too far to say that Moses here is depicting clear signs of burnout, as this paper has defined it. However, this account certainly shows the high degree of stress placed upon Moses as a minister and the effect that stress had even on someone considered one of the greatest leaders of God’s people. But Moses is not unique in showing signs of burnout. Job and Jeremiah join Moses in this group of biblical figures who struggle with the syndrome (granted, Job is not a called worker). There is another important figure in this group. D.G. Kehl wrote an article in *Christianity Today* that explains how Elijah showed signs of burnout:

The account in I Kings 19 reveals that Elijah manifested some of the distinct characteristics of burnout. First, in traveling a day’s journey into the wilderness, he shows distancing, detachment. Of course, we can’t fault the prophet for getting out of Jezreel, because Jezebel had vowed to kill him within 24 hours. But note that he leaves his servant behind in Beersheba (v.3). Obviously he wishes to get away not only from the wicked queen but from everyone else as well. This effort to get away from people is an unmistakable sign of burnout.

As the prophet sits under the broom tree asking to die, he manifests some of the advanced stages of burnout: depression and despair. His request minces no words: “I’ve had enough, Lord, take my life. I am no better off than my ancestors.” (that is, “I might as well be dead.”) (v.4) Here we see the despondency that often follows prolonged intensity. Elijah proves a classic example of what Freudenberger says: It’s the letdown that comes in between crises or directly after “mission accomplished.” Frequently, following a triumph, high achievers suffer periods of deep melancholia somewhat akin to the postpartum depression some women experience after giving birth. The feelings are remarkably similar: sadness, separation, sluggishness and above all emptiness. The burned-out person questions the value of activities and friendship... even of life itself ... The man who displayed such great energy in outrunning Ahab’s chariot (sense of omnipotence) now is completely exhausted, not just physically, but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. He stretches out and sleeps under a broom tree, awakens just long enough to eat food prepared by an angel, and sleeps again.

.... In his subsequent dialogue with Jehovah at Mount Horeb, Elijah manifests several more typical characteristics of burnout. He reminds God that he has been very zealous in the Lord’s service, showing a sense of bitterness at the level of appreciation the people are showing. Further, he reveals the burnout’s feeling of indispensability—that he alone is serving God: “I, even I only, am left.” These feelings of indispensability and lack of appreciation often lead to another characteristic of burnout: feelings of being mistreated, even of paranoia. Elijah said to God, “They seek my life to take it away.” Who are “they?” He doesn’t say “she” meaning Jezebel. The antecedent appears earlier in

⁴⁶ R. Dennis Cole, *The New American Commentary: Numbers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 187,188.

verse 10: the children of Israel who had forsaken God. But there is no evidence that Elijah was in danger from the Israelites, especially now that the three and one half year drought was broken.⁴⁷

While the Bible does not shy away from describing the inherent struggles that come along with ministry, stemming both from the sinful called worker and the sinners he is called to serve, it also depicts positive ministerial practices in the area of spiritual energy management. First and foremost, WELS pastors look to the example of Jesus for guidance and motivation in living Christians lives and striving to fulfill the high calling in which they serve. Throughout the gospels, Jesus is seen to practice self-care in all three categories of physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual.

In taking care of his physical and emotional needs, it can be seen across the gospels that Jesus would often withdraw from the large crowds that followed him, presumably in some cases to rest and recharge with his close group of disciples. After teaching a large crowd from a boat for a good part of the day, Mark 5:35-38 reports:

That day when evening came, he [Jesus] said to his disciples, “Let us go over to the other side.” Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him. A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, “Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?”

The account of Jesus calming the storm goes on, and the main point of the story is Jesus’ power over nature as true God. But Jesus’ humanity cannot be overlooked in this account either. A long day of instructing the people had taken its toll on him, and he decided to use the trip across the Sea of Galilee for a physical and mental respite. Jesus chose to humble himself during his earthly ministry and set aside the divine attributes given to his human nature, so that he too felt the limitations that are natural to the human body. In other accounts, Jesus is unafraid to retreat to a quiet place with his disciples for physical and emotional rest. Before feeding the five thousand, Luke 9:10 records that “[Jesus] took [his disciples] with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida.” While this particular effort to find rest was thwarted by the crowds who were waiting for Jesus at Bethsaida, Jesus’ attempt still shows the wisdom in attempting to find temporary retreat from the rigors of ministerial work.

⁴⁷ D.G. Kehl, “Burnout: The Risk of Reaching Too High,” *Christianity Today*, v. 2s:20, 1981, 26.

More importantly, the gospels show in multiple accounts how seriously Jesus took his spiritual health – particularly his prayer life. Time and time again in the gospels Jesus not only withdraws from the crowd to a quiet place, but he uses his time to be in conversation with his Father. Luke records two instances of this. In chapter five he wrote, “Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed” (Lk 5:15,16). Again in chapter six Luke says, “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God” (Lk 6:12). Matthew registers another account of Jesus’ prayer life in chapter fourteen of his Gospel, “Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray” (Mt 14:22,23).

The importance Jesus placed on his own health is evident in these passages, although it is not the sole intent of the gospels to prove this. As Oswald says:

Jesus Christ is an excellent example of how to do ministry while taking care of oneself. Jesus didn’t allow his caring to completely overextend him so that he had no energy for primary things. He offered himself as a sacrifice for the sake of a broken world, yet in spite of the magnitude of his mission, he did not allow himself to get so strung out that he lost his center and his relationship with God. It was not the intent of the Gospel writers to show us how well Jesus took care of himself. Yet just look at some of the self-care passages that emerge in the Gospel narratives.⁴⁸

This portion of the paper is not meant to beat the reader down if his own thoughts about ministry look and sound more like the first examples of biblical burnout, nor to dishearten him if his prayer life and devotional practices do not meet the standard of Christ’s own life. The latter is of course impossible as even the most faithful pastors, and indeed every faithful Christian, have “sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Ro 3:23). However, those same pastors and teachers are also “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Ro 3:24). Sin absolutely taints every aspect of life and ministry, and yet God gave his perfect Son to forgive those shortcomings in ministry, and that same Son serves as the perfect example for called workers to follow. Although Christ set an example in all aspects of life that could be profitably examined in other studies, this paper will now focus on the aspect of spiritual energy

⁴⁸ Oswald, 17.

renewal through the Word of God as one key part of many when considering wholistic health for ministers of the gospel.

Focusing on Spiritual Renewal Through Devotional Study of the Word

As ministers of the gospel, it is only natural that WELS pastors spend much of their time connected to the gospel. Sermon and Bible class preparation, counseling sessions, hospital and member visitations, opening devotions for various committee meetings – all these serve as opportunities for the pastor to delve into God’s Word in order to share its message of law and gospel with those who need to hear it. Ironically, in his quest to serve his people faithfully with God’s Word, the pastor may find that he is forgetting to serve himself with the Word. Diane Chandler, a faculty member with the School of Divinity at Regent University found “spiritual dryness as the primary predictor of emotional exhaustion, the stress dimension of burnout.”⁴⁹ As a result of the specialized issues pastors face, their personal lives may become critically imbalanced and their spiritual lives ironically dry. Lutheran pastor Roy Oswald speaks to this personally:

Pastors face unique problems, I believe, in keeping fresh spiritually. For one thing, the spiritual disciplines we learned as children and young adults are now the tools of our trade. For me, scripture, prayers, and worship became overfamiliar and lost much of their mystery. It was difficult to read the Bible devotionally when I knew I had to prepare a sermon from those texts. I felt so much pressure to come up with something meaningful to say that I read the Bible as though I were on a scavenger hunt! Everything I read was directed towards others’ spiritual needs and not my own.⁵⁰

Successfully combatting this spiritual dryness is what the portion of this paper hopes to accomplish, as managing spiritual energy is an absolutely pivotal point in a pastor’s overall health. This does not mean that the benefits of physical exercise and mental or emotional relaxation should be ignored. Nor does this mean that spiritual care given by fellow pastors or professional Christian counselors should not be sought in many scenarios. Rather, this portion of the paper will focus on the pastor’s individual devotional and prayer life. This line of thought stems directly from Paul’s words to his young trainee, when he writes in 1 Timothy 4:8, “For

⁴⁹ Diane J. Chandler, “Pastoral Burnout and the Impact of Personal Spiritual Renewal, Rest-taking, and Support Systems Practices,” *Pastoral Psychology* 58, December 2009, 273-287 [journal on-line].

⁵⁰ Oswald, 93.

physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”

Paul maintains that physical training – the upkeep of the body God grants to all people as a blessing – is indeed useful. However, he uses a lesser-to-greater comparison to highlight the importance of godliness, or spiritual training. Philip Towner, Dean of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship of the American Bible Society, comments on this verse, “In place of physical exercise (whether ascetic rigor is meant or not), exercise in ‘godliness,’ that wholistic life encompassing faith and visible behavior, is set out as the first priority ([1 Ti] 2:2; 4:7). Its superiority stems from its far-reaching value (“for all things”), in contrast to the limited value of the former.”⁵¹ New Testament scholar William Hendriksen adds similar thoughts regarding the everlasting benefits spiritual training gives:

It is not at all surprising that the apostle now draws a comparison between the value of *physical training* and *training for godly living*. He states that the former is *of some benefit*. It is useful for something. The latter, however, is of benefit *in every way*. It is useful for all things. He is by no means belittling the value of physical exercise. He is saying two things: (a) that the boon which bodily training bestows, however great it may be, is definitely inferior to the reward which the godly life promises. The former at best bestows health, vigor, beauty of physical form. These things are wonderful and to be appreciated. But the latter bestows life everlasting! (b) that the sphere in which bodily training is of benefit is far more restricted than that in which godly living confers its reward. The former concerns the here and now. The latter concerns the here and now but also reaches far beyond it.⁵²

Besides the eternal benefits of faith given only through God’s gospel in Word and sacraments, having a deep relationship with God through the study of his Word is of utmost importance in the ministry of a pastor. Paul Tripp describes the profound effect faith has on the pastoral ministry, “It is here again that we are faced with the fact that our ministries are not shaped just by knowledge, experience, and skill but by the true condition of our hearts. Excellence in ministry flows from a heart that is in holy, reverential, life-rearranging, motivation-capturing awe of the Lord of glory.”⁵³

If a pastor is to carry out his calling to feed the Savior’s flock, it is imperative that he feed himself as well. Speaking more practically, how can a pastor proclaim the truths of the gospel

⁵¹ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 306-307.

⁵² William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957), 151.

⁵³ Tripp, 142.

effectively if he has not felt those truths resonate deeply within his own heart? Concerning this point, Tripp says, “First, we must be committed to preaching the gospel to ourselves, reminding ourselves of our ongoing need to be rescued from us and the low standards to which sin attracts us.”⁵⁴

This may seem too simplistic – that ministers of the gospel must be *in* the gospel – and yet the research and statistics previously spoken to in this paper show that a great number of pastors across various denominations are involved in the Word professionally, but are not personally allowing Scripture to renew them spiritually. This is not to say that professional study of God’s Word does not strengthen faith or is inferior to personal study. Rather, a personal devotional life is meant to be a safeguard for pastors when their professional life is hurried or harried.

Bible believing pastors strive to trust Jesus’ words in Matthew 4:4, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Yet more often than not they may find the every day tasks and pressures of ministry crowding out devotional time. Over time, this spiritual dryness may cause many pastors to begin to feel the singe of burnout. Paul Tripp observes that when the demands of ministry threaten to spiritually dry out a pastor, he seeks refuge somewhere. His words highlight the importance of seeking refuge in the Lord and in his Word:

In the middle of trouble, when you are in the heat of the battle, you will run somewhere for refuge. You will run somewhere for rest, comfort, peace, encouragement, wisdom, healing, and strength. You and I must learn, in life and in ministry, to make the Lord our refuge.

Perhaps in trouble you run to other people, hoping that they can be your personal messiah. Perhaps you run to entertainment, hoping to numb your troubles away. Maybe you run to a substance, trying your best to turn off the pain. Maybe you are tempted to run to food or sex, fighting pain with pleasure. Since none of these things can provide the refuge that you seek, putting your hope there tends only to add disappointment to the trouble you’re already experiencing.

God really is your refuge and strength. Only he rules every location where your trouble exists. Only he controls all the relationships in which disappointment will rear its head. Only he has the power to rescue and deliver you. Only he has the grace you need to face what you are facing. Only he holds the wisdom that, in trouble, you so desperately need. Only he is in, with, and for you at all times. He is the refuge of refuges.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Tripp, 143.

⁵⁵ Tripp, 109.

There appears to be a massive paradox that exists in a majority of pastoral ministries. In order to best serve their people, pastors need to be firmly rooted in the truths of God's Word. But in their zeal to serve others, pastors often end up depriving themselves of the spiritual life they desperately need to remain effective ministers of the gospel and avoid burnout. The answer to this paradox is to develop personal devotional habits that allow ample opportunity for God's powerful Word to nourish and equip the pastor in his calling to nourish and equip others.

Developing devotional habits is not always an easy task. But failure to develop devotional habits can be not only detrimental to the spiritual health of a pastor, but it can be spiritually deadly. However, pastors and indeed all Christians, being motivated by God's love for them, seek to cultivate a deep spiritual bond with God as part of their life of sanctification. In the second essay of a five part series *Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage*, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary professor Richard Gurgel writes:

What is the worst curse God can send our way in this life? Isn't it what is mentioned in Amos 8:11?

“The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign LORD,
“when I will send a famine through the land –
not a famine of food or a thirst for water,
but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD.”

There is nothing more awful in this world than when God goes silent. If it is true that “man does not live by bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD” (Deuteronomy 8:3), then the reverse is also true. Where the judgment of Amos 8 falls, real life has ceased even if breathing continues. Where God ceases to speak, there is no longer any source of spiritual life, and we would become, spiritually, precisely what Israel became when this judgment fell: a valley of very dry bones (Ezekiel 37).

Conversely, beyond the gift of his incarnate Son, what is the greatest blessing that God can send our way in this life? Is it not what is mentioned in Romans 10:8? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart,’ that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming.” Since “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him” we could never fully grasp the glory of God's grace if he had not “revealed it to us by his Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:9). God has not consigned us to a deafening silence from his lips that would spell our disaster as fallen creatures. Instead he has pulled back the veil in his self-revelation and has invited us to seek his saving face (Psalm 27:8).⁵⁶

That God has given Christians his Word is an amazing blessing. That he has entrusted pastors with proclaiming that message to others is even more amazing. As fragile jars of clay,

⁵⁶ Richard Gurgel, “Part 2: Growing in the Gift of Meditating on the Word”, *Reclaiming Our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage*, December 2012, 2-3.

pastors need to seek the strength and comfort found only in the saving gospel. But even as pastors diligently strive to be connected to God through devotional studies, various obstacles from life and from the sinful nature strive to pull him away from those studies. In order to better understand these obstacles, this thesis will now present a brief sample of these obstacles and how they can perhaps be overcome.

Answering Objections to Developing a Consistent Devotional Life

There appear to be two main concerns voiced by those who desire to improve their devotional habits. The first of these chief obstacles is a perceived lack of time with which to devotionally study God's Word. In a survey conducted by Richard Gurgel in the fall of 2012, 150 called workers responded that a lack of time was the primary obstacle in the way of their devotional life. This statement was qualified by some, saying it was difficult to be consistent in setting aside time each day, or that their time was often interrupted by different distractions such as other tasks to be done. While this may be especially true of pastors, many lay people could likely state a similar issue. Full calendars and a wide variety of responsibilities and obligations are not uncommon, especially in a society that as a whole is busier than it has ever been.

In order to find the best answer to this objection, it is necessary to change views on what exactly devotional study of the Word is. The sinful and selfish human nature would define the Christian's devotional life as something done for God. In this case, devotions quickly become another task on the Christian's lengthy list of tasks that must be done. Furthermore, since a devotional life appears to be the same as other responsibilities, it becomes easier to justify pushing it down the list as other tasks, tasks also given by God according to an individual's vocation, seem more important.

In response to this human understanding of regular devotional study, Gurgel advocates a drastic change in view:

But all our arguments run out of breath if time in the Word is not primarily about *our "doing" for God* but is preeminently about *his doing for us*. Everything changes if what happens in that time in the Word is that the vital, life-giving breath of the Spirit is being breathed into us. What if this time in the Word is, at its heart, the time God serves us so that we can remember who we are in our primary calling as [a] child of God and so that we have the strength and wisdom for how to serve him by serving others in all the other callings he has given us? Then suddenly this item sitting on our "to do" list (which,

actually, is on God's "to do" list!) rises up above anything and everything found on our list. God even knows, in his wisdom and might, how to dispense with ten (or a thousand) things on our "to do" list while we pause for him to fulfill the #1 task on his daily to do list: to feed our souls with his grace. When items on our "to do" list for God are rightly compared with this item on God's "to do" list for us, is the comparison even close?⁵⁷

Logically speaking, this understanding does not make sense. How could doing something with invisible outward results, like studying God's Word, trump something with tangible results, like preparing a bulletin for worship? This is the fallacy of human logic. Just because an action does not have visible results does not negate its usefulness and benefits. When this biblical view of devotion and time in the Word is adopted, the other obligations of the Christian still matter but they are put into proper perspective. Pastors must strive to adopt this mindset of setting devotional time aside as a priority that, while not always logical, is unmatched in its importance for their spiritually health.

The second objection to developing consistent devotional habits, which unlike the first is specific to called workers, is that a devotional life is redundant, since most of the pastor's time is already spent in the Word. Contrary to that objection, even while working in the Word professionally, as in preparing a devotion or sermon, it is good for the pastor to apply its truths to himself first. After allowing the Law to cut his heart and the Gospel to bind his wounds, he can then better proclaim those truths to those whom he serves.

There is another argument to this point, brought on by the legalist that still lurks inside the sinner-saint's heart: time spent in the Word professionally does not qualify as the personal time that God requires of us. While this legalism concerning time in the Word must be avoided, there is a warning against constantly using the professional use of the Word in place of a personal use that pastors should take into account. To this point Gurgel states:

We all know in the press of the duties of the ministry, how easily our study of the Word shifts from a devotional mentality of being a consumer of the Word ("Speak, Lord, your servant is listening!") to a merely practical mentality of being a producer of spiritual words ("Lord, don't you know that Sunday is coming, and I need something to say?"). Because the means of grace are the tools of our trade by which we feed the hungry souls of others, we can very easily slip into becoming merely wholesalers of the Word. We can end up being merely distributors who parcel out to others what brings refreshment to their souls, but all the while our own souls are more and more anything but refreshed.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Gurgel, 4.

⁵⁸ The thoughts in this portion of the thesis up to this point, including the quotations, are based on Professor Richard Gurgel's second essay in his devotional workshop for seniors at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary entitled, *Reclaiming our Christ-Centered Lutheran Devotional Heritage*.

While the first objection can be answered by allowing God's words to change the Christian's view of the purpose of a devotional life, the second requires pastors to find a balance between using God's Word professionally and personally. At particularly busy times in life and in ministry, the temptation to cut out the personal time in favor of the professional will rear its head. In those times, it is wise to remember that what God says through his Word is of primary importance in the life of a Christian, and in the life of his called workers.

Thus far this paper has focused on the importance of God's Word as the refuge to which busy and burnout pastors need to run, as well as answering two common objections to developing a devotional life based on the Word. However, the discussion so far has been largely theoretical. In the next section, the author will offer practical suggestions for fostering a healthy devotional life, which in turn may help pastors avoid ministerial burnout.

Practical Applications and Encouragements

It is not the purpose of this section of this thesis to tell a pastor how he is to foster his own devotional life. In fact, to even attempt to do that would be a fool's errand due to the immense amount of variation not only from pastor to pastor and call to call, but also from the plethora of responsibilities that come with those different callings and different family situations. Furthermore, this author lacks both life experience and ministry experience pertaining to the matter of individual devotional habits to speak with such authority. Each man's daily and weekly schedule is going to differ greatly from even his closest pastoral neighbor and no strict or authoritarian set of rules is going to neatly fit into those different schedules perfectly. Rather, this portion of the thesis will present broad overarching principles that can be tailored and personalized to fit into an individual's personal schedule. And of course, the goal of all these principles is to help remove barriers that would get in the way of cultivating a personal relationship with the Savior through God's Word.

First and foremost, in order to spend time studying God's Word, one must find time to set aside. Days and weeks fill up quickly with both the expected and the unexpected, so finding time each and every day for personal study of the Word is imperative. It is wise to aim for the same time each day, at least when starting or expanding devotional practices, in order to solidify the daily routine as habit. Furthermore, it is highly advised that time for a daily devotion be

scheduled in the pastor's calendar. Whether this calendar is found on a desk, within a book, or on a screen, segmenting out a period of time is crucial. As the author's supervising pastor told him over vicar year, "If it's not in the calendar, it's not going to happen!"⁵⁹ Eugene Peterson, a Presbyterian pastor-turned-author, adds his convictions concerning the power of the pastor's calendar when he says, "It [the appointment calendar] is a gift of the Holy Ghost (unlisted by St. Paul, but a gift nonetheless) that provides the pastor with the means to get time.... It is more effective than a protective secretary; it is less expensive than a retreat house. It is the one thing everyone in our society accepts without cavil as authoritative."⁶⁰ Pastors need not be ashamed to utilize such a powerful tool in their plans to establish or fortify their personal study habits.

Concerning the time of day at which the pastor chooses to study, it would be wise to consider using the portion of the day at which the pastor feels most energized and focused. One of the several thought-provoking propositions made by Loehr and Schwartz in *The Power of Full Engagement* is the idea that we are "oscillatory beings in an oscillatory universe. Rhythmicity is our inheritance."⁶¹ This rhythm of life includes times of high energy and low energy throughout the day. It has been recognized by different societies and can be seen in certain practices like the *siesta*, the brief afternoon respite enjoyed by many Hispanic and Latino cultures. They recognize that a majority of people experience a time of lower energy during the early hours of the afternoon.

Individuals may have different times during which they feel the most productive or motivated. For some (including this author) that time falls in the mid-morning. Others feel most productive in the early morning hours, while others experience their highest energy in the evening or into the night. Lloyd Rediger provides further insight and encouragement regarding this period of highest energy and focus:

By prime time I mean awareness of the biorhythms of your day. Everyone has high and low energy rhythms each day. If you become aware of your prime time (high-energy time), you can schedule tasks which need high energy for your prime time and fill secondary time (low-energy time) with less demanding tasks. Violating your own energy rhythms drains energy unnecessarily. Planning around your energy levels doesn't mean

⁵⁹ Wayne Uhlhorn, pastor at Fount of Life Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs, CO, spoke these words, or slight variations, multiple times in staff meetings over the 2015-2016 school year.

⁶⁰ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), 22.

⁶¹ Loehr and Schwartz, 30.

that you are pampering yourself. It simply means you are honoring the way God created you instead of implying that God made a mistake.⁶²

Of course, God's Word is powerful and efficacious at all times. Scripture's power does not wax and wane as human energy has been observed to do, but why not attempt to use the time when one is most focused and motivated to study the deep truths of that Word? Just as Christians seek to give God their first fruits in monetary giving they also seek to give God the first fruits of their time in devotional studies. The giving of time is always motivated solely by God's love for his people, shown in his Son and shown by means of his Word. Another powerful motivation comes from the recognition that Christians are not merely serving God by setting aside devotional time, but that God is in fact serving his people through time spent in his life-giving Word.

Secondly, it is usually beneficial to remove distractions – or remove oneself from the distractions – during the specific time of devotional study. While technology such as cell phones and laptops are incredibly powerful tools for the pastor's study of God's Word through computer programs like Logos, these machines also tend to serve as disturbances. Besides the obvious distractions like audible notification alerts, many pastors presumably wish to respond in a timely manner to members and others who wish to communicate with them. But once email and messages are being checked, the pull to respond will likely infringe upon the selected devotional time. This is not to say that cellular phones or laptops should never be used. In fact, these devices can also serve to reduce outside distractions through music or white noise. Ultimately, individual pastors must make their own decisions regarding the use of phones or laptops during devotional time.

Finding a quiet place separated from potential distractions should be considered. If studying in the home while the family is getting ready for their day, the kitchen table is probably not the best place to try and study Scripture. An office or other peaceful area will likely serve better. If studying at church though, the pastor's office can be a bustling hive of activity in certain calls. Members drop in to talk or associates and administrative assistants have questions or thoughts to share. Sometimes it seems as though the pastor's door should be revolving in design. A suggestion would be to head into the sanctuary. Not only is it likely quiet, but the room

⁶² Rediger, 66-67.

likely contains various art and symbolism that can be quite useful in focusing the mind on the task at hand: allowing God's grace to permeate the heart and mind.

Third, in addition to Scripture itself, there are countless other devotional resources available such as devotional booklets, commentaries, and reading guides and schedules. It is, of course, wise to educate oneself about the author of said resources and his or her beliefs, which may stray from biblical doctrine. But if the author is doctrinally sound, it makes absolute sense to reap the benefits of another's study of God's law and gospel. However, devotional materials are not the final word – that title belongs only to *the* Word. While grasping the truths of the Bible itself can prove challenging, WELS pastors have been trained for several years and are well equipped to lay hold of Scripture's message.

As far as daily reading length is concerned, Professor Gurgel offers the following three thoughts, which have been paraphrased. First, while a rapid reading of Scripture keeps all of salvation history in frame, attempting to read too much at one time can be like trying to drink from a fire hose – it becomes difficult to meditate on a thought when there are too many thoughts streaming into the brain. Second, attempting to read too large a portion may also lead the brain to read for reading's sake, turning the devotion into another box to check off. Third, following a reading schedule can be beneficial but it can also be detrimental if the reader feels he is only able to have so many days for certain books or sections of the Bible.⁶³

Finally, prayer should not be overlooked when the pastor's devotional life is being considered. The importance of asking God to open the mind to the wonders of his gospel before study and thanking him for the gracious gift of his Word after study should never be separated from the devotion itself. This can be done in a variety of ways. The pastor can come before God confidently with a prayer *ex corde*. He could also use any number of psalm verses as a prayer such as Psalm 119:34,35: "Give me understanding and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight."

There are a number of prayer books available for Christians as well. A collection of prayers from Martin Luther, *Luther's Prayers*, includes both hints for effective prayer as well as a selection of prayers for enlightenment from God's Word. Another resource available for pastors is the *Christian Worship Pastor's Companion*. Besides a number of prayers for various

⁶³ Gurgel, 16,17.

situations, the book also contains two prayers that can be said before studying Scripture.⁶⁴ Of course, God's gift of prayer to his people could be talked about at length, but for brevity's sake this discussion will suffice for this particular thesis.

Again, all of the guidelines and applications listed above are by no means extensive nor are they prescriptive. Rather, may they serve the reader in bringing to mind practices that have served many Christians well as they seek to make time with their Lord and dive into the gracious gift of his Word. The reader can feel free to adjust, modify, and augment the applications in order to best fit his present circumstances. The end goal of these applications is to aid the fostering of devotional habits, since God works to strengthen his people spiritually through his Word, and renewing one's spiritual energy through the Word may help heal and even prevent ministerial burnout.

Conclusions

Regardless of a parishioner's perception or the thoughts of skeptical unbelievers, the pastoral ministry is a busy vocation. It is a calling in which the stress and strain of working in a sin-infested world can often weigh heavily on the pastor's shoulders. It is a multifaceted vocation that sometimes requires long hours and intense conversations. In short, the pastoral ministry can be more stressful than many other careers. But as John Newton said, "While being a pastor can be at times the worst of all jobs, it is also the best of all callings."⁶⁵

While the pastor's ministry can indeed be stressful, not all stress is bad. In fact, it has been observed in this paper that a certain amount of stress is useful and necessary for the pastor to fulfill his duties well. Unfortunately, many pastors (whether out of zeal for their work or other wrongly oriented motivation) often find themselves overstressed. If left unchecked and uncared for, this stress can lead to disastrous consequences for both pastor and congregation in the form of burnout.

⁶⁴ This author has found the first of these two prayers to be particularly beneficial when preparing to study God's Word: "Almighty, everlasting God, Lord, heavenly Father, whose Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path, open and enlighten my mind that I may understand your word purely, clearly, and devoutly, and then, having understood it correctly, pattern my life according to it, in order that I may never displease you; through Jesus Christ, your son, our dear Lord. (John Bugenhagen, 1485-1558).

⁶⁵ Carroll, 187.

Burnout is a real danger for all people, but especially clergy members since they serve in an “others oriented” profession. Burnout affects the entire human being – physically, mentally, and spiritually. This spiritual side of burnout’s effects can be seen clearly in pastors. In their striving to care for others’ spiritual needs, the pastor can too often forget to care for his own spiritual needs.

Because burnout encompasses the entire being, it must be approached in a wholistic manner. It is the belief of this author that an integral part of a fulfilling ministry is finding the proper balance between work and rest, and being able to renew and “refuel” the energy that the pastor daily expends. While stress management, nutrition, exercise, and mental relaxation practices are important practices to help renew physical and mental energy, spiritual care through God’s Word is of primary importance.

The Bible is not silent concerning spiritual care and warnings of burnout, though it does not use that exact terminology. Reading the accounts of various Old Testament leaders and prophets reveals symptoms of burnout that affected the ministry of those men. On the other hand, reading accounts of Jesus’ life in the Gospels reveals that he made sure to care for himself in all aspects of life, but especially his spiritual life. As a saint who still struggles with a sinful nature, the pastor can of course not expect to live up to the perfect example of the Savior. But these accounts do highlight the importance of a strong spiritual connection to God in the life of the pastor, and indeed the lives of all Christians.

The power to renew spiritually is only found in God’s Word⁶⁶, so it is to the Bible that the pastor must go to restore his soul. The sinful nature will offer various excuses and muddle the difference between professional and personal study of the Word. But these excuses can be fought against and the muddied waters can be settled by a change in view of devotional time spent in the Word. When viewed as something beneficial God does for his people, a daily devotion becomes the highest priority for the pastor, and something he makes time for even with his busy schedule. Even if the reader has already cultivated a strong devotional life, the applications and guidelines presented by the author may still serve to refresh the appropriate methodology of the reader.

The purpose of developing a healthy devotional life as a pastor is indeed for his own spiritual well being, but it is also for the spiritual benefit of his people. When the pastor has felt

⁶⁶ This is not to exclude the importance of the gospel in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These gifts from God serve to comfort and empower Christians in a visible manner. In fact, a Christian’s daily devotional life is where one goes to drown his Old Adam in the waters of his baptism.

the hammer of the law crush his sinful pride, he can more effectively relate that to his people. When the pastor has personally experienced the joyful proclamation of sins forgiven through Christ, he can more effectively present those truths to his congregation. Furthermore, by growing in God's Word and renewing his spiritual energy through the power of the gospel, the pastor will, Lord willing, become less susceptible to the effects of burnout, allowing him to minister to his people for the full length of his ministry.

Finally, that is the purpose of the pastor: to benefit others through the preaching and teaching of God's Word. The Lord of the Church wishes to bless his people through his pastors, and he also seeks to bless his pastors through his Word. A healthy devotional life is by no means the only component in the overall health of God's under shepherds, but it is a pivotal practice through which God strengthens the Church's leaders, in order that they might strengthen those in their care. A pastor's relationship with the Lord will never be perfect on this side of glory, but it is the author's encouragement to the reader to continually strive for a deeper, profounder connection with God, a relationship through which God will bless both the pastor and his parishioners.

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