



## 'Care' Fullness

Ps Mike Keating

MA(Min)(HBC); BA(Theol)(Murdoch)

Contact: [mkeating@harvest.edu.au](mailto:mkeating@harvest.edu.au)

---

### Introduction

Possible solutions to the problem of ministry 'fall-out' are being offered from various directions, most of them helpful, to my ears at least. But if you add to 'fall-out' – 'burn-out', and bear in mind the students having trouble finding pastorates – who 'miss-out'; not forgetting the older ministers clinging on because of not being able to move – 'pushed-out'; and the smaller number of ministers who stay while wishing they could leave – 'want-out'; to say nothing of the rest of us wondering how long before we are 'clapped-out', you are reminded the standard advice of area superintendents to prospective candidates for ministry – 'stay out, if you can' (Beasley-Murray 1995, p. 5).

Rowland Croucher reported in his article "Why Clergy are leaving the Ministry" in *Ministry Today* that there are 10,000 ex-pastors in Australia and that 75% of them left depressed, disenchanted, or damaged. To compound the matter, almost half of these exiles no longer attend church (1994, p. 41).

Peluso writes,

Clergy, on the whole, do not care well for themselves. At least anecdotal evidence suggests this. If one listens to clergy at their lectionary groups, denominational gatherings, and local ministerial association lunches, one will hear an array of topics, most of them negative: the excessive hours they work; the vacation days they did not take; the exercise schedule they neglected; the reading and reflection that administration squeezed from their schedule; the emergencies that preempted family time; and the emotional needs that went unattended. When one gets more intimate with them and learns about the emptiness of many of their spiritual lives, the picture grows even dimmer (1998, p. 227).

Ministry should come with a health warning that it can be very hazardous to your

spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. This essay will investigate the significant emotional, physical, and spiritual hazards of modern ministry, and how ministers might holistically calibrate their lives in order to maintain performance and personal wholeness over the 'long distance.' Subsequently, these observations will be personalised in critical self-reflection and strategies to engage and enhance the public and the private aspirational aspects of ministry.

## **Know Thy 'Self'**

One of the Delphic inscriptions engraved in the forecourt of the famous ancient temple had the words "Know Thyself" (Ferguson 2003, p. 215). It was originally thought to be a warning against hubris, except Socrates invested it with some metaphysics, and some 2,500 years later, it still forms one of the core questions of the modern philosophy.

Who or what is the 'self'? Aristotle, expanding on Socrates, suggested, "Knowing yourself is the beginning of Wisdom" (Stavropoulos 2008, p. 47). If this is true, then defining and delineating the 'self' is vital to understanding the peculiar burden of 'human' life across its gory and glorious spectrum; from the womb to the tomb, from the killing fields to the Sistine chapel.

Only humans are self-aware. More than that, only *humans are aware that they are aware*. There are basically three world-views purporting to give insight into the inner 'human' space. It could be called many things - mind, consciousness, atman, soul, spirit, id, ego, ego-self, or just plain 'self'. There is, however, much conjecture as to what constitutes this 'I am' sensation.

## **Pantheistic**

While this is by necessity the briefest sketch, pantheism advocates that all reality is either singular or non-existent. The sum of reality is identical to the divine and the divine is non-personal. Life is defined by the effort to escape the current corrupted illusion through either devotion, magic, or meditation. Karmic management defines morality. The person is either accumulating or diminishing of 'debt' owed to previous incarnations. Historic pantheism is very focused upon the end of the 'self'. The Western 'modern' reincarnation of Pantheism is quazi-scientific with a focus on loving and caring for Mother Nature to whom we are all related.

Here, the 'self' does not exist as a separate reality. Like a raindrop, it is temporarily separated in time from its true nature as 'water' and the rain drop will finally pass through its life cycle to find itself lost in the ocean of 'ultimate being'. The rain that falls from the sky is conned by its positional separation from the earth, is then gathered into the sacred river of life to drift out into the ocean and if not set free from the illusion of Maya, condemned to recycle through the entire process again and again.

The Soul is imagined first, then the particularity of objects,  
External and internal, as one knows so one remembers.

As a rope, not perceived distinctly in dark, is erroneously imagined,  
As snake, as a streak of water, so is the Soul (Atman) erroneously imagined.  
As when the rope is distinctly perceived, and the erroneous imagination withdrawn,  
Only the rope remains, without a second, so when distinctly perceived, the Atman.

When he as Pranas (living beings), as all the diverse objects appears to us,  
Then it is all mere Maya, with which the Brahman (Supreme Soul) deceives himself.

(Deussen 2010, p. 618)

In pantheism, the self is a persistent and stubborn illusion, and often negatively construed as the result of negative karma, the curse of existence and that to be human is to suffer. Ultimate reality is not material. It is an illusion. There is no 'self'.

## **Materialistic**

The materialistic view asserts there is no 'self' beyond a biological 'left-over' resulting from the evolutionary process that has given rise to the naked apes that we call human. The 'self' is compared to the accidental and incidental squeaking of the axle that turns the wheel of the cart. 'Consciousness' is a remarkable but non-essential 'by-product' of the selfish gene replicator that gave rise to humans, a view much popularised by Richard Dawkins. Evolutionary biologists go as far to say that the 'self' was a tragic misstep in the climbing the evolutionary chain.

Evolutionary biologist, Pierre Lecomte du Nouy, for example, comments on the unchanged pre-Cambrian worms that are substantially the same as those found today having 'achieved remarkable and superior adaptation' (1945, p. 89). One of the worms was a misfit and had to keep on evolving to survive. He concludes that 'this worm, less perfect as a worm, may have been our ancestor' (p. 89). Evolutionary psychologist Stephen Pinker states the case of the materialist, "The supposedly immaterial soul, we now know, can be bisected with a knife, altered by chemicals, started or stopped by electricity, and extinguished by a sharp blow or insufficient oxygen" (2003, p. 209).

In the materialist's worldview, ultimate reality is matter. The 'self' is a conundrum. Its phobias are residual after-effects of reptilian, paleomammalian and neomammalian developments. Our fear of vertigo, claustrophobia, and agoraphobia harkens back to our time when humans left the trees and ventured out into the grasslands as hairless, upright apes (Reaney 1991, p. 3).

The 'self' may undergo existential crisis but has no intrinsic reality. Frederick Nietzsche puts these words of solace in the mouth of the prophet Zarathustra to the dying man and sums up the nihilism of the materialist's viewpoint. "On my honour, friend" answered Zarathustra, "all you have spoken about does not exist: there is no Devil and no Hell. Your soul will be dead even before your body: therefore, fear nothing anymore!" (1885, p. 6). The 'self' is an annoying illusion according to the materialist. Famous existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in *Being and Nothingness* (1943, p. 4.2.III), "Man is a useless passion."

However, I reject both the pantheistic and materialistic notions of the 'self'. Based on reason and ontological merit, this essay presupposes that the nature of the 'self' is that the human being is the result of a special creative act by a transcendental spiritual personal unity and that humans reflect the nature of that creator. Ultimate reality is immaterial; or what we might more often call 'Spirit'. In effect, I believe that the best understanding of the 'self' is derived from a careful and systematic understanding of Scripture.

## **Biblical**

Anderson (1995) writes as a Christian, a psychologist, and as a theologian. It is worth giving space here to outline his model in order to develop a biblical understanding of the 'self'. He, first of all, makes an important observation that modern assumptions about the nature of the 'self' are culturally bound and generally unfaithful to the teaching of the Bible.

Some forms of theology, from Augustine to Calvin, have not helped form a healthy biblical view of the 'self'. Furthermore, there has been some loss of clarity concerning the idea of human consciousness as a consequence of the modern 'Enlightenment' project.

The biblical information about the 'self' is sparse. In the New Testament, the term 'self' is most often thought of in the negative sense of denial (Matt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23). There are also those passages that refer to the 'old self' (Rom. 6:6; 7:6) which must be 'put off' and replaced with the 'new self' which is created in God's image (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10).

The 'golden rule' points to the value of 'self' particularly in the context of relationships as it commands that believers are to love others as they love their 'selves' (Matt. 22:39).

The "Legend of Tarzan" makes the observation that identity is shaped by its context. A child raised by apes will behave like an ape. When it comes to people, it has been observed that a person becomes a person through other people (Boyle 2011, p. xiv). Anderson (2010, p. 19-21) unpacks the Genesis creation story to show how Adam's sense of 'self' came about by the creation of his 'other', Eve. It was God's assessment that it "was not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

Only when God created woman by differentiating and completing the man do we find the first expression of self-conscious personhood in the Creation account. "This, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called woman, for out of the man, this one was taken" (Anderson 1995, p. 21).

Anderson (1995) goes on to interpret the biblical data to show that the life of the 'self' is experienced within the body. Life, mentally, emotionally and spiritually, is an embodied one. It cannot be compartmentalized. The identity of the biblical 'self' is worked out in the context of an 'embodied' open interactive engagement with God and others.

## **'Self' Development**

This essay will adopt the worldview posited by Anderson (1995), in that the 'self' is real, personal, relational, rational, emotional, experiential and spiritual. It is an inner conscious 'alloy' of awareness and it cannot be dissected into its parts without crippling its function. According to Anderson (1995), humans are firstly physical (of the dust), then mental/spiritual (breath of God), and defined by their relationship with God and others (communion with God and Eve) (Anderson 2010, p. 11). The inner sense of 'I am' is real, immaterial, but inseparable from the embodied existence. It requires understanding, self-awareness, and appropriate care for long-term effective ministry and living.

## **'Self' Harm**

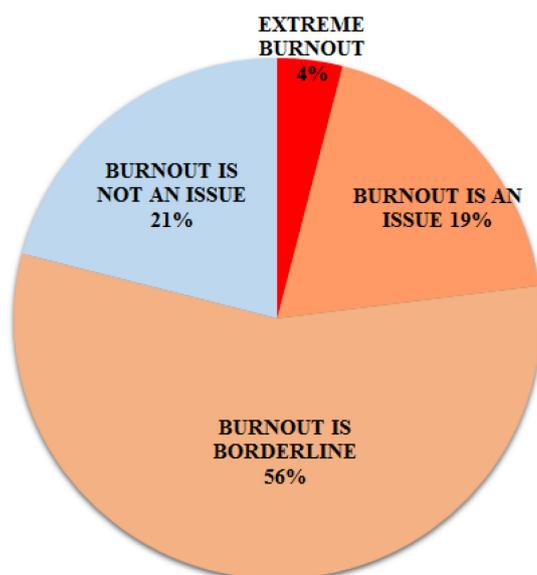
The factors that impinge upon the proper care of the ministerial 'self' and what can be done to counteract unhealthy behaviours and motivate healthy behaviours will now be surveyed.

If Abraham Maslow is correct with his 'hierarchy of needs,' then care of the 'self' begins with the basics of life, protection, shelter, and security. Without these needs being in adequate supply, the thought of care for the inner 'aspirational' aspect of life is

perhaps unrealistic. While not ignoring the fact that clergy do minister in places around the world under the most severe and adverse circumstances, this paper will assume the more 'western' context of ministry where many of these basics commodities are in good supply.

Australia is privileged to have access to reliable data on the health of ministers through the research conducted under the auspices of the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). The results of their 1996 survey of some 4,400 respondents from 25 denominations of the Australian church was published in *Burnout in Church Leaders* in 2001 (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 7). Utilizing the Alban Institute's test for measuring stress and burnout, the data reports only 21% of Australian ministers believe that they have no problems with either stress or burnout. Conversely, 79% have at least some dilemma with the issue. More concerning, 23% are either plainly or extremely 'burnout' according to their own assessment (p. 9). The overarching analysis reveals that stress and burnout are not specific to one denomination, and more likely associated with issues of personal factors, congregational viability, and leadership support systems (p. 10).

#### NCLS Stress and Burnout – Risk Levels



(Adapted from Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 9)

Similar eclectic data is provided by Wheeler (2012, pp. 41-42) in his book *A View from the Parsonage* using research from the United States.

- 13% of active pastors are divorced.
- 23% have been fired or pressured to resign at least once in their careers.
- 25% do not know where to turn when they have a family or personal conflict or issue.
- 25% of pastors' wives see their husband's work schedule as a source of conflict.
- 33% felt burned out within their first five years of ministry.
- 33% say that being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 40% of pastors and 47% of spouses are suffering from burnout, frantic schedules, and/or unrealistic expectations.
- 45% of pastors' wives say the greatest danger to them and their family is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual burnout.

- Though I can find no specific statistics (I am sure they are out there), the pastorate is seeing a significant rise in the number of female pastors.
- 45% of pastors say that they have experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.
- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 52% of pastors say they and their spouses believe that being in pastoral ministry is hazardous to their family's well-being and health.
- 56% of pastors' wives say that they have no close friends.
- 57% would leave the pastorate if they had somewhere else to go or some other vocation they could do.
- 70% don't have any close friends.
- 75% report severe stress causing anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear, and alienation.
- 80% of pastors say they have insufficient time with their spouse.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 90% feel unqualified or poorly prepared for ministry.
- 90% work more than 50 hours a week.
- 94% feel under pressure to have a perfect family.
- 1,500 pastors leave their ministries each month due to burnout, conflict, or moral failure.
- Doctors, lawyers, and clergy have the most problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, and suicide.

NCLS summarized its research on stress and burnout with ministers with the following eleven critical factors (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 129-130).

1. The importance of developing a well-rounded life.
2. Leaders need to treat their family with great care.
3. Ministers need to put effort into building strong and resilient relationships.
4. Leaders need to look after their health.
5. Leaders need to make space to grow spiritually.
6. Leaders need to put a priority on developing a corporate vision for the future.
7. Ministers need to focus on building a sense of community who are growing in their relationship with God.
8. Ministers should be alert to the greater risks and pressure in smaller churches.
9. Leaders need to have a style of leadership that inspires and empowers others.
10. Leaders need to clearly understand their role priorities and expectations and work through any issues.
11. Ministers need to develop a range of coping strategies to deal with the issues they may face in the workplace.

We can clearly understand why ministry can be hazardous to your health and wellbeing. Now, I would like to direct the reader to the different quadrants of caring for the 'self'.

## **Physical Self**

Here we see the proverbial "chicken versus the egg" predicament. Stress and burnout can lead to very adverse physical health and yet poor physical health can likewise lead to increased levels of stress and burnout (2001, p. 25).

The NCLS data shows that a majority of ministers report their health as fair, poor or very poor and this is at a higher rate than for both the population in general and the

'white-collar' professions specifically (2001, p. 25). This data is useful but relies solely on the survey recipient's personal assessment.

Such 'self-reporting' studies show that clergy have higher than normal rates of obesity, arthritis, depression, heart problems, high blood pressure, diabetes and stress than the norm. However, it is surprisingly difficult to find hard data measuring actual health differentials of ministers compared to standardised scores.

Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Sara LeGrand observe that "the health of clergy has been under-studied, with the exception of a small but growing literature on clergy stress and a handful of studies on clergy mortality rates" (2012, pp. 734–742).

In their comprehensive study, only one example could be found by them showing that the prevalence rates for clergy were clinically higher by 10.3% for obesity, 4.3% for high blood pressure, 4.1% for asthma, 3.3% for diabetes, and 2.5% for arthritis than the standard population (2012, p. 736).

The study also identified the unusual phenomenon that has been noted in previous research, where ministers on one hand report higher levels of poor health than their 'white collar' counterparts, but lower levels of impairment in their performance because of health reasons (2012, pp. 739-40).

Archibald Hart (1995) has provided useful work showing the relationship between excessive stress and physical health problems (along with other issues) stating,

Nothing I have to say in this book is as important and far reaching as about how adrenaline and stress disease are connected. This topic is especially important because it shows how adrenaline affects the cardiovascular system (1995, p. 91).

While it is admitted by Hart, almost reluctantly, that some stress may actually be positive, he draws a strong link between poor adrenaline management and a whole raft of deleterious health outcomes (1995, pp. 9-10, 26-27).

The body's response to real or imagined threats produces the chemical that produces the 'fight, fright, or flight' response (1995, p. 7). The failure to manage adrenaline can result in a condition known as "hypo adrenal anaemia" where the body's adrenal system 'eventually crashes and forces the victim into a state of prolonged and severe fatigue' (p. 87). This is a part of the reason many ministers experience increased moodiness, fatigue, guilt, and restlessness while trying to slow down (p. 86). They are going through the withdrawal symptoms associated with an addiction to adrenalin.

The NCLS data observes that 'an obvious issue is diet' (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 26). There is no research supporting this beyond the anecdotal, but it is a reasonable assumption that the poor dietary patterns of busy westerners are likely to be prevalent among ministers. It would be expected that those ministers reporting poor health would also struggle with an over-consumption of fast foods, stimulants such as coffee/tea and soft drinks, alcohol and smoking while at this same time living quite sedentary lives devoid of regular exercise (p. 26).

## **Emotional Self**

The emotional life of the minister is a significant factor affecting longevity and health. The NCLS data is germane. On the plus side, the most significant positive factor mitigating stress and burnout is the minister's general sense of wellbeing (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, p. 54). Where the minister has developed a balanced lifestyle and is

generally satisfied with life, then that is the best preventive medicine for stress and burnout. Furthermore, it would seem that a sense of accomplishment is also a determinative factor to the emotional well-being of the minister (p. 71)

On the debit side of the ledger, the high-risk 'emotional' factors' identified by the NCLS research include confusion over roles and expectations, loneliness, poor family relationships, and a shortage of friends. Other studies showed 90% of ministers felt constantly fatigued, 77% had unhappy marriages, 75% felt unqualified and impotent with their role, 72% read the Bible only for sermons, 71% battle depression on weekly or even daily basis and 74% do not have any form of regular personal spiritual life or devotions (Krejcir 2007).

In a more formal sense, Pegram (2015, p. 212) has provided strong evidence to show that there is a direct link between 'emotional intelligence' and stress and burnout. Emotional intelligence training can assist the minister to better negotiate the 'risk' factors in their given personality/support/context matrix (pp. 214-215).

Emotional Intelligence enhances variables that affect directly on health. A person with better emotional intelligence has the capacity to:

- Limit exposure to stressful events
- Exert greater resilience
- Build richer personal health and emotional resources
- Exude more positive emotionality and less negative emotionality
- Adopt wider social support networks
- Develop adaptive coping mechanisms
- Better self-regulate in maintaining healthy behaviors (Pegram 2015, p. 74)

Sadly, one of the most glaring manifestations of failure to manage stress is sexual misconduct among ministers. The incidence of sexual misconduct does vary from study to study ranging from 10 to 33 percent. Whatever the actual level, it is without excuse. Whetham makes the correlative observation that the "sexual misconduct literature reflects the burnout literature in that it identifies loneliness and a fear of intimacy as primary factors" (2000, p. 48). Ormerod suggests that,

while in the public perception church ministers will have higher ethical standards than people in secular professions, such is not necessarily the case. In fact, given that there are fewer mechanisms for professional accountability for those in ministry, that they have no clear code of professional ethics, and that their training in counseling skills and its complexities is minimal, it would come as no surprise if ministers were to have a worse record than secular professionals (1995, p. 6).

Clearly, the emotional world of the minister is critical to their capacity to self-care.

## **Spiritual Self**

Whetham, relying upon work by Croucher and NCLS, estimates that almost one-half of ministers will leave their calling, mostly in the first five years, and about 40% of these will not attend church again (2000, p. 28).

The link between diminished personal devotions and stress is clearly established. Studies show that as few as 26% of ministers report a healthy devotional life (Krejcir 2007). The NCLS data backs up these observations and adds that a deep sense of calling, and an ongoing experience of God's presence, effectively alleviates the pressures of

ministry (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 37-39). The Church has been very aware of the reality of ministers experiencing a 'crisis of faith' for its entire history. Pope Gregory the Great wrote a treatise in the eleventh century *The Book of the Pastoral Rule* and in the second chapter, he emphasizes the importance of personally practicing what has been learned publicly. Saint John of the Cross spoke of the 'Dark Night of Soul' as a peculiar maturing experience where the minister has a crisis of faith but today's statistics show that many get lost in the night (John of the Cross 1959).

Discouragement could be described as an emotional reaction. However, it can just as well be labeled a 'spiritual' malaise'; particularly if the condition becomes a settled disposition.

Functional externalism becomes another risk. The minister learns 'the ropes' and focuses on the pragmatic issue of survival while doing enough to stay in the job. This clinical professionalism is another risk to the internal life. It is not a new phenomenon. Jesus warned about those religious of his day who were outwardly pious but inwardly unhealthy (Matt. 7:14-21; chap. 23).

In short, the NCLS data provides a very useful summary of the factors influencing ministers' health over three spheres: the leaders themselves, their congregations and the execution of their roles. Some factors are not directly in the control of the minister, but others are. The minister can profit from some targeted self-care. Some of the risk factors are absolutely related to the individual minister's skill, temperament, and training. There are, however, risk factors that are more connected with the specific church setting such as entrenched attitudes, limited resources, and resistance to change. Then the role itself brings its own risk factors, the chief being identified as ambiguity over the role and expectations.

## **Future 'Self' Care**

Socrates once said, "... the unexamined life is not worth living" (1966, p. 38a). The direction of this paper now turns from the abstract to the concrete, from the theoretical to the practical and from the corporate to the personal.

This article is directed towards intentional self-care. How does the minister take responsibility for their personal health and sustainability in ministry? Each minister would need to develop a plan that meets his or her unique 'soul' print, circumstances, and challenges. The biblical 'self' is a specific, unrepeatable, valuable entity that requires a tailor-made 'self-care plan'. It is with some humility that I offer my own program, however, it is my hope that the reader will profit from some of my observations and discoveries and be able to apply such thinking and initiative into their own lives.

## **Physical 'Self' Care**

The NLCS data indicates that older ministers with many years of experience tend not to struggle to the same degree with factors that lead to stress and burnout. However, they are at risk of a premature end to their ministry because of poor health issues (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 21, 25). Diabetes is a huge issue in the general population. My anecdotal experience is that many of my contemporaries are struggling with this 'secret' sugar disease.

At 58 years of age, I enjoy reasonable health given the hours worked and responsibilities carried. However, I skip meals; eat at random times, usually quite late at night, often with a glass of wine. This diet is supplemented with fast food on an *ad hoc*

basis. High levels of caffeine and poor levels of physical exercise accompany my food intake.

I have chronic hip, knee, and back pain associated with osteoarthritis and an old sporting injury. My physician reports that my sugar levels are okay, but I have quite high blood pressure. I am required to reduce my weight by 10 kilograms and now have quite high levels of hypertension (180/90 mmHg).

I need to find one hour a day for energetic exercise, either rising earlier for a fast walk in the Serpentine National Park or taking a lunch break around some form of exercise. Some of my appointments are now based upon a 5km walk around a lake. Over a longer term, I may take up riding a bicycle.

## **Emotional 'Self' Care**

This is an area where I have struggled a lot. Given a history of depression, and some very difficult if not constant life challenges, which includes a wife with Parkinson's disease and a family member's lifestyle choice, has made it difficult to find the right emotional zone for safe and nurturing relationships.

Having left home as a teenager, and experienced a life of a homelessness, associated petty crime, alcohol abuse, sexual permissiveness and exploitation, my conversion to Christ was as unexpected as Saul meeting Jesus on his way to Damascus. My experience was profoundly grounding and defining. In some indefinable way (maybe even in an unhealthy way), I gave up my 'self' life at that time. This provides a keel to my boat so that no matter the weather, foul or fine, my life belongs to Christ. Boyle writes, "Success and failure, ultimately, have little to do with living the gospel. Jesus just stood with the outcasts until they were welcomed or until he was crucified – whichever came first" (2011, p. 172).

Over time, I have had to learn that this is not the same as being a martyr. Total denial of the inner 'human' is not biblical, nor ultimately sustainable. "Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever" (Westminster Catechism 1861). I am truly persuaded that in a world of trouble, Jesus came to give us life to its full (Jn. 10:10; 16:33).

Tim Hansel's little book *When I Relax I Feel Guilty - Discover the Wonder and Joy of Really Living* (1979) is a great resource. Hansel was a pastor who got caught up in the 'ministry-activity' trap but changed his career to that of a wilderness guide. He now leads people to find deeper experiences with their 'selves', others, and God, particularly through enjoying creation and learning the art and skill of play. For me, where guilt was a constant motivator, this has been a very valuable tool.

Alan Jones makes the important point that the word 'sacrifice' in the Bible does not have the 'modern' negative associations of loss but rather speaks more of spiritual communion, joy, forgiveness, life released, and celebration (1999, pp. 138-139).

Anderson (2010) speaks about the "Responsible Self – the Wisdom of the Heart" as a part of the biblical approach to healthy self-development. Emotions are not to be ignored but embraced as an inner sign of the health of the individual's interior. On an informal level, Anderson is declaring the ancient biblical wisdom that exhorted the believer to "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23 NKJ).

Over the years, I have also visited a Clinical Psychologist from time to time. This has been useful, to have a confidential 'outsider' with a different skill set to explore my inner world. The psychologist has a doctorate focused on volunteer behavior in the non-for-profit sector, was a former career missionary and possesses theological training and experience as an ordained minister. This means she is well equipped to understand the bizarre world of the minister.

Sadly, and surprisingly, in years that are more recent, I have lost all of my spiritual mentors. Most of my 'fathers' have not finished well and so their credibility with me has been badly damaged. I am striving to find one or two ministers in what Robert Clinton calls the 'afterglow' season of their ministry life (2012, p. 30) to help show me the way.

## Spiritual 'Self' Care

When I am disciplined in this sphere, I am surprisingly strong and resilient. Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline* (1984) provides a great template of the ancient disciplines of the universal and historical Church and I find that they are all beneficial when practiced.

- *Meditation* (something which I do practice with regularity)
- *Prayer* (more communion than petition)
- *Fasting* (seasonal but very grounding)
- *Study* (informal and formal)
- *Simplicity* (regular de-cluttering – especially electronic communications)
- *Solitude* (love this when I can get it)
- *Submission* (great attitude checker – choosing love and not power)
- *Service* (I will often do the unseen 'help' for those in need)
- *Confession* (I practice appropriate transparency)
- *Worship* (I love God - really)
- *Guidance* (I'm exploring this more)
- *Celebration* (I do need to adjust mood and affect here)

I have been greatly assisted by the reflections on Christian leadership by Henri Nouwen. He speaks from the perspective of a former professor of psychology, a Catholic priest, and as a contemplative mystic. Using Jesus' response to the three tests offered by Satan in the wilderness, Nouwen suggests that there are three temptations to modern ministry, of being relevant, popular, and powerful. He urges that the appropriate response is contemplative prayer, life in community, and being led to love, rather than lead by power (1999).

I consider it very beneficial to define 'success' in biblical terms and Nouwen's work is one pathway towards 'goal-orientated' behavior that is radically centered on Christ and His person. This provides me with the ability not to easily succumb to denominational, personal, or worldly scoreboards, and to more easily succeed at spiritually defined goals. It is much easier to live for the applause of One.

While it is always a challenge to carve the time out in the diary, I attempt to practice many of these disciplines by 'tithing' my time to spiritual retreat. Thus, every month, I try to undertake three days of retreat at a Benedictine Monastery located at New Norcia. The *Officium Divinum* has a rhythm and ritual to it that I personally find very refreshing compared to the normal hustle and bustle of ministry life.

Research from the NCLS data strongly indicates that spirituality is a key factor in reducing the effects of stress and burnout (Kaldor & Bullpitt 2001, pp. 34-38). It is also

evident that actual form seems not as critical as its actual practice (p. 16). Pentecostals who are active in their spirituality tend to do better than those using more traditional or orthodox expressions (pp. 17, 111). This also harmonises with Dr. Cettolin's research into the spirituality of Assembly of God ministers, which reports their private practice of spirituality is strong and meaningful (2006, pp. 80-81). For me, I can verify these dynamics in my own life and when I am consistent with these spiritual practices, I tend to find the rest of my life is in balance.

## Holistic Model of 'Self' Care

Over the years, I have learned the art of 'ruthlessly' managing my inner world. I have attempted to create margins in my life that permit balanced living, and while this endeavour has more often been marked by failure to stay on the right page, there is a constant commitment to reset and live a holistic life.

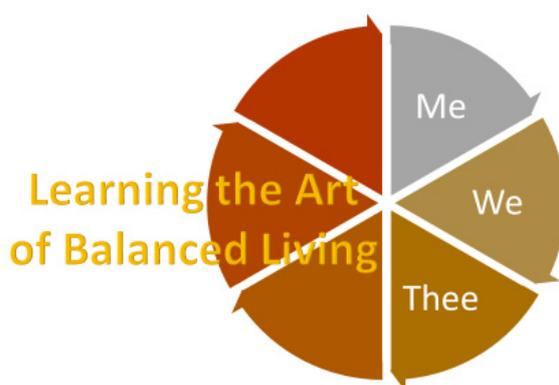
Gary Harbaugh's book *The Pastor as a Person* (1985) provides a helpful model for holistic living as a minister who recognises both the divine call and their human frailty. A real fundamental is that life must be lived as a whole and we should avoid the compartmentalising of lives and this must include all forms of spiritual reductionism. Harbaugh (1985) argues for a model that reflects all the context and contours of a balanced life. No minister is an island but is a conglomeration of physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Intentional choices that allow the different quadrants to receive appropriate care will provide for the development of a successful self-care plan. He provides a framework where the social, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of life require intentional choices about our feeling, relating, exercising, and thinking in order to achieve a balanced 'whole' life as a minister.

Balanced living is godly living. Jesus left us the example of living with total submission to God's call but with the ability to take time off for respite and refreshing (Mk. 6:31), and to simply take time out with friends to hang out (Jn. 21:5).

A number of years ago I also profited from developing my own mission statement based upon the work of Laurie Beth Jones *The Path – Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and Life* (1998). This brings clarity to my most important values and motivators. It helps me to say that little difficult word 'no' more often and at the appropriate times, because it states *I live to inspire and encourage people in my sphere of influence to live abundant lives.*

Much of this ruthless 'self-care' distils down to the art of proactive 'time management'. This means for me personally limiting my exposure with people. Given many years of reflection on this key personal survival skill, I developed a model based somewhat upon the notion of Sabbath. Jesus made it clear that Sabbath was created for the benefit of humans and not for God (Mk. 2:27). Thus, on multiple levels, Sunday is not the Sabbath for the minister. It is noteworthy that the penalty for Sabbath breaking was death – maybe not stoning these days, but damaging unbalanced stressful lives.

As a template for balanced living, I try to live out a 'Me, We and Thee' approach to allocating my time. One part of seven should



be focused on me (self-nurture). A second part in seven, on the broader social setting (family/friends), and a third part in seven, on the significant 'other' in my life. This still allows a significant amount of time for the ministry.

## Summary – A Note to 'Self'

This paper has examined the metaphysical, psychological and theological notions of the 'self' and concluded that a biblical model where the self is immaterial and integral to the complex of human life in the body is preferred, providing not only the rationale for, but also the way to the appropriately care for the 'self'. This enabled the paper then to address the issue of stress and burnout as a major dilemma facing ministers.

Research has shown that ministry burnout is a pervasive and serious problem. Not only do large numbers of ministers leave the ministry due to burnout, but also many still in ministry are suffering the effects of burnout. This has a financial cost, which may be measured in such terms of productivity, sick leave, unnecessary ministry transitions and 'wasted' training costs. It also has a large human cost. When a minister is going through burnout, not only is there great anguish for the sufferer, there may also be significant damage to others in the minister's relational networks (Pegram 2015, p. 210).

As an older minister with some thirty years of ordained experience in the workplace, I have already learned some positive disciplines and probably some bad habits as well. Pinker suggests, "at every moment, we choose, consciously or unconsciously, between the good things now and the better things later" (2003, p. 394).

I now will commit to some unpleasant disciplines of self-care, particularly in relation to diet and exercise, with the expectation of better things later. I am also spurred by the statistics to continue to practice some of my current modes of self-care; especially in the area of spiritual retreats. Jesus did leave us sound advice regarding stress and burnout.

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly" (Matt. 11:28-30, MSG).

---

## Bibliography

- Aydemir, O., & Icelli, I. (2013). *Burnout: Risk Factors. Burnout for Experts: Prevention in the Context of Living and Working*. Bahrer-Kohler, S. (Ed.). (2013). *Burnout for Experts*. NY: Springer ebook. 119-143.
- Anderson, R. S. (1995). *Self-Care: A Theology of Personal Empowerment and Spiritual Healing*. Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1997). *The Soul of Ministry: Forming Leaders for God's People*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.
- Beasley-Murray, P., & Murray, J. (1995). *A Call to Excellence*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

- Blanchard, K., Zigirimi, P., & Zigirimi, D. (1985). *Leadership and the One-Minute Manager*. NY: William Morrow, 1985.
- Boyle, G. (2011). *Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion*. NY: Free Press.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Buys, C., & Rothmann, S. (2010). "Burnout and Engagement of Reformed Church Ministers." *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 63 (1), 1-11.
- Calvin, J. (1950). *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. (ed., John T. McNeill, trans.) Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press.
- Cedar, P., Hughes, K., & Patterson, B. (1991). *Mastering the Pastoral Role*. Portland, OR: Multnomah.
- Centre for Reformed Theology and Apologetics. Westminster Shorter Catechism 1861 Retrieved May 18, 2015 from <http://www.reformed.org/documents/wsc/index.html>
- Cettolin, A. U. (2006). *AOG Pentecostal Spirituality in Australia: A Comparative Study of the Phenomenon of Historic Spirituality and its Contemporary Developments within the Assemblies of God in Australia*. (Doctoral dissertation). Australian College of Theology, Sydney, NSW.
- Clinton, R. (2012). *The Making of a Leader*. Colorado Springs CO: Navpress.
- Comiskey, J. (1998). *Introduction to Pastoral Care*. Houston TX: Touch Publications.
- Cordeiro, W. (2009). *Leading on Empty*. Minneapolis, MA: Bethany House.
- Covey, S. R. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Croucher, R. (1994). "Why Clergy are leaving the Ministry." *Ministry Today*, Vol. 1, 1994, 38-41.
- Enroth, R. M. (1992). *Churches that Abuse*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.
- Foster, R. (1989). *The Celebration of Discipline*. London, UK: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Gregory the Great (590). "The Book of Pastoral Rule" (trans. By Philip Schaff). Retrieved May 2, 2015 from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/shaff/npnf212html>
- Haggai, J. (1986). *Lead On*. Milton Keynes, UK: Word.
- Hansel, T. (1979). *When I Relax I Feel Guilty: Discover the wonder and Joy of Really Living*. Elgin, IL: David Cook Publishing.
- Harbaugh, G. L. (1985). *Pastor as Person*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
- Hart, A. D. (1984). *Coping With Depression in the Ministry and Other Helping Professions*. Waco, TX: Word Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1995). *Adrenaline and Stress*. Dallas, TX: Thomas Nelson.
- Hume, D. (2014). *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Adelaide SA: Retrieved May 30, 2015 from <https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/h/hume/david/h92t/B1.1.1.html>
- Jagelmann, I. (1999). *The Empowered Church*. Adelaide, SA: Openbook.
- John of the Cross (1959). *Dark Night of the Soul*. (trans. by E. Allison Peers) Garden City NY: Image Books
- Jones, L. (1998). *The Path: Creating Your Mission Statement for Work and for Life*. NY: Hyperion Books.

- Kaldor, P. (1994). *Winds of Change: The Experience of Church in Changing Australia*. Homebush West, NSW: Anzea Publishers.
- Kaldor, P., & Bullpitt, R. (2001). *Burnout in Church Leaders*. Harbord, NSW: Openbook.
- Kermery, E. R. (2006). "Clergy Role Stress and Satisfaction: Role Ambiguity Isn't Always Bad." *Pastoral Psychology*, 54, 561-570.
- Krejcir, R. J. (2007). "Statistics on Pastors." *Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development*. Retrieved May 17, 2015 from <http://www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=36562>
- Larson, B., Anderson, P., & Self, D. (1990). *Mastering Pastoral Care*. Portland, OR: Multnomah.
- London, H. B., & Wiseman, N. B. (2003). *Pastors at Greater Risk*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.
- Mc Donald, G. (1984). *Ordering Your Private World*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (1986). *Restoring your Spiritual Passion*. Nashville, TN: Oliver-Nelson.
- Miner, M., Dowson, M., & Sterland, S. (2009). "Burnout and Work Satisfaction in Australian Church Leaders." *InPsych*. August 2009. Retrieved May 16, 2015 from <https://www.psychology.org.au/inpsych/burnout/>
- Nietzsche, F. (1981). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for All and None*. Retrieved May 17, 2015 from [http://www.lexido.com/EBOOK\\_TEXTS/THUS\\_SPOKE%20ZARATHUSTRA.aspx?S=1](http://www.lexido.com/EBOOK_TEXTS/THUS_SPOKE%20ZARATHUSTRA.aspx?S=1)
- Nouwen, H. J. M. (1999). *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Ormerod, N. T. (1995). *When Ministers Sin: Sexual Abuse in Churches*. Alexandria, NSW: Millennium Books.
- Oswald, R. M. (1995). *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry*. Alban Institute.
- Pegram, N. (2015). *Emotional Intelligence and the Prevention of Ministry Burnout*. (Doctoral dissertation) Tabor College, Adelaide.
- Peluso, E. (1998). "To Live or Die in Battle: Clergy Self-Care." *Journal of Theological Resources for Ministry*, 18 (3), 227-246.
- Pinker, S. (2003). *How the Mind Works*. New York NY: Norton Press.
- Proeschold-Bell, R. J., & LeGrand, S. (2012). "Physical Health Functioning Among United Methodist Clergy." *Journal of Religion and Health*. 51, 734-742. DOI 10.1007/s10943-010-9372-5.
- Petersen, E. H. (1980). *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press.
- Reaney, D. (1991). *Death of Forever*. Melbourne, VIC: Longman Cheshire.
- Sartre, J. (1993). *Being and Nothingness*. (H. Barnes Trans.) NY: Washington Square Press.
- Shelley, M. (1985). *Well-Intentioned Dragons: Ministering to Problem People in the Church*. Waco, TX: Word.
- Speidell, T. (Ed.) (2007). "Special Issue: The Work of Ray S. Anderson." *Edification: Journal for the Society of Christian Psychology* (1) 2.

- Stavropoulos, S. (2008). *The Beginning of All Wisdom: Timeless Advice from the Ancient Greeks*. Boston, MA: Steven Da Capo Press.
- Socrates. (1966). *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. (Trans. Harold North Fowler) Retrieved April 12, 2015  
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=plat.+apol.+38a&redirect=true>
- Weaver, A., Larson, D., Flannelly, K., Stapleton, C., & Koenig, H. (2002). "Mental Health Issues Among Clergy and Other religious Professionals." *Pastoral Care Counselling Journal* (56) 4, 393-403.
- Wheeler, R. (2012). *A View from the Parsonage*. Maitland, FL: Xulon Press.
- Whetham, P., & Whetham, L. (2000). *Hard to be Holy*. Adelaide, SA: Openbook.
- Witt, L. (2011). *Replenish: Leading from a Healthy Soul*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing.