

# Soul Care for Leaders

Keys to long-term spiritual health.

*Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things . . . the Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.*

PSALM 103:1-5, 8

**I** IN A ZEALOUS QUEST for the consummate Christian life, the unthinkable happened: I burned out on the spiritual disciplines. The activities that were designed to create abundant life deep within my soul were in fact doing the opposite. My soul was weary and depleted. Each time I heard a pastor, author, missionary, or respected leader suggest a discipline that meant something special to him, I would add it to my spiritual to-do list. As a result, I accumulated more than my heart could handle.

The disciplines I sought to follow regularly included the following: read the Bible from cover to cover in one year; pray daily through an extensive prayer list (which I meticulously kept up to date); memorize the countries of the world and their capitals so I could pray more intelligently for missionary endeavors; pray my way through the daily newspaper; attend conferences; listen to radio and television preachers (and order their follow-up materials); read devotionals; fast regularly; journal daily; purchase books by the dozens (not always reading them, but at least I could say “I have it” if asked about a certain title). I was a spiritual-life-aholic. Over time, I became weary and disillusioned and eventually brought them all to a grinding halt.

I knew deep within my heart there had to be more for me with less guilt attached to my desire to deepen my walk with God. When I found my spiritual equilibrium again, through the aid of a mentor and friend, I was determined to step back and pursue genuine spiritual health and vitality. It required that I hop off my treadmill of constant activity and learn what it means to actually exegete the verb “to be” instead of always parsing the verbs “to want, to have, and to do” in my daily life.

What was the invitation of the lover of my soul, and how was the Lord desirous of my heart’s full attention? In what ways did the Lord want me to receive his loving initiatives? These were the compelling questions I sought to answer as I returned to the basics of an authentic relationship with God and experience once again the life-transforming gospel of grace.

I discovered afresh that, although the spiritual disciplines noted above were all worthwhile for developing

a healthy soul, when combined they created spiritual heartburn. Yes, it’s possible to try to ingest and digest too much material, and even though we may feel full, we actually discover we are unfulfilled. It took a while, but I eventually discovered that less is truly more.

Instead of pursuing multiple disciplines (of which there are dozens of options to consider), the recipe for vitality included three basic ingredients: time and space set apart to receive the gift of God’s Word, the joy of prayerful communion with the Trinity, and the gratitude of the heart that emerges from personal reflection on life.

Scripture, prayer, reflection. A healthy dose of each, and my soul is deeply satisfied and renewed. Coming out of a refreshing encounter with the living God, my prayer closet has become once more the place from which I am sent out into a lifestyle of service to God and his kingdom.

Isn’t it time for you to review the state of your soul? The Lord delights in reviving and renewing your life by the power of his Word, the presence of his Spirit, and the peace that comes from Christ alone. Leaders who attend to their soul live intentionally and effectively build up his kingdom in alliance with others who share common desires and forget not all his benefits (Ps. 103). ●

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