



REPLENISH: Leading From A Healthy Soul

by Lance Witt

Replenish is a soul-level wake-up call for ministry leaders. Lance encourages leaders to pause, reflect, and return to the well of God's presence. His message is clear: you can't give what you haven't received. Only when leaders prioritize their own soul health can they truly lead others toward transformation.



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De-Toxing Your Soul

It's possible to serve in ministry, speak truth, and care for others... all while quietly drifting from God.

Lance Witt knows what that feels like. He was deeply involved in ministry—leading teams, planning services, reaching people. But inside, his soul was dry. He was running on fumes.

Replenish begins with a clear message: **ministry can deplete your soul if you're not paying attention.** Many leaders start with passion and purpose, but over time, the demands, expectations, and busyness begin to take a toll. We care for others, but we forget to care for ourselves. We lead out of skill rather than Spirit. We teach about God's presence while struggling to enjoy it ourselves.

Eventually, it catches up with us.

Witt calls this *soul neglect*. It's not always loud or obvious. It might look like short tempers, shallow relationships, a busy calendar, or numbness in worship. It might feel like fatigue that won't lift, or the creeping feeling that you're just going through the motions.

It's easy to detox your body for a week. It's much harder to detox your soul.

But that's where healing begins—by recognizing what's really happening under the surface.

Start Here...Start Now

You don't fix a soul overnight. There's no fast-forward button.

But you can start now. And you must.

Witt invites leaders to return to the basics—simple but powerful soul-care practices that reconnect us with God and help us lead from a place of health. These aren't spiritual checklists. They're lifelines.

1. Slow Down.

Our culture values speed, but our souls thrive in stillness. If we want to grow deep, we have to stop living on fast-forward. Witt quotes Dallas Willard: "*Ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life.*" That means we must make hard choices—about schedules, screens, and saying no.

2. Rest on Purpose.

God gave us a rhythm—six days of work, one day of rest. It wasn't a suggestion. Sabbath is a sacred gift, a weekly reset. It's a reminder that the world keeps spinning even when we stop. Practicing rest builds trust in God and sets us free from the need to prove ourselves.

3. Be Alone with God.

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places to pray. If He needed silence and solitude, how much more do we? In a noisy world, quiet can feel uncomfortable at first. But it's in the quiet that we hear God most clearly and see ourselves most honestly.

4. Be Honest.

You can't heal what you won't name. Leaders often feel pressure to hold it all together. But healing starts when we admit what we're feeling—fear, anger, sadness, shame. We bring it to God. We confess. We let others in. That's where the freedom is.

5. Live in Community.

Isolation is not strength. Real leadership happens in relationships. We need friends who know our blind spots and aren't impressed by our titles. We need people who can speak truth, offer grace, and walk with us when we're weak.

Start small. One practice. One change. One honest prayer.

But start.

Sustaining a Lifetime of Health

Anyone can run hard for a season. But ministry isn't a sprint. It's a marathon.

To last, leaders need rhythms—not just rescue plans. We need practices that replenish us over and over again. Witt shares how building soul-care into the fabric of your life can prevent burnout and restore joy.

Character > Competence.

It's easy to focus on skills, strategies, and structures. But those things can't replace character. Your leadership will only go as far as your soul can sustain it. The hidden parts of your life—your thought patterns, emotional health, and spiritual walk—matter most.

Margin Matters.

Healthy leaders live with breathing room. You need space in your calendar, your heart, and your mind. No one does their best work when they're overloaded. Creating margin allows for creativity, connection, and clarity.

Daily, Weekly, Yearly Rhythms.

Witt encourages leaders to think in rhythms—not resolutions. What does your ideal day look like? Your ideal week? Do you have time to pray, reflect, rest, connect? What do you do each year to reset your heart? A healthy soul is built one rhythm at a time.

Lead Like You're Loved.

This might be the most freeing truth in the book: you are already loved. You don't have to earn God's favor with performance. You don't have to prove your worth by doing more. When you live from the security of His love, your leadership becomes an overflow, not a grind.

Leaders who last are leaders who stay grounded. They lead from rest, not rush. From calling, not comparison.

Building Healthy Teams

Healthy leaders build healthy teams. But if a leader's soul is sick, it spreads.

Witt helps leaders understand that their inner life sets the tone for the people they lead. If you want a culture of grace, you must first receive grace. If you want your team to value rest, you must live it out. If you want honesty and trust, it starts with you.

The most powerful leadership is always from the inside out.

Witt challenges teams to stop chasing success and start pursuing soul health together. That means:

- Giving each other permission to be human.
- Celebrating spiritual growth as much as strategic wins.
- Prioritizing relationships over results.

- Making space for vulnerability, confession, and encouragement.
- Asking deeper questions: How are you doing—*really*?

He encourages leaders to build rhythms into the team's life: shared retreats, honest conversations, sabbath rhythms, and regular evaluations—not just of goals, but of the group's spiritual and emotional health.

You can't lead people somewhere you've never been. When a team is made up of people tending their souls, ministry becomes not just productive—but life-giving.

Final Thought

There are no quick fixes.

You can't give what you haven't received. Only when leaders prioritize their own soul health can they truly lead others toward transformation.

Replenish offers a new way to live—and lead. A way that prioritizes presence over pressure. Soul health over platform. Surrender over striving.

The truth is: ministry is hard. But it doesn't have to drain you.

When your soul is anchored in God, you can face the storms. You can lead with clarity, courage, and compassion. And you can finish well.

As the Psalmist said,

"Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise Him, my salvation and my God" (Psalm 42:11).



Below are my favorite quotes from the book

Favorite Quotes

Introduction

1 The Idolatry of Leadership

- in trying to fill the gap with leadership resources, inadvertently we have marginalized the soul side of leadership.
- We have neglected the fact that a pastor's greatest leadership tool is a healthy soul.
- Godly leadership is always inside out. God always has and always will choose to smile on men and women who are healthy, holy, and humble.
- True spiritual dignity comes from a healthy soul and a life marked by spiritual power and the presence of Christ.
- I believe the church is his plan for accomplishing his purposes on earth.

2 Hole in My Soul

- When the Wesleyan bands (small groups) got together, the first thing they asked each other was a back-stage question: "How is it with your soul?"
- Henri Nouwen painted a picture of leaders with a healthy soul: The central question is, Are the leaders of the future truly men and women of God, people with an ardent desire to dwell in God's presence, to listen to God's voice, to look at God's beauty, to touch God's incarnate Word and to taste fully God's infinite goodness?
- How well does your team engage in back-stage conversations? How well do you personally engage in back-stage conversations?
- If someone asked you today, "How is it with your soul?" what would you say?

3 Your Ministry Is Not Your Life

- Paul said, "When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." Notice the words "Christ, who is your life." Jesus is my life.
- I was crystal clear about this when I went into ministry as a young man. But there certainly have been seasons through the years when I lost that clarity. My ministry became my identity. My ministry became my first love. My ministry consumed all my spiritual passion. My ministry (not Jesus) was my life. The unintended byproduct during those seasons was a slow disconnect from Jesus.
- When this happens, you begin to do ministry in the flesh. You begin to think serving God is all about working hard, being strategic, developing leaders and executing vision. You fundamentally begin to believe that it's up to you.
- When God came to Moses and gave him the assignment of leading his people, Moses had a predictable response: "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God essentially replied, They will follow you because you have my presence in your life. That is what qualifies you for spiritual leadership.

- God was Moses' life. He had learned the valuable lesson that relationship comes before responsibility.
- Moses doesn't ask for skill or charisma. He says, "Teach me your ways so I may know you." It's all about relationship.

De-Toxing Your Soul

4 Image Management

- "The older I get, the less concern I have with what I have or have not done and the more concern I have for what I have or have not become."

5 Seduction of Ambition

- I have a growing conviction that it's dangerous to equip young leaders with vision, leadership, strategy, and church growth principles without equipping them to have healthy souls.
- The emotion and the pressure were mostly self-imposed. The emotions I felt had to do with my own ambition. In my mind the only successful pastor was the pastor of a fast-growing church. Our obsession with size and church growth has set up a generation of pastors who feel like failures.
- Fire tests the purity of silver and gold, but a person is tested by being praised.
- If there is one thing I've learned in recent years, it's this: numerical growth alone is no indicator of God's favor or godly leadership.

6 Ambition Ambush

- What makes selfish ambition so insidious is we can see it in others but not in ourselves.
- Your self-interest hides in a million clever disguises."
- In ministry, the perfect storm for a personal disaster is also the convergence of three elements: ambition, isolation, and self-deception.
- We must dig beneath the surface and extract the roots that keep producing dysfunction. Why am I so driven? Why do I keep pushing so hard? Am I obsessed with success? Do I have God's measuring stick for success? Do I have a utilitarian view of people? How has my drive to succeed hurt my family?
- Humility is not being down on yourself. It is not self-ridicule. I like Andrew Murray's definition. It is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God. Where God is all, self is nothing.
- life of Jesus and discover how many times he used the word "not" or "nothing" in reference to himself. In John, he makes statements like "in myself, I can do nothing" or "I do not please myself" or "I do not accept praise from men" or "I came down from heaven not to do my will" or "I do nothing on my own" or "I am not seeking glory for myself."
- Even as the Son of God, he was aware he was not pursuing his own agenda but fulfilling the Father's plan.

- A few years ago I had the opportunity to visit the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, where Dr. David Cho is pastor. After the morning service I attended a reception where the church's vision and values were articulated. Dr. Cho described the church as a three-legged stool and said if any leg were removed, the stool would collapse. The first two he mentioned didn't surprise me: prayer and small groups. Cho's church is renowned for its prayer ministry and thousands of cell groups. The third leg did surprise me: It wasn't biblical teaching or powerful worship or social ministry or personal evangelism. The third leg of the stool he referred to as "touch not the glory."
- All of you, serve each other in humility, for "God opposes the proud, but favors the humble." So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time he will lift you up in honor. It is our job to humble ourselves and leave it to God when and how he honors us.

7 Approval Addiction

- My family and my soul paid the biggest price. Back then I would have attributed my behavior to a commitment to Jesus and my calling to ministry. And I was sincerely and authentically devoted to Christ. But that wasn't the whole story. I also harbored an addiction to approval that has been a big part of my story.
- Applause was the fuel necessary for me to feel significant.
- When approval is a driving force in your life, it messes with your motives. You run decisions through the filter of "What will people think?" rather than "What's the right thing to do?"

8 Isolation Trap

- Ministry is a character profession. I can't separate my private life from my public leadership. According to Jesus, it is the holiness of my private life that gives spiritual power and validation to my public ministry. This raises the stakes for my personal integrity; I must have people in my life who help me stay on track in my private world.
- need to invest the time and build mutual trust in an accountability relationship. It is a sacred trust to give someone that kind of access to my life, and I'm not going to quickly give them the password into my private world.

9 Need for Speed

- Many of us live with a stuck accelerator. The frantic pace of life resides in the church as much as in the community. And we have no trouble rationalizing our velocity. After all, time is short, and we're going fast for Jesus. We have been scammed into believing that an insane pace is simply the price tag of effective leadership.
- John Ortberg says once, "Hurry is not about a disordered schedule, it is about a disordered heart."
- It's not easy to slow down our lives. Despite all our lamenting about how busy we are and the pace we maintain, we like exhilaration. It makes us feel important.

- A stuck accelerator has huge implications for my soul and my ministry. Hurry is a devious soul enemy. Incessant activity will drain us. In our rush to accomplish much and live to the fullest, we rob ourselves of some of life's richest moments.
- We have hints that there is a way of life vastly richer and deeper than all this hurried existence, a life of unhurried serenity and peace and power.
- Since this issue of "hurry" has been on my radar in recent years, I've noticed something in the life of Jesus. He never seems in a hurry.
- You and I live in a different world; therefore we must be even more intentional about slowing down.

10 Fatigued, Frazzled, and Fried

- Everywhere I go I meet people who want a simpler life, a slower pace, and a schedule with more breathing room. People are exhausted and frazzled.
- in our culture we have swallowed hook, line, and sinker the lie that busyness equals importance.
- Busyness will not only distract, it will infect. Your busyness will damage your soul. Over time you will develop a hurried spirit. And even when your body is still, your soul will be racing. Your busy spirit will constantly remind you of everything you need to be doing. At times you'll feel like your insides are racing.
- Could it be that in our driven, overachieving busyness we have missed what's most important? Could it really be that sitting is better? It feels so unproductive.
- I can relate to Wayne Cordeiro's observation from his own journey. It's a gift to be able to launch an inspiring vision. But unless you manage it along the way, it can turn on you, and soon the voracious appetite of the vision consumes you.
- Your ministry will take all you give it. Your church will take all you are willing to give it. Ministry demands will always exceed your capacity.
- Just because you can doesn't mean you should.
- I don't have all the answers to this huge problem, but I do know you won't gradually merge into the slow lane. You have to get serious and declare war on the compulsive busyness that's controlling you.
- There is a simpler, less frantic way to do ministry. And, more importantly, there is a simpler, less frantic way to do life.

11 It's Not All About the Weekend

- If I've learned anything about the health of churches in the last several years it's this: The weekend experience is a poor indicator of the health of a church. In fact, attendance alone is not a good gauge of effectiveness for any ministry event.
- here's where this conversation begins to bury many pastors. They apply the same logic to their stagnant church. They assume the lack of large crowds means they're ineffective and unhealthy. They must not be doing something right; they must be a failure.

- The numbers game can mess with your head and heart and end up making you feel like a loser.
- We often defend our numbers obsession with statements like “there’s a whole book in the Bible called Numbers” or “numbers represent people.” But somehow when you hear them talked about, it doesn’t always feel like it’s about people. It can feel like it’s more about the leader. Too much focus on weekend attendance has one of two results, and neither is good. The pastor ends up feeling either proud or discouraged.
- [A man’s] work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. Notice that Paul doesn’t say the “quantity” of my works will be judged, but rather the “quality” of my works. In ministry we need to recapture the word faithful. It is the nature of our world to be enamored with what’s big. But in the church we should seek to be enamored with what’s godly. By God’s sovereign design and call, some people are given hard assignments where the soil is hard and the plowing is slow.

Start Here...Start Now

12 Pit Stops Required

- If you could plot the trajectory of your soul, your inner life, where is it headed? If your soul stays on the path it’s on, where will it be ten years from now? Twenty years? After your ministry role is gone and you no longer hold an organizational position, what will you be left with? Where you end up then is largely determined by how well you manage what’s going on inside you now.
- Playing the movie means never to see any individual action as a singular thing in and of itself: any one thing you do is only a scene in a larger movie.
- More than ever, it is imperative for leaders to take time away for thinking and reflection about where we are and where we’re headed.
- you can’t afford not to take the time. In order to maintain my sanity and some semblance of spiritual health, I have to make time for personal retreat.
- If you’ve ever watched the Indy 500, you know that no one wins the race without making pit stops. Pit stops allow the tires to be changed, adjustments to be made, and the tank to be re-fueled. In ministry today, we have to learn how to take personal pit stops so we can consider where we’re headed and make mid-race adjustments.
- Ruth Barton, in an article on personal retreat, says, One of the most important rhythms of a leader’s life is a constant back and forth motion between times when we are engaged in the battle—giving our best energy to take the next hill—and times of retreat when we are not “on” and we do not have to be any particular way for anyone. Time when we can be in God’s presence for our own soul’s sake.
- Leaders who stay spiritually healthy long term are those who learn this sacred rhythm of advance and retreat. There are times when we’re focused on the mission and taking the next hill for Christ’s kingdom. But you can’t stay on the front lines forever. You have to rest and regroup. In fact, the more fierce and intense the battle, the more often you have to retreat.
- Replenishing my soul.

- I now realize the world can get along just fine without me for a little while. I am learning to “be” with my heavenly Father, and my soul is replenished in the process.
- Recalibrating my perspective.

13 What Kind of Old Person Do I Want to Be?

- What kind of old person do you want to be?
- Gordon MacDonald’s *The Life God Blesses*.
- Securing a spot on MacDonald’s list of “emulatable” old men had virtually nothing to do with achievement or success as we often define it. It had more to do with character and attitude and “being.”
- I am more drawn to men and women who live well than to those who live big.
- “my success was putting my own soul in danger.”
- When we have accomplished a measure of success, we can begin to coast.
- of our experience and knowledge rather than the deep well of a healthy soul. On the outside we have the answers, but on the inside we have questions.
- we have to admit that decades of ministry haven’t necessarily made us more like Jesus. Our sermons are better, our leadership is better, our staff management is better, our planning is better, but our intimacy with Jesus? Not so much.
- For many of us in ministry, our challenge is quite different. It’s not success that threatens our soul but the perceived lack of success that now becomes the threat to us as we age. Ministry hasn’t turned out like we thought it would. We’ve done the best we could, but more often than we want to admit, ministry has been more babysitting than leading, more mundane than miraculous, more life-taking than life-giving.
- Some days we want out. We daydream about what it’s like on the outside. We fantasize about a prison break from the constraints of ministry. We wonder what it would be like to have a “normal” life. We ponder how it would feel to have weekends off. We dream of not being constantly scrutinized. If ministry hasn’t turned out like you expected, I want to ask you the same question. What kind of old man or woman do you want to be? I’m not asking what kind of ministry you want to have. I’m asking about you, as a person, as a Christ follower. You can’t undo the past, and you can’t control all of your circumstances, but you can plot a different trajectory for your future.

14 It’s All About the Groom

- John Piper says, “Christ does not exist to make much of us. We exist in order to enjoy making much of Him.”

15 The Call No One Wants to Get

- Obscurity can be a bitter pill to swallow. We in ministry like to quote passages like the one in Acts 17 that says the early church turned the world upside down. We love to talk about great people of faith who changed their world. Hebrews 11 talks about such people. These

great men and women of faith conquered kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, became powerful in battle, routed foreign armies, and even raised the dead to life. It would be great if the chapter ended there, leaving us inspired by the exponential potential of faith. But there's a ninety-degree turn in the middle of verse 35, a subtle transition in the word "others." Their names are not listed. They will remain historically anonymous. These "others" were still great men and women of faith. In fact, "the world was not worthy of them." But unlike those who experienced miracles and victory, these "others" were tortured, flogged, imprisoned, stoned, and put to death by the sword. They were destitute, often homeless, and they lived in obscurity. Interestingly, "These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised." None of them received what had been promised. Not yet. Not in this world. Not all of God's promises had been fulfilled in this life.

- following Jesus did not bring notoriety; it brought obscurity.
- One of the spiritual health questions every ministry leader must answer is, "Am I willing to serve in obscurity?"
- obscurity allowed me to wrestle with my identity and significance.
- Jesus never ran toward the spotlight.
- unseen does not equal unimportant.
- Even if you've had a "Kevin Skinner" moment where the spotlight has been on you, it doesn't last long. The spotlight is fickle. It will always turn toward the next rising star. Even if you're in the spotlight today, obscurity is coming again. It's inevitable. When the spotlight is gone, what you have left is the relationship. That's why paying attention to your soul is so important. Someday the trappings of ministry will fade away, and all you'll have will be Jesus. Will that be enough?
- Obscurity didn't matter. The relationship did. Someday the trappings of ministry will fade away. We'll move out of the office. We won't have a business card or a title. The spotlight will turn to someone else. But if we've been sharing our life with Jesus, obscurity won't matter. The relationship will.
- But Lord Jesus, you were a servant of all. Today I surrender all desire to be great; I renounce all pleasure I take in being important.

16 Simplicity Is Not Simple

- "Amid the confused restlessness of modern life, our wearied minds dream of simplicity."
- the first step toward simplicity was taking full responsibility. I had to own my stuff and admit that when it comes to simplicity I am my own worst enemy. Most of the complexity and clutter was my own doing—saying yes to too many requests, not having healthy boundaries, not knowing my limits, and always trying to please everyone contributed to a cluttered life. I was not the victim, I was the perpetrator.
- I also have to realize I will never drift toward simplicity. The drift is always toward complexity and clutter. Take your garage, for example. If you neglect it, it will naturally drift toward disorder.

- We must be proactive and preemptive in guarding our lives from complexity. So, how do you do this, practically? You get crystal clear about your values and priorities.
- Mindy Caliguire writes, “Simplicity means taking action to align one’s exterior world with one’s interior values and commitment to God.” When my values get clear, decisions get simple. Not easy, but simple. Simplicity is not necessarily about doing less. It’s about using your priorities to filter opportunities and options.
- Their observation was that my focus was diffused and fragmented, and they challenged me to simplify.
- As the German artist Hans Hofmann eloquently said, “The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak.”
- I must trim the excess so there is room for the essential.
- Own your life. Take responsibility, and don’t play the victim card. The problem is internal, not environmental. Get alone and determine your values and priorities. Write them down and regularly review them. Make the hard decisions. The hardest part is having the courage to carry out the necessary decisions that will help you simplify. Perform regular maintenance. Practice the discipline of planned neglect.
- Clarity + Courage + Calendar = Simplicity.

17 Feel the Rhythm

- The key to unlocking a sane pace of life is found in that word “rhythm.”
- Jesus regularly took time to live in the spaces between the notes. He often withdrew from the demands of life to be alone and to be with his Father. He also helped the disciples embrace the idea of rhythm. Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while.

18 iPhones and Your Soul

- Unplug. Literally and figuratively. Consider giving your phone and e-mail a weekly Sabbath.
- Engage. When you engage in conversation, listen! Make good eye contact. Don’t look past people. Don’t send signals through your body language that you’re in a hurry. Practice being fully present. Communicate care and value by giving your full and undivided attention. While technology has its place, there is no substitute for full, personal, physical, focused—undivided—attention.
- Treat others like you would want to be treated. That means you aren’t constantly glancing at your phone looking for the next text message. That means you don’t send an e-mail when you need to have a personal conversation. That means being very discerning about answering a phone call when you’re meeting with someone.

19 70% of Pastors Don’t Have One

- there was a subtle pressure to project an image that you had it all together. Because of that subtle pressure you wouldn't let people get too close, which meant your friendships were usually shallow.
- you never drift into deep friendship.

20 Identity Theft

- We're often eager to listen to the voices that say, "Prove yourself, do something important, succeed, achieve" rather than God's voice, which whispers, "Rest in me; I am your shepherd. You don't have to prove anything. You are not an employee, you are my child." But let's be honest. With all the pressure to succeed, even in ministry, it's hard to hear and really believe God's voice. For many of us, our activity is synonymous with our identity. It's how we convince ourselves we have value. To feel better about ourselves we work harder and longer and become prisoners of our own illusions.
- Notice what God said and didn't say. His words in that sacred moment "were neither directional (go here) nor instructional (do this). They were relational: This is my Son."
- The question is, Can we learn to tune out the fickle voices that for so long have dominated our lives? Can we listen to the voice of our Father who calls us his child?
- See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children, and we really are!
- Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.
- When gratitude and sonship fills your heart, it spills over. Without competition or comparison or insecurity, we are free to bless others. We can tell them how much they matter to God. We don't have to turn the conversation to us, and we don't have to grab for the spotlight. We can allow others to succeed without envy because our identity isn't wrapped up in our achieving. We are God's children. And that is enough.

21 Death to Dancing Bears

- My focus shifted from ministering to people to managing them. I began to obsess about organizational development rather than people development.
- we need to lean into both aspects; we need to be good organizational leaders and yet we need to truly value and engage people.
- Another factor fueling this problem is that programs are easy to measure. It's easy to count butts in seats, so that's usually what ends up getting celebrated. But the size of a church or ministry doesn't matter when it comes to caring for people. Some large churches are very personal and soft toward people. Some small churches are impersonal and hard toward people. It isn't about size, but mindset.
- Richard Baxter, more than three hundred years ago, have never been more timely: The whole cause of our ministry must also be carried on in a tender love for our people. We must let them see that nothing pleases us more than what profits them. We should show

them that what does them good does us good also. We should feel that nothing troubles us more than what hurts them.

22 Does Your Soul Have a Backbone?

- Over the last few years my single most consistent prayer has been for spiritual courage.
- my fear of the “old guard” often kept me from making courageous leadership decisions. I could always justify my position in the name of “not going too fast” or “bringing people along” or “keeping unity,” but the truth is, sometimes it was lack of courage.

Sustaining a Lifetime of Health

23 The Art of Doing Nothing

- The world or your ministry may not give you permission to stop, but God does. In fact, he has commanded that we stop and rest.
- In her practical book on Sabbath, Lynne Baab reminds us that Sabbath isn't about resting only when everything has been completed. “Sabbath is God's gracious ‘five o'clock whistle’ that gives me permission to stop and lay down my tools, ready or not.”
- We have forgotten what enough feels like. We live in a world seduced by its own unlimited potential.
- During Sabbath God whispers, “I'm in control. The world can get along without you for twenty-four hours.” We are not as indispensable as we think. When I practice Sabbath I find that I'm more present. I tend to do a better job of living in the moment and enjoying life's simple pleasures. I notice the beauty of creation more easily. I listen a little better, and I feel more joyful. Practicing Sabbath is like getting a weekly perspective adjustment. When I stop and reflect and pray and spend time with God, I'm reminded of what's most important. Living in the twenty-first century is like being in a jar of muddy river water. Only when the jar remains still will the sediment drop to the bottom and the water once again become clear. Sabbath keeping helps me see God and life more clearly.
- I love Pete Scazzero's template for practicing Sabbath—Stop, Rest, Delight, and Contemplate. Stop. Put productivity on hold for twenty-four hours. Rest. For some of us the most spiritual thing we can do is take a nap. Delight. Isaiah 58 talks about enjoying and delighting in Sabbath. Sabbath is a day to enjoy what God has created. Contemplate. Take time to “be” with God. The seventh day is a Sabbath “to the Lord.”

24 Say Yes by Saying No

- Tony Blair, former British Prime Minister, once said, “The art of leadership is not saying yes, it is saying no.”
- William Ury says, “Like all good No's, ours were in service to a higher Yes.”
- Maybe part of the reason we have such a hard time with no is that we aren't still long enough to discover the yes.

- Ask yourself, “What is the higher Yes in my life that will become the filter through which I make decisions?”
- The only way to have the courage to say no is to turn your values into resolve. Drive a stake in the ground and determine that you will not be driven by the fickle opinions of others. If you wait until you’re in the moment, you will cave in. By deciding your “higher Yes,” you are essentially pre-deciding when you will say no. When you’re navigating all the options and choices in front of you, pay attention to your gut instincts.
- William Ury gives us solid advice: Treat your emotions as signposts, pointing at your core needs. Rather than being your enemy, your emotions can become your ally, for they can help you uncover your yes.
- have the courage to say no to some things so you can say yes to the best things.

25 Noise-Canceling Headphones for the Soul

- In the biblical stories we discover that many God moments came when people were alone in his presence (e.g., Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, Paul).
- I am not a victim of circumstance or situation. My lack of solitude is a reflection of choices that I make. I just want to tell you that I need you and desire to change this area of my life. Help it to be enough just to be with you.
- We are conditioned to surround ourselves with noise. With our incessant activity, frenetic pace, and electronic leashes, it’s no wonder silence and solitude are rare commodities. We despise “dead time.”
- He only has three years of public ministry—not much time to start a movement that will turn the world upside down. You’d think his strategy would be to push hard for three years. Travel as much as possible, see as many people as possible, preach as many times as possible, develop an organizational plan, and raise up as many leaders as possible. Yet when Jesus left the house that morning, he didn’t head out to do ministry. He went to a solitary place to be alone with his Father.
- “We who have been drugged by diversions cannot expect to enter the quiet without a struggle. Our souls will roar for diversion.”
- Henri Nouwen eloquently articulated the freedom that solitude can bring:
- In solitude we become aware that our worth is not the same as our usefulness.
- I have stilled and quieted my soul;

26 The Most Embarrassing Gap in My Leadership

- But I remember thinking, No one would ever accuse us of being a house of prayer. The Holy Spirit took the spotlight and shined it on my own life. My next thought pierced my spirit: and no one would ever accuse me of being a man of prayer. I repented. I knew something had to change.
- Proverbs says, “He who walks with the wise grows wise.”

- structuring these pieces into my weekly schedule made a huge difference in my passion for prayer. The most important thing was creating space in my week for me to be with God.
- As I put more focus on pursuing Jesus than pursuing my ministry, prayer is a thread that weaves its way throughout my day.

27 Humility and Hubris

- the “health and strength” of your spiritual life is tied to a spirit of humility.
- Maturing as a leader comes with some hard but rich lessons. One of those is to learn that real joy comes not in promoting self but dying to self. And, that real satisfaction comes in being nothing so that Jesus might be everything.
- We can begin to think it’s because of us and about us.
- We can obsess with success and forget that what draws a crowd isn’t necessarily what draws God. We forget that he cares just as much about the means as he does the ends.
- The more fruitfulness and success we experience, the greater the temptation. Your success and the praise that follows it will be a test of your humility.
- When hubris begins to win the day in a ministry, there are some telltale signs. It’s more about the leader’s vision than it is about Jesus. Prayer is conspicuously absent. Achieving the cause gets more attention than abiding in Christ. There’s a utilitarian view of people. There’s a spirit of competition and comparing.
- Work hard at praising others and not yourself. The challenge from Solomon is direct and straightforward: Don’t praise yourself; let others do it! Pay attention to those inner promptings when the Holy Spirit is spotlighting self-promotion.
- Be interested in others more and interested in yourself less. Ask people questions about their lives. Get someone to tell you their story.

28 Stay in Touch With Your Dark Side

- They seemed to be more in touch with what they were capable of and, as a result, they didn’t trust themselves.
- But I need to realize my potential isn’t all positive.
- The closer you get to God, the more miserable things you will find in your heart. This is not a negative thing—God allows it to let you lose confidence in yourself. You will have accomplished something when you can look at your inner corruptness without anxiety or discouragement and simply trust in God.
- Another benefit of staying in touch with my depravity is that it helps me be less critical and more loving toward people.

29 A Valuable Lesson From Alcoholics Anonymous

- Resolved, whenever I do any conspicuously evil action, to trace it back, till I come to the original cause.
- Edwards knew the value of examining the why behind the what.

- When he discovered sin in his life, Edwards felt compelled to trace it to its origin—the heart.
- In order to become holy he must trace the waters of sin upstream until he reached the springs from which the iniquity flowed—his motives.
- One reason self-examination is so crucial is found in the words of Jeremiah: “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?”
- Solomon wrote, “The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being.”
- Consider using the following questions that John Wesley used in this practice. Am I consciously or unconsciously creating the impression that I’m better than I really am? In other words, am I a hypocrite? Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate? Do I confidentially pass on to another what was told to me in confidence? Can I be trusted? Am I a slave to dress, friends, work, or habits? When did I last speak to someone else about my faith? Do I pray about the money I spend? Do I get to bed on time and get up on time? Do I disobey God in anything? Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful? Is there anyone I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward, or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?
- Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

30 Practicing the Presence of People

- as Aaron faced ministry decisions, he was to ask, “What’s best for the people?”
- Ultimately, leadership is not just about vision and strategy, it’s about people.
- really loving people is demanding work. It’s much easier to sit at my computer or plan an event. Really loving on people and investing in them is messy and time-consuming, but there’s no substitute for personal care.
- He feared they were spending more and more time in front of a computer screen and less and less time in front of a person.
- I’ve experienced plenty of times when the people weren’t on my heart, but they were on my nerves! I know that to be a faithful pastor I have to love people. The challenge is trying to stay healthy enough so that I can really love people.
- Too many of us have the head of a leader but not the heart of a shepherd.
- Even though all vision is ultimately about touching and impacting people, we can do it in a way that’s very impersonal.
- Stay relationally connected.
- Stay spiritually connected to Christ.
- when your own soul is healthy and filled up with Christ, your heart will be softer toward others.

- Slow down. Try walking slower. When you have a conversation, take time to listen. Hurry is the archenemy of intimacy and deep relationship; it says to people, “I don’t really have time for you.”
- Engage people at a personal level. When was the last time you sat down with somebody on your team and asked, “How are you doing, really?” Maybe take someone in your ministry to lunch with no other agenda than getting to know them.
- One of the quickest ways to soften your heart toward others is to pray for them.
- May the people you lead always be on your heart.

31 Paying Attention

- they long to be noticed, to be loved.
- 1. Speed. You must slow down to notice people.
- The speed of our lives causes us to miss many people God wants us to notice.
- Look people in the eye.
- Ask questions.
- Leave margin in your daily routine. When every single moment is spoken for, you leave yourself no time for the divine interruptions God wants to send your way. Most of Jesus’ life-changing encounters were unplanned and unscheduled.
- Preoccupation.
- Paying attention to my soul and my life with Jesus results in being less preoccupied with the stresses and pressures of ministry. Having a healthy soul may not change my outward circumstances, but it makes my heart soft toward people in spite of my circumstances.
- I must raise my spiritual antenna and actually scout out people God wants me to notice. Think of it like the Where’s Waldo? books. In the busy, cluttered pages of your life and ministry, God wants you to find some Waldos. And you’ll only see them if you’re on the lookout. This week, be like God and turn your face toward people.

32 Shock Absorbers for the Soul

- Jesus did not come to cajole or manipulate people like some kind of religious charlatan. He did not come to debate or lead by forceful personality. He never tried to gather a crowd or build an organization. Rather, Isaiah portrays a gentle, compassionate, tender-toward-people Messiah.
- I don’t remember much about the conversation that night, but I do remember how kind and tender and gracious he was with each person in our family.
- Olav is that rare person who doesn’t make you want to be like him; he makes you want to be like Jesus.
- If tenderness, care, and kindness are the attributes of gentleness, then intimidation, domination, and manipulation are its antithesis. When we “power up,” we lose our gentleness. When we are self-serving, we lose our gentleness.
- “Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”

- God is near and watching. How I treat people does not go unnoticed. God isn't just interested in my ministry to the masses—he also cares deeply about my treatment of individuals.
- when I'm emotionally empty and spiritually unhealthy, I am not gentle.
- Emotional vitality and spiritual health are like having a good set of shock absorbers for your soul. When shocks are working right, they help absorb life's bumps and potholes. But when your shocks are worn out and you hit a pothole, you bottom out and the ride is rough. I also need to remember that when my soul isn't healthy, I make the ride rough for everybody else in the car.
- It should be true that the longer we know and serve Jesus, we grow in graciousness, not grumpiness.
- “Do those who know me best respect me most?”
- Do those who have a front-row seat to my life see a leader who's personal, tender, gracious, and gentle? “Let your gentleness be evident to all.”

33 The Blessing of Voice and the Voice of Blessing

- Part of creating a healthy team environment is learning to bless people with our words. In a world where people are verbally battered, we have the privilege of being the voice of blessing. It's not only a privilege, it's also a sacred trust.
- “Kind words can be short and easy to speak but their echoes are truly endless.” Your words, both helpful and hurtful, reverberate through the lives of the people around you.
- Paul commands us to “encourage one another and build each other up.”
- “You matter, your life counts, God loves you, and I am glad you're in my life.” Your words may be the only encouraging ones some people hear. You are the voice of God's grace to those around you.
- Being an encourager requires you to shift from looking down and in to looking up and out.
- May your conversations this week be peppered with phrases like “I believe in you,” “I'm grateful for you,” “I see God using you,” “I appreciate you,” and “I'm glad you are in my life.”
- Remember the admonition of Solomon: Words can kill and words can give life. The choice is yours.

34 The Gift of Loitering

- I want more slow and deep in my life, and less fast and shallow.
- They also believed that the vacation began when you start, not when you arrive. When that's your mindset, it's okay to enjoy moments along the way.
- Building Healthy Teams

Building Healthy Teams

35 “Team” Doesn’t Have an “I,” But It Does Have a “YOU”

- If you want to talk about an organization’s true spiritual health, you have to look at the health of the team that leads it. The first step to building a healthy staff and leadership culture is to get it on the radar. We get so busy trying to grow the organization that we neglect to grow and develop our team. If your team is your greatest asset, it’s not only right to invest in them, it’s also strategic to the fulfillment of the vision.

36 Is Your Team Culture More Corporate Than Christlike?

- Authentic Spirituality There must be a vibrant, life-giving God orientation to how we do team.
- Over time the environment can begin to feel corporate and lacking in spiritual vitality. The kind of spiritual life we talk about on Sunday is not what the team is experiencing through the week. This becomes a breeding ground for cynicism that can poison the entire leadership culture. That’s why we must work hard to raise our team’s spiritual temperature. A great starting place: simply have more God conversations. Share what God has been doing in your life or what he’s been teaching you. Ask others what he’s been doing. Another way to raise the spiritual temperature is to regularly open God’s Word together. Spend a few minutes unpacking a passage with your team. Memorize a passage together. Pray together. I mean really pray together, about anything and everything. Have planned times and spontaneous times of prayer. Make prayer a part of how you do team.
- Developing People
- “More time spent with fewer people equals greater impact.”
- You know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.
- our first priority is to build people, not a program.
- Encouraging is about affirming and blessing.
- Comforting is all about helping people through the difficult
- Urging is about challenging people—nudging them and pushing them to improve and grow.
- Relationship is what gives me the right and insight to encourage, comfort, and urge the people on my team.

37 Speak the Unspoken Rules

- one of the steps we took that proved helpful was the creation of a team covenant—a set of operating principles we came up with together and agreed to live by.
- What creates dysfunction in a team is what creates dysfunction in any relationship: colliding expectations.

- Collaboration is lost to sideways energy every day in the local church. Why? The three reasons I see most are mistrust, personal ego, and lack of strategic clarity. . . . Leaders rarely clarify what working together really looks like.
- “What is it that no one has likely told me, that I need to know to succeed here?”
- Someone has said culture is the “unspoken rules of how things get done.” For team health, it is imperative that someone speak the unspoken rules.
- That’s why leaders must take responsibility to bring clarity to the team culture. Marcus Buckingham, who writes about maximizing strengths, says, “Clarity is the preoccupation of the effective leader. If you do nothing else as a leader, be clear.”
- TEAM COVENANT We will openly voice and express our own opinions and it is safe to voice contrary opinions. We will follow through with our commitments. We will agree to support and invest in each other personally and professionally. We will pray for each other and with each other. We will hold and respect all confidences. We will have frank and open discussion within the room, solidarity outside the room. We will strive to help each other win. Silence is agreement. We will have fun. Show up on time. No e-mail during meetings (except during breaks). Communicate often and constantly ask “who needs to know.” We will not verbally “throw each other under the bus” when we speak of one another.

38 Show Up and Speak Up

- Unless we learn how to have more honest conversations, we will have shallow relationships. Unless we learn to talk about the hard and uncomfortable stuff, our sense of authentic community will be purely cosmetic.
- teams who don’t engage conflict “resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments.”
- At the first hint of conflict in a team meeting, many people will turtle up. When you pick up a turtle, what does it do? Sticks his head into his protective shell. The more you prod and poke, and beat on the shell, the deeper he withdraws. It’s a defense mechanism. The turtle will not stick his head out again until he feels it’s safe to do so. The same is true for people.
- As a leader, I must begin to create a safe environment, infused with trust, where we talk about the hard stuff and engage conflict in a healthy way. When people take the risk of sticking their neck out and disagreeing, we must not shut them down. Nothing will cause turtling up quicker than use of power, position, guilt, or defensiveness; in contrast, we want to foster openness and bless honest feedback.
- So, from a leader’s standpoint, we must create a culture and environment that fosters openness and blesses honest feed-back.
- From a team member’s standpoint, once I sense there is a safe environment, I have the responsibility to show up and speak up. I must engage and not hold back. The team needs my input. I see things others don’t. My perspective and experience are unique.
- When I don’t show up and speak up, it is usually because I am thinking of me. I want my comments and non-comments to put me in the best light. But if I really care about the team and the relationships, I will be honest. I’ll give my feedback and share my concerns.

- **There's a definite irony here. Trying not to upset people and make waves makes just the opposite happen. In our attempt to avoid conflict, we actually end up creating it.**

39 Are Your Systems Vitamins or Toxins?

- The system Jethro proposed was three-pronged: Pray. Teach. Delegate. Moses was to pray and take the people's needs before God. He was to teach the people so they would know God's laws and be able to settle most disputes themselves. And, he was to find faithful men and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundred, fifties, and tens.
- **Notice that the healthy system would allow Moses time to pray. When a culture is dominated by ineffective and dysfunctional systems, spiritual practices get marginalized. Healthy systems actually create space and time for spiritual life.**

40 Going Beyond Alignment to Attunement

- Too many leaders approach organizational alignment as a purely mechanical process and underestimate the importance of relationship.
- Attunement has to do with aligning hearts. It's about relationship and bringing people along. It's about creating a sense of ownership and buy-in.
- attunement comes only from relationship, when those who follow us trust us and know we care about them.
- Alignment tends to focus on organizational goals, while attunement tends to focus on relational good will.
- Believe in your people.
- "I believe in you; I want to do everything I can to help you succeed"?
- Celebrate.
- the number one reason people leave their jobs is because they do not feel appreciated."
- Build community.
- In your meetings take time to build relationships. Pray together. Celebrate birthdays. Go to dinner with the team and their spouses.
- Listen aggressively.
- Listen to people's ideas. Listen to their frustrations. Be accessible and approachable. Give them your undivided, unhurried attention.
- Constantly communicate.
- lack of communication fosters negativity and cynicism.
- In a culture of attunement, people feel included, not just informed.
- "Who is going to be impacted by what we talked about today?"
- Have fun.
- Focus more on people than plans. Have unhurried conversation with team members that isn't about their leadership, but is about their lives.

41 Ten Commandments of Technology and Team

- Crackberries have become the unofficial mascot of the Age of Speed, but mind your addiction. Research revealed that allowing frequent email interruptions causes a drop in performance equivalent to losing ten IQ points—two and a half times the drop seen after smoking pot.
- 1. Thou shalt not use e-mail to deliver bad news.
- 2. Thou shalt not put anything in e-mail that you would mind having forwarded . . . because it probably will be.
- 3. Thou shalt not e-mail (or chat online) during meetings.
- 4. Thou shalt not use “bcc.”
- 5. Thou shalt be more personal than professional.
 - By its very nature, e-mail tends to come across as impersonal. Therefore, we have to work hard to come across as warm and personal. Make your e-mails more relational and less transactional. It takes a few extra seconds, but communicate as a friend.
- 6. Thou shalt keep e-mails short and to the point.
- 7. Thou shalt not text or take calls while in conversation or in a meeting.
 - If you must take a call while talking to someone else, explain why you need to interrupt the conversation and apologize for having to do so.
- 8. Thou shalt not call or e-mail people on their day off.
- 9. Thou shalt use e-mail for prayer and encouragement.
 - E-mail and texting (etc.) are wonderful tools for prayer and encouragement.
- 10. Thou shalt give phone/e-mail/Facebook/Twitter (etc.) a Sabbath.
 - I encourage you to talk with your team about having a technology Sabbath where you literally and symbolically unplug for a day.

Epilogue Bringing Your Soul Back to Life

- “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.”
- “If we don’t change the direction we’re going, we’re likely to end up where we are headed.” Look ahead. If you stay on the road you’re traveling today, where are you going to end up?
- You will find rest for your souls.
- Could it be God’s first priority in my life is a connected and joyful and refreshed soul? Could it be true in my ministry that his “yoke is easy and [his] burden is light”?