Health in Ministry

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We want to talk about health and ministry and keeping heart till the end today.

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And I'm wondering if somebody would just open us up with prayer as we talk about a pretty intense and serious topic. Sure. I'll pray. All right, Mike. Thanks. God, thank you for the gift of life you've given to each of us. Thank you for calling us together today. Thank you for who you are and your character and your faithfulness to us. We just pray a prayer of protection over each of us in our. I pray that today you would teach us new things through Bob and through our time together.

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I pray that you would be glorified through this time, in Jesus' name, amen. Amen. All right, thanks so much for that prayer, I appreciate it. If you guys, I just put in the chat box a link to some notes if you want to follow along. Today, I've got a bunch of stuff I want to get through, but I really want to make space, not just at the end for Q&A or discussion, but anywhere along the way. If you want to jump in with a question or a comment or anything, please feel free to do that.

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All right? Okay, is Jim here? Jim, did you just pop in? I am here. There's space. All right. Especially you, Jim, with all your years of wisdom. I feel like, can you, can you kill Brian's video feed? I feel like it was just a really, I didn't feel like there was a lot of like agreement with what you said about my… You just started laughing when I said that, yeah. I thought I was shaking his head.

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It just didn't, it didn't fill me with confidence, that's what I did. Alright, well, just to give you a little bit of backstory here, I planted a church in 2004 in Portland, Oregon, and I don't know if you guys know much about Portland, but it was already fairly post-Christian at that, at that point, and the nice thing was, at least in the early 2000s, it was so post-Christian, you know, I'd call it post-post-Christian,

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that there actually was a lot of openness to spirituality, to, you know, a lot, we had people come to our church who had never… step foot in a church, didn't know the connection between Easter and Jesus, you know, it wasn't that these people had quit going to church, it wasn't that their parents had quit going to church, it was that their grandparents had. And in some ways that made it easier. As the

years went on, though, the climate there really changed and got a lot more hostile in it.

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It just felt like a really, it was hard soil for most of the time we were planting there and a really difficult place to be. By about year seven in our church plant, I was thoroughly burned out. I had been, the way that I think about it is, I had planted a church without the benefit of a sending organization, without the benefit of a network, basically by an act of will.

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Like I white knuckled a church into existence. And I, everything that happened, I had my hands in because I, I needed to, you know, it was like, I was the generalist. And even though I had people who were along with me, I wasn't, I hadn't done a very good job of handing off a lot of ministry. So by year seven, relationships with staff were broken. I was tired. My elder said, you need to go on a sabbatical.

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And I did. And it was very life changing. I went from being a white knuckles on the wheel of the church, probably swung the pendulum a little bit too far the other way to like, hey, you know, whatever, guys, it'll be OK. But I went from a type A personality to a type B. And in that, in that season was when I really began to think a lot more deeply about health and ministry. and about keeping heart till the end. I engaged a spiritual director. I began.

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working on a d-man in the area of, well it was leadership and spiritual formation, but I did my specific project on a guy named Richard Baxter and his paradigm for pastoral health and spiritual vitality. And it was during that dissertation that I came across, you know, as I was doing my research, just some very scary statistics. What I discovered was about, at any given time,

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about a quarter of pastors would describe themselves as being burned out. Eighty percent would say that their ministry had adversely affected their families. Fifty percent would say, I'm unable to meet the demands of this job, like, Like, what people expect of me, I can't do. Ninety percent said they were inadequately trained to even do the job. And we all know this. We've all said it. Those of us who've been to seminary have said at some point, seminary never prepared me.

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for this. And if you haven't said it, you will at some point, right? Here's a really scary one. Seventy percent of pastors that were polled reported not having a single close friend. Seventy percent would say they get less than seven hours of sleep. One quote that came out of my research was, they have forgotten what it is like to feel good. Seventy percent said they had a lower sense of self-esteem than when they entered the.

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ministry. This is a scary one. The number one motivation to go into ministry is fulfillment. The number one motivation to continue in ministry is guilt. Good time. Good times. Here's a scary one. 37% said that they had experienced an inappropriate sexual relationship with someone in the church. Right? And then the one that really got me was 50% of pastors were so discouraged that they.

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said if they could leave and do something else they would, but they had no other way of making a living. And that was kind of where I found myself. It was like I'd been to Bible college, I'd been to seminary, like I didn't know how to do anything. And there were points where I really hit a real low depression, burnout, and I thought man if I could do something else I would, but I can't. So I guess I have to keep doing this. So in your notes, this is where where you can.

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start following along if you want. I think that professional, Professional ministry, which I still have a, like I know that bi-vocational and co-vocational is very, those are, those ways of doing ministry are held in high esteem right now and a lot of people are aspiring to that. I, you know, I still believe in, you get trained to be a pastor, you throw yourself into that full time.

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I think that's a perfectly valid way of doing ministry. But that sense of professional ministry, I'd say it's a vocation that is in crisis right now for a lot of different reasons. One of them is it's a crisis in what we'll call it congruence, a crisis in like internal congruence. How I present myself to everyone around me is not how I actually am, right? I just feel the need, like we all want to be authentic and we want to share our struggles.

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struggles, most of us share what we used to struggle with, and occasionally we might let people in a little bit on what we currently struggle with, but there's so much of our lives that are hidden for a lot of different reasons, some good and some bad. But what that creates is this crisis of congruence. I can't let people know who I really am when I'm doing ministry, right? There's a crisis of emotional maturity. So as a society, we used to produce neurotics, you know, the Woody Allen type, people who.

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feel guilty for things that they have no responsibility for. That's a very rare thing today. Now what we produce as a society are personality disorders. Someone else is to blame for all of my issues. Something outside of me is causing all this pain and heartache in my life. The earmarks of someone who is willing to take responsibility for themselves is knowing that you don't make me think, feel, decide anything, right?

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I take responsibility for my own emotional well-being. And I think there's a crisis

of emotional maturity among pastors in the sense that we – yeah, Jim says, yay! We will blame everybody from the church boss to the problem parishioner to society in general. And very little of it gets turned inward to where we look at what's going on in ourselves. We have a crisis in dependence, I would say.

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We develop a dependent relationship on our role as a pastor, as a leader, as a minister to give us validation, like, who would I be if I weren't a pastor? Who would I be if I weren't a leader? That's a really tough question for some of us to ask and answer. And because of that, we feel very fragile and defensive around our roles as pastors. We have – we develop attachments to the idea that we are right, that we are leading well,

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that, you know, we wouldn't say my way or the highway. At least I hope not. But we often lead that way, right? We become workaholics all because our identity is bound up in our role. You know, we have this crisis of identity in a sense, this idea that we don't know who we are. Oh, yeah, I love that one, Jim. Another one is would I pursue God as diligently as I do if it weren't my job?

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Yeah, I will never forget. The day I was a youth and worship pastor at one point before we had planted, and early in the morning I was sitting at my desk, and I had my Bible open, and I was really struggling just to read anything. And I remember thinking to myself, would I be doing this if I weren't afraid that someone was going to ask me if I do this? And I had to admit at that moment that the answer was no. Right? Yeah. We have this crisis of identity. You know, our identity is connected to our role,

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not to Christ, not to who we actually are. Right? A crisis, this is a big one, I think, for a lot of us in ministry, a crisis of personal neglect. Neglecting what I enjoy, what keeps me healthy, in order to feed the addiction of work and identity. Right? Brian says someone asked me do you rest from God or do you rest with God? That's good. I like that.

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Yeah. We have crises in our marriages. Too many pastoral spouses see ministry as a mistress, or a mister. I don't know what, is there a male equivalent of a mistress? I don't think so. Sorry about that ladies. But they feel like their spouse is in an adulterous relationship with ministry, because ministry gets the best part of them and family gets the leftovers.

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Right? And all that leads to a crisis of loneliness, a crisis of stagnation, you know, where we haven't learned anything for years and years. The only time we study is when we're preparing to teach. And that kind of study doesn't feed our souls. That kind of learning doesn't, expand us as people. It's just facts that we take in

so that we can regurgitate in a nice outline to other people, right? Here's the problem. Those of us in.

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ministry, we tend to be really naive about our own human issues, right? We're a lot like Solomon. We've got great wisdom for everybody but ourselves. We can tell other people how to live really good, fruitful lives. We tell people you need to Sabbath, you need to rest, you need to live life in balance, and then we do exactly the opposite. Because somehow we buy our own propaganda that I can do this, I can muscle my way through this, God has given me a calling,

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therefore I can continue on in this very unhealthy way of living. And the truth is what I don't name, what I don't take responsibility for in my life, I can't deal with and I can't change. Until we admit that not all of these things that I've listed, but some of them, are things that we are either dealing with or are prone to deal with, we're going to get shipwrecked.

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This is an arguable statement, but I'll say it. I don't think there's any profession that is quite as stressful as ministry. There's a lot of helping professions that are really stressful, but the thing about most of them is you get to go home from them. You get to get off the clock. Pastors rarely do that. Now I don't say pastors don't get to do that, because pastors could do that, but they don't.

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do that. We rarely turn off our phones. We rarely stop checking our email at a certain point in the day. We rarely disconnect fully and completely. from ministry and give ourselves to our families, to God, to ourselves, right? And as a result, this profession of ministry is just, it's profoundly stressful. And the problem with that is that our pathologies emerge under stress. Stress brings out our self-destructiveness.

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Like, have you ever, like, we see these, we see these stories of pastors and leaders who shipwreck themselves, whether through moral failure or alcoholism and drug use. And you go, how did they get there? Like, it makes no sense to me. What happened there? And I can tell you that none of them woke up and thought to themselves, I'm going to have an affair today. I'm going to become addicted to pornography today. I'm going to drink too much today.

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I'm going to let my marriage fall apart. Nobody does that. None of us plan on. Finding ourselves. there, but we just do. And the worst part is, too, stress brings out not only our own self-destructiveness, but our destructiveness towards others, right? I mean, have you ever wondered how someone who started their life off wanting to minister to others became such a jerk? Why are these people so mean? Well, it probably has a lot to do with how they do or don't deal.

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with the stress of ministry. So, stress could be understood both physiologically and psychologically, right? Physiologically, the mobilization of our body's defense mechanisms against what we perceive to be threatening or otherwise emotionally challenging events or circumstances in our lives. In other words, the fight or flight thing, right? Stress raises the level of our fight or flight, when we are under stress. Suddenly,

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But what in when we're in a good, healthy frame of mind, we would see as a challenge. Now we see it as a threat. And so people in our churches become threats. Yeah. Jim just gave me a good cue to ask if there's any questions or reflections. And I had said before Jim came on, please feel free to break in any anywhere.

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But let me I've been talking for 15 minutes. So let me stop here and just say, what do you how are you processing this? What are you hearing? What what are you thinking as we talk about this so far? Yeah, I'm reminded of a class I took where it talked about like this is your personality in a context. Mom situation, then this is the personality under stress. And so what you're saying about. And how it brings out these self-destructive pathologies resonates with what I remember from that class.

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And I just remember being really surprised by learning it, but then also as I reflect on myself, being like, oh, yeah, that makes sense. You know, this is how I become when I'm stressed. These are my tendencies. Cool. What else? Thanks, Mike. Other thoughts or reflections? Yeah, Bob, I got a question. Go ahead. Yeah, David. You know, you were talking about the identity crisis.

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Do you find it is greater, because the statistics you were talking about, do you find it is greater in those that come up through a more structured form of Christendom, Bible college, seminary? Do you find it more there or in others whose identities have been defined? outside in the secular world that move into pastoral, into the pastorate? I mean, that's a great question.

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I would think that it would be found more in those that, like, they have set their hearts on the vocation of ministry and they've pursued it in various ways. But I would say that even those who come to pastoring later in life are still going to be prone to having that sense of, like, if I'm not a leader, who am I?

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I worked for a guy once who was a pastor. He had been, like, an Air Force colonel for 20 years, right, and then went into pastoral ministry. And... He was not a humble guy. He was not a gentle leader, and I have a feeling that for him, it

wasn't so much that his identity was bound up in ministry as it was in just like leadership, like being a leader.

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I think we're all prone to this to some extent or another, but that's probably a good instinct to say that those who have come into pastoring from other vocations or from the workforce might face less of this, yeah. I wonder if even it's more – it seems to me the people that I work with or have worked with, it seems like they've come from different – either they've come up through or they've come from outside in.

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And it seems like at least a really big determinant – I don't know if it's a bigger determinant, but a very big one – is what are they – Yeah. Simply what are they placing their value in? Um, you know, if they're, even if they're from the secular workforce, if they handled value and importance by hitting their, you know, goals and marks and, you know, everything that they're supposed to be able to do, then they're going to, they're going to import that. If they're not, if they're not reflective enough, they're going to import that in. And that's the part I think that kind of knocks being a pastor into one of those weird high categories of stress, because you, you either are defining your value and success on what you're seeing, or if you're not seeing that, even if that's not God's definition of success, so it doesn't even matter if you're right.

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If you define it that way, you either see it through that numbers of people, money, usually. Those are the things, or what you have to do is you kind of have to turn on the people that you're working with so that you can, you either take that blame on yourself or you have to find someone else to push it on to. And I think when you, when you get that swirl. control of success, failure, value, and value, things like that, it just eats people alive. And I've seen it, it seems like I've seen it from almost, I don't know if I could say definitively,

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but almost even numbers based on what their, how their value is situated. Yeah. Yeah. If your value comes from your job before you become a pastor, it will continue to come from your job after. That's a good point. Other thoughts? I was, I was just reflecting a little bit as you're talking, Bob, on my last year and a half where I spent all of 2020 with mono related to job stress. And several of these crises kind of.

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hit home, you know, for me. So yeah, that, that sounds real, real. Yeah. Yeah. I have a question. Maybe you're going to get to it. Yeah. I'm not a pastor, not technically in ministry. Can I say that? No. Dang it. I'm not a pastor. I'm an advocate, though, for a couple different pastors and a good friend and a sociologist by training. So I look at these statistics, and as someone who's advocating for our pastor and for this church, I'm concerned.

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So I might be the only one sitting in the meeting right now that's not a pastor. So what do people that are not the ones going through these crises are like, you can't fix yourself sometimes. You know what I mean? And I understand that it's a God thing, but what would everyone's advocates, hopefully you all have advocates somewhere, need to know and need to do? That's an excellent question. Can we save that? Yeah. And we'll come back to it?

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I think we will get to it. But if I don't adequately answer it. Ping us on that, because I think we'll take a shot at it. Here's the problem with. Right. When we as as leaders, it's not just that there is we have these stressful moments. It's that we live stressful lives and our our fight or flight, our arousal state to danger, to threats, to stressful ministry situations.

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When it becomes the norm, we end up like stretched out rubber bands. Right. We end up with just in this constant state of fight or flight or dealing with stress. And we lose the elasticity. We lose the ability to deal adequately with stress and then relax. To have a proper response to.

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a stressful person or situation, and then come back down to earth. We end up just constantly on the edge. You know, you've heard people talk about they blow out their adrenal glands, right? It's just they're constantly living in that state, and so something breaks within them. And there's a lot of – here's the problem. There's a lot of stress producers for those in ministry, right? We have this role ambiguity, like we don't know what is it that I'm supposed to do here?

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Am I a CEO or am I a shepherd? Are people looking to me to make decisions, or are they looking to me to point them to Jesus, right? And the problem is in the same congregation, you'll have people who feel very strongly towards one way and very strongly towards the other, and oftentimes we just don't know what it is we're struggling with. We don't know what we're supposed to be doing. We have role conflict. Who does it? Because what? Right? Whose job is it to lead the church? Is it your job? Is it the elders? Is it the rest of the staff? And oftentimes there's conflict over like, how do we, how do we move forward? How do we make decisions? That kind of thing.

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There's a stress producer for us is, is our internal versus external expectations, like of what the pastoral role and life is meant to be like. It can be very stressful when we try to define success. What do we count? Right? Are we counting, you know, butts, buildings and budgets? Are we counting disciples? Are we counting decisions? How, you know, how? How do we define success? One of the problems with, with ministry is that there's never an end. Like you, you finish something, and it's just, you're on to.

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It's Sunday's always coming. Right. And there really isn't a sense of of accomplishment that happens or if there is, it's very short lived because immediately you're on to the next thing. Church politics can be very stressful dealing with people, poor staff relationships. I had a professor in my in my DMIN program say I have never seen a mutual staff relationship that I thought was healthy. And that that statement, like I had to write that down. It was just so huge. This was a guy that that he was a counselor and his specialty was working with the pastors and leaders.

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And he said, I've never seen a mutual staff relationship that I thought was healthy. Managing your own family and home. That's a huge stressor. And I still feel that even as a. Lay leader in a church when my kids. are spinning off and doing crazy things, like, I don't, I feel like I don't feel that in the same way that maybe others do that aren't trying to help lead a church. Like, there's this extra weight on my marriage and my family, right? Spousal conflict, financial problems. This is a big one,

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lack of boundaries. Like, it is so hard for us as pastors to set boundaries, to say these, these are the times and the dates I will answer my phone or look at email. These are the times that are open to others. These are not. I think it was Stanley Howard that said, most pastors are a quivering mass of availability. Just let that sink in for a second. Most of us just become a quivering mass of availability.

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And that's the, problem. And then, of course, we don't rest. We don't Sabbath. And so, the results are we feel sick, right? Headaches, colds, free-floating anxiety, sleeplessness, flu symptoms, maybe mono, but all that stuff. Impossible to actually even rest while you're on vacation. Like, all you're doing is thinking about church. So, what happens, though, is eventually stress,

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if it's not managed, becomes burnout, right? Stress is primarily a physiological problem. There's a cognitive element, but it primarily destroys your body. Burnout is primarily psychological, and it affects our ability to function relationally, right? Pastoral ministry is a relational exercise. It's a... relational vocation. And so if you allow stress to rise to the level of burnout,

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you cannot do what it is that God is calling you to do. Stress is characterized by over-engagement. Burnout is a defense characterized by disengagement. Stress will lead you to be hyper-aware. Burnout will lead you to become oblivious. In stress, the emotions become over-reactive. Every little thing we're reacting to.

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But in burnout, our emotions become blunted. We lack the ability to feel, right? In stress, the physiological damage is primary. It affects my body. I feel sick. I feel

tired. I feel bad. In burnout, the damage is primary. It affects my body. I feel sick. I feel tired. I, is primarily emotional because I lose hope. I lose energy. I can't face reality. The exhaustion of stress affects physical energy. The exhaustion.

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of burnout affects motivation and drive. Right? Stress can be best understood as a loss of fuel and energy, but burnout can best be described as a loss of ideals and hope. And there's a direct line from one to the other. Right? So the depression of stress is produced by the body's need to protect itself and recover. So some of you.

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have probably experienced the Monday letdown from Sunday. Right? That sense of just like, oh, man, I'm just so exhausted after Sunday and I just can't do anything and I feel your body's, Your body is pushing you into a physiological depression in order to recover. You know, here's something I learned a long time ago. If you will not Sabbath, your body will do it for you. Like if you refuse to obey the command to Sabbath, eventually you will.

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You won't be able to avoid it. The depression of burnout, however, it's not so much physical. It's produced by a deep grieving engendered by the loss of hope and vision. It's when your whole life narrows in and you just can't. It's like it's the sense of how it is now is how it will always be. And I've lost hope. Right? Stress produces urgency. Hyperactivity, burnout produces paranoia and detachment and depersonalization.

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And then finally, stress. Stress may kill you prematurely, but burnout will make you wish that you were dead. Stress may actually shorten your life, but burnout will make you feel like your life is not worth living. Right? So, how do we deal with this? Oh, yeah, Josh, yeah, getting a punch in the arm there. Yes, you can do this. How do we deal with this? Well, here's a couple things.

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And the first is, I call it self-differentiation, right? And this goes back to that idea of identity. Self-differentiation is me knowing who I am. And this is a little tangled here, so follow me. Me knowing who I am without respect to who I think you think I am. Too many pastors base their identity on...

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on how they think the church thinks about them. When they're riding high, they feel good about themselves. When there's a lot of grumbling happening or there's some leadership issues or problems, they feel terrible about themselves. Like when numbers are up, I feel good. When numbers are down, I feel bad. That is poor self-differentiation. That is me not knowing who I am. That is me resting my whole identity on what I think other people think of me.

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And the problem is none of us are mind readers. We don't actually know what other people are thinking of us. But worse, that's a state that we call codependence, right? Codependence is a confusion between these two little, these two little prepositions, two and four. T-O and F-O-R, right?

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Self-differentiation is knowing that I am, and this was one of the biggest changes for me in pastoral ministry. So if you catch nothing else today, catch this. As a pastor, as a leader, I am responsible to my people, but I am not responsible for them. I have responsibilities to them, but I am not responsible for them.

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So take the issue of a couple who are, their marriage is hitting the rocks, right? My responsibility to them is to love them, pray for them, speak hard truth to them, offer whatever resources I can, right? To do what I can as their pastor to help. But I am not responsible for them. their marriage. I cannot make them reconcile. And that sounds like, well, duh, Bob, but believe me,

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you will find yourself lying awake in the middle of the night thinking about the couple who are, contemplating divorce, and you will find yourself worrying about the next time you're going to meet with them. You may not vocalize this, but it will be there in the back of your head. If I don't say the right thing, their marriage is done. If I can't come up with a strategy to reconcile them, their marriage is done. Right? And codependence is a confusion between two and four. Like, I am.

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responsible to you in a lot of different ways, in a lot of different contexts, but I'm never responsible for you. Like, I can't carry the weight of your happiness. I can't carry the weight of your happiness. I can't carry the weight of your happiness. I can't carry the weight of your, of your spiritual walk with Jesus. I can't carry the weight of your soul, right? I'm not responsible for that, but I have responsibilities to you. Let me stop there because I know this is kind of a self-differentiation, big concept.

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What are you thinking? What kind of thoughts come to mind as we talk about this, comments, questions? I'll just testify to the Sabbath quote, if we refuse to Sabbath, our body will make us. I remember I learned the hard way when I was in college. I would just go, go, go. I'm an enthusiast, and my body would just shut down, and I would get sick, and it would make me Sabbath.

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I'm learning just the good of Sabbath. Also, I think when I practice Sabbath, I often, describe it like um like a stream that slows down and when a stream slows down sediment settles out and things become clearer so it just becomes clear during sabbath if i'm tired i'll know it it's kind of like detoxing so sabbath is a place where often i see a lot of junk in myself and it.

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can be discouraging but it's a place where i feel like i'm able to kind of see what's under the surface for me during the week so that's that's a little bit about how i've experienced sabbath and that quote resonates with me yeah that's good yeah your um description of burnout so i i had a i had a burnout season myself uh about five years into my church plant and um you know and similarly didn't have a mother ascending church in the area really was a parachute church planner.

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just created something out of nothing and went hard and so i tell my death, My definition of burnout was I knew I was in burnout when I was sitting at a Five Guys with my family. And yeah, just how you described it, just emotionally numb, right? Just kind of this emotional numbness. Now, I remember very vividly watching the employees behind the counter flipping burgers, and they were kind of cracking jokes and flipping burgers. And I thought to myself, I would die to have that job. Like, I get to go, laugh with a few friends, flip some burgers and go home. And then that's it. Then you're done.

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And I remember going, where's the application for Five Guys? Like, that's what I want to do. Right? And so I've asked, you know, people who know me now. I've asked, like, have you applied to Five Guys lately? You know, that's their, that's their code for like, how are you doing? And, and yeah, like, just what you've said just resonates. It almost gives me PTSD thinking back on it. But yeah, very accurate for sure. Yeah. yeah Bob what you said is very helpful I know I'm listening to you and in my own context because.

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of where we're at and we're still planting and planning um it's created a lot of flags in my head that I'm like I need to look out for um particularly even now you begin to see some signs where in myself I'm like well am I headed in that direction um or is this coming on and I'm I'm not conscious of it um so I'm grateful for that one of the things that are two things you said actually that have just been on repeat in my head since the session started was when you started statistics in the beginning um with even just uh taking friendships for granted um and.

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valuing them in this stage you know you can be so focused on on the task ahead that you can let those things sort of slip through the cracks and um and I started thinking about that well what what are my current friendships like, those close relationships um because in the middle of this, And then even just this idea of, well, not the idea, but making sure that the Sabbath is important. I would say to myself, well, we're just getting started, so I need to really go hard and work because we have to get started.

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And that's all my mind is on. It's like we have to get started. You're like, we're behind. We need to get started. And you can easily, in that, take this righteous

mission and neglect yourself and neglect that you need to care for yourself if you are going to be beneficial to anyone in the end. And so I'm grateful for you saying that because even in my own mind, I had planned, well, I still have planned next month a trip just to visit some friends. And as we were thinking, we're planning to start Dinner Church in July.

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So we've decided to adopt that for a while until we can really get started with anything else. And in my mind, as you get yesterday, I was like, should I cancel this trip because we're getting ready to plan something in July? And just even listening to you just a moment ago, it's just like, no, I can't. take that for granted, so I have to take it, so thank you for that. Yeah, that's good. So, self-differentiation, a really important topic, and I'll point you to some resources to.

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do some more reading about that, but basically, knowing who you are, knowing that I am not my church, how my church does, whether it grows, whether it is around for a year, five years, 15 years, 20, whatever, that is not me, that is not my identity. So important, knowing who you are, irrespective of what you do, right, irrespective of roles and jobs and other things.

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So, some other ways to avoid burnout. When you are, under stress, develop the discipline of journaling, not a diary, but a journal of your feelings that says, I feel this way about that because. And that sounds really kind of simple and dumb and whatever. But the truth is, as a leader, you probably won't know why you feel how you're feeling about something until you say it, until you write it down, until you actually.

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have to write that sentence. I feel this way about how that particular elder is treating me because. And all the stuff that comes out after that because, that is fertile ground for the Holy Spirit to do his work in. So when you feel the stress coming, in your prayer, in your journal, I feel this way about that. Because, all right, do not, another way to help avoid burnout, don't feel bad about paying people.

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to listen to you. Let's take the shame of paying people to listen to you away, right? There's nothing wrong with that. Whether it is a counselor, a coach, a spiritual director, have someone that you are paying to listen to you and who is trained to reflect back to you what it is that they are seeing, hearing, and to help you hear the voice of God.

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in different ways, yeah? Here's another one. Develop a theology of what it means to be the self that you are in ministry in relationship to other selves that, are just as dysfunctional as you are, right? If you cannot see yourself as, you know, I'm a

sinner and I'm helping lead a congregation of sinners and we are all trying to figure out life in the way of.

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Jesus, you know, a number of things will happen. Like either you will hide your sin, right? You will not be an authentic person in front of them. You'll have that crisis and congruence. Or you will become what Bonhoeffer calls the accuser of the brethren. You will be the one that shakes their finger at your congregations thinking, why is this so hard for you guys? I've been preaching on this for five years.

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Why don't you have it yet? Why can't you worship? Why can't you pray? Why can't you serve? Why aren't you on mission? The truth is you are a person in process in the midst of. And you've got to make room for that. There has to be an understanding of that. The mental picture I had to carry around with me was to keep me from becoming the accuser of the brethren when I felt those feelings coming on of like, man, why couldn't I be a pastor of that church? They all seem to get it. Why am I with these losers? Right?

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I had to remember that, you know, I was acting like the teacher that walked into the seventh grade pre-algebra classroom and was upset that they didn't know how to do algebra. Like, no, that's my job. I'm there to help them learn. I am not there to berate them for not already knowing what it is that I'm there to help teach them. Right? As a pastor, you are a person in process. Helping other people who are in process to get closer to Jesus.

00:48:04
Don't forget that, right? Develop a theology of failure and success, right? If your theology of success is all about planting a church that lasts for 100 years, developing a big budget, no. The day that I decided to plant a church, and I think I talked about this in my opening talk to this cohort, someone said, well, how are you going to define failure? And I thought about it for a minute, and I said, well, I guess failure in this church plant will be if we don't love people,

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if we don't feed and clothe people, if we don't point people to Jesus and preach the gospel. And the guy who was having, he wasn't an official mentor of mine, but this mentor said, good, I think you'll do okay then. Because my definition of failure wasn't, well, if the church doesn't last. It was... Because if we don't for however long God allows us, if we're not actually being the church, that was failure to me, right?

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Develop and practice some relaxation exercises, right? I can't overemphasize this. I have a daughter who is just on the cusp of teenageness. She is 12 going on 13. And sometimes she gets overwhelmed. And I will tell her, take a deep

breath. Take a deep breath. And it's like she refuses. No, no, that's not going to help. And I tell her, it really will help.

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And I'll tell you right now, take a deep breath. It really will help, right? You'd be amazed. I'm so glad we have our watches now which tell us to breathe. We get annoyed at. We get annoyed at them. But. at least once a day, listen to your watch when it tells you to breathe, right? I would repeat to myself, because I found it to be hugely helpful, I would tell myself, relax, relax.

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When it got especially bad, the mantra that I would say in my head over and over is, I am at peace with this. My kids would be screaming in the backseat, fighting. I was having fantasies of pulling over the car and getting out and just walking away, walking home and tell my wife, yeah, they're in the car, mile back, go get them. Yeah, I never did that. But eventually, I would have to say to myself, I'm at peace with this.

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And here's the trick. The more I said that, the more it became true. I was at peace with things, right? Here's one thing that I developed, like, I don't know, five or six years into things when things were really tough. I would put everything away at night. And what I mean by that is I would lie in bed. We would turn out the lights. My wife and I would say goodnight to each other.

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And I would mentally catalog the people in my house. I would say my son is in bed. My daughter's in bed. My other daughter's in bed. My wife is beginning to snore. Or everyone is asleep. Okay. And I would say I give myself permission to do nothing for the next seven hours than to rest. That's my job. My job, there's nothing I can do. People were getting e-mails from me at 3.30 in the morning.

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And they would complain to me, Bob, why did I get an e-mail from you that said 4 o'clock a.m.? I'd be like, well, I was up, so I started, you know. No. I had to start giving myself permission. I just said, I have no responsibilities. Everyone in my family is safe and sound. They're asleep. I would kind of put everything away mentally till the world narrowed to just me and God. And then I could sleep. Develop those little mental exercises, whatever it is for you that will help.

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At a certain point in my life, I had a watch. When the watch was on, I was Pastor Bob. Bob, when the watch was off, I was just Bob. Right? I was off the clock. Whatever you have to do to disconnect, to put it away, do it. You guys know, I mean, you know what you need in terms of physical exercise and rest. You just don't do it. So let me say, just, Pastor, you have to smoke what you're selling.

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Right? Telling other people that they have to Sabbath and rest and live life in

balance if you are not doing it, people will know. It's the small stresses in life that will kill you, not that your house burns down. It's how you respond to red lights, to traffic, to frustration that people bring you, right? How you respond to all the little pieces of life, right? I had to redefine red lights as an opportunity to slow down and breathe.

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I used to get hugely road rage, and I had to redefine how I was on the road. Stress turns responses into reactions. That's good. Yeah. Bob? Yeah, go for it. Can I toss a practice? Please, toss a practice. One of the things that I learned today, I was really... bad about the same thing that Brian mentioned, the five guys application thing. I would come home,

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but my brain would be flying around 100 miles an hour, sometimes the whole evening, sometimes just for about an hour. But I was missing time, especially when our kids were little. I was missing time because I was constantly distracted, easily frustrated. So one of the practices that that I started doing, and I don't have a very long drive home because we're very close to where we where we tend to be for our ministry. But I would have places along the road where I would leave.

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certain concerns. Like there was a traffic light. That traffic light was where I left my concern that I was missing something that was going to cause a lot of pain to people. And I was missing something that was going to cause a lot of pain to people. Like I was going to screw it up. And then, Sorry, my dog is trying to climb on my – my 80-pound dog is trying to climb on my lap because it's thundering like crazy. She's literally shaking. I would – there was a light pole where I would leave concerns with things weren't working well on our team.

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There was another light pole where I would leave concerns about our finance. It was just – I would drive by, and I would leave them, and then – and just maybe me being dumb, but I would give myself permission – that's the dog that's now got the courage to get away from me a little bit. But I would give myself permission to pick them back up when I went in the next day. Like, I'm not leaving them there forever. I'm not ignoring them. It was, you know, just – it helped me to, like, okay, but I'm not taking them home. And there was one time I went home after I was doing this for a while, and Trey said,

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you're still all whatever. She made me go out and drive it again and then leave, you know, because it's like – and it became – a practice where it's like okay this and there are all these little practices that you have to find and that one may be just completely that may not work with you at all that's fine but you've got to find the ways that you can symbolically and realistically leave things for a little bit, um and you know otherwise you you won't or what you'll do is you'll just stiff arm everything away.

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i feel like we either feel like we have to absorb everything that people want or we have to like have such a such a barrier between us and them that we start to think of it like it's us and them and you know it's these little practices that help you navigate all that weird middle that we try to kind of stay in that's my that's good that's good a couple last things here um, you.

00:57:02
get control of your calendar. Okay, here's the truism. Work will expand to fill the amount of time you give it. Like, work will expand to fill the available time. So, in your calendar, like, if you have determined I need to exercise three times a week, put it in your calendar. Block that time off, right? Let your calendar say no for you. When someone says, can we have coffee.

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on Wednesday afternoon? Don't say, oh, you know, I need to work out. Because you'll feel ridiculous turning down a meeting with somebody so you can do something that you could do anytime, right? What you'd say is, I'm sorry, Mike, and this is from Peterson and his book, The Contemplative. pastor. What you say is, no, I've got something scheduled then. Is there another time when we could meet? Right? Friday night is date night, but so-and-so needs to get together because they're.

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in crisis. Well, very rarely you might have to actually put off date night, but if you make a habit of that, you're going to be in trouble. So instead of saying, well, I'm going to hang out with my wife instead of dealing with your crisis, which sounds like a terrible thing to say, you just say, listen, man, I've got something scheduled on Friday night. Could we grab breakfast on Saturday morning? Or could we get together for lunch on Monday? You know, let your calendar say no for you. Put in all the things that you need to do to be healthy and sane and let work fill in.

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all the other spaces, right? So schedule your time with God. If you need to schedule time with your spouse, schedule the, workouts, schedule the walks, and let work fill in wherever it is, because if you don't do that, work will fill the whole thing, and you and your family will get the leftovers. You will work out whenever you can fit it in. You will be with your spouse whenever possible, right? But trust me, fill in your calendar. Let your calendar say no for you. Here's one,

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you may or may not agree with this, but it was very healthy for me. I quit taking Mondays off and shifted to Fridays. And the reason was, this was me personally, if Sunday went great, I would go into Monday with all this energy, like, oh, that was great. I'm, jazzed for the week. But if it was my day off, I'd have to try and tamp it down, and I'd find myself working anyway. If Sunday was terrible, I would go into Monday with all this energy, and I'd find myself working anyway. Go into Monday.

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with all this energy. I've got to fix everything. I've got to I've got to write this email and talk to this person and do this thing. And what I found was that having Mondays and Saturdays off was terrible. I needed two days together. I needed a day to decompress and then a day to actually work. So for me, Friday was my alone day. And Saturday was my family day. And having those two together, having that kind of alone day to read and write and and just go sit in the at the.

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mall and take a nap, which is the thing I used to do. That allowed me to actually decompress to the point where Saturday could be meaningful with my family. When my days off were broken up, I just it was too hard. Right. The penultimate thing before I mentioned the last thing, and then make room for your questions. Have a hobby. Have something you do that is yours, that has nothing to do with ministry.

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Like, it's cool if you want to fly kites as your hobby. But if that's your, if that's like a missional outlet for you, you know, you're going to have to know yourself and know what you can do safely that's not going to put you into pastoral mode. Like, so do something in your garage to build something, do knit something, make, you know, have, have something that's just, you enjoy it. For me, for a lot of years, I read comic books.

01:01:41
You know, that was it. That's my outlet. And zombie novels and whatever. Now I do woodworking and it's so good. I'm so glad to have something to do with my hands that isn't brain work or people work. Right. Last thing. Burnout. Burnout is primarily not about stress, but it's about becoming more intimate with our problems than we are with God.

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Burnout happens when we begin to look at God and the rest of the world through the lens of our problems, rather than looking at our issues and our context through the lens of God and who he says we are. So the number one way to avoid burnout, these are all good things, rest, have good relaxation, coping skills, have good self-differentiation. But the number one way that you can avoid burnout over the long run is to actually believe the gospel.

01:02:48
Here's a quote. This is from a book I'll recommend to you in a little bit. Ordained ministers can live for years on the level of objective truth. Church mediated faith, what we believe, without reflecting much on their personal history with God, without any heartfelt personal love involvement with God. The discovery that one is loved by God must eventually take priority over all other ways of relating to God.

01:03:20
The unqualified love of God for the human creature redeemed in Christ is prior to

the human admission of guilt and seeking of forgiveness. It is prior to any effort at undertaking works in God's service. Until one discovers this primal truth that we are loved by God, human life will be distorted and driven. In fact, all else should follow from the deep knowledge that one is loved. Without that knowledge, all else, now listen, without that knowledge that God loves you.

01:03:55
not for what you have done, not for what you accomplish. Not for what you keep yourself from doing, but because of who you are, just because you are. Without that knowledge, all else is likely to be efforts at self-validation, efforts to ward off shame and condemnation. In short, a lifestyle, especially for clergy, of drivenness.

01:04:27
I'm going to put that, is that quote in your notes? It is? Okay, never mind. I won't put it in the thing here. Burnout is the gospel issue, guys. Believing that you are your own savior. Believing that you've got to get it right. You've got to figure it out. You've got to work it out. Believing that you are the savior of your community and not Jesus. Believing that if you don't do it, they won't get it. If you don't teach it right, program it right, do it right.

01:04:58
Like their faith is, No, no, Jesus is the shepherd. He's the pastor of the church. You're his helper. You're at best number two. And probably really number three or number four. But, right? Believing that you are loved and accepted by God on the basis of what you do or don't. That's making yourself your own savior.

01:05:32
As opposed to believing that you are loved by God because of who you are and accepted by God because of what Christ has done. That's the gospel. And when you get that deep in your heart, you can be other people's pastor and not have it kill you. When you know that God loves you for who you are and accepts you for who you are. And accepts you, not based on your performance, but based on what Christ has done. you are safe to be other people's pastor. Until that point, you are not a safe leader.

01:06:08
And people who truly understand the gospel understand the real meaning of Sabbath, of resting from our own work and resting in the finished work of Christ. So let me say this. If you don't Sabbath well, you probably don't understand the gospel. If you don't know how to Sabbath, there's something in you that really thinks that it's all up to you. You're not trusting Jesus in the way that you could. That's a really.

01:06:39
harsh statement, but I'm just going to leave it there because I believe it. If you don't know how to Sabbath, you probably don't understand the gospel. Don't preach the gospel with your mouths and then deny it with your mouth. Don't

preach the gospel in your sermons and deny it with your dreams. drivenness. Don't tell people that Jesus is their Savior, even as you strive to be your own.

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You are loved by God unconditionally, and you are accepted by God on the basis of what Christ has done, not on how this church plant turns out, not on how many people show up on Sundays, not on how you feel about Sunday sermon or anything else, right? You are loved and accepted by God, period. And the more you know that, the healthier a leader you will be. All right, I think I have at the bottom there some other notes that you can check out.

01:07:42
and some suggested resources, some books. Let me just ask, other thoughts, other statements, other questions? That was a lot. Thank you for listening. It was kind. just looking around, looking at me. Somebody say something. I remember a quote, that J.R. Briggs actually has said before and has stuck with me. He says, when it comes.

01:08:13
to Sabbath, Sabbath is a weekly reminder that I'm not that important and the world will go on without me. And I've always remembered that one too of his. I wake up on Sabbath and I go, I'm not that important. No one needs anything from me because the world will go on without me. So that's kind of one that stuck out. That's good. What else? Other thoughts or questions? Other wisdom for us? Yeah, go for it.

01:08:44
So a couple years ago I read The Rest of God and then, this past year I feel like the Lord really, pressed into a lot of those elements of Sabbath and I recently finished The Ruthless Elimination of Furry by John Marcomer, and that has been, incredibly influential in the rhythms of new ministry and rest and like try to find pockets of sabbath every day in addition to a day a week um that just like the practices of slowness of.

01:09:14
silence of sabbath and simplicity um that are so rooted in scripture and in jesus and how he lived um yeah just highly recommend that book um it was really really good and helpful. yeah i'd be i'd be curious what um not to not to put anybody on the spot but what some of the other um women what your reflections are on this um are you.

01:09:44
like locked in an agreement is there some sort of skew to what we've been talking about uh what what's your i'd love to hear just hear even if it's yeah this was good um i'd love to hear some of y'all's reflections. I feel it was good um I feel like um one of the things that is like both.

01:10:15
I think encouraging and also kind of intimidating is like um Bobby you talked one

of the stress like inducers is like it's a journey it's like there's no end you know um and I think day to day like that can be um I it can be something that keeps me like I think faithful to the process to the becoming nature of like our people sure and myself.

01:10:50
um but also like sitting here in in my 20s I'm like oh, that that sounds like like a big deal, Um, and so, yeah, I, I mean, there's not really a question here. But I do think that's something that, um, I mean, just as like, my personality is more, if there's something on my plate, like I will work until it's off my plate, like eating and all. But, um, yeah, I think that's something that I have to fight.

01:11:28
I mean, I don't want to say like fight against all the time. Um, because I think it can be like a helpful thing. Um, but also keeping it in perspective of like, this is, I mean, long obedience in the same direction. And there is no, there's no end and that's okay. Um, so yeah, I think that's something that I'm, I'm chewing on. Yeah, as a leader.

01:11:59
Don't just take the long view. Take the ridiculously long view. Like, unless you realize that, like, I'm going to be doing this, like, God is going to be forming my character until I die, you know, until I'm 70, 80, whatever. Like, that's the long view you have to take. Like, otherwise, you will not be as, you will not be, you'll be more condemning of yourself than you need to be.

01:12:32
Like, you'll give yourself less grace than Jesus does. And that's, you don't want to get into that place, right? So, you don't make excuses for yourself, but you just say, listen, I'm a young leader. I'm a middle-aged leader. I'm becoming an older leader. But it's all part of this process. It's becoming who I want to be when I'm an old person. You know, God's not done with me yet. Yeah. What else? Bob, thank you for sharing with us.

01:13:05
I think one of the statements that stands out to me is you said something like, reflecting on something you said, in that context, I'm not a safe leader. I'm wondering, circling back to your story, you talked about planting a church in 2004 after seven years, burnout, sabbatical. Can you talk about, like, a little bit more about your story and kind of, yeah, did the church, was there, did you find that you were renewed so that you could go back into ministry?

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What did that look like for you? I'm just wondering, like, as we pay people to listen to us, you know, is there a place where we're like, wow, I'm sick. I need a break. What does that, how does that happen? And I don't know if that connects with yours. Just wondering about that. Yeah. I mean, I think you need to build into the framework of your leadership, whether you are taking a job somewhere else or you're creating your own job as a church planter.

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Like, there will be sabbaticals. You know, seven years is the industry standard. Every seven years, like three months every seven years. Build that in. Again, you need that time away, but also take seriously your vacations. It amazes me that as Americans, we don't even often take all the days that we could, especially as pastors.

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Like, and we'll break them up here and there. It's like, no, get away for like two, three weeks with your family. Disconnect. We're like, oh, I could never do that. But, yeah. Yeah, for me, sabbatical was. And what I found was when I took my white knuckles off the wheel of ministry and the church kept going, even though I was gone for three months, and I realized, yeah, I'm not as important as I thought I was, I realized it's a lot more comfortable.

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Boy, my hands feel better, so to speak. I kind of like being a little more hands-off. I like not feeling like everything is resting on my shoulders. I like letting other people carry some of this weight, you know. I can actually see the benefit of Sabbath now, and I can start to do that in a more regular and healthy way. Yeah, I don't even know that I could quantify all that changed for me.

01:15:56
Other than that, I know that. Something shifted. And I think a big part of it was my identity was not based on how the church was doing anymore. I was able to begin to separate my identity from that of the church. And that was huge for me, because before that, they were intertwined. Yeah.

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I don't know if I actually answered your question. No, I appreciate you sharing more. I'm just wondering, like, did you go back to ministry in that same church plant, or was that the end of that? Okay. Yeah, I did another seven years. And here's the truth. Pastoral ministry happens in, like, these seven-year increments. Like, people tend to make a shift or a change in the six. The eight-year, you know, the 13 to 15-year.

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The somewhere around year 21, that kind of thing. I did another seven years before I let go. And I probably and Jim will he did an assessment with us. He probably agree. I probably should have gone like two years earlier than I did. But, you know, I was scared. You know, I didn't really have anything else to do. So I hung around there. But, yeah, I did go back into ministry. I did stay with our church. But the thing that changed was that I was no longer the lead pastor. Like we transitioned from Bob's lead pastor to the the elders as a whole are leading this church. And that, you know, maybe that was good. Maybe it wasn't. I don't know. That's for others to decide. But it was good for me.

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Yeah, it sounds like a story of success. And yeah, it's really. It's really

encouraging to hear your story, Bob. So thank you for sharing it with us. you're welcome. Yeah, thank you. I think that if you run into difficulty with that, because Bob was in a situation where he had built it in and the board was willing to go with him there. I know a lot of churches where that's not necessarily the case. There's this like sense of, well, why do you need three months off? We don't get three months off, you know, and that kind of.

01:18:23
thing. I think something that can be really helpful if you are not, if you're not getting a lot of acceptance of, you know, I might need to slow down. You know, the thing that we do, that feels extra at first and people are like, wow, it's so great. You know, it becomes an expectation in no time. And that if we just keep doing that, our church can expect more and more and more and more from us. If you find that your board, your co-elders, your leadership team,

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you know, you're going to be able to do that. And I think that's something that we need to, isn't responsive to a need to kind of slow down and take some time, that kind of thing, I think bringing in someone from the outside can be extremely helpful, especially someone that the leadership team would be like, okay, this person maybe knows what they're talking about. It's essential that you're kind of helping to shape and guide, and no, this is important. I mean, it's in the Bible. I read it somewhere. And all this, that's going to be really important. Important in praying, just that their heart would be shaped.

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But alongside that, sometimes if you just hit a wall, there have been times where I know our church has benefited from bringing someone in that says the same thing I've been saying for who knows how long, and then someone from outside that's the director of or the coach of or something like that. It's like the clouds part, the Jordan stops. I mean, everything just like all of a sudden, they're like, this is brilliant. We should do it. You know? And let, that's one of the. benefits of Ecclesia or other networks. You have people.

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that can do that. And so I think that's going to be really important if you're finding there's some pushback. Yeah. Good. All right. Other thoughts? Other questions? Oh, yeah. The question that we were going to circle back around to. Okay. So I liked all of the really practical things that pastors can do, ministry leaders can do.

01:20:37
to avoid burnout. What I want to know as a church planter that's helping write the leadership structure is where do we go in and lay in the trip wires? What are the warning flags and the red signs that someone who with the best intentions and the greatest heart, is not taking these seriously or not doing them at the moment? Like before, everything hits the fan and it's a big issue at what point are elders alerted to, the fact that we need to slow down or build in some space how do i do that oh that's good.

01:21:13
um i'll give some ideas and then i'll see if others have some um i think you have to have at least there always needs to be somebody on the elder team that sees it as their role to be that advocate i like that you're just naming it that but someone i always had someone that that um for me it was a gal named sarah and she was like a fierce defender she didn't always agree with me she didn't always like me but she knew that um like it's important that.

01:21:48
bob has somebody who like speaks for him and asks him hard questions of how are you doing how's your marriage how are you how are your emotions, You know, that kind of thing. Having someone that sees it as their unofficial role to check in and just ask and then say, hey, I think we need to give pastor, send him and his wife away or her and her husband away for a weekend.

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You know, we need to arrange for that. You know, we need to care for them in this way. Anyway, having a board that says, while we we're not going to engage in pastor worship, we're going to be as generous as we can. One of the ways that that a church can be generous, even if they don't have a lot of money, is to have like four weeks of vacation a year. You know, and that's to American ears. That sounds ridiculous.

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But it's not even the minimum. It's not even the minimum that people in Europe get. So when we started, we. were like, everybody on staff gets four weeks a year. One of the things that we did was everyone on staff, if you were a pastor on staff, we would pay for spiritual direction or a coach because we knew that was important. You need to have someone to talk to, someone that is, maybe you can't, you're not paying them to listen to you, but somebody is. Um, so we would make sure that they had that outlet. Um, and then, you know, just.

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being, staying on top of things past, you know, how many times a week are you out? Okay, that's too much. Let's see what you can get, what you can hand off, what you can schedule back, you know, allowing for comp time. If you've got, if you're out of time, you're out of time, three nights a week doing ministry stuff, you shouldn't necessarily be coming in at the, you know, the butt crack of dawn every day. Comp time means like if your day goes until nine.

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o'clock at night, then you come in at noon the next day, you know, that and people understand that. But just having that, creating an atmosphere where the pastor is not seen as a disposable ministry widget, but a person that we take care of because they are taking care of us. Yes. We want to, as a church, care for the ones that are caring for us. And so we're serious about their mental, emotional and spiritual health.

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What else? What am I missing on that? Jim, what else can be put into place? OK, a question would be to the people that are on the call. How many of you feel like you're in a leadership situation where that would be. That is either being done or that being done. You could have a conversation. with your board, your elders, and, you know, and they would be amenable to that. Like, we need to be watching for this stuff.

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Okay. Yeah. Okay. So, I think that, you know, if you're not, I think, because it is, it's like a, it's a little bit of a different way of looking at balance that kind of pushes against our American way of doing things. And there's some people that, a lot of times, boards can be the people that, and I don't.

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recommend that this is the way it is, but a lot of times, boards can be made up of people that are successful, they're big donors, they're older, they're kind of this, you just pull yourself up by your own bootstraps kind of folks. I think that if you run into difficulties... I think you run into difficulty with that, either because you're... the pastor or pastors that you're working with are not, they're not going to take those steps, right? You know, the question originally was, how can you be an advocate? Well, some people receive that advocacy and others kind of push back.

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And the reality is, it's just going to be across the board depending on the church. Early on in my ministry, I almost had to be hospitalized because I was going so quickly for so long, my, my adrenal gland, this is not exactly, but my adrenal gland got stuck in on position. I was just dumping adrenaline into my system all the time. I could not calm down and that creates some really odd and unpleasant side effects.

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And, you know, if you'd have told me back then, I don't know that I would have received it. I don't know that I was ready. I think we have to be aware that sometimes people are on a process and we can speak into it, but we can't. We can't mandate their allegiance to it unless we have the authority to. So I think realizing that some people are going to be on a process of just praying for them to get there, realizing people are in different places in their understanding. If you're in a ministry and you don't have a team that is willing to allow for this or sees the value in this, again, I think you've got to be willing to bring people in.

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Again, it's just going to take – and you almost need to kind of work it through with someone outside of your context that can help you kind of sort out, well, now, how would you present this to them? How could you do this well? What is your part? Is there a part for someone outside? I think that one of the things that we did among my co-pastors is we all know kind of if we are about ready to fly off the

handle or we're getting out of balance, what specifically will we start to do? What are we going to act like?

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And so the red flags, that was the – we listed our flags. This is what – I tend to do. I tend to start talking really fast and not listen to people. And so the people that are serving with me know my cues. And so they can start to see. There's one of the co-pastors, you know, she just kind of, even on Zoom, she kind of sits down and she gets real quiet. And it's like, okay, there it is. What is that? Is that this? Is that something else? So just a smattering of things. But it's like, this is the issue when you're a pastor or when.

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you are an advocate for them. Sometimes the team around you is more or less open to this kind of stuff. If they aren't, it's okay. We can work through that. There are ways through that. It's just, if they are, then it's great. You can kind of move a lot more quickly. But if they're not, there are solutions that are out there. Sorry for that smattering. But that seems to be when I'm coaching folks. Oh, sorry, one other really quick thing. I'm coaching a pastor now in Phoenix who's like, the.

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He's the most driven person I think I've ever been around. He wears me out sitting on Zoom with him. And I was like, so how's your balance? He's like, oh, fine, it's fine. It's all good. That's what he says. All good. You know, and, I mean, literally that's what he does. I said, okay, well, then let's have this conversation with your spouse next time. And he got real serious all of a sudden. I'm like, no, let's bring her on, and let's talk about this together to see if there's a way. And, you know, maybe she agrees, maybe she doesn't. But let's just have a talk together.

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I think any time you can bring a spouse into that conversation about balance, you get a different perspective. So I almost always try to do that if I can. Okay. Excellent. That's so good. Another thing I would add for an advocate of a church planner or pastor, especially a church planner as you're starting to write things like bylaws or annual contracts. Covenants, things like that. Trying to get as clear as you can up front with things like sabbaticals.

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and building those in is really important. Building in what are the expectations for hours per week and what will the accountability for that look like. So I think having clear expectations has been really helpful for me. So I hand in my hours monthly, and it just helps me to know I'm giving a report. And if people have a problem with it, they can talk to me about it. So that's another thing I would say. I worked for a senior pastor once that set the expectations that I would work,

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the hours that I would work at 50 to 55. And he said that the reason why is because we have a church full of professionals and that's how much they work.

And I was too young at the time. I mean, I was old enough to go, yeah, I'm not going to do that. But I was too young at the time to really reflect on why that was so. wrong. And what I've come to is that, listen, if we, if all we're doing is reflecting the culture around us, if we're not modeling a healthier way of life for them, then what are we doing?

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You know? And there might be weeks where you do have to, just because one thing or another happens, you're working 55, 60 hours a week. But if that's your norm, it's too much, right? That's a sign that you're trying to build something as opposed to doing what you can do and leaving the results in God's hands, right? Yeah. Well, guys, it is the bottom of the hour, and we want to release those.

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You might have to get on to other things. We can hang out and continue to talk. But, by tomorrow, I will have posted this video for you. I will send you a bunch of other resources on Sabat. Go and, on pastoral health and keeping heart to the end. And also, we will have posted the post-session videos. We've got three sessions for you. One on funding the mission. So how do I raise funds and how do I get that whole thing going?

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One on pastoring in the power of the Spirit, the role of the Holy Spirit in our leadership. And one on, this is always everyone's favorite, legal and admin issues. But I think the way he's doing it is pastors and finances. So I think there's some personal stuff in there for you as well that you might need to know. But we will make those three sessions available for you. And then also, we want to schedule some one-on-one times with you just to reflect, to check in, to see how you're doing in your church planning plan.

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and how we can continue to connect with you. And come alongside of you. So with that... We will say goodbye to anyone that needs to go. And we can kind of hang out here for a little bit longer and continue to chat if people want to do that. But otherwise, look for those things coming to you in your email, and I'll talk to you soon. Thank you, Bob. I got to run. Bye, guys. Thanks a lot. All right, everyone. Thanks.

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Bye now.