

AUC Ministerial Association

Group Discussion Guide



Healthy Leaders for Healthy Churches

As a leader, people listen to what you say – they become what you are.

Wayne Cordeiro

"The greatest thing we have to offer our people
is not our education.
It is not our good ideas.
It isn't even our gifts and abilities.
It is the fruit of the time
we have spent with the Saviour,
The utterly unique and unparalleled thing
that happens to us
When we are simply
In His Presence."
Ben Patterson

The Best Job on The Planet?

A study by Focus on the Family of over 1000 pastors found:

- 45.5% will experience burnout or depression causing them to leave their jobs
- 70% say their self-esteem is lower now than when they started their position
- 2nd highest divorce rate among professionals
- 80% of Pastors say they have insufficient time with spouse and that ministry has a negative effect on their family.
- 40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner once a month.
- 75% report they've had a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- 56% of pastors' wives say they have no close friends.
- 40% of pastors considered leaving the pastorate in the past three months.
- "For every 20 pastors who go into the pastorate, only one (1) retires from the ministry."
- No other profession has a 95% drop-out rate!

(H. B. London, Focus on the Family Reserach, 2007)

Peter Drucker's Four Hardest Jobs

1. President of the United States
2. A University President
3. Hospital CEO and
4. Pastor

Yet

- **75-80% of pastors say they love their jobs!**

Healthy Pastors...

1. Practice Excellent Self-Leadership

The hardest person on the planet to lead is yourself

Self Leadership is **your** responsibility, Lead yourself exceptionally well

- Am I leading out of the overflow of time spent with God?
- Is my calling sure?
- Is my vision clear?
- Is my passion hot?
- Am I developing my gifts?
- Is my character submitted to Christ?
- Is my pride subdued?
- Are interior issues undermining my leadership?
- Is my pace sustainable?
- Is my love for God and people increasing?

Cynicism is the enemy of healthy leadership – Be part of the answer – not just another knocker.

Make Time to Recalibrate:

Take some time to recalibrate your personal life and your ministry. Work through the issues of self leadership and ensure you are in a healthy place spiritually.

- Make time to invest into the people closest to you.
- Try some new spiritual disciplines
- Put a physical exercise plan in place

2. Grow Heart Building Habits

A well-ordered heart will ask questions like:

- How can I fill my daily tasks with a sense of the presence of God?
- How am I involved in Christian community?
- How do the people closest to me experience God working in and through me?
- Am I growing in a love for God and people?
- How will I handle money in a way that draws me closer to God?

Be still and know that I am God Psalm 46:10

3. Balance Work and Family

“leadership is having those closest to me love and respect me the most”

4. Build Mentoring Relationships

- Seek mentors who you allow to tell you the truth.
- Be willing to mentor others

5. Seek God’s Vision

- The church is Christ's body. He is the head and already has a vision for your church.

6. Cultivate Community

- Pastors need loving relationships too. Too often pastors are lonely people – so many working relationships and so few friends.

Discuss:

- How can you model community in your congregation?
- Why do pastors have so few friends and is this healthy?

7. Find Self Value in God

- Pastors are in danger of being people pleasers and we start finding our self values in what the congregation says rather than in being God's child.

8. Lead in Relationship to Church Size

"The most severe and potentially damaging tensions are those caused by pastors and individuals on the leadership team who relate to the church according to the wrong size category." Michael Fletcher

9. Share Ministry

The dangers of over functioning – the church will cheer you on as you die.

Traps:

The Ministry Treadmills

- We get caught on the ministry treadmill. The sheer immediacy of each next event or ministry demand prevents leaders from taking the time required for discerning the culture and defining the DNA of the church.
- Today's demands can choke out needed dialogue for tomorrow. When this occurs, our multiplied activity prevents us from living with a clearer identity.
- It would be useful for the pastor to find even one day a month to pray and think about the DNA of the church and what it would take to move forward with God-given plan.

Book Summary - Leading on Empty

Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion

Wayne Cordeiro,
Bethany House, 2009

- It is 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.
- "Adrenaline arousal can be compared to revving up a car engine, then leaving it idle at high speed." Dr Archibald Hart
- The only way to finish strong will be to first replenish your system. If you don't prepare for a crash.
- Being a pastor: "It's like giving birth on Sunday and then on Monday finding that you're pregnant again."
- I was fixing everybody's problems except my own, and I needed time to replenish my spirit.

Causes of Depression:

- Long-Term Stress
- Great Loss
- Unresolved Problems
- Financial Stress
- Pressure to Excel

Warning Signs:

- Sense of Hopelessness
- Frequent Tears
- Difficulty Concentrating
- Decision Making Comes Hard
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Lowered Activity Levels
- Feeling Alone
- Lack of Marital Attraction
- Eating Disorders
- Aches and Pains
- Sometimes we get so busy rowing the boat, we don't take the time to stop and see where we're going...or what we are becoming.
- Solitude is a chosen separation for refining your soul. Isolation is what you crave when you neglect the first.

- If you had only one month left to live, you'd be surprised at all the things that really didn't matter anymore.

What are the things that only I could do and, if neglected, would affect the rest of my life?

- A vibrant, growing relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ
- A healthy and genuine relationship with my spouse
- An authentic family that is close to God and close to one another
- A God-pleasing ministry
- A physically healthy body and a creative soul
- Taking time to enjoy life with family and friends

- These six items require a daily investment of my time and heart.

- There must be certain pilings driven so deeply into my soul that in times of crisis they will serve as immovable, unquestionable anchors in my life.

- Knowing the remedy doesn't necessarily complete the healing; the difference comes when we apply it.

- Your soul is like a battery that discharges each time you give life away, and it needs to be recharged regularly.

- Know what fills you and what drains you. Do as many of the things that fill your tank as you can.

Seven Lessons:

1. Do Not Overproduce
'Come back tomorrow'

 2. Steward Your Energy
Invest bursts of energy more intentionally

 3. Rest Well
It's the space between the notes that makes the music

 4. Exercise Your Way to Recovery

 5. Eating Your Way to a Good Life

 6. Recharge Daily

 7. Fight for Your Family
If you miss building the home base, you will have nowhere to go when your ministry days are over.
The darkest part of the lighthouse is at the base.
- Divine Mentors – get accountability in place.

- We will all experience fatigue in the midst of a demanding ministry unless time is set aside to rest and realign ourselves back to God and His original design.

Dashboard

- Faith Life
- Marriage Life
- Family Life
- Office Life
- Computer Life
- Ministry Life
- Financial Life
- Social Life
- Attitudinal Life
- Author's Life
- Speakers Life
- Physical Life

"My goal was to restore my hunger and passion for what God has called me to do."

This book also provides an appendix of excellent resources for planning your day, experiencing Sabbath and planning retreats. In addition, it has an excellent reading list.

"The answers are not found in our models, methods and manmade systems but in the truth of God's Word and in being filled and led by the spirit of God." *Neil Cole (Organic Church)*

Burnout

I don't think pastors 'burn out' because they work too hard. People who work hard often do so because they're good at what they're doing and they enjoy doing it. I think burnout comes from working with no relational gratification.

Eugene H. Peterson

Ten Factors That Cause Burnout

- Feeling driven instead of called – They feel compelled to the job for God rather than let Him accomplish it through them.
- Failing to pace ourselves – Many pastors have a great pressure in pacing themselves because of the 'urgency' of their ministry.
- Trying to do it all ourselves – high achievers generally have a great need for recognition. Often they feel they have to prove something to themselves or to someone else. Frequently the high achiever wants to do all the work in order to gain recognition or approval

- Excessive contact with people's problems
- Majoring on the minors
- Unrealistic expectations – Most high achievers are not aware of their own limitations – in fact, they usually don't think they have any.
- Developing too many routines – Routines sap the challenge and excitement out of our lives. They destroy our creativity and turn innovation people into robots. On the other hand routine can be good if it leads to the formation of positive habits that free up our conscious minds to work on more creative endeavors
- An inappropriate view of God's priorities for our lives - Allowing the work of God to create a lack of balance. They justify neglecting their families by the importance of ministry. Their whole lives revolve around 'their' ministries. These people are often self-righteous because of their 'commitment and dedication' to the ministry.
- Poor physical condition
- Because high achievers have lots of drive and energy they must keep their bodies physically fit in order to keep up with the mental and emotional drives.
- Continuous rejection. Too many rejections cause us to develop negative attitudes toward people, our job and ourselves.

Avoiding Burnout

- Make your relationship with God your top priority
- Respect your limitations
- Keep your work in perspective
- Reevaluate goals and priorities regularly
- Take time to experience life – cultivate meaningful leisure time\

Recovery

- Make space in life for spiritual recovery
- Plan for rest and relaxation
- Develop a physical fitness program
- Seek help with rebuilding self-confidence

Possibilities for Change:

- Do something totally different from ministry
- Be okay with taking care of you
- Lighten up and laugh more often
- Build relationships with people for no 'ministry' purpose
- Take care of your body
- Master technology – don't let it master you
- Periodically take a solo retreat
- Don't Try to Insulate Yourself From Pain
- Learn to Absorb Punches with Grace
- Slow Your Pace of Ministry
- Learn to Be Okay When Things Don't Go Your Way
- Make Spiritual Receptivity the Biggest Thing in Your Life
- Remember That Ultimately we Serve the People; They Don't Serve Us.
- Leave the Results to God
- Intensify Personal Relationships

Comeback Leaders:

Summarised From:

Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, B&H Books, 2007.

- Pray Passionately
- Distinguish between obvious symptoms and underlying problems.
- Take the initiative for change
- Challenge Excuses
- Make time to learn
- Model Evangelistic Passion
- Share the ministry
- Spend time with their leaders
- Understand that leadership is more about what you can get done through others than what you can do yourself
- Cast a clear and compelling vision
- Multiply themselves

Discussion

Why do you think are the biggest challenges to having a healthy life balance as a pastor?

What do you do to be revitalized?

Why do you think many pastors are lonely?

Why do you think so many pastors burn out?

Why do you think so many pastoral marriages fail?

What is one tip you would share with a person new in ministry in regard to living a balance life?