

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD

In our relationship with the Holy Spirit, prayer, Bible reading, and meditation (*intensive listening*) are critical aspects for a pastor.

Most pastors are older men.
Many pastors have begun well.
Now we want to talk about finishing strong.
Finishing **STRONG**!
Finishing **strong** is a major issue.
It is actually much easier to begin well than to **end well**.

Many Christian leaders do **NOT** finish strong

- Saul ended miserably
- David finished weakly
- Solomon finished in pornography and moral corruption.

Haggai teaches that holiness is not easily kept, but it is easily lost. Hag. 2:11-14
Love needs to be kept alive, love must actively be renewed.

/// 2-2/// What are some of the things you are doing to refresh your first love and fire for Jesus? -----

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We'll give you a few suggestions here that have helped hundreds of church leaders,
But your relationship with the Almighty is very personal.

I have practiced many of the suggestions I am sharing today.

1) *"The joy of the Lord is your strength"*

Neh 8: 10 is a primary Bible verse.
I enjoy getting up early to be with Jesus.
A day of prayer is a spiritual privilege!
On a prayer walk I find myself getting so excited I might skip and jump, or shout, or wave my arms.

A day of rest every 7 days is a feast!

Dearest Brothers, you can do any or all of the following suggestions but your spiritual life may still receive little benefit.

What makes it possible to do some of these things, especially spending more time with the Lord, is just **enjoying** His presence.

What we are really talking about in this section is about old men like myself rediscovering their first love for Jesus.

/// 2-3/// Can you remember the glorious beauty of being saved?

I hope these suggestions will help you to fall in love with Jesus all over again.
May God bless you richly as you try a few of these things at home.

A. Daily one hour in God's Word and prayer

Imitating Jesus

Jesus did this in the **early** morning — He set the example. If you want to be like Jesus make time at sunrise for one hour.

Do you think Jesus woke up in the morning and groaned, "Oh no, I need to get up and spend time with my Father"?

That is not ever the attitude we get from Jesus. Rather if we observe closely, Jesus seemed to delight in being with His Father.

He **WANTED** to be with Him.

He enjoyed the fellowship; He received strength and power; He received confirmation of His task.
For many years our previous leader Slavic Nesteruk, studied God's Word for one hour every morning. He was trying to follow the example of Jesus.
Another Ukrainian leader used to sleep in until he saw Christ's example and wanted to imitate Him.
Now this person rises at 5:30 and his whole life has been revolutionized.

Spending daily one hour with God will set the tone for your whole day.
As you read biographies of great spiritual leaders you will see this as a regular discipline in their lives.
But not one of burden; rather one of joy and refreshment.

/// 2-4a /// How much time do you spend daily in God's Word and prayer? _____ (write in the minutes)

/// 2-4b /// How much time would you like to spend? _____

B. Prayer Walk

Bringing God and sinners together

As believers we love to spend time in the quiet, sacred confines of our church buildings.
But God, Jesus, the apostles, the prophets focused on being among the people and rubbing shoulders with them.
This is where prayer becomes real, on the streets, asking God's victory over the sin in front of us.
Prayer walking has its foundation in the Old Testament when the believers walked around the city of Jericho.
For them it was a real prolonged active participation as an exercise of their faith.
They praised God quietly and loudly, and pulled down evil strongholds that brought complete spiritual victory.

Jack Hyles, once pastor of the largest Baptist church in the USA practiced this.
He needed a large piece of property for a Christian college.
The property was ideal but super expensive.
Once a month he would go at midnight to this property, take off his shoes, walk around the property and claim this property as holy territory for his Lord Jesus.
Pastor Hyles did this monthly for 3 years. Eventually God granted his wish and he was able to buy that land for almost nothing.

In another city a husband/wife team walked around their neighborhood praying for each house and apartment. A few weeks later the Holy Spirit instilled in an unbelieving couple to seek spiritual help. The Holy Spirit helped them to bypass all other churches and led them to attend the exact church where this praying husband & wife team belonged.

How much is prayer walking part of your lifestyle as a Christian leader in your community?
I dedicate my time and efforts usually a few times a year to do a prayer walk around the city where I live.
In the housing section, I may pray over family abuse, good parenting, liquor situations I see, or pray against drug use in derelict districts.
In front of a factory I pray employees will work diligently according to Biblical principles, at another factory I may intercede for the management to seek God's ways of doing things, etc.
I do this because I am an active person and I like to be physically involved in my prayer. Many men in your churches will find it hard to sit still for hours on end praying, but walking and being gripped by the degradation of their community is for many men a very real practical way to have prayer as a spiritual priority.

An extra benefit from prayer walking I have found is that it makes me more conscious and active in prayer at other times, such as on busses, and in the markets, etc.

Have you given thought to combine your worship of God — the idea of:

/// 2-5 ///
Love the Lord your God in a practical time of bringing God and unbelievers together as you walk around a district in your city?

/// 2-6a /// Are you a prayer-walker?
Never yet / Seldom / Occasionally / quite regularly (circle one)

/// 2-6b /// Would you like to venture out and begin this new expression of spiritual fervency?

Yes / No / later (circle one)

For further help special material on this topic may be requested from New Life for Churches. Ask for the lecture on Prayer-walking.

C. Day of Prayer

Spending time with Jesus

Recently a church elder questioned, "Praying for one hour? I would not know what to say!"

The fact is that when we are "*in love*" we have a lot to say.

When we are "in love" we want to spend a lot time with our loved one.

In many churches world wide it is a sad fact that church leaders spend only a few minutes a day with their beloved Lord in prayer.

How is that in your church?

How much "extra" time do your elders and church leaders spend in prayer?

What example are you as their pastor?

We as church leaders claim that God has led us, or that we are doing God's will.

On how much deep prayer contact are such statements based?

Jesus said that the mouth speaks of what our inner most thoughts are preoccupied with. Luke 6:45

/// 2-7a /// How much time do you estimate your church members give to prayer, privately, daily? _____

/// 2-7b /// How much time would you like your leaders to spend in prayer regularly? _____

/// 2-7c /// How much time do you personally as pastor spend in active prayer weekly? _____
setting the example?

We are suggesting to add some very specific prolonged times of prayer.

We call that "**A Day of Prayer**".

— This activity consists of finding a quiet spot like Jesus did and spending minimally 6 hours with your Bible, a songbook, a pencil and notebook in prayer and praise.

We suggest that once a quarter, semi-annually, or perhaps even monthly, this may be a tool to help you **FINISH WELL** as a church leader.

Perhaps you are already using this idea to be drawn closer to God?

/// 2-8a/// Yes, I am doing such days with my precious Savior, usually 4, 6, 8 or more hours. (circle one)

/// 2-8b /// No, but I would like to re-awaken my first love and spend more time with Jesus. (circle a word that applies)

/// 2-8c /// Yes, I want to use my notes on "A Day of Prayer" and I commit to begin later this month with a "half day" to begin awaking my spiritual prayer lust. If so boldly circle YES -----

For further help special material on this topic may be requested from New Life for Churches
Ask for lecture "How to have a Day of Prayer."

D. Using a new translation quite regularly

God's personal voice to you.

/// 2-9 /// Perhaps you are already actively involved with a new translation for personal use and growth. If so mark (____ times weekly?)

James tells us to draw close to God and God will draw close to you. Jas. 4:8
Sounds great doesn't it?

But it gets even better!
If we draw close to God, the devil will flee.
I believe that thought makes every believer shout "Hallelujah."
But how do we come close to God?
Moses listened and saw. Elijah heard a whisper. Paul refers to the written Old Testament as our guide.
Jesus spoke and a whole universe was born.
Then Jesus spoke again and your name was written in the Lamb's Book of Life.
Jesus is called "The Word of God."
The 6 best books of the Bible are: the 4 gospels, Proverbs & Psalms.

Such intimate conversations are extremely private. They are not standard, or tradition, or church methods.
In scripture God called many people; but He did not call any two in the same fashion.
He spoke to each one personally.

Jesus did not use the official language, he used the vulgar, every day street language called Aramaic.
Throughout history the church fathers have attempted to bring God in close communion by using modern translations.
First it was Hebrew, then Greek, then Latin, then Slavic, then German, then English.

Now finally we have the extraordinary blessing of having not one but several modern translations in our own language.
This is a blessing for which numerous translators have given their lives in martyrdom.
There are translations in several languages for which even today translators are shedding their blood.

Are you coming close to God by listening to Him in a still small voice that comes with fresh, new meaning?

/// 2-10 /// Are you as a major executive and representative for Jesus using a *new Translation* quite regularly?

(no /or/ yes, how many times weekly? _____) for personal use and growth?

E. Making Bible reading notes

Writing God's thoughts

Even we as key church leaders, key representatives for God are very fallible.
We pray, we read the Bible, and we received a wonderful precious new insight.
Yet only moments later the insight is lost.
All of us have felt blue, discouraged and wondered why that happened.

One of the most unique things God did with the Jewish nation is to give them His *written* word.
That meant that they had to learn to read and write. A skill that most nations did not have.
A skill that many believers today do not have.
A skill that you as a pastor should practice.
Learning to communicate to your grandchildren, leave accurate instructions for co-workers and provide little notes of blessing to needy church members is a wonderful tool.

God knew that.
So when you open His Word the Bible, He gives you some insights and because you are a pastor God expects you to share that insight with others.

It is a most wonderful thing to daily write one or two lines summarizing what you saw in the Bible. It is a treasure note of God's contact with you.
God is precious, He loves you so much; please write a note for memory's sake.
Perhaps future generations will be blessed as they see your notes of praise.

/// 2-11 /// Yes, it is my habit to make written notes of my Bible reading — circle YES

I have lived a long time and served Christ with diligence, but I must admit that I did not keep a record of His goodness to me.
I am sorry Jesus.
But it is never too late to start.

/// 2-12 /// Thank you Jesus for giving me new insight and a new chance.

For further help special material on this topic may be requested from New Life for Churches.
Ask for the booklet *Basic Christian Life, Part 1*.

F. Resting 1 day weekly

1) *Becoming holy*

Being Renewed!

God rested on the 7th day... if we don't take a day of rest, our actions say *we think we are better* than God!

I have never met a pastor or elder who did not want to be holy.

We all know and grieve over the trauma of carnal believers.

But not many of us know that God **wants** to make us holy; that God is **waiting** to make us holy.

That God has a **plan** to make us holy.

Many of us think holiness is difficult to acquire; we must do that and must not do something else.

We try and try --- and — fail again.

But God said many times in the Bible **"I will make you holy"**. Ex 31:13, Lev. 20:8

Jesus emphasized rest for our souls even amidst busy times.

In this context check out Ex 33: 14, Matt 11:28, Mark 6:31, and Heb 4:1.

So God has a definite desire, God has a definite plan.

2) *What is the secret so many church leaders have missed?*

God's system for holiness is extremely simple.

God's says "If you give me time, I will give you holiness."

How much time does God need in order to give us holiness?

He says "tithe" every 7th day and I will make you holy.

We all know about God's money principle of giving 10% FIRST and trust Him with the other 90%.

In the same way God has spoken "give one full day of rest and I will bless you abundantly" with the other 6 days.

All through the Old Testament various sin seems to culminate into a desecration of the Sabbath.

God says the Sabbath (7th day) is a sign that we are believers in the true God, we are the children of God (Ex. 31:12, 13).

The recurring principle is a 7 day principle that is still valid today.

It is not a legalistic event based on the Jewish word "Sabbath".

It is rather meant to be a reminder that God is first. And to remind us of our limitations. Even Christ would step back from ministry to rest, and God the Father took a day of rest after creating the earth.

By withdrawing from our worldly activities and concerns, we give priority to God and His way of doing things.

Jesus seemed to have very meticulously followed this 7th day principle.

A deeper study will reveal that Jesus never worked on the Sabbath.

Jesus did not break any of the 10 commandments. The things Jesus did on the Sabbath seem to fall into 4 categories:

- A silencing of demonic spirits who untimely revealed His Godhead,
- demonstrating examples of mercy,
- illustrations of a principle he was teaching,
- or an exhibition of His Godhead.

There is an overwhelming emphasis on this 7th day principle by which God heaps on blessing after blessing, or devastation after devastation for those who ignore or break this principle.

Seventy years of captivity was the punishment.

The 7th day principle is one of the strongest in Scripture, and it almost seems like God is telling us, "If you give me *one hour* of physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual rest and worship I will give you *one hour* of holiness."

If you want 2 hours of holiness, give me 2 hours of separation from your worldly involvements.

Unfortunately I have seen many pastors burn out and emigrate or quit the ministry. The ones I talked to were good men who shared one problem: being over tired and not having followed God's 7th day principle. They went into captivity. *How terribly sad!*

Often I have been asked about my spiritual and physical vitality and I have even been asked, "What is your recipe."

All I can say is that I follow the 7th day principle strongly and after my day of rest God seems to fill me with His vitality and power. For me it has been like Christ said, "I have food that you know not of."

I want to wholeheartedly recommend it to you my dear brothers.

The Bible says that for pastors, Sunday is not a day of rest.

Therefore pastors need to have another day of rest.

God, for optimum performance, simply designed for mankind to have a rest, physically, emotionally and for your souls *every 7th day*.

For your own blessings look up Isa 56:2 and 58:13, 14 and see that by keeping the 7th day holy, God himself will make you holy and spiritually successful.

He will make you like a king riding far above your earthly difficulties.

Brothers, those of you who desire holiness; "You must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from your life."

God wants some of your time for **HIMSELF!!!**

I want to ask you, brothers, to "Give your Lord the most precious thing you have. Give Him your time."

G. Listening for the Future

Making less mistakes

Enjoying God creates a desire in us to know *His* direction for our future.

It takes time to become quiet enough so we can hear our heavenly Father's still small voice.

/// 2-13 /// For reflection on the direction my life is taking I have or would like to develop regular special times for listening to God: i.e. 15 minutes a day;

1 hour weekly for spiritual meditation;

One day for reflection monthly.

Yes ... / ... not sure ... / ... feel the need for ... (circle one)

H. Personal Insights

How I am becoming more like God

/// 2-14 /// Other new things I am doing to refresh my relationship with Jesus are:
