

Goal: Encourage you to care for your well-being so you serve sustainably, model health and balance, and avoid burnout or compassion fatigue.

Framing the Conversation

Here's what I know about leadership drawn from both ministry research and lived experience of those in long-term service roles

1. Emotional Load of Shepherding People

- Carrying the burdens of others' pain, crises, and spiritual struggles can lead to **compassion fatigue**.
- Ministry leaders often have to hold space for trauma, grief, and brokenness while maintaining hope and faith.
- Unlike some professions, the "work" of caring for people can extend into evenings, weekends, and personal time.

2. Relational Conflicts Within the Church or Team

- Disagreements, gossip, power struggles, or criticism — especially from those you serve — can feel deeply personal.
- Leaders may feel pressure to keep peace, leading to internal stress or suppressed feelings.
- Strain intensifies when conflict involves long-time members.

3. Blurred Boundaries Between Work and Personal Life

- Ministry is not a 9-to-5 job — weddings, funerals, crises, and late-night calls are common.
- This can lead to a constant state of "being on" with little true rest or disconnection.
- Family members may feel the pressure as well, especially when ministry needs override personal commitments.

4. Financial Pressures & Questioning

- Many ministries operate on tight budgets, and leaders may feel personal responsibility for fundraising and stewardship.
- This creates stress about job security, sustainability, and being able to adequately support programs and staff. In some cases, the leader's own salary may be modest, creating personal financial strain.
- Commonly questioned about finances and expenses.

5. The Loneliness of Leadership

- Due to the leadership role, there are fewer safe spaces to process experiences.
- Many leaders feel they cannot confide fully in their congregation or staff.
- This isolation can lead to discouragement, burnout, and poor decision-making.

6. Criticism and Unrealistic Expectations

- Ministry leaders often feel they are “never doing enough” — expectations from members, boards, and the community can be unending.
- Leaders may also place **unrealistically high expectations** on themselves, increasing the strain.

7. Constant Crisis Management

- Unexpected emergencies (health crises, family breakdowns, moral failures, community tragedies) require quick, compassionate, and wise responses.
- These events disrupt planned ministry work and drain emotional energy.
- Over time, living in “reactive mode” can leave leaders depleted.

8. Spiritual Dryness While Ministering to Others

- The paradox of leading spiritually while feeling personally disconnected from God can be deeply distressing.
- *Leaders may be so busy preparing for others' growth that their own spiritual life gets neglected.*
- This often goes unnoticed until the leader is already in a wellness crisis or worse yet falls to temptation.

9. Role Overload and Lack of Delegation

- Many ministry leaders wear multiple hats — pastor, administrator, counselor, fundraiser, event planner, community liaison.
- Without adequate staff or volunteer support, the workload can be overwhelming.
- Leaders who struggle to delegate may compound the problem.

10. Moral and Ethical Weight of Decisions

- Ministry leaders face high-stakes choices about doctrine, discipline, staffing, and community engagement.
- These decisions can have lasting spiritual and relational impact.
- The pressure to “always get it right” can weigh heavily, affecting sleep, health, and mental clarity.

Key Talking Points:

1. God calls us to live from a place of trusting in Him. This is the **only way** we will experience balance and health.
2. Without fully abiding in Him, and trusting our people and outcomes to Him, we run the risk of giving from our own strength, which will inevitably lead to depletion, burnout, or worse yet, fall to temptation. (*John 15:5 (God's call to abide)*);
3. *Serving broken people comes with weariness and disappointing others, so our wellness is key especially in those times. Matthew 11:28–30 (weary to come to Christ)*
4. Leading from overflow means giving **from God's abundance**; leading from overdraw means giving on empty, leading to fatigue and resentment.

Interactive Prompt:

*When was the last time you felt you were leading from overflow rather than depletion?
How did that show up differently than when you lead from depletion?*

Compassion Fatigue Check In:

Have participants quickly mark which of the following they've done in the past two weeks:

In the last two weeks give yourself 1 point if you...

1. Pressed pause to rest in God's word/prayer – not for teaching/sharing with others
2. Considered your why for ministry
3. Set a boundary to not overwork/overproduce (said no)
4. Had authentic, no programmed fun with friends/family
5. Met with tx/counselors/coach/pastor/spiritual director
6. Drank 8 cups of water in a day
7. Got 8 hrs of sleep (not due to illness)
8. Exercised
9. Done 1 item of self care (massage/salt lounge, took pto, journaled)
10. Experienced enjoyment/adventure or restorative time

In the past 2 weeks subtract 1 if

1. Been the giver in a relationship
2. Felt guilt/frustration bc of not getting something/enough done
3. Felt overworked/ out of control/or worked into the evening
4. Spent time with people you don't like or don't trust
5. Used social media, food, alcohol, drugs, sex or some other numbing agent to feel better
6. Experienced aches, pains, restlessness or even exhaustion
7. Wished or dreamt about a different job, life or living situation
8. Felt irritable, withdrawn, negative or resentful for how much you give/sacrifice
9. Had difficulty concentrating, felt anxious or had trouble sleeping
10. Tuned out in a conversation with a loved one because you were distracted by a pressing issue related to ministry

What's your score? Is there anything left? Do you have overflow? Is it enough for the week ahead?

Exploring the Wellness Wheel

Step 1: Explain each dimension with ministry examples:

- **Spiritual:** Connection to God's purpose. **meaning, peace, accountability, mentorship**
- **Financial:** Stewardship, personal and ministry. **budgeting sharing, saving, and future planning**
- **Social:** Support systems and authentic relationships. **connection, belonging, enjoyment, relationships**
- **Physical:** Caring for your body as a temple. **activity, rest, nutrition, restoration**
- **Professional/Occupational:** Joy and fulfillment in your ministry role. **calling, growth, satisfaction**
- **Home/Environmental:** Worship space, home, and work environments that bring peace. **balance, support, safety, comfort**
- **Intellectual/Individual:** Ongoing growth in Scripture and skills. **vision, creativity, knowledge, learning**

- **Emotional:** Healthy coping with ministry stress. **gratitude, joy, positive mindset, counseling**

Step 2: Reflection Questions – break into groups of teams and answer

1. *Why is this element important?*
2. *What would a “10” look like here?*

Activity: Complete Wellness Wheel worksheets.

3. *Rate yourself in each category today and note patterns.*
4. *Where do you want to be one year from now?*
5. *What would it take to get there?*

If you were to cut out the wheel to see how “round” it is.

Activity: Group exercise – how will it move collectively?

Addressing Barriers

Group Discussion (write on whiteboard):

1. What's holding you back from where you want to be?
Make two lists: **Internal factors** vs. **External factors**
2. How are these barriers contributing to your results (or lack of results)?
3. If you stayed on the same path for one to five years, what would it cost you?

If you were teaching on the overflow what would you say at this point?

- Overflow happens when **input ≥ output** and rest is part of your rhythm.
- Biblical models: Jesus withdrawing to pray (*Luke 5:16*), Sabbath rest, Paul's endurance in ministry.
- Leading from overflow benefits your ministry longevity, joy, and modeling to others.

Personal Commitment Plan

Handout: *My Wellness Action Plan* (with sections for focus area, why it matters, small step, barriers, ways to address them, and cost of inaction).

Closing:

- Invite 2–3 volunteers to share their focus area.
- Read *Hebrews 13:20–21*. Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing His will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.
- Pray blessing over the leaders.

Materials Needed

- **Printed Wellness Wheel worksheets**
- **My Wellness Action Plan handouts**
- Pens/markers
- Flip chart or whiteboard for brainstorming
- Optional: background instrumental music during reflection time