



How many time commitments per week do you have for your family? _____.

How many time commitments per week do you have for employer? _____.

How many time commitments per week do you have for this church? _____.

Some of our capacity for ministry is based on experience, but much is by our _____.

Discussion: How would you define the rhythm of your life? Is this a sustainable rhythm? What would a sustainable rhythm look like?

Key Point! When it comes to managing our stress and survive in ministry, the answer is not an issue of *less or more*, but rather *rhythm*.

If we are not careful, life in and around the church often gets reduced to so much activity, so much busyness, such incessant expectations there is no joy.

Most of us know only one speed: full steam ahead. We must be this way to compensate for the percentage of a church that refuses to participate or help.

If we do not establish saner rhythms in our own lives—life patterns that curb our unbridled activism and calm our compulsive busyness—we will not make it over the long haul.

THE STEADY RHYTHM BETWEEN WORK & REST

Jesus understood how quickly our passions, even the most noble, can wear us out if we're not careful. Early in his ministry with the disciples, he began to teach them about the importance of establishing sane rhythms of work and rest.

In Mark 6, Jesus commissioned the disciples for ministry and gave them the authority to cast out demons, to preach the gospel, and to heal the sick. They went off on their first ministry excursion and returned excited about their newfound power and influence. They crowded around Jesus to report all they had done.

Mark 6:30-31 NKJV

30 Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they *had done* and what they *had taught*.

31 And He said to them, "*Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.*"

But what did Jesus do? He didn't seem to have much time for their ministry reports. Immediately he instructed them "to come away with me and rest awhile." He seemed more concerned about helping them establish a rhythm that would sustain them in ministry rather than allowing them to be overly enamored by ministry success, which can lead to a compulsion to do more and more without ceasing.

Key Understanding! When we keep pushing forward without taking adequate time for rest, our way of life may seem heroic, but there is frenzied quality to our work that lacks true effectiveness because we lose the ability to be fully present. Present to God and present to other people. And we lose the ability to discern what is really needed in our situation.

The result can be "sloppy desperation," a mental and spiritual state in which we're "*just trying to get it all done*". And this prevents us from the quality of presence that delivers true insight and spiritual leadership.

When we are depleted:

- *We become overly reliant on clamoring voices outside of us for direction.*
- *We react to symptoms rather than seeking to understand and respond to underlying causes.*
- *We rely on other people's ministry models because we are too tired to listen and observe our setting and craft something uniquely suited for this place.*

When we are rested:

- *We bring steady, alert attention to our leadership and are characterized by discernment of what is truly needed in our situation.*
- *we have the energy and creativity to carry it out.*

THE STEADY RHYTHM BETWEEN ENGAGEMENT & RETREAT

One of the most important rhythms for us to establish is a constant back-and-forth motion between *engagement* and *retreat*.

2 Chronicles 20:15 KJV "...Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's."

We need regular times to engage in the battle, giving our best energy to the task. Then we need regular times when we step back to gain perspective, re-strategize, and tend our wounds.

Point! While the war against Satan is evenly and equally *ours* (the church), not every battle is *yours*.

Notes: _____

An occupational hazard for leaders is that it can be hard to distinguish between the times we are “on,” working *for* God, and times when we can just *be with* God to replenish our own soul.

Warning! Our time with Scripture can be reduced to a textbook or a tool for ministry rather than an intimate communication from God to us personally. Even prayer can become an exhausting round of different kinds of mental activity, or a public display of our spiritual prowess.

Times of extended retreat give us a chance to come home to God’s presence and to be open with God, in utter privacy, about what is true of us. This is important for us and for those we serve.

Truth! IF we give God a true account, telling Him what he have *done* and who we have *become*, He can share what *He will do* and who *He is*.

When we repress what is real in our lives and just keep soldiering on, we get weary from holding it in and eventually it leaks out in ways that are damaging to ourselves and to others.

But on retreat there is time and space to attend to what is real in our own lives - to celebrate the joys, grieve the losses, shed tears, sit with our questions, feel our anger, attend to our loneliness - *and allow God to be with us in those places*.

Point! Such times as described above are when God restores our *wholeness* and *joy* once again.

THE STEADY RHYTHM BETWEEN SILENCE & WORD

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7 KJV

1 To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven:

7 A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;

Key Understanding! The incessant flow of words we feel compelled to issue from our mouths, pens, phones and computers can wind us up in severe angst.

“Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt.” ~ Mark Twain

“Right speech comes out of silence, and right silence comes out of speech” ~ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*“Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise:
and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding” ~ King Solomon*

Truth! There are times the most heroic thing you, as leader, can do is to remain *calm* and *quiet*.

Rather than speech that issues from our subconscious needs to impress, to put others in their place, to compete, control, and manipulate, to put a good spin on things, we are able to notice our inner dynamics and make choices that are more grounded in love, trust, and God-given wisdom.

In silence our speech patterns are refined because silence fosters a self-awareness that enables us to choose more truly the words that we say.

Discussion: How does your current pace reflect your understanding of your own limits? To what extent have you been trying to fill roles that only God can fill in peoples' lives?

THE STEADY RHYTHM BETWEEN STILLNESS & ACTION

Points!

- Stillness isn't easy: It takes energy to be restrained.
- The more distressing things are, the more silence I need.
- Buried deep in the psyche of many leaders is a Superman mentality. This is a myth that we indulge to our own peril.

Sabbath keeping is the primary discipline that helps us live within the limits of our humanity and to honor God as our Creator. It is the key to a life lived in sync with the rhythms that God himself built into our world.

There is a reason we practice "*3 Days of Rest*". Sabbath keeping honors the body's need for rest, the spirit's need for replenishment, and the soul's need to delight itself in God for God's own sake.

Rest begins with the willingness to acknowledge the limits of our humanness and then to take steps to begin to live more graciously within the order of things.

There are limits to my relational, emotional, mental and spiritual capacities as well. I am not God. God is the only one who can be all things to all people. God is the only one who can be two places at once. God is the one who never sleeps. I am not.

Key Point! There is a freedom that comes from being who we are in God and resting into God. This eventually enables us to bring something truer to the world than all of our striving.

Discussion: When has busyness or lack of energy affected your response in a ministry situation? What are the signs that you have reached this state? How could you avoid reaching it in the future?