



Salt

a pastoral retreat

God Doesn't Often Use A Parked Car

I always pray for the Spirit to communicate through me in this message. In the end, the words always seem to form and this time is no exception. I have been thinking about this one word for the past few days and I just can't seem to shake it, so that must be it, "communication". What gets done without it?

Let's take for example your communication with your car. That might seem far fetched, but your car depends on you for every decision that is made and every place it goes. Your car has its entire focus on you and is always listening for you to communicate, so it can respond: you turn the key, it starts; put it in gear, it goes forward; push the throttle, it goes faster; push the brake, it stops. And if our cars don't do what we ask? Well, we all know what a disappointment they are then. That's when they have decided to park themselves!

Have you ever found your car to be a bit negative? Cars today, they are great complainers. They tell you that they are too hot, too cold, that their oil level is low, that they're out of gas and oh my favorite — my car even has the nerve to tell me that my seat belt isn't fastened! I bet God views us a little bit like a car. And in many ways, wishes we were a bit more like one. If we would only respond to Him half as well as our cars respond to us.

I believe our Heavenly Father desires constant communication with us, just as if He were driving a car. Not a hot rod, just a reliable car, and one that is always listening. Unfortunately, we don't seem to make the time for those quiet, relaxing "Sunday drives" with God. I know I find myself traveling down the highway of life as if I were a roller coaster, not a car. I hit the lows and trudge my way up the inclines. About half-way up, I realize I stopped listening to my Driver. I get back on track and when I again reach those exhilarating high places, both my hands go flying up in the air! Yep, during the lows, life just doesn't seem to click like it does when I'm on the highs. So you would think I would learn to listen to the wise One behind the wheel, stay on track and quit all my 4-wheeling!



Praise the Lord, this past year a few apparently were listening to our Almighty Driver. He wasn't just communicating with us old station wagons either. A few new coupes found their way to the back roads of Salt. God found some focused listeners and a number of things got done. Probably the biggest was the website. It was a large and long undertaking. But God's hand was on it and even when the monkey threw his wrenches at the wheels, it still rolled off the line. Have you seen it? www.saltmountain.org What a Cadillac it is! We pray it proves to be a useful vehicle to get more people involved.

As we communicate our needs to God, He listens and He answers with resources and people who have a heart to serve. Just as Salt approved the blue prints for the completed building design, the team from Happy Home Church visited us yet again and got the building ready for window installations. Happy Home also sent their Youth Group down. They caged young trees to protect them from the ever roaming wildlife and those young coupes picked and moved approximately 40,000 lbs of rock (that's not a typo!) for the entryway construction. Then the team of "Two Hearts From The West" came and sanded all 15 huge beams in the Great Room, readying them for the final finish. Just as the year was trying to come to a freezing close, God held off the inclement weather long enough for the mason to finish the entryway. God used the hands of that craftsman to turn all that hand picked rock into a work of art!

We thank our Driver for the communicating He has done and for the hearts who were listening. We pray that many others would hear His calling and join us on His road trip, here at Salt.

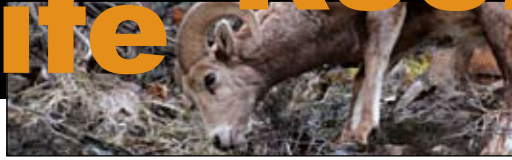
Your servant in Christ,
Don

P.S. I pray that if you too are on one of life's roller coasters, that your roller coaster would get stuck on the highs!
See you soon.



Be a part of the vision . . . coming to light

Wildlife Recreation



How To Burn Out, Stress Out and Water Down Your Ministry In 7 Easy Steps!

by Pastor Kelly Rhoades

In my early days in ministry I was full of excitement and passion. It seemed that my energy was boundless, I worked as a youth pastor, went to school, and managed to work another part time construction job to pay the bills. As I grew older, and God blessed my wife and I with children, things began to get more complicated. My energy seemed to wane and I found myself stressed out, burned out, and coasting. The passion and excitement I had in those early days wasn't gone, but it was on it's way. I went through a lot of pain, soul searching, prayer, and guidance from mentors before I identified the cause. I'll admit, I still find myself struggling to maintain balance in these areas. Thankfully, I have men in my life who will point out when I need to step back and readjust a few things. Take a look and see if any of these are issues you struggle with as well.

1 Let other people determine your worth

No matter how many people tell me how great the message was on Sunday, just one negative or overly critical person's voice seems to drown out all the others. The problem isn't with that one Negative Nelly, the problem is when we derive our feelings of success or satisfaction from people rather than from the Lord. If you are preaching from the Word of God, which is sharper than any two edged sword, sooner or later you will offend someone and offended people often lash out. When they do, it is easy to get down on yourself because of their hurtful words. Pastor Perry Noble when speaking on the issue of critics in the church says,

"When you allow the voice of those who know you the least, to define you the most, you are in trouble. The voice of the critic does not define you if you are a follower of Jesus and called by Christ. You need to trade in your self esteem for God esteem."

However, by the same token, if your confidence rests on getting "ataboys" from certain people in your congregation you are playing with fire as well. In Luke 6:26 Jesus said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." The Bible is clear, we are first and foremost accountable to God, and our chief aim must be to please him.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15 (ESV) — emphasis added

When we allow the voice of the crowd and their opinion, whether positive or negative, to shape our sermons and leadership we

are really allowing them to lead instead of following the Holy Spirit. Pastor you are the called and anointed leader of the church and your family. The Lord has entrusted, equipped, and called you to this task, at this time. Don't let anyone strip away or diminish what the Lord has called you to.

2 Compare your ministry to others

This is so natural to do, but it is also destructive. We compare numbers, facilities, budgets, even softball team records and when you do that, either way you fail. You end up either feeling like you don't measure up or pridefully conclude that your ministry is better or more anointed than someone else's. God wants us to be confidently humble, to be neither in envy of another or prideful over what God has done through our work. 1 Corinthians 3:6 makes it clear when Paul wrote "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." God is the one doing the real work. The first question you need to answer is, "Am I being obedient?" I'll take obedience over numbers any day. People will know we love Jesus not by how many people we cram in our churches, or by how big the offering was, but by how we obey. I also have this sneaking feeling that obedience leads to health, which leads to making disciples and growth in every significant area in the church. Pursue Christ through obedience, He will take care of the rest.

3 Don't take care of yourself

Current CIA Director, General David Patraeus, has stated that the human body is the ultimate weapons system. When well cared for, these bodies of ours are capable of amazing feats. However, when we are running on caffeine, subsisting on junk and fast food, and carrying too much excess baggage, we find ourselves running low on energy to the point where enthusiasm and passion just aren't enough anymore. Not only do we have less energy, we are less productive with what we do have. Getting on a whole body health plan that addresses body, mind, and spirit is one of the most challenging things I have ever attempted to do. It takes discipline and commitment to be successful, but I find that when I take time to exercise, eat right, and fill my mind with good things, the dividends far outweigh the expenditures.



4 Stay isolated

Ministry is lonely, but it doesn't have to be. I have found that because pastors tend to struggle with 1 and 2 they often fail to build real relationships with other pastoral peers in their community. These are the men who know the load you carry, and have been down that same road you are on. Even pastors

photo by Dallas Health Helpers

need relationships so that “iron can sharpen iron”. Younger pastors need to connect with more experienced pastors, and more experienced pastors need to pass on their knowledge and wisdom. Sadly, there are many that are more dedicated to their pet doctrines than they are to the unity Jesus prayed for in John 17:20-23 and Paul wrote about in Ephesians 4:1-16. We need to lay differences aside and find time to build relationships with other pastors for prayer, fellowship and support. Who knows if pastors led the way in this, entire communities just might follow suit!

5 Maintain poor boundaries

As one called into ministry the word “no” is both surprisingly hard to say and seems to be very offensive to people when they hear me say it. But everyone needs to hear it from time to time. After a spate of very early morning and middle

of the night phone calls, I asked a person in the church to stop calling my home and to only call me during business hours at the office. It’s not that the calls were completely pointless, but they were disturbing my family’s rest and my family comes before anything but a legitimate emergency. There are people in your church and community that are needy and while they cannot be ignored, good boundaries must be put in place or everything else will suffer. There is simply not enough time or energy available to meet the needs of everyone around you and maintain the things God has called you to. Know where the line is and do not hesitate to draw it.

6 Keep even poorer priorities

We are called to our personal walk with God first, to our spouses second, our families third, and then to our ministry. In that order. It is easy to get that out of whack and when we do, ministry becomes a mistress that attacks our marriages, families, and can ultimately destroy the church. Some pastors allow their walk with Christ to suffer because they replace it with sermon prep. If God is indeed desirous of relationship that is so often described in passionate and intimate terms, there needs to be passion and intimacy in your daily pursuit of Him. The same goes for your spouse. They need to know they are number one in your book and you can show that by making time, cultivating your relationship, and doing the little things that matter. Guess what? Your kids need that same type of relational cultivation. One requirement of ministry in both Titus and Timothy was a healthy home life. No, you don’t have to be June and Ward Cleaver. But you do need to take care of your household first. As 1 Timothy 3:5 reminds us, “For if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of the church of God?”

7 Refuse to rest

This is a big one. We often preach honor the Sabbath day and keep it holy, but it seems that many pastors struggle to maintain a consistent day of rest for themselves and their families. Here are some tips to a healthy Sabbath.

Set aside – a day each week specifically for rest.

Attitude – train your mind to stay off the work you need to get done at the office.

Boundary - again, unless it is an emergency, this is a day for you and your family to rest in the Lord.

Bible – Remember this isn’t a vacation away from the Word. The Bible is meant to refresh and reenergize so make time in your day for your own study.

All together – your family needs to be a part of this rest time as well, whenever possible. Plan time to be together.

Teach yourself – I have a stable of preaching podcasts I listen to for my own edification. This is not when I listen to leadership podcasts though. On my days off I specifically listen to preaching so that through hearing the Word my own faith might become activated.

Home – spend some time at home. Unless rest is just impossible at home, spend time around your house. Fix things, garden, take a nap, play with the kids, enjoy time with your spouse, whatever you need to do to relax, find a way to do it at home.

The title of this article is a little tongue-in-cheek, but seriously, any one of these can lead to burning out, stressing out, and watering down your ministry. If you find yourself dealing with multiples of these, you may have a real problem on your hands and may need to see somebody. I know where my greatest struggles are and which ones come more easily, but I definitely have plenty of room to grow in all these areas.

Do you have a thought, personal testimony or encouraging word you would like to share? Visit our blog, Brothers In Arms, and post a comment:



<http://saltmountain.org/2012/03/burn-out-stress-out/>

Find us on Facebook  www.facebook.com/saltmountain and on Twitter  @saltmountaininc

“Our trip to Salt brought the youth of Happy Home Church closer as we worked hard and fellowshiped together with encouragement and laughter. We had the opportunity to accomplish goals as a team with joyful endurance in the midst of God’s beautiful creation, and found great satisfaction in getting to have a small part in God’s plan for this ministry. The experiences we shared illuminated the gifts and value of each person as he or she contributed to the tasks at hand.”

The HH Youth Group “Rocks Salt”



“After working hard, it felt wonderful to sit in the refreshing river and swim. We also took a relaxing rafting trip where bald Eagles flew overhead. In the evenings, we visited around the campfire. Everyone agrees that we are very much looking forward to going back again.”



“Our hosts, Teresa and Don, with LaNette and Gary from Happy Home, fed us like kings and provided refreshing drinks during the hot days. They inspired us with the vision God has given them for Salt and their desire to be obedient to God’s call. We enjoyed the opportunities to meet other brothers and sisters in Christ during the outdoor worship service we were allowed to have at the campground, and at the Cowboy Church. We greatly enjoyed visiting.”



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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Salt