

FOREWORD

By Peter N. Landless, M.B., B.Ch., M.Fam.Med., MFGP(SA), FCP(SA), FACC, FASNC
Director, Adventist Health Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists
Executive Director, International Commission for the Prevention of Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (ICPA)

"Your stress EKG shows signs of inadequate blood flow to parts of your heart muscle and this is what is causing your tiredness and shortness of breath although you are only 45 years old. . . There are more tests to run, possible balloon (angioplasty) intervention or maybe even surgery, and intentional lifelong lifestyle changes must be made." As the treating physician, I shared this news with the pastor sitting in my office. His eyes widened with fear; he shuddered as he fought back the tears—"I should have been paying attention—so much work—so many visits, never-ending meetings. . . I just did not have the time to have regular health checks, exercise and work on my needed weight loss; now I am in danger and have no choice!"

Another time, I sat in the office of an energetic, successful and seasoned pastor/administrator. The conversation turned to the huge challenge of transition into a new and even more responsible position, and the domino-effect on the spouse and children who changed country, work, schools, and were learning a new language. Stress, role adjustment for all, financial pressure, and sometimes, even health challenges all complicate adjusting to a new assignment and environment! Yet, it all felt so lonely because pastors and leaders provide solutions and answers to life's challenges. They are expected to adjust, adapt, and continue regardless of personal issues, needs, and circumstances. . .

These are common experiences in the lives of pastors. The pastor's journey is busy, full, and multifaceted—as striking as a diamond, and some days as hard! Pastors are expected to be powerful preachers, thoughtful theologians, fiery fundraisers, daring developers and bold builders, consoling comforters, and faithful friends. Waiting patiently, and sometimes longingly, for a mention in this incomplete list are the faithful family members who tirelessly, and often, selflessly support their ministry and all it entails.

In the midst of the tyranny of the overfilled schedule often forgotten by all, including the pastor, are his/her personal wholistic health and well-being! Wellness is very often absent from the "to-do" list of the busy cleric. In addition, pastors have lonely journeys—with whom do they talk and in whom can they confide? It is a given that we lay our burdens on Jesus; we do also need accountability partners and, too often, have none. Should our pastors be on this relentless treadmill of leadership, ministry, and service, running on empty, and dangerously close to physical, mental or spiritual challenges? Is this your experience? How are you in yourself?

And now my personal disclaimer in writing this piece: I have had the privilege of serving the God and Church I love as a physician and pastor all of my career—a blended ministry in verity. It continues to be a joy and honor. What a revelation comes of both living the pastoral life and being the physician to other pastors! I have seen and experienced both sides of the coin, and then have been given the privileged opportunity to write about it—not as one who shadow boxes—but as one who has worked at the same coalface as do you, having experienced, and continue to experience God's grace, mercy, redemptive and restoring power—even through the rigors of overwork. . . He can and will restore—mend us, if we allow Him to, but first we

must make the decision, and the intentional choice.

As a Church, and as individuals, we have been blessed with a wonderful grace-filled, wholistic, preventive, preserving, and often healing, health message (while Jesus tarries, death is inevitable). After the Otsego vision in June 1863, Ellen White stated that we were given the health message because our work was not yet done (White, 2000). In short, we are saved, and strive to be healthy in order to serve, not healthy in order to be saved! “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). What is important is that there be a strong corollary—as wholistic beings, each dimension of our being affects all aspects of our being!

Mending Ministers is an excellent resource and covers so many facets—the wellness and richness that blended and respected diversity brings to us and our congregations; intellectual wellness; financial health—all the while dedicated to keeping the passion of the pastoral calling kindled in the lives of the servant and the served. It has the potential to change your life! You will find reminders of wholistic health and well-being, the importance of Shalom, and all that this can and should mean in our lives. You may even be questioning whether some of the difficulties you face in your daily work may be related to burnout; do we even fully understand what burnout is and the various ways in which it manifests? How do we recognize it? How do we avoid it? Can we recover from it? The leading cause of disability worldwide today is mental and emotional ill-health, specifically depression and anxiety. Pastors are not immune, but often do not recognize the problem nor the severity—and if they do, they often feel uncomfortable talking about it and delay seeking the much-needed help for fear of being thought to be weak, faithless or a failure. . . .

We do not readily talk about abusive relationships—in the Church or in our homes, or in our professional settings. Sometimes, because we are overextended, burned out, or even depressed, our family members may be the victims of unintended abuse by us. Let’s work on breaking the silence on this destructive behavior—many may benefit—including we ourselves and our families!

And then the elusive ideal of balance—work-life balance and the importance of self-care! Getting some kind of physical activity *every day* in order to strengthen and renew physical, mental, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, relational, and sexual wellness. We are wholistic beings and need wholistic care and maintenance. The *ongoing mending of ministers*, if you will!

Topics so relevant to the pastor’s life, family, and work are expertly, comprehensively, and empathetically addressed in *Mending Pastors*. Please don’t give these chapters just a cursory glance—peruse them, thoughtfully digest the messages, and please visit the resource websites listed throughout the book. Prayerfully consider any changes you need to make in order to live life to the full, be in good health, and experience wholeness, even in our inevitable brokenness.

Our prayer for you is an echo of the apostle John’s prayer for Gaius: “Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as you soul is getting along well” (3 John 2, NIV). How about you, dear friend? Are you persuaded? As you work daily under the tyranny of an overfilled schedule, an overflowing email inbox, sermon preparation, agenda planning, strategic planning for your congregation(s), your own personal study and devotional time, and struggle for time slots to include a personal exercise program, adequate rest, recreation, and *relaxation* (a word and concept often foreign to the busy pastor’s life), I can almost hear

your anxious plea: "I don't have the time!" We need to make the conscious decision and choice to live more healthily, engage our spouse and family, and implement the needed changes. It is literally a matter of life and death. If we neglect to find the time to nurture wellness, we will need to find the time for the inevitable and often preventable illness which might have been avoided. The incidence of preventable diseases such as burnout, depression, and metabolic diseases (hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and obesity) is alarming! Ellen White reminded us that it is our duty to make the needed changes:

Our first duty toward God and our fellow beings is that of self-development. Every faculty with which the Creator has endowed us should be cultivated to the highest degree of perfection, that we may be able to do the greatest amount of good of which we are capable. Hence that time is spent to good account which is used in the establishment and preservation of physical and mental health. (White, 1951, p. 107)

John's wish for Gaius is my wish for you—wholeness of body, mind, spirit, emotions, and social relationships. We need to take stock of every part of our lives, honestly confront the issues, and, by His grace, and through His power, choose to make the needed changes. It does not matter how trivial or serious the challenge—from slothfulness to gluttony, from pride to pornography, from selfish indulgence to fractured relationships—there is healing! Seek God's help. Find an accountability and prayer partner. Rediscover your spouse and the joy of renewed trust, togetherness, and even—perhaps especially—intimacy. His promises are for you and for me: "I can do all this through him [Jesus] who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13, NIV). And also, God affirms, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5, NIV). He is faithful: "God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted [*dare I insert stressed and pressured*] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted [*stressed and pressured*], he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it" (1 Cor. 10:13, NIV).

Again, the pen of inspiration exhorts:

Health is an inestimable blessing, and one which is more closely related to conscience and religion than many realize. It has a great deal to do with one's capability. Every minister should feel that as he would be a faithful guardian of the flock, he must preserve all his powers in condition for the best possible service. (White, 1915, p. 175)

Wholeness, despite our inevitable brokenness, comes through accepting Jesus, His righteousness, and death on the cross in our place: "For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Eph. 2:8, NIV). Thankfully, this includes all deeds, behaviors, and actions—including lifestyle practices and habits. Our salvation is not *earned* through exercise, rest, or even diet. Salvation, Sozo, and Shalom, including wholeness in our brokenness, are all gifts!

Completely whole, mended ministers *being continually mended* with new life in Christ—may this be your and my experience, by His grace! Maranatha!

References

- White, A. L. (2000). *Ellen White: Woman of vision*. Review and Herald.
White, E. G. (1915). *Gospel workers 1892*. Review & Herald.
White, E. G. (1951). *Counsels on health*. Pacific Press.

INTRODUCTION

By Ivan L. Williams, Sr., D.Min., M.Div.,
Director, North American Division Ministerial Association
Chair, Pastor Health and Wellness Committee

If there ever was a doubt that Christian denominations need to pay attention to the health and wellness of their pastors, the Duke Divinity Clergy Health Initiative launched in 2007 eliminated it. Their study focused on helping United Methodist clergy in North Carolina improve their health. Four years after its launch, more than 1,100 pastors enrolled in the diet and wellness component of the initiative called “Spirited Life.” Some of the findings were eye-opening; the results caught my attention and moved me to inquire more, especially regarding improving pastors’ health.

These findings encouraged a trip to the Duke University campus to meet with Dr. Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, the principal of the pastor health initiative. Dr. Angeline Brauer (NAD Health Ministries director), Dr. Anthony Medley (Senior Pastor of the Emmanuel Brinklow Seventh-day Adventist Church), and I traveled to Duke to listen and learn how best to launch a health & wellness initiative for pastors of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the North American Division.

Awareness and Understanding

Seventh-day Adventist pastors face challenges with health and wellness, even with a beautiful whole-life health message ingrained in our faith tradition. We also live with the challenges of resilience, depression, self-care, wholeness, mental health, imbalance, stress, burnout, and emotional intelligence. Awareness and understanding of these personal and interpersonal issues are critically related to ministry impact and missional outcomes.

After this initial investigation, there was a felt need to build on this vision from a foundation of solid research. First, existing studies were gathered, and important information was gleaned about what researchers have discovered concerning Adventist pastors’ health and wellness. These studies led to an investigation of emerging issues of longevity in ministry, personal and professional stress, and effective positive change strategies. The first study featured five focus groups of active Adventist pastors. The second study engaged individuals who have left Adventist ministerial employment, to discover motivations for leaving and possible remedies to better support current pastors. The insights gained from these studies called for action. We initiated a comprehensive plan to strengthen, encourage, and inspire ministers to a new level of health and wellness.

This book, *Mending Ministers*, is the launch of the emphasis “*Adventist HealthyYOU: Pastors’ Health and Wellness*.” It starts a varied but collaborative pastor-centered approach of focus groups and interviews, research and outcomes, personal coaching, peer reviews, and connectivity with our Adventist Healthcare systems—all to support those who serve in full-time ministry. As you read this book, you will understand the need for personal self-care and systematic, intentional institutional support in a whole new way. Being intentional about one’s health and wellness through the rigors of the pastoral life is essential not just survive but to thrive. If pastors thrive, so will mission. If pastors are whole and healthy, churches will be healthier.

As the table of contents shows, this book comes with a wholistic view of the

pastor's health. Each chapter contributes from a unique angle, providing practical tips, resources, experiences in response to the research findings. The diverse cross-disciplinary group of authors will help you gain practical insight, encourage you towards whole-life resilience, and give you tools to thrive as you serve in ministry.

Heartfelt Thanks

I am deeply indebted to my collegial book editors, René Drumm and Petr Činčala, and their assistants. A thank you is not enough. You all have worked tirelessly to see this book project through, and I know it is worth the effort. To Dr. Peter Landless and Dr. Angeline Brauer, your spurring support of pastors' health has meant more than you will ever know. Thank you. To the many pastors who participated with steeled resolve in the focus groups, survey questions, and verbal and written testimonials, your passion for helping your vocational peers is celebrated. I'm grateful to the Adventist HealthyYOU: Pastors' Health and Wellness planning committee members: Peter Landless, Torben Bergland, Angeline Brauer, David Williams, my worship-in-motion coach Tony Medley, Gary Fraser, Colwick Wilson, Richard Martin, René Drumm, and Petr Činčala.

I am filled with heartfelt gratitude for each of the 31 authors who gave of their time and research investment into these critical areas of health. Your written deposits will serve as excellent gifts towards wellness. I want to thank our partnerships with the Loma Linda University Adventist Health Study II, Adventist Risk Management, Adventist Health Care Systems, and Adventist Retirement. You enhanced our research immensely to form ongoing support of the pastor's health.

For Those Who Serve

In closing, our Lord's example, telling His disciples to "come away from the people, be by yourselves and rest" (Mark 6:31) after the disciples buried the beheaded and beloved John the Baptist, is proof that we should be intentional and not neglect our own care as we serve others. May the work of this book lead and guide all those who serve in the vocation of pastoral ministry towards greater wholeness—mind, body, soul, and life-work balance (3 John 2).



Adventist[®]
HealthyYOU
PASTORS' HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The following research reports were used to inform this book's teams of authors.

- The Adventist Pastor: A World Survey (2013)
- Seminary Training, Role Demands, Family Stressors and Strategies for Alleviation of Stressors in Pastors' Families (2014)
- Views of Future Pastoral Ministry Careers Among SDA Adolescents (2019)
- Pastoral Health: What We Know and What We Need to Know (2019)
- Pastoral Longevity in Ministry: Survey Report (2020)
- A Quantitative Comparative Study of Employee Engagement Among Full-time Seventh-day Adventist Pastors in the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and its Relationship to Level of Participation in Annual Pastoral Continuing Education (2020)
- Former Seventh-day Adventist Pastors: Qualitative Study Report (2021)
- What Can and Must Be Done to Save the Health of Adventist Pastors: Health Qualitative Study Report (2021)

The reports are available in full text at: <https://nad.adventistresearch.org/search/>



SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Cultivating a Friendship with God

PETR ČINČALA, CRAIG CARR, & CAMPBELL PAGE

Petr Činčala, PhD, MSW, MDiv, is an associate professor in research and missiology and serves as director of both the Institute of Church Ministry and Doctor of Missiology program at Andrews University's Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. He heads the office of Natural Church Development America. As a freelance missionary, he developed a model for reaching unreached Czech atheists. His current focus is on research and missiology.

Craig Carr, DMin, is the ministerial director for the Mid-America Union Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska. He researches and presents on the interaction of emotional and spiritual maturity in pastoral ministry. The ultimate purpose of his work with pastors is summarized in this phrase, "Restore the joy of my vocation."

Campbell Page, DMin, is a Métis/Saulteaux and Cree man and is the Indigenous ministries director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada. He is also a registered psychotherapist, board certified chaplain, university professor, and also pastored in Canada and the United States for two decades. His Doctor of Ministry degree dissertation focused on facilitating change through positive church-community relationships based on authentic discipleship practices and missional church principles. His mandate is to nurture reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and his work sees him healing relationships and facilitating programming across Canada. He lives by this principle, "We are all kin; how one of us lives affects us all. Love, respect, courage, truth, honesty, humility, wisdom, and a deep connection to our Creator will help us live lives that invite healing of the past and present, creating unlimited possibilities for the future."

Why this chapter?

Pastoral ministry resembles a marathon more than it does a sprint, but forward progress can be exhausting and the finish line always out of reach. For a vocation whose job description is written by a committee and supervised by a congregation of onlookers, wise pastors prioritize, first and foremost, their relationship with Jesus as the One Who called them, gifts them, and sustains them. The true source of pastoral leadership comes from friendship with God. It is out of this friendship that healthy engagement with others can flow consistently.

Why research?

It has been very useful to draw current information through surveys of pastors which was then coded into common themes as it relates to ministry. Interviews with Adventist pastors provided a deeper understanding of their present experience in ministry.

This chapter covers:

- ... Defining Spiritual Health
 - ... Missional Spirituality
 - ... Challenges with Spirituality
 - ... Spiritual Health Barriers
 - ... Additional Resources, Tips, and Coping Strategies
-

Are you confident when talking about spiritual health? Is it a topic of conversation that effortlessly flows from you? For me (Petr), I can easily answer “no” to both questions. Yet, since early childhood, I have had a strong desire to engage in religious and spiritual activities. Perhaps that was why my sisters used to—tauntingly—call me the “holy one.”

Only years later did I realize that my spiritual journey started while I was still in the womb. Before I was born, my dad was called to ministry via a church plant; this was a bold and somewhat daring move in Communist Czechoslovakia (today called the Czech Republic). While he was far away, preparing the new facility for worship services and readying an apartment for his growing family, my mom was alone at home, pregnant with me, taking care of my sister, and praying for the journey ahead. During this time, she intensely studied Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy, preparing for her new role as a pastor’s wife.

As a young person, I never doubted God’s goodness—regardless of the trials I experienced. However, I rarely felt spiritual satisfaction. Even after spending considerable time praying and studying God’s Word, there was always the sense that I did not pray long enough or read enough. It took years of searching to relax in God’s arms, learning that spiritual health is a daily, lifelong process.

In his book *Dangerous Wonder*, Michael Yaconelli (2003) shares his experiences with spiritual life. As a child, he listened to the voice of Jesus—until he got too busy and lost track of his priorities. It took him *fifty years* to realize he was lost. He testifies:

No one knew I was lost—my life had all the *trappings* of found-ness. I was a pastor, for heaven’s sake. I had spent twenty-five years in church-related ministry and most of my days were consumed with writing or talking about Jesus. And yet I was lost, confused, soul weary, thirsty, and bone tired. I had succeeded at mimicking aliveness, but I was nearly dead. (p. 16)

Once Yaconelli realigned his spiritual life with Christ, he experienced a dramatic shift. He began to understand that God had not simply been giving him a list of do’s and don’ts; God was not “telling me what to do, He [had] been telling me how much He [loved] me. He [had] not corrected my behavior, He [had] been leading me into His arms . . .” (Yaconelli, 2003, pp. 16–17).

We each have our own unique stories of spirituality, don’t we? Yet there doesn’t seem to be a universally accepted definition for the term “spirituality.” As mentioned in the introduction of this book, in the last ten years, multiple studies have been

conducted on Adventist pastors (Činčala & Drumm, 2021; Sedlacek et al., 2014); these studies have examined different aspects of pastoral life, including spiritual experiences, familial experiences, health, etc. The pastors who participated in this research discussed their concern about the lack of a clear definition for “spirituality” because what may be considered a spiritual behavior to some may not be considered so by others. As one pastor put it:

The definition of spirituality is a problem, very different to members of the congregation, probably different to all of us here. So, that is a word that when you ask the question, ends up being defined by each of us. And then, I think often what happens is people will put a guilt trip on us or will put a guilt trip on ourselves because we are not spiritual like some other definition or someone else is. So, probably that is a very difficult thing to try and determine . . . what is spirituality? (Sedlacek et al., 2014, pp. 45–46)

The word “spirituality” is not found anywhere in the Bible. In fact, it has only been used and discussed within the last few generations. Catholic theologian Ronald Rolheiser (1999) writes, “Few words are as misunderstood in the contemporary English language as is the word spirituality” (p. 5). In light of Adventism’s holistic belief system and approach to life, I tend to agree that “spirituality is not on the fringes,” merely “an option for those with a particular bent” (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 6)—although sometimes it feels like and/or we are made to believe so. Human beings are spiritual beings by default. The issue at hand is how we handle our spirituality. How spiritual should a pastor be? To what level of spirituality can you go as a pastor (Sedlacek et al., 2014, p. 46)?

Defining Spiritual Health

Foster (1998a) made spirituality more accessible and understandable by articulating specific spiritual disciplines that one can practice. Since his groundbreaking work, this list has been cultivated, revised, expanded, and changed by others (Jones & Tickle, 2005; Ortberg, 1997; Thompson, 1995; Whitney, 1997; Yaconelli, 2003). This “menu approach” (including “ingredients” such as prayer, study, meditation, fasting, solitude, simplicity, submission, service, confession, worship guidance, and celebration) has helped us understand that we need to nurture our spirit to be spiritually alive, the same as our body requires good quality food to be healthy. However, this list of spiritual disciplines can be easily manipulated, leaving us with the impression that our spirituality is a matter of attainment rather than a process (Moore, 2002, p. 30).

Common ingredients in all types of spiritualities within Christendom include prayer, learning from Scripture, worship, repentance, and sanctification. However, there are legitimate “sacred pathways” (Thomas, 2020), spiritual streams (Foster, 1998b), or spiritual styles (Schwarz, 2009) that allow us to connect with God and maintain a nurturing intimate relationship with Him. Some people love studying Scripture beyond typical, every-day devotionals; comparing Scriptures, connecting the dots, deepening their knowledge of biblical doctrines, and learning the historical background of Bible stories gives them spiritual meaning and connection with God. Others practice godliness through sharing with others through serving, volunteering, encouraging, and praying for/with others. Perhaps you spiritually thrive and/or experience God’s presence through worship, music, and/or art, and those are equally valid ways of experiencing spirituality supported by Scripture. Do you belong to the group of people who find

comfort to their soul when praying, meditating, and cont-emplating in nature? This kind of spirituality is rooted in the Bible, the same as the others.

Chandler (2014) writes that “the goal of our spiritual journey is conformity to Jesus (Rom. 8:29)” (p. 70). Indeed, spirituality is more than matching behavior to a list of expectations. “There is something bloodless in the contemporary vision of spirituality as part of a general fitness scheme, that sees it only as a means for attaining a life of perfection and health” (Moore, 2002, p. 163). Spirituality is more than a daily spiritual workout. Have you ever been in a situation in which the more you “trained” (i.e., prayed, studied the Bible, etc.), the weaker and less spiritual you felt? Could this be because our spirituality can easily become task-oriented and duty-bound?

Along the same lines, spiritual life is more than simply acquiring information. In the Western world, we are taught from childhood that it is desirable to be rational about everything. As a result, “we trust in the mind and in facts,” utilizing a somewhat “materialistic approach to knowledge” (Moore, 2002, p. 199). Ortberg (1997) explains that “the ultimate indicator of your spiritual health is your capacity to fully love God and love people” (p. 16). God wants to restore us back to His image so we can “share in a reciprocal love relationship with God and others. It starts with being formed spiritually” (Chandler, 2014, p. 70). Obviously, then, our “spiritual life cannot be reduced to numbers and research studies . . . [Perhaps] what is needed is a new appreciation of the non-rational without sentimentalizing eccentricity or a magical view of life” (Moore, 2002, p. 200).

Spirituality is a matter of the heart. Believing in, relating to, and loving are rooted in emotion. We all have a deep desire from within. “Spirituality is, ultimately, about what we do with that desire. What we do with our longings . . .” (Rolheiser, 1999, p. 5)—whether we deal with the pain that comes from our dissatisfaction, frustration, etc., or whether we experience love, beauty, creativity. Ultimately, our hearts hunger and thirst for God (Ps. 42; Dybdahl, 2008).

Emotions cannot be separated from reasoning; feelings and thinking go hand-in-hand. “The biblical perspective is in line with modern neuroscience, which continues to disprove any real separation from mind and body. Thinking and feeling cannot be cleanly separated. There is interconnected influence between our thoughts and our emotions” (Collins & Collins, 2019, p. 30). Nancy Rockey and Ron Rockey (2008) go as far as to say that “our feelings dictate our beliefs . . . [and] our behaviors” (p. 174). Could it be that our feelings might, at times, be stronger drivers for our spiritual journey than our logic?

When Diane Chandler (2014) introduces her integrated approach to spiritual development, she addresses not only the spirit, but also emotions, relationships, intellect, vocation, physical health, and stewardship. The same principle holds true for pastoral health and wellness, as discussed in this book. While some chapters examine other aspects of health and wellness, we should not isolate them. Each of the areas of health and wellbeing are intertwined. Spiritual development is connected to maturation and health in other areas of life, as the following quote from one pastor in a focus group demonstrates:

If I don't do my physical exercise and health is not there, then spiritual health will not be there either. At the age of 50, I was breaking down health-wise from stress in one of my hardest districts in the conference. But then the Lord showed me that you need exercise, you can't neglect that. (Sedlacek et al., 2014, p. 50)

Spirituality is a way of embracing and being embraced by God, a way of knowing and being known by God. On our spiritual journey, we continue learning how to connect and maintain our connection with God most naturally—engaging our mind, heart, soul, and spirit. Rolheiser (1999) indicates that healthy spirituality has two foci. First, it gives us “energy and fire,” so we stay vital, vibrant, “living with zest, and full of hope” (pp. 11, 14). It allows us to enjoy beauty and find the joy of living. Secondly, spirituality keeps us “glued together, integrated, so that we do not fall apart” (p. 11). Spirituality provides a “sense of who we are, where we come from, where we are going, and what sense there is in all of this” (p. 14). Indeed, “spirituality refers to something vital and nonnegotiable lying at the heart of our lives” (p. 6). Before we get to the discussion about challenges related to spiritual health, there is yet another important aspect of spirituality that needs to be mentioned: spirituality connected to mission.

Missional Spirituality

Missional spirituality is not about spirituality that makes you a better pastor. Pastoring is a role. It is what you do, not who you are. Missional spirituality is recognizing that it isn’t about you. It also isn’t about those you pastor, ultimately. It is about God. Being a pastor needs to be the fruit of who we are as a seeker of God. Only when we realize this, can our lives be all about God—revealed, encountered, embraced, pursued, and reflected. Missional spirituality is about being real—fully real—with who you are, before the One who made you.

Missional spirituality, in its truest sense, is not a specific model. It is not about keeping up with the newest trends in ministry, nor is it merely a fresh look at the old ways we have done things. It is about God, what God is already doing in the world, and how we join God in the spaces and places He inhabits as He redeems this rock upon which we live. Some of that can be done through the traditional and important disciplines like worship, study, memorization, prayer, etc. It can also come from intentionally noticing where God is in a specific moment or the next, in this place or another. Think of Balaam. Although Paul (Romans 1–2) tells us that all of us can see God in the natural world, I am sure Balaam never expected a donkey to speak. Where might God surprise us with His presence if we stopped long enough to look and listen?

Missional thinking understands that it is not the church that has a mission—the *God of mission has a church* (Moltmann, 1993). Hence, it is not the people who have a mission but the God of mission who has a people. Thus, my spirituality is not about mission or pastoring; it is about encountering and living with others, doing everything I can to walk, eat, play, love, think, and listen, with—*really with*—God. Being present to God. To hang out with God all the time so that His presence transforms me.

I am His mission, you are His mission, and when people see that we have been—really been—with Jesus and the Spirit of God works through us, we are also a conduit of God’s mission (Acts 4:13). The idea that “whoever has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9, ESV) is realized in us. Jesus is exalted and draws people to Him (John 12:29–31). That’s missional spirituality. That doesn’t stop at our study door. It’s a life of devotion. Playing with my kids with a heart of intentional gratefulness for that blessing from God. The heartfelt kiss of my spouse as we end a difficult day together. Waiting in line at a store and praying for the troublesome shopper in front of me. These are all the result of God’s mission through me.

Ephesians 1:1–6 tells us that God’s blessings are being poured out on us every day.

Intentionally looking for God's presence can help open our hearts and minds in an attitude of openness to God's prompting, keeping our focus on Him without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Perhaps that looks like removing an obstacle to listening. Maybe it is immersing myself intentionally in an activity with a God-centered focus—like taking one verse of Scripture and marinating on it for a day, a week, a month (White, 1902). When we do this, we carry God's Word with us, wherever we go (Ps. 119:11).

I (Campbell) love doing this with Zephaniah 3:17:

The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in His love He will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing. (NIV)

Did you realize that God is so full of joy that you are His child that He breaks out singing over you? Let that sink in. Make some space when you're on the run all day to chew on this. Have you caught the melody? Heard the chorus? Sunk into that all so important bridge? Is it the uplifting otherworldly movement of a Mozart aria? Is it the haunting bars of a blues riff that connects with the tune of where your heart is right now? Is it the power of one of those old-time hymns that just settles into your core as you behold the majesty of God? Is it the silence in every piece of music? Without silence there is no music. When's the last time you stopped to reflect on the plain and simple fact that no matter who you are or what you have done, God, your Father, is singing over you and inviting you to meet Him in the silence between the notes and enjoy His peace together?

Missional spirituality is intentionally turning to God, wherever you are and whatever you are doing. It goes against the extractive mentality of our society, "What can I get from this time with God to fuel me for today?" It is about dropping the agendas, dropping the "What do I need to get out of this?" thinking. It is being satisfied with God if God is all He ever gives you. Because it's all about God, being like Him, being close to Him, being transformed into His likeness so that others see Christ and not us. Mulholland (2016) talks about how we are "saved for the sake of others" (p. 47). So many of us, myself included, have taken this to mean that the many things that make us who we are (our identity) are given up in serving God and His people.

The church machine is set up so that members and those above us often push their own agendas. We seemingly have no choice but to do what they say and enable their codependent behavior to fulfill our position in the machine. *How often do we just manage the machine?* It was Dallas Willard (1998) who said, "[Our] system is perfectly designed to yield the result [we] are getting" (p. 58). Whether that is the Adventist machine in general, or the <insert your name here> machine we have created for ourselves, it won't change without serious effort.

I (Campbell) have had and created my own machine while serving as a pastor. In 2013, it led me to burnout, including severe struggles with depression and anxiety disorders. Those last two, in much lesser degrees, are still my constant companions. I began a process of deconstructing my faith. While, for some, this may seem like a negative experience, for me, it was essential to get back to just me and God. I had to admit I had depression and anxiety. I had to admit that trying to meet everyone's expectations and being strong for others was literally destroying me. This came mainly from being caught up in the machine of pastoring, with all its expectations and the

unbiblical nature of the denominational design of ministry that is perfectly designed to get the results we are getting—pastoral burnout. I had to get back to God’s design for me—it was just me and Him for a while with God, as Browning shares in his 1917 poem, “dragging me through the sand, leaving much more than footprints” (Browning, 1917). God was doing the heavy lifting at this point.

To be very honest, I came to an understanding that what was before me was a choice that I had to be willing to live with. If I chose deconstruction and rebuilding in the way God was showing me, I could get to a place of authentic, transformative faith and would have to leave ministry to keep that kind of relationship with God. I essentially had to pick between my life with God or my ministry of almost 20 years. My spouse, my kids, the conference, the members—none of them could do this for me. I remember being confronted with a question from author Jan Johnson (1999): “If all God gave you was Himself, would you be satisfied?” (p. 17). So, I left paid ministry. Without that willingness to give it all up to just be with God, I shudder to think where I would be today.

I am a Cree, *Saulteaux*, Red River Métis man. My roots helped to see how Jesus wants me to live missionally. There are all kinds of ways in which the Creator speaks to me and gives me direction. Many Indigenous peoples in North America call that “good medicine.” Every piece of this earth “crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God” (Browning, 1917, n.p.) can be filled with the opportunity for me to see where God is, be present to watch and listen for His movement around me, in me, in the lives of others. This allows me to jump into being with my Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, and Friend. “Good medicine” like this is sought after. “Bad medicine” is what we need to avoid. It can be mundane to think that pastoring is who I am, but this idea does not draw us nearer to our Creator. “Good medicine” and our Creator are integrated into everything in life.

God is everywhere you are; He’s even before you, too (Ps. 139). Missional spirituality involves us noticing and joining God just as much in the preaching of the best sermon of our lives as in washing the dishes after supper. God is there. Find Him.

Challenges with Spirituality

The calling and vocation of pastoral ministry is a proverbial platter of interwoven spaghetti noodles spilling off the plate and onto the checkered tablecloth of reality. Each strand represents a ministry function that requires a measure of attention and occupies a place of importance, but they all too easily blur together on the plate of our schedules. The priorities and demands of ministry can easily turn the pastor into the main course; their time is swallowed up and ultimately, their soul is left starving for nourishment. (Okay, I [Craig] wrote this while I was hungry.)

Through the years, I (Craig) have talked with many fellow pastors about their call to ministry. Although there are many variations in the circumstances, one common theme has been consistent: God called, and the individual answered. The calling to ministry is spiritual—a holy covenant between the individual pastor and the Lord. The vocation of ministry includes the realities and challenges of life outside the calmness of that “still, small voice”—many of which resemble the plate of pasta described above. In a word, pastors are busy; however, the epidemic proportion of time-consuming activities is only the presenting problem. What often accompanies physically tired pastors is the more deeply important undernourishment of their emotional and spiritual vitality.

Whether in the first or fiftieth year of pastoral ministry, the challenge remains the same: how does a pastor maintain a vibrant spiritual connection while busily serving everyone else's needs? As the shepherd of a flock, the needs of our communities—both inside and outside our congregation—are endless. Most pastors can relate to getting calls and texts at all hours of the day and night, having calendars filled with appointments and meetings, squeezing in sermon-writing time, with no margin of time for the unexpected emergencies that often arise.

The stark reality of pastoral ministry is that there is a distance between the calling to be a pastor and the vocation of doing the work of a pastor. This reality gap is evident in the results of a recent survey of North American Division pastors (Činčala & William, 2020) in which a vast majority (97%) of pastors responded, "I know that God called me to be a pastor." This is a marvelous affirmation that these pastors sensed that they were fulfilling God's purpose in their life. Having accepted the call to serve in the vocation of pastoral ministry, 93% affirmed that they "enjoy being a pastor." However, of those same respondents, a lower percentage (85%) claimed that they received adequate support from their congregation. Measured in minutes, a mere 15% of pastors strongly agreed that they "have enough time to perform the tasks necessary to my ministry" (Činčala & William, 2020). This is only a mere slice of the realities and challenges of pastoral work while working with a mostly volunteer labor force.

Even when one's calling is sure, the landscape of ministry is rougher terrain than many expect, and human, financial, and time resources come in limited quantities. When taking inventory of one's own reserves, a pastor can quickly find themselves drowning in the deluge of expectations and appointments that litter their calendar. At some point, there truly are not enough hours in the day to accomplish all of the tasks that need to be done; there never has been nor will there ever be. This is where pastors need to recognize and embrace their God-given limits.

I (Craig) have noticed that most pastors will respond to the question, "How are you doing?" by including the word "busy" somewhere within the first few sentences. While it's a truthful statement, given the crowded calendar of commitments, a concern is that busyness is too closely connected to a pastor's identity and view of their effectiveness. The moment we make unchecked "busyness" into a badge of honor or an idol to be worshiped, we are disobeying our Maker's intended use of our energies. To slow down enough to care for one's own spirituality can often produce guilt or even self-doubt in the heart of the earnest pastor who has mistakenly replaced purpose with the approval of others. In addition, the more physically tired we are, the less emotional energy we have to give, which often correlates with spiritual vitality (or the lack thereof). It's all connected.

Spiritual Health Barriers

Pastors face many barriers to spiritual health and vitality. Research conducted with pastors in the North American Division have revealed that many are particularly problematic in our Western culture.

ISOLATION

In Matthew 18:20, we read, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (ESV). There is something to be said about the importance of community when it comes to spiritual health. Yet many pastors report that they feel

alone and do not have people to whom they can relate. When pastors lack peers and a community in which they can safely be themselves, they miss out on one of the most important aspects of Christian living.

To be and feel alone in ministry is alarming and ultimately dangerous in the long run. It is not God's design, as even God Himself operates in a community of three. It is vital that pastors have a spiritual partner, someone in whom you can confide and with whom you can pray. Neil Cole (1999) in his book *Cultivating a Life for God* suggests a simple yet practical model of two or three people of the same gender meeting weekly or biweekly for half an hour to encourage and pray with each other. It may be someone from your congregation or a pastor from another church in your community; however, it may also be someone who is not yet a Christian but is interested in reading the Bible and praying (Cole, 1999). The important thing is you are not alone on your spiritual journey!

PRESSURE FROM THE LOCAL CONFERENCE

Pastors are responsible for not only managing and ministering to their local congregations; the local conference also sets forth expectations for them to meet. This pressure from the conference level can lead to pastors focusing on achieving results, thus neglecting their own personal spiritual lives (Sedlacek et al., 2014). In addition, since pastors often measure their personal spirituality by their congregation's success, if they do not feel they are excelling in their ministry and meeting expectations, they are much more likely to feel their spiritual health is lacking (Sedlacek et al., 2014).

Pastor needs to have at least one accountability partner with whom he or she regularly meets and who provides valuable feedback, helping pastors set healthy priorities and boundaries that align with biblical teachings. (The issue of setting healthy boundaries is discussed in greater detail in other chapters of this book.)

CHURCH MEMBER EXPECTATIONS

Managing church members' needs and wants is a difficult part of ministry. No matter what the pastor does, there is always someone who will disagree with their decisions. However, church members' high (and many times unrealistic) expectations of pastors are often at the root of pastors' spiritual struggles (Sedlacek et al., 2014). When pastors feel as if they are not meeting their congregations' needs and expectations, they may more easily waver.

Congregations expect performance from clergy. This expectation to perform and to provide 'results' can become a point of personal and congregational anxiety. Poorly managed, this anxiety can result, ultimately, in clergy burnout, terminations, and congregational frustration. It does not help that American congregations exist, and often share, in a culture whose values reflect corporate "bottom-line" attitudes and performance expectations of leaders. As a result, very often clergy themselves take on those performance expectations. (Galindo, 2004, p. 169)

Perhaps you need to take an honest inventory to identify what causes you to neglect your spiritual life in regard to church members' expectations. Perhaps you believe that you succeed *only* if all church members are happy. Maybe you adhere to a belief that you are a Christ-like servant only if you make yourself available to the members 24/7. Or perhaps you simply don't know how to say no. A helpful resource to make positive changes in your life in order to be released from the captivity of

expectations of others is Craig Groeschel's (2021) book *Winning the War in Your Mind: Change Your Thinking, Change Your Life*.

LACK OF TIME FOR ENGAGEMENT IN SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES

Pastors' schedules are often filled to the brim. While Adventists use the Sabbath as a day of rest and reconnection with God, Sedlacek et al. (2014) found that, by the very nature of the job, it is impossible for Adventist pastors to actually keep the Sabbath. And this isn't the only area of struggle when it comes to engagement in spiritual activities. McBride et al. (2014, p. 31) found that

- two thirds (67 %) of pastors struggle to make time for personal devotions,
- over half (56%) of pastors have difficulty with personal prayer,
- over half (54%) of pastors have trouble maintaining a personal connection with God, and
- two in five (40%) pastors struggle with keeping the Sabbath day holy.

If these areas are foundational to spiritual health and vitality, and if pastors are unable to find time to engage with them due to other pressures and tasks, it's no wonder that these barriers negatively impact pastors' spiritual life! Perhaps it's not about finding, but making time by setting healthier boundaries, of which the Sabbath offers its own permission to rest.

And (Jesus) said unto them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile," (Mark 6:31). Christ is full of tenderness and compassion for all in His service. He would show His disciples that God does not require sacrifice but mercy. They have been putting their whole souls into labor for the people, and this was exhausting their physical and mental strength. *It was their duty to rest*. Christ called them to rest that they might spend a few hours with Him. How thoughtful and tender was His love and care for them! (White, 1897, n.p.)

If you are finding yourself unable to slow down and rest and do not know how to change it, we encourage you to reach out to a mentor or coach who can guide you to discover the hidden obstacles keeping you from engaging in spiritual activities. In addition, in the remainder of this chapter, you may find more clues and ideas to implement.

Maintaining and Enhancing Spiritual Health

In view of the existing barriers, you might ask, "How does a pastor stay spiritually grounded and emotionally stable with the demands of ministry? How can they turn their ministry—their life—around?" There's good news: it's never too late for pastors to make positive changes.

ACCEPTING HUMAN LIMITATIONS

The primary area that pastors struggle with is striking a healthy work-life balance. One way to combat this involves accepting human limitations and allowing time for self-care. Sedlacek et al. (2014) found that

pastors identified the constant struggle of the many demands on their schedule as barriers to their desired level of spiritual health. Pastors reported overwhelming expectations placed on them to be able to do all and be all for their church members, family members, members of the community and the greater Adventist church leadership. To help alleviate some of this pressure, pastors reported that

being able to accept human limitations was key. (p. 48)

As one focus group participant put it,

I think we need to accept that God has called us, and we should be normal human beings. Because, when we accept this call, we form, we create our own expectation of us. Connect to God all day. But you need to be connected with people as normal people. (Sedlacek et al., 2014, PFG 4)

The goal of accepting this is to be able to embrace the following statement of a pastor and make it your own:

I just want to emphasize what I've found helpful for me is in those moments with me and God, where they're scheduled, just for me and God, or God, my family, and me. I don't pick up the phone. You just have to be jealous for that time, you know you just have to be jealous for that time. (Drumm & Činčala, 2021b, p. 12)

During your times of self-evaluation, have you ever spotted the subtle fear of being rejected—either by church folks or even by God? Did the thought, “God will only accept me if I work harder” ever crossed your mind? Have you entertained the question, “Why do I feel that I am not good enough?” Entertaining these thoughts means there is a subconscious issue of you not accepting yourself.

Another way of accepting your own limitations is by seeking the help of others, specifically by meeting with a Christian counselor or therapist. Employing the help of such a professional can provide an outside perspective and help you sort out the pressures in your life. As one pastor shared:

One of the best things that I ever did for myself was see a therapist for three years . . . I have been in this for almost 40 years. At some point, I just had a lot of stuff. I would often have my biggest breakthroughs driving home from my therapist's office. (Sedlacek et al., 2014, p. 50)

Self-acceptance is covered in another chapter, but here we want to emphasize the importance of living every day in God's grace. God demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt through Jesus Christ that He accepts you unconditionally and desires to work *with* you and *through* you, wherever you are. It is like taking a shower every day: you can get in the habit of daily taking a shower in God's love, reminding yourself that while you are on a journey of growth and transformation, God accepts you and loves to work with you—just the way you are. This is an important foundation for being able to set the necessary boundaries and living within your limitations. A healthier, grace-oriented identity is key in battling the enemy's accusations of, “you're not enough,” or “you can never do enough to be worthy of love.” Keep in mind, boundaries are not just good for your schedule, but also for your heart and soul.

SPIRITUAL INTENTIONALITY

Sedlacek et al. (2014) also found that being intentional about spiritual experiences—whether they occurred within the work context or on a personal level—was key to pastors maintaining spiritual health. In addition, the research team suggests,

One simple intervention to encourage greater intentionality is for church leaders to regularly remind pastors . . . that their spiritual development is paramount. Pastors should specifically be encouraged to make personal time with God more important than sermon preparation or any other pastoral responsibility. (p. 108)

One way you can practice spiritual intentionality is to learn more about your spiritual niche or spiritual style (i.e., how you most naturally connect with God). It may help you to be more intentional and passionate about spending time with God.¹

ENGAGING IN ENJOYABLE ASPECTS OF MINISTRY

Pastors reported that they experienced enhanced spiritual wellness when they engaged in personally enjoyable aspects of the ministry. The enjoyable aspects included a variety of activities such as baptizing, providing Bible studies, evangelism, and chaplaincy (Sedlacek et al., 2014, p. 49). As one focus group participant put it: "When I'm baptizing, when I'm wet, when I'm preaching, when that canvas is snapping in the wind, that is when I'm alive! That's when things are happening, when I'm standing up there preaching, that's when I'm alive" (Sedlacek et al., 2014, PFG5). By using your spiritual gifts in ministry, you may also experience the joy God has for you as you bring Him glory.

EXPERIENCING MEANINGFUL PERSONAL WORSHIP

Pastors also reported that personally meaningful worship experiences enhanced their spiritual lives (Sedlacek et al., 2014). This included praying (both silently and aloud), engaging with God's Word (via reading, meditating on Scripture, or listening to an audio recording of the Bible), spending time in nature, seeking the Holy Spirit throughout the day, etc.

When I (Petr) was going through spiritually rough times running a center of influence in a secular European environment, God providentially brought a book on fasting to my attention (Franklin, 2008). I was asked to translate a three-week fasting journal, meaning that I could not merely scan through it then put it aside. I had been familiar with fasting since my teenage years, and I actually had done one-day fasting on a regular basis, but this journal explained it on a whole different spiritual level, drawing from biblical stories and texts.

Before the translation was finished in January 2011, I went through a three-week fast to start the new year, and I have continued starting each new calendar year with this worshipful experience. For me, fasting has become a bodily/physical experience of unity with God, feasting on His presence and dwelling in intimacy with Him. The added value of this experience is that it allows God to manifest His power in ways He might not do otherwise.

Additional Resources, Tips, and Coping Strategies

Perhaps you are a pastor (or know a pastor) who is currently feeling spiritually unhealthy and burnt-out. Or maybe you aren't sure where you stand. Author Donald Whitney (2001) offers ten questions that we can use to assess our spiritual health and vitality.

1. Do you thirst for God?
2. Are you governed increasingly by God's Word?
3. Are you more loving?
4. Are you more sensitive to God's presence?
5. Do you have a growing concern for the spiritual and temporal needs of others?

1 You can learn more about the various spiritual styles and take a test to find your own spiritual style at <https://3colorworld.org/en/etests/spirituality/summary/about>.

6. Do you delight in the bride of Christ?
7. Are spiritual disciplines increasingly important to you?
8. Do you still grieve over sin?
9. Are you a quick forgiver?
10. Do you yearn for heaven and to be with Jesus? (Whitney, 2001)

If you find yourself answering “no” or even “I’m not sure” to these questions, it is very likely that you are experiencing spiritual sickness. With that in mind, we want to share a few more tips and resources that you may find helpful.

ON A JOURNEY OF HEALING

Pastors experiencing spiritual exhaustion and burnout are often in need of healing. Whether their wounds come from ministry or not, healing is central for spiritual health to be regained.

I (Petr) was preaching on the difference fathers make in their children’s life (the sermon was titled “Who is your dad?”). We looked at the well-known story of Jacob, Joseph, and his brothers, noticing the difference between the story and life of Joseph, who had loving parents, and the story of Ruben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah (Gen. 29–30) who grew up in a dysfunctional home where their father did not love their mother nor them. After the sermon, one young lady came up and with tears in her eyes said, “You know, I have never been able to connect with my father. He has been a pastor—a good pastor—but he never bonded with me.” It became obvious that her father was not able to emotionally connect with her; perhaps it was because he carried old, unhealed wounds—“unfinished business”—which prevented him from becoming the father his daughter needed. Ultimately, this father’s lack of healing perpetuated a cycle of emotional damage.

CULTIVATING SPIRITUAL EMOTIONS

Tristen Collins and Jonathan Collins (2019), in their book *Why Emotions Matter*, support the claim of Peter Scazzero that “it is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature” (p. 30; see also Scazzero 2003, p. 52). This valuable resource provides practical help to navigate emotions, moving towards greater spiritual health; more specifically, it addresses how to work with shame, fear, anger, sadness, jealousy, and happiness. Overall, the authors demonstrate how to connect (emotionally) with God and others, handle inner wounds, work through compulsions and addictions, and succeed.

Spiritual emotions have been taken for granted or even looked down upon. Although we deal with feelings (our own or the emotions of those around us), we often overlook (deny) that they are important in relating to God. Belief and faith are emotions that come from the heart. You cannot fully love God without sharing your emotions with Him. We encounter feelings throughout the Scripture, the Bible is full of godly (as well as ungodly) emotions. One only needs to review Galatians 5 to be reminded of the fruit of the Spirit that is loaded with both positive emotions and character qualities that God instills in us for us to have a vibrant life and build loving relationships. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23, NKJV).

If you are still not sure about that yet, we recommend the book *Feelings and*

Faith (Borgman, 2009), which provides a Biblical and theological foundation, as well as practical guidance, for cultivating godly emotions in the Christian life. There are various ways of how to do that, whether through journaling, praying, reading, meditating, singing, sharing with others, or walking in nature.

BONDING WITH GOD IN NATURE

There is increasing evidence of the harmful impact today's urban environment has on our physical, mental, and spiritual health, intensified by the lack of regular—or any—experience with nature. Obesity, depression, loneliness, and anxiety are results of being “cooped up” indoors. Spending sufficient time in nature (such as going for a hike in the forest or sitting on the grass in a park) “leads to lower blood pressure, calmer nerves, and a more focused mind” (Loorz, 2021, p. 65). Did you know that in Japan, a doctor can write a prescription for a walk in the woods? The forest atmosphere helps regeneration, relaxation, and reconstruction of physical and mental resources (Arvey, 2018, pp. 76–77). The more time spent in nature, the greater well-being is reported, including positive changes in mood, a decrease in stress and negativity, better sleep, and better connections with others (Williams, 2017, pp. 181, 192). Intentional exposure to nature can profoundly enrich your walk with the Triune God.

Take a regular break to walk among trees, listen to birds, watch the green grass blow in the wind; take deep breaths of the fresh air; slow down; and find a place where you can sit, pray, read, and/or listen to what God tells you.² Some find it helpful to journal their thoughts while listening to God. Perhaps there might be an opportunity to have a spiritual retreat with your colleagues away from ministry for two or three days—a time to turn cellphones and the Internet off, be alone and recharge together. There is enough evidence that being in nature has a positive impact not only on your physical, mental, and emotional health (see relevant chapters) but also on your spiritual health (Arvey, 2018; Haupt, 2021; Loorz, 2021).

THRIVING AMIDST SUFFERING AND PAIN

Pain and suffering are perceived as undesired elements in life, something we are taught by society to avoid them. Therefore, if we are experiencing pain or suffering, we may easily get stressed out or depressed, perhaps feeling rejected or abandoned by God. In the secular society where I (Petr) grew up, people, in general, have the feeling that, “If there was a God, things would look differently.” This ideology forms their cognitive bias and toxic life outlook, making their life more miserable than it already is.

The Bible offers a different approach. The Apostle Paul is an inspiring example of a person who was able to “get the most” out of pain, suffering, and persecution. We see numerous occasions in his life when he could have complained, pitied himself, or become bitter. Instead, he sang, rejoiced, and praised God, knowing that the trials in his life could make him a better person and bring him to a closer fellowship with his Lord (who Himself suffered much). I find Paul's legacy compelling and his joy contagious,

2 Lisa Miller (2021), in her book *The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and Our Quest for an Inspired Life* explains, based on decades of scientific research, that we have two modes of awareness in our brain: achieving awareness that gets lost in life's details of trying to gain control, and awakened awareness, that allows us to see things from bird's perspective and connect with God. Finding time to slow down in nature to contemplate or mediate over God's promises actually sets the brain into the awakened awareness mode.

don't you?

Gary Thomas (2002) in his book *Authentic Faith: The Power of Fire-Tested Life* elaborates on the deeper meaning of life's trials and tests. He very thoughtfully helps the readers understand how the disciplines of waiting, suffering, social mercy, mourning, and sacrifice can become agents of transformation in our lives and help us spiritually thrive. "Living in this world sometimes requires that we be uncomfortable. Our desire to live our lives free from pain can become a type of idol . . . If you insist on avoiding suffering at all costs, you will never be free from your addictions" (p. 74).

Jesus Our Ultimate Example: Concluding Remarks

One doesn't have to read too far into the Gospels to notice that Jesus had similar challenges to what pastors face today: everyone wanted time with Him and He—the incarnated Christ Himself—was limited by the 24-hour day. He once claimed, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4, NKJV). Amidst the incredible amount of work involved to achieve His mission, we see Jesus, on a regular basis, seeking the solitude and quietness of the early morning hours before the clamor of the crowd or any interaction with His disciples. Jesus modeled how to maintain a vibrant, spiritual life by regularly spending time with His Father in nature to receive a fresh anointing of His purpose.

In Mark 1, we see recorded a normal, hectic day in the ministry of Jesus. After a busy day of healing, He arose the next day before anyone else. The disciples were likely awakened by members of the crowd who were looking for Jesus and a search party was dispatched. When Peter found Him in a desolate place (i.e., in nature), the coercing expectation of the crowd is evident in Peter's anxious words, "Everyone is looking for You" (Mark 1:37, ESV). But Jesus was not fed by the fleeting but feel-good "need to be needed;" He remained fixed on the agenda He had received from His Father for that day. Jesus and His disciples then departed for the next town, where Jesus was led by His Father to preach.

We hope that this chapter has provided ideas that captured your heart and inspired you to cultivate your relationship with God. We hope and pray that the current and future generation of pastors will be more "intimately and passionately in love with Jesus Christ, more self-aware, less controlled by their unresolved issues, healthier in the way they relate to their families and congregations" (Sedlacek, 2022, p. 7).

References

- Arvay, C. G. (2018). *The biophilia effect: A scientific and spiritual exploration of the healing bond between humans and nature*. Sounds True.
- Borgman, S. B. (2009). *Feelings and faith: Cultivating godly emotions in the Christian life*. Crossway.
- Browning, E. B. (1917). Aurora Leigh. In D. H. S. Nicholson & A. H. E. Lee (Eds.), *The Oxford book of English mystical verse*. Clarendon Press.
- Chandler, D. J. (2014). *Christian spiritual formation: An integrated approach for personal and relational wholeness*. IVP Academic.
- Činčala, P., & William, M. (2020). *Pastoral ministry survey 2019: Frequencies & charts*. Unpublished report for North American Division Ministerial Department.
- Činčala, P., & Drumm, R. D. (2021). *Adventist healthyYOU: Pastors' health and wellness*. Presentation to North American Division Ministerial Directors.
- Cole, N. (1999). *Cultivating a life for God*. Church Smart Resources.
- Collins, T., & Collins, J. (2019). *Why emotions matter*. Beaumont Press.
- Drumm, R. D., & Činčala, P. (2021a). *Former Seventh-day Adventist pastors: Qualitative study report*. Unpublished report by the Institute of Church Ministry.
- Drumm, R. D., & Činčala, P. (2021b). *SDA pastor health qualitative study report: What can and must be done to save the health of Adventist pastors*. Unpublished report to the North American Division Ministerial Association of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Dybdahl, J. L. (2008). *Hunger: Satisfying the hunger of your soul*. Review & Herald.
- Foster, R. J. (1998a). *Celebration of discipline*. Harper & Row.
- Foster, R. J. (1998b). *Streams of living water: Celebrating the great traditions of Christian faith*. Harper San Francisco.
- Franklin, J. (2008). *Fasting journal*. Charisma Media.
- Galindo, I. (2004). *The hidden lives of congregations: Discerning church dynamics*. Alban Books.
- Goldberg, D. S. (2017). The intersection of leadership and spirituality: A qualitative study exploring the thinking and behavioral attributes of leaders who identify as spiritual. *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, 11(2), 104–105.
- Groeschel, C. (2021). *Winning the war in your mind: Change your thinking, change your life*. Zondervan.
- Haupt, L. L. (2021). *Rooted: Life at the crossroads of science, nature and spirit*. Little, Brown Park.
- Loorz, V. (2021). *Church of the wild: How nature invites us into the sacred*. Broadleaf Books.
- Jones, T., & Tickle, T. (2005). *The sacred way: Spiritual practices for everyday life*. Zondervan.
- Johnson, J. (1999). *When the soul listens*. NavPress.
- McBride, D., Sedlacek, D., & Drumm, R. (2014). *Pastoral family stress qualitative study: Pastor family spiritual life challenges and enhancers*. Prepared for the North American Division Ministerial and Family Ministries Departments in conjunction with the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Miller, L. (2021). *The awakened brain: The new science of spirituality and our quest for an inspired life*. Random House.

- Moltmann, J. (1993). *The church in the power of the spirit: A contribution to Messianic ecclesiology*. Fortress Press.
- Mulholland, Jr., R. (2016). *Invitation to a journey: A roadmap for spiritual formation* (revised and expanded ed.). IVP Books.
- Moore, T. (2002). *The soul's religion: Cultivating a profoundly spiritual way of life*. Harper.
- Ortberg, J. (1997). *The life you've always wanted: Spiritual disciplines for ordinary people*. Zondervan.
- Ortberg, J. (1997). *Growth: Training vs. trying*. Zondervan.
- Rockey, N., & Rockey, R. (2008). *The destination [workbook]*. Life Renewal Institute.
- Rolheiser, R. (1999). *The holy longing: The search for a Christian spirituality*. Doubleday.
- Scazzero, P. (2003). *The emotionally healthy church: A strategy for discipleship that actually changes lives*. Zondervan.
- Schalk, C. (2020). *Empowerment for life*. NCD America.
- Schwarz, C. A. (2009). *The 3 colors of your spirituality*. ChurchSmart Resources.
- Sedlacek, D. (2022). The impact of adverse childhood experiences on pastoral education and experience [Manuscript submitted for publication]. In P. Činčala & J. Gavin (Eds.), *As one who serves: Perspectives on Adventist ministry to members, families, and communities*. Institute of Church Ministry.
- Sedlacek, D., McBride, D., Drumm, R. D., Baltazar, A., Chelbegean, R., Hopkins, G., Oliver, E., & Thompson, W. (2014). *Seminary training, role demands, family stressors, and strategies for alleviation of stressors in pastors' families*. Unpublished report prepared for the North American Division Ministerial and Family Ministries Departments in conjunction with the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
- Thomas, G. L. (2002). *Authentic faith: The power of fire-tested life*. Zondervan.
- Thomas, G. L. (2020). *Sacred pathways: Nine ways to connect with God*. Zondervan.
- Thompson, M. J. (1995). *Soul feast: An invitation to the Christian spiritual life*. Westminster John Knox Press.
- White, E. G. (1902, June 25). What the Word of God is to us. *Signs of the Times*.
- White, E. G. (1897, August 5). Looking unto Jesus. *Signs of the Times*.
- Whitney, D. S. (1997). *Spiritual disciplines for the Christian life*. Nav Press.
- Whitney, D. S. (2001). *Ten questions to diagnose your spiritual health*. Nav Press.
- Willard, D. (1998). *The divine conspiracy: Rediscovering our hidden life in God*. HarperCollins.
- Williams, F. (2017). *The nature fix: Why nature makes us happier, healthier, and more creative*. Norton & Company.
- Yaconelli, M. (2003). *Dangerous wonder*. NavPress.

Books for Further Reading on Spiritual Health

- Edgar, B. (2013). *God is friendship: A theology of spirituality, community, and society*. Seedbed Publishing.
- Heinrichs, S. (Ed.). (2019). *Unsettling the word: Biblical experiments in decolonization*. Orbis Books.
- Twiss, R. (2011). *One church, many tribes: Serving Jesus the way God made you*. Chosen Books.
- Twiss, R. (2015). *Rescuing the Gospel from the cowboys: A Native American expression of the Jesus way*. IVP Books.
- Willard, D. (1988). *The spirit of the disciplines: Understanding how God changes lives*. Harper and Row.
- Willard, D. (1999). *Hearing God: Developing a conversational relationship with God*. InterVarsity Press.
- Willard, D. (2002). *Renovation of the heart: Putting on the character of Christ*. NavPress.
- Willard, D. (2009). *Knowing Christ today: Why we can trust spiritual knowledge*. Harper.
- Willard, D. (2015). *The allure of gentleness: Defending the faith in the manner of Jesus*. HarperCollins Press.