

# THE Well Lived MINISTER'S Life

**Vocation.** *It comes from the latin...*

*vocare, to call, and means the work a man is called to by God.*

**There are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of society, say, or the superego or self-interest.**

By and large a good rule for finding out is this. The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done. If you really get a kick out of your work, you've presumably met requirement (a), but if your work is writing TV deodorant commercials, the chances are you've missed requirement (b).

On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, you have probably met requirement (b), but if most of the time you're bored and depressed by it, the chances are you have not only bypassed (a) but probably aren't helping your patients much either.

Neither the hair shirt nor the soft berth will do. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

From *Wishful Thinking*,

*Frederick Buechner*



I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.  
John 10:10

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,  
I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7

**Without question, one of the most important factors in sustaining healthy churches is to develop, care for and sustain pastors that are healthy spiritually, emotionally, socially and professionally. This serves the church and the pastor in the calling to help build the Kingdom of God in their place and in their time. We intend to join this calling by “ministering to the minister.”**

**Our hope is to engage our pastors (and other staff) at various levels and seasons of their ministries, from the call process, through preparation for congregational service, and throughout their active ministry years. We intend to frame this within the language of life, growth and excellence, as well as to provide resources and support in times of crisis and conflict. Tending to our shepherds is important to us.**

So many times ministers are taught the “how-to’s” of ministry. The following pages focus on the minister’s self, the “who” of ministry. It is one way for the minister to assess his own whole life – personal, family, professional dimensions. The wheel depicts six of those areas. You are invited to be honest with yourself and your Maker and take stock of yourself, to observe where you feel adequate, and where you may want to make progress on a gap you discover. The pages following the assessment wheel fill in each of those areas with questions, suggestions and appropriate scripture. At the end is a page assisting you in creating a “self-care plan.”

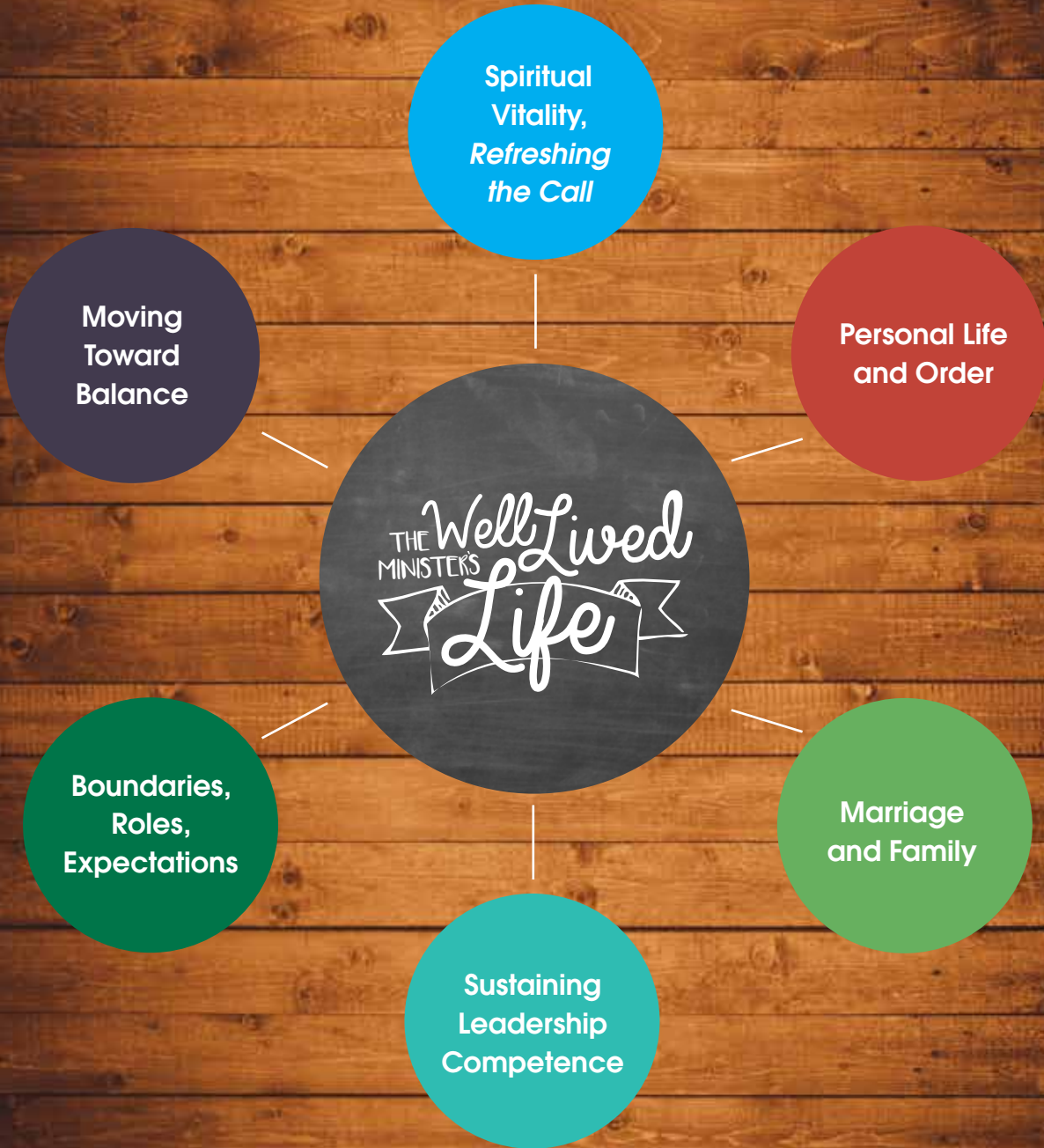
May you value yourself as Christ values you, believing that you are already enough to serve Him through His people and His church. You are God’s beloved, in whom He is well-pleased.

May you also believe in good stewardship of your whole life, accepting challenges to deepen, change and re-orient your life and ministry where you can and must.

And may yours be a truly abundant life, as God in Christ intends!

*Effective ministers don't just happen. Great falls from ministry don't just happen either.*

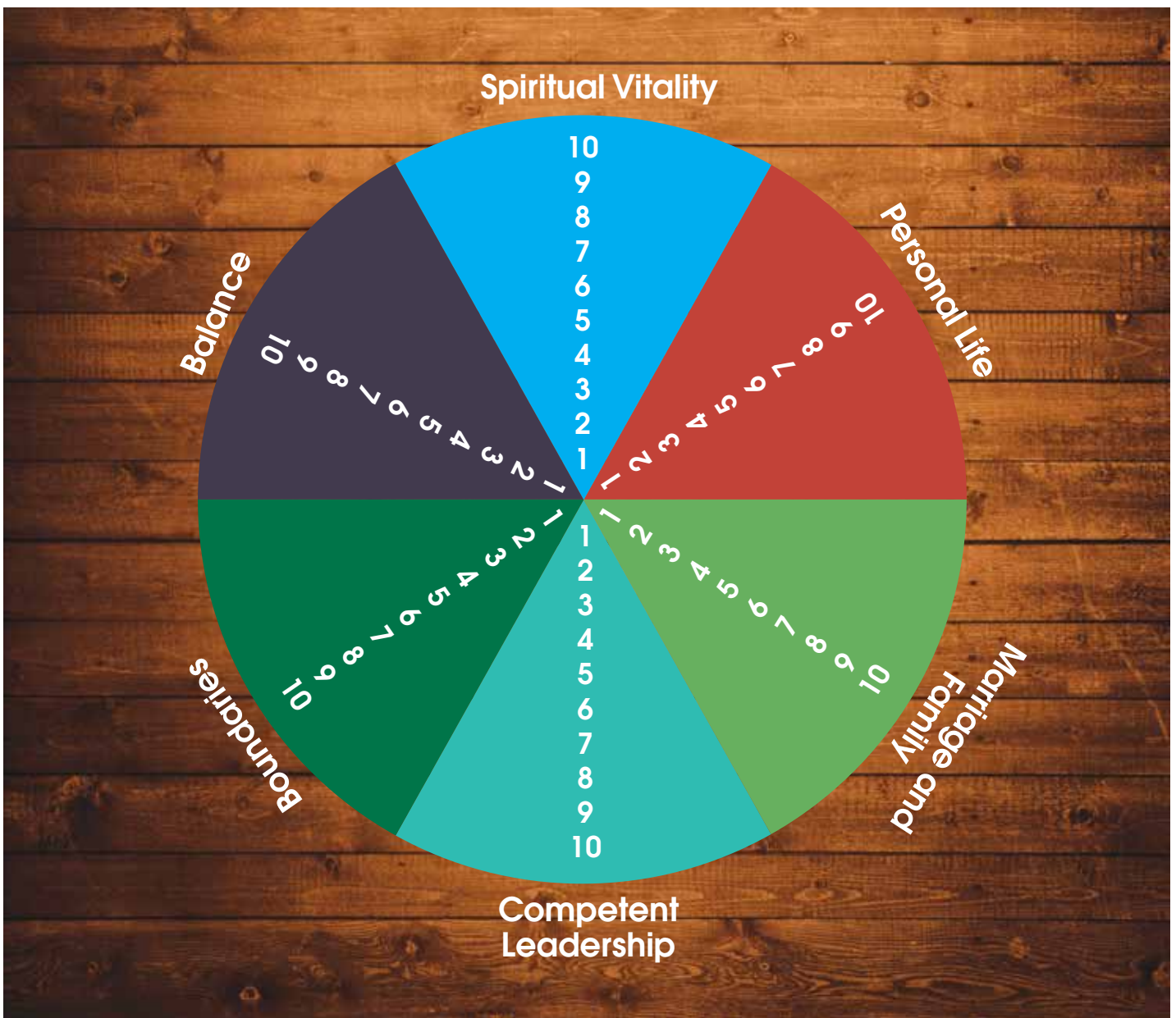
*Preventing Ministry Failure,*  
Michael Todd Wilson and  
Brad Hoffmann





Assess your level of satisfaction on a scale of 1-10.

Assess your level of satisfaction with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. Then connect the dots, this new perimeter representing your correct assessment of your life. What do you notice and how do you feel about this representation? What needs your prayerful attention? Next, walk through the questions (at right) and continue to think critically about each answer.



1

## *Spiritual Vitality* Refreshing the Call

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- How is my relationship with God deepening? What am I doing on purpose for prayer, reflection and immersion in the Word? How am I honoring Sabbath in my life?
- How is God continuing to shape my call? How is it different now?
- How am I making sure I'm hearing the voice of God among all the other voices calling to me?
  - What needs to happen so that I will be able to live into God's call for me more fully?
- What am I hearing from God these days?
- What compelling question related to my call and relationship to God can I ask myself each morning?

2

## *Personal Life and Order*

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- Since my body is a temple, how am I attending to it and taking care of it?
- What would a "healthy me" look, feel and act like?
- What sort of personal friendships are mine to enjoy?
- What do I like to do just for fun and diversion? How often is this happening?
- How am I doing with my financial management?
- How do I assess myself regarding stress management or mismanagement?

3

## *Marriage and Family*

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- What's my assessment? What would my spouse say? My kids?
- Where are my challenges and opportunities?
- How much is enough good marriage and family time?
- What do I say about my home life, and what do I actually do?
- If my life depended on taking action and making changes here, what would I do?
- How am I balancing my commitment to ministry and my commitment to my home?
- How is my leadership imitating Christ?

4

## *Sustaining Leadership Competence*

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- How are my skills and experience matching my ministry dreams and call?
- Where are my leadership gaps in my present ministry place?
- What would make me feel more competent and compelling as a leader?
- Where am I asleep at the wheel?
- What is my idea and plan for continuing education and renewal of my mind?
- How am I doing at setting boundaries and still being a loving person?

## 5

## Boundaries, Roles and Expectations

- What are some legitimate boundaries I need to put in place at church? At home?
- What am I afraid of if I set realistic boundaries?
- Who, or what, is telling me who I am and what I ought to be doing?
- How can I be clearer about my expectations of others, and their expectations of me?
- What does God expect of me? What do I expect of myself?

## 6

## Moving Toward Balance

- In which of the areas above am I most out of balance and need to engage?
- When I am 80 years old, what will I want to say about my life?
- In which of these areas am I feeling the nudging of God?
- What do I need to say “yes” to more often and “no” to more often?
- What am I willing to change?
- What is it for me to live the gifts of life and ministry more fully?



### Suggestions for a Transformative Self-Care Plan

## 1

## Spiritual Vitality

Refreshing the Call

1. Revisit Jesus' baptism story (Matthew 3:13-17). Remember your own experience of feeling like God's beloved son/daughter. Remember it once a week.
2. Establish intentional alone time with God.
3. Find an accountability partner or small group.
4. Find and display (or wear a rubber band) Scripture, quotes, etc. that remind and support you in your individual walk with God.
5. List all the voices/influences calling to you. Notice whose voice you are responding to most.
6. Develop a personal purpose or mission statement that tells us who you are and what's most important to you (as Jesus did in Luke 4:16-21).
7. Utilize the questions in "Thinking About a Well Lived Life."
8. Pray specifically about this area, and listen to what God wants for you.

## 2

## Personal Life and Order

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1. Examine your calendar and checkbook to see where your priorities are, and put them alongside what you say they are.
2. Reinvest in and make time for your favorite hobby or pastime.
3. Find an accountability partner or small group.
4. Start walking or doing some sort of exercise.
5. Actually take and honor your day off. It is your stewardship of what "sabbatical" means.
6. Write "destination declarations" or outcomes you want for physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of your life. Then write action steps for each to attain your goals.
7. Utilize the questions in "Thinking About a Well Lived Life."
8. Pray specifically about this area, listening for what God wants for you.

## 3

## Marriage and Family

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1. Re-establish or establish a date night or day.
2. Establish sharing and prayer time, in addition to meal blessings and bedtime prayers.
3. Find a marriage enrichment opportunity to attend, and/or create one for your church.
4. Create regular, intentional conversational time with your spouse around these two questions:
  - (a) "How much are you feeling cared for by me?" (1, ignored; 10, well cared for)
  - (b) "What would it take to improve that number?"
7. Utilize the questions in "Thinking About a Well Lived Life."
8. Pray specifically about this area, listening for what God wants for you.

## 4

## Sustaining Leadership Competence

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1. Find an accountability partner or small group.
2. Write down names of a few people you consider to be great leaders. Go visit one to ask questions or even arrange for a mentor relationship.
3. Read at least three books or attend one conference on leadership that relates to your needs, improvement or curious exploration.
4. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 every day to deepen your compassion as leader.
5. Form or utilize a trustful "feedback" group within your church to find out how you're doing.
6. Write out a continuing education plan for this year.
7. Utilize the questions in "Thinking About a Well Lived Life."
8. Pray specifically about this area, listening for what God wants for you.

## 5

## Boundaries, Roles and Expectations

1. Find an accountability partner or small group.
2. Think through and write down what new or renewed boundaries you need to put in place to support your valuing of (a) yourself, (b) your relationship to God, (c) your spouse, (d) your family and (e) your ministry.
3. List as many of your tasks as you can. Using two headings, "urgent" and "important," decide which of your listed tasks goes under which heading. Think about how you can bolster the "important" area, and be less enslaved to the "urgent."
4. Read the book *Boundaries*, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.
5. Pray specifically about this area, listening for what God wants for you.
6. Utilize the questions in "Thinking About a Well Lived Life."

## 6

## Moving Toward Balance

1. Decide, for now, which area of the above is most out of balance that you and God want to engage.
2. Find an accountability partner or small group.
3. Brainstorm possibilities to address this area.
4. Think through and list what else would make your life more abundant (John 10:10).
5. Begin to develop a Transformative Self-Care Plan.
6. Pray specifically about this endeavor, listening for what God wants for you.
7. Utilize the questions in "Thinking About a Well Lived Life."



### Reflection on Scripture and a Well Lived Life

**We must learn and practice relentlessly the language of life in Christ. Then we can tune our ears and hearts to it so we can choose health and abundance instead of unfulfillment and scarcity.**

**Scripture certainly shines much revealing light regarding our imitation of Christ, which brings us the most abundant life. Consider these four passages — there are so many others — to help focus us on being the best stewards possible of this life God has given us.**



## Voices, Shepherding and Abundance

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John 10:1-11

*'Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.'* Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So again Jesus said to them, *'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.'*

### For prayerful reflection:

1. As Jesus is the good shepherd and the gate for the sheep, how do you hear Him calling your name (v.3)?
2. How are you letting Him lead you? Who does God say you are?
3. How do you know it's Jesus' voice and not some other compelling voice (vss.4-5)?
4. You are also a shepherd, better, an under-shepherd. How is your leading and shepherding like that of Jesus? What might others be seeing as they follow you? Who do you say you are?
5. How is your life abundant now (v.10)? Where is it not abundant?

## Who Ministers to the Minister?

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2 Corinthians 1:3-6

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering.*

### For prayerful reflection:

1. How have you personally experienced the great truth and promise of these words?
2. Since it is likely that to be effective in our ministry to others, what in your own life stands in need of healing that today you now bring before God?
3. How can you more intentionally and effectively position yourself to first be God's child in whom He's well pleased and then be His called minister?
4. A humble understanding of ourselves will prevent us from performing for the crowd and instead will encourage us to play to an audience of One. What role do you feel humility plays in ministry? Practically speaking, what does it look like?
5. Remember and describe a time you saw God use your weakness for His glory.

## Living in the Present for Eternal Values

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2 Timothy 4:1-8

*In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of His appearing and His kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully. As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

### For prayerful reflection:

1. What is the most difficult part of “carrying out your ministry fully” (v.5)?
2. Since people often choose teachers and leaders “to suit their own desires” (vss. 3-4), what must you do to more fully be a leader in the pattern of Christ?
3. Verse 7 is often quoted at retirements and funerals. What can you alter or overhaul now in order (present tense, not past) to fight the good fight, run the race, keep the faith? Remember Hebrews 12:1: “...let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us...”

## Walking the Talk

### Matthew 16:13-19

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.'*

### For prayerful reflection:

1. Who do you say that Jesus is (v.15)?
2. Based on the way you live personally, your marriage and family life, your evidenced relationship with God, do you think people see whom you say Jesus is?
3. In what ways are you struggling with a “public” life that appears perfect and a “private” life that is deteriorating?
4. What might God be nudging you to do so that your walk matches your talk?
5. What parts of your life need attention so that you may live more abundantly, and thereby manifest in your life the stewardship of a life well-lived in Christ?



## Beginning and Implementing a Self-Care Plan

The regular practice of continuous awareness, identification, confession and repentance can lead us into reconciliation, restoration and repair. It can be life-changing and critical to our personal and professional abundance. It is faithful stewardship.

So, we now move to establishing some accountability, some self-covenanting and some honesty before God, in order to help align our thinking with God’s point of view for us.

A plan begins with just one step. We don’t have to “get it right” all at once. In fact, the only way to not get our self-care plan right is not to create one. It will be an intentional work in progress. And it can be transformational.

What might a plan for on-going restoration look like for you?

### Some points to consider in moving forward:

1. Looking at the six areas that relate to a well-lived life, as well as at the “wheel,” which area(s) or issue(s) gets your attention the most? Where do you feel the most pain, least fulfillment and biggest “want-to?”
2. Consider again the questions on the sheet “Thinking About a Well-Lived Life,” and the section(s) that best relate to your areas for change.
3. Still considering your areas for focus, refer to the sheet “Some Suggestions for a Transformative Self-Care Plan.” Do some of these ideas connect with you? How can you build on these?

List the three areas that captured your mind and heart.

*Of those three, which is the one you now want to engage?*

List all the ways you can think of that will help you move forward with some kind of action with this one.

Who, in addition to the unmatched help of God, can assist you in being intentional, action-oriented and accountable?

With all this in mind, describe the very next step you will take in beginning your self-care plan.



## Going Deeper with Additional Resources

### Spiritual Vitality, Refreshing the Call

- The Power of the Call: *Blackaby, Brandt, and Skinner*
- Celebration of Discipline: *Richard Foster*
- The Call: *Oz Guinness*
- Living Your Strengths: *Winseman, Clifton and Liesveld*

### Personal Life and Order

- Leadership and the One-Minute Manager: *Blanchard*
- Halftime: *Buford*
- HeartShift, *Trent*
- Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives: *Swenson*

### Marriage and Family

- Covenant Marriage: Building Communication and Intimacy: *Chapman*
- Love and Respect: *Eggerichs*
- The Three Big Questions for a Frantic Family: *Lencioni*
- The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict: *Sande*

### Sustaining Leadership Competence

- Spiritual Leadership: *Blackaby and Blackaby*
- Leadership by the Book: *Blanchard, Hybels, and Hodges*
- A Work of Heart: *McNeal*
- Being Leaders and Building Leaders: *Malphurs*

### Boundaries, Roles, Expectations

- Boundaries: *Cloud and Townsend*
- The Emotionally Healthy Church: *Scazzero*

### Moving Toward Balance

- Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry: *Oswald*
- Preventing Ministry Failure: *Wilson and Hoffmann*