

REFRESH **RENEW** RESTORE

A DEVOTIONAL GUIDE FOR MINISTERS



**“For I will restore health to you,
and your wounds I will heal,”
declares the Lord.**

Jeremiah 30:17

CONTENTS

WELLNESS INVENTORY	1
DAY 1: ANCHORED TO THE ROCK	3
DAY 2: RISING STRONG.....	5
DAY 3: LEADERS WHO LAST.....	7
DAY 4: STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.....	9
TORQUE TOLERANCE AND STRESS FRACTURES	11
REFLECTION.....	15

HOW'S IT GOING?

Start by taking a personal inventory on your mental and spiritual wellness.



YOUR PHYSICAL HEALTH

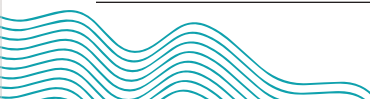
Compared to one year ago, how would you evaluate your physical health – sleeping patterns, eating patterns, fatigue, and overall sense of wellness?

YOUR EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Are you anxious? Irrationally worried? Unduly irritable?
Are you finding it increasingly difficult to be excited about life?

YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Are people feeding you or draining you? Do you find you are increasingly attempting to withdraw from social contact?



SPIRITUAL VITALITY

Are you in a better or worse place in your faith walk than you were one year ago?

WORK SATISFACTION

Do you feel trapped? Are you looking for ways to avoid or escape your duties?

God never said that the journey would be easy, but He did say that the arrival would be worthwhile.

Max Lucado



ANCHORED TO THE ROCK

I slowly open my eyes, hand guarding against the bright light. I prop myself up on one elbow and look out. All I could see was white. And then, as an opening in the mist widened in front of me, I could see the mountainside below, bathed in the magnificent morning sun.

**MINISTRY
IS A
CALLING
TO HIGHER
THINGS**

Patrick, aka *The Vertical Adventurer*, was in a portaledge, a collapsible platform like in the photo above, used by rock climbers who spend days or weeks at a time on huge cliff faces. At first glance, you may wonder what happens if you 'roll off' in your sleep or trip over the edge. Rest assured; you always wear a harness that is connected to the main anchor with a rope. Wind, rain or storms may come. There is no possible way you can fall.

As a minister, you are a vertical adventurer "seeking the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" Colossians 3:1 (ESV). Pastoral ministry is a calling to higher things. Disappointment, delays, conflict, resistance, and discouragement are part of the storms that ministers face.

1. What do I want God to assure me about His workings in my life?

**“THIS HOPE WE HAVE AS AN ANCHOR OF THE SOUL,
A HOPE BOTH SURE AND STEADFAST...”**

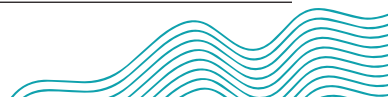
HEBREWS 6:19 (ESV)

2. What habits in your life anchor you? Which one(s) do you want to give attention to this week?

**“...DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS, STAND FIRM.
LET NOTHING MOVE YOU. ALWAYS GIVE
YOURSELVES FULLY TO THE WORK OF THE
LORD, BECAUSE YOU KNOW THAT YOUR LABOUR
IN THE LORD IS NOT IN VAIN.”**

1 CORINTHIANS 15:58 (NIV)

3. **Prayer:** What are you thankful for? Ask God to help you fix your mind on higher things, what is above and waiting for you.





RISING STRONG

God's preparation comes with tests, trials, afflictions, signs, wonders, and miracles. All of this happens during the process of you fulfilling the story that God is still writing on you. The Lord says, *"I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction"* Isaiah 48:10 (BSB).

GOD HAS NOT DROPPED THE PEN THAT HE IS USING TO WRITE YOUR STORY.

1. What is God saying to you about your ministry story through this statement above?

**"THEY CRIED OUT TO THE LORD IN THEIR TROUBLE,
AND HE BROUGHT THEM OUT OF THEIR DISTRESS.
HE STILLED THE STORM TO A WHISPER; THE WAVES
OF THE SEA WERE HUSHED. THEY WERE GLAD
WHEN IT GREW CALM, AND HE GUIDED THEM TO
THEIR DESIRED HAVEN."**

PSALM 107:28-30 (NIV)

2. Which part of your story do you feel most reluctant to share?
Imagine how God could be glorified by sharing it.

There is power in your story. It may not be perfect. It's probably in progress. But share your story, be honest, be vulnerable. You have to walk through vulnerability to get to courage.

Healing starts when you share your story.

3. Think of someone who shared a vulnerable part of their story and inspired you. What did they share? Why not reach out today and thank them for the first time or for a second time.

DECLARE TODAY, "IN JESUS' NAME, I WILL HELP OTHERS RISE STRONG."

**HEALING
STARTS
WHEN YOU
SHARE
YOUR
STORY**

*With skinned knees and bruised hearts;
we choose owning our stories of struggle,
over hiding, over hustling, over pretending.
When we deny our stories, they define us.
When we run from struggle, we are never free.
We craft love from heartbreak,
compassion from shame,
grace from disappointment,
courage from failure.
Showing up is our power.
Story is our way home. Truth is our song.
We are the brave and brokenhearted.
We are rising strong.*

Brene Brown





LEADERS WHO LAST

RESILIENCE IS PERSISTENCE THROUGH RESISTANCE

In God's economy, our discouragement, our disillusionment, and our failures do not go wasted. Small acts of faith are still acts of faith.

Over the last two years, you discovered that resilience is persistence through resistance.

Sometimes it took all your energy to keep from quitting. You didn't underestimate the power of faithfulness or, call it, holy stubbornness. You worked the muscles of perseverance and dogged-hopefulness. You kept putting one foot in front of the other. You kept showing up. You kept praying, standing, and working.

"WE'VE BEEN SURROUNDED AND BATTERED BY TROUBLES, BUT WE'RE NOT DEMORALIZED; WE'RE NOT SURE WHAT TO DO, BUT WE KNOW THAT GOD KNOWS WHAT TO DO; WE'VE BEEN SPIRITUALLY TERRORIZED, BUT GOD HASN'T LEFT OUR SIDE; WE'VE BEEN THROWN DOWN, BUT WE HAVEN'T BROKEN."

2 CORINTHIANS 4:8,9 (MSG)

1. Underline all the phrases in the above verses that describe your life over the past two years.

Worship is not passive. Worship is a sacred act of defiance. Reverently lifting your hands to a loving God who hasn't yet shown his hand in making things better for you is a prophetic demonstration of hope.

**“THEREFORE, LET US OFFER THROUGH JESUS
A CONTINUAL SACRIFICE OF PRAISE TO GOD,
PROCLAIMING OUR ALLEGIANCE TO HIS NAME.”**

HEBREWS 13:9 (NLT)

2. Write down five words or phrases that describe your devotion to Jesus.

**“HAVE FAITH IN THE LORD AND YOU WILL BE
UPHELD...STAND FIRM AND SEE.”**

2 CHRONICLES 2:20 (NIV)

3. Make the following declarations. Say them out loud. Repeat daily.

I WILL PERSEVERE.

**I'M NOT SOMEONE WHO SHOWS UP
WHEN IT'S EASY AND LEAVES WHEN
IT'S TIME TO DIG IN.**

**I AM COMMITTED TO SEEING
MOUNTAINS MOVE.**

**I AM NOT UNDONE BY POWERS AND
PRINCIPALITIES.**

I CHOOSE LIFE.

I CHOOSE JESUS.





STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

**Well, I won't back down
No, I won't back down
You can stand me up at the gates of hell
But I won't back down**

Jeff Lynne

The moment you step into your calling, you step out of your comfort zone. But when you're called to a purpose, backing down isn't an option.

**"HAVEN'T I COMMANDED YOU? STRENGTH!
COURAGE! DON'T BE TIMID; DON'T GET
DISCOURAGED. GOD, YOUR GOD, IS WITH YOU
EVERY STEP YOU TAKE."**

JOSHUA 1:9 (MSG)

1. Who do I want to become in 2022? List 3 qualities or behaviours you see as living your life on purpose for God.

Jesus continues to baptize in the Holy Spirit those who are believers. This empowers them to continue His work of proclaiming with speech and action the good news of the arrival and coming of the Kingdom of God.

“I DO NOT ACCOUNT MY LIFE OF ANY VALUE NOR AS PRECIOUS TO MYSELF, IF ONLY I MAY ACCOMPLISH MY COURSE AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

ACTS 20:24 (ESV)

2. What do I believe God is calling me to step into in 2022?

Each local church is an expression of the universal church whose role is to participate in the mission of God to restore all things.

3. What is one thing I will do to help our congregation be relentlessly outbound in 2022?

**PARTICIPATE
IN THE
MISSION
OF GOD TO
RESTORE ALL
THINGS**

Churches in the Book of Acts stayed laser-focused on the Great Commission. As we obediently look outwardly, God will sustain us and lead us in tumultuous times and new territories.



Devotionals written by:

*Bob Jones
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TORQUE TOLERANCE & STRESS FRACTURES

REAL ISSUES IN MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP



by Al Downey
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PAOC ABNWT District

tightened the lug nut just a bit beyond its torque tolerance level. There was the clear, distinct sound of a snap and my project lay broken in two pieces. It's called a 'stress fracture.'

It can happen in mechanics. It can happen in leadership. I work in Pastoral Care for leaders. As we pass through the two-year mark of COVID in Canada, I am more frequently encountering leaders whose accumulating stress is reaching a 'torque tolerance' level. Unless they take steps to back away from the pressure and recover some objectivity, something will have to snap.

Because of my own propensity to depression, I have had to build some safeguards into my life to prevent 'stress fracture.' Perhaps they will be helpful for you as well.

1. A DISCIPLINED PERSONAL DEVOTIONAL LIFE

Jesus modelled this for us. He deliberately and intentionally built times with His Father into the routine of His life. If He, being God the Son, understood His need for this, how much more should we recognize our need. There needs to be a quiet place in our life, a place where we can be refreshed in the presence of God our Father. These intentional interludes keep the pressure points of our life and ministry from escalating to a dangerous point.

2. PRACTICE 'WORK SPURTS'

As the COVID dilemma has persisted, I have discovered that I work best in fairly short, productive spurts. An internal pressure begins to build as I subject myself to long periods of concentrated time in front of the computer or iPhone screen. We may not even realize it is happening. It is imperative to take short de-escalation breaks every hour. It is like releasing the valve on an over-inflated tire.

3. AN ALTERNATE ACTIVITY

It is important to have an interest, hobby, or diversion outside of the parameters of your work. That activity should re-energize you. It should not demand more energy capital. It should involve some aspect of physical motion. It is interesting to note that watching television or Netflix is an energy-draining exercise and does not qualify as a positive alternate activity. It will ultimately leave you more tense.

<https://www.earlytorise.com/watching-tv-is-bad-for-your-energy/>

4. FAMILY AND FRIEND ENJOYMENT

God has placed us in family units for the purpose of our well-being. The tendency for pressure-driven people is to withdraw from simple dialogue, banter and humour. All three of those ingredients are stress relieving. They should be, first of all, sought in the context of an immediate nuclear family. If that is not possible, it is imperative to have a small social circle of friends to provide that outlet. Stress fractures usually occur when a person chooses to isolate themselves from others.

5. AUTHENTICITY TO ALL, CLOSE CONFIDENCE IN A FEW

Nothing ramps up stress like 'pretense.' When we are living behind a façade, the pressure to keep up the act is intense. My own mental health journey arbitrarily forced me into vulnerability. People witnessed a weakness in me that was beyond my control. Surprisingly, it did not affect the trust they had in me as a leader. When I resigned after seventeen years of ministering in one location, the comment I heard most often was this: 'Pastor, in your vulnerability, we found hope for our own situation.' Authenticity ramps down the pressure to perform.

It is important, however, to understand that the deepest confidences of life, the heart issues, the internal struggles are best shared only in the context of a few proven and trusted friends. When divulging such matters, one does not need censure or judgment but compassion, honesty, and empathy.



6. WHOSE BRIDE?

It would be false to suggest that I did not experience points of great stress in ministry. There were times when I pushed hard against the 'torque tolerance' of my emotions. This inevitably was associated with my responsibilities as pastor. It was in one such moment that I sensed the Lord speaking to my spirit: "I will build My Church!" It was not my role to build Christ's church. He would do that. If I attempted to build His Church, it would become idolatry in my life. Reminding myself of this often, kept me from owning responsibilities that were not mine. My task was to obey what the Spirit was saying to me and know that the yoke Jesus had for me was easy and the burden was light.

We must respect the Bride of Christ, nurture and provide for her. If we try to marry her, we are committing adultery with someone else's bride.

7. JUMP OFF THE GUILT TRAIN

At one time or another, 'guilt' plagues us. We say within ourselves, "If they only knew what I wasn't doing!" This has become even more prevalent since the onset of COVID and frequent 'work from home mandates.' A prominent leader recently confessed to me the onset of a sense of guilt in his life. Acquainted with a consistent, regimented work schedule, he now found himself restricted in what he could do. The guilt was overwhelming him.

I have found an antidote to such feelings comes with the understanding that God does not measure His grace to us according to the level of our personal productivity. If our concept of acceptance by God is based on the amount we accomplish for Him, we have missed the very essence of 'agape' – unconditional love. Our justification before God is not based on a record of good works but on grace alone. When guilt threatens to take me past my torque tolerance, I go back to examine the nature of my relationship with God and fall back on His grace.

8. READ THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT ONCE PER WEEK

William Wordsworth, a renowned nineteenth-century British poet lamented these words: "The world is too much with us, getting and spending we lay waste our powers. Little we see in nature that is ours. We have given our hearts away..."

With the pressures of my role, the bombardment of a Christ-less media, and the negative emotions generated by a world gone askew, the world becomes too much with us. I am not immune to that.

When all those things combine to rob me of my peace of mind and leave me in a state of 'worry,' I return to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5,6,7). Those reassuring words of Jesus Himself help to back me away from the cliff. I have made it a practice to read them and meditate on them frequently. It has kept me from a stress fracture.

Worry is simply an out-of-control concern. Reading the Sermon on the Mount and allowing the Holy Spirit to filter those truths into the depths of my own spirit has helped me to turn fruitless worry back into a healthy and reasonable concern.

*(Resource: The Anxiety Cure, by Dr. Archibald Hart (2001)
- published by Thomas Nelson)*

9. LEARN YOUR OWN 'TORQUE TOLERANCE'

I used to envy individuals who seemed to be able to function at an overwhelming level of stress.

I have come to realize that we are all created uniquely and are able to handle different levels of pressure.

Socrate's great maxim was, 'Know thyself!' There is wisdom in that statement. Understand yourself well enough to recognize when the pressure in your life is mounting to a dangerous level and respond accordingly.

10. THERE IS HELP

The Canadian Mental Health Association states that one in twos Canadians will face some type of mental health challenges before they reach the age of 40.* That is 50% of the population. The biographical witness of the Scriptures would indicate that great men and women of God have never been free from dangerous levels of stress.

We are fortunate in our cultural context to have wonderful professional Christian counsellors who can help us regain equilibrium in our lives when we have broken under pressure. There is help. There is hope. There is healing.

Life and leadership will present its pressures, but these are ways we can counteract those pressures and mitigate their effects.

One of my preacher favourites, Dan Betzer, says, "I think that one day we will stand before Jesus and He will look at us and say, 'I really hadn't meant your life to be so grim.'" He is probably correct.

* <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>





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Free confidential consultation with a trained counsellor. We encourage you to take advantage of this excellent resource. We are committed to the health and well-being of you and your family. For those who carry a PAOC credential card, the clergy care number is included there.

COUNSELLING

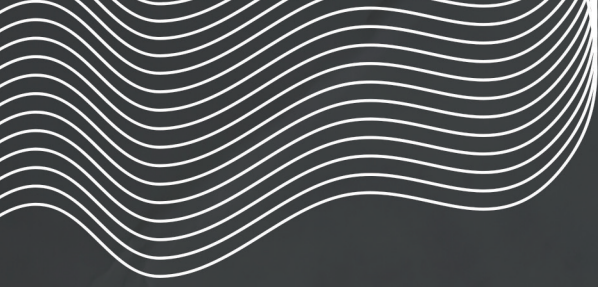
(Confidential Pastoral Care Counselling)

Counselling is more than a remedial exercise. We encourage counselling that is 'maintenance or preventative' in nature. We encourage each of our leaders to connect with a trusted counsellor, coach, or confidante periodically. We can help connect you at a casual or professional level. Please call the ABNWT Pastoral Care Coordinator at 780-977-2179 or the Director of Leader Care at 780-426-0190, Ext. 223. All counselling arrangements are kept in strict confidence.

Upon ABNWT District approval, professional Christian counselling may be available for credential holders and/or their immediate, dependent family members. To access this resource, call the Pastoral Care Coordinator. All counselling arrangements are kept in strict confidence.

KERITH CREEK RETREAT FOR LEADERS

The ABNWT District strongly endorses the ministry of the Focus on the Family Kerith Creek Retreat Centre. Marshall and Merrie Eizenga (PAOC credential holders) direct week-long renewal retreats for ministry leaders in a safe and confidential environment. For more information call: 1-800-550-5655 or go to www.kerithretreats.ca.



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