

Sabbath Rest

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Rob's Running Story (by Pastor Rob, LA, a recent guest)

I know several people who enjoy running. It has become their passion... getting up early, lacing up the shoes and hitting the pavement for what they call fun and relaxing. Yes, running is a great exercise, whether you want to improve your overall fitness, develop stamina and endurance or lose weight. But for me, running took on a whole other meaning one dark day in September of 2009. It was Labor Day Monday and I chose to run and run far. My strategy that day was to escape from the prison that I felt I was in... *the prison of being in full-time ministry.*

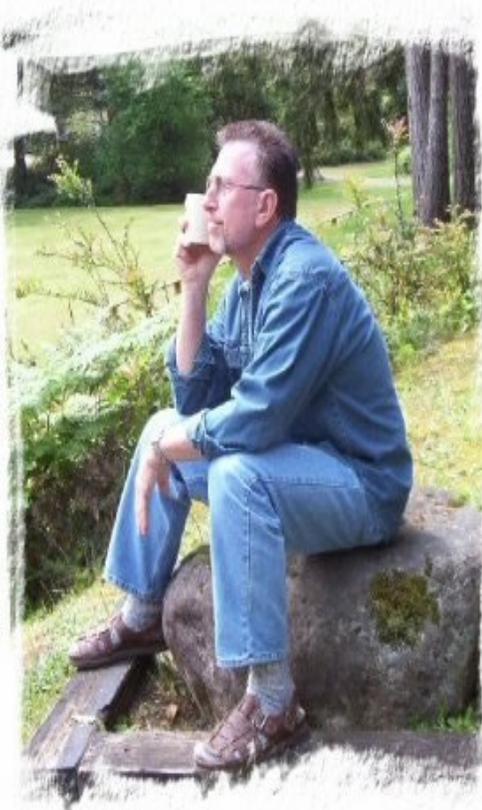


My life at that point was spiraling out of control. The workload at church was frantically mounting. Being pulled in every direction as an associate pastor became my way of life: counseling sessions were rising, my hand was in almost every ministry on our campus, leading a life group, preaching, weddings, etc., etc., etc., and ETC! I was a complete wreck internally. Of course, I wore it so well that no one knew. I saw no plausible end in sight.

I could have chosen a quick fix of drugs or alcohol to minimize the pain, but I chose the next best thing. That Monday morning after my wife left to run errands... I packed my truck and headed out of town. As I drove past the city limit sign, I said my goodbyes to the church and my family and drove until the sun went down. I drove across the state line with a sensation of finally being a free man from the extreme heaviness of ministry. I have to admit it felt good – no decisions needed to be made except where I was to sleep and what I was to eat. But after two days of this life “on the run”,

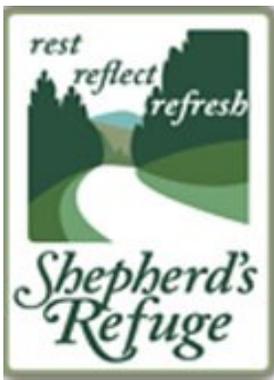
I soon realized this feeling was short-lived.

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- ⇒ Encourage and support your pastor to decide to take time off.
- ⇒ Help him/her remove the feeling of guilt when they do decide to get away.
- ⇒ Think about the health of their own family relationship.
- ⇒ Consider the benefits to the congregation from a well rested pastor.
- ⇒ Understand the consequences of a burnt-out pastor!
- ⇒ [You can decide to make a difference, become a Ministry Partner](#)

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Luk 5:16 And he (Jesus) withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed.

Rob's Running Story Continued...

God began working on me via emails (I brought my laptop) and even through a radio commercial. After reading emotional email pleas from my Senior Pastor and my wife and children, I knew this "running" was not the answer. The third day though was the turning point. He began showing me little glimpses of His love for me and reminded me that His own Son, while hanging on the cross battered and beaten, refused gall from the soldiers to numb His pain. I'll never forget where I was – sitting on a bench at a rest area along the interstate looking at a beautiful sunset. His message to me at that moment was simple: He endured the cross and took upon Himself ALL my pains. **The running was over.**

Tearfully, I entered my home on the afternoon of the fourth day to family and friends. Over the next several months, I began a slow progression of healing, counseling and unmasking the trigger mechanism that propelled me to do what I did. Of course, pride was one of the weapons Satan used against me. But far more reaching was the fact that I held all the stresses of ministry...INSIDE. I found myself in kindergarten again, learning a few basics: how to rest, share feelings with my wife, and how to say "NO" to the pulls from ministry.

Over the last couple years I have learned that unplugging from ministry is vital to my health, marriage and longevity. My encouragement to anyone in ministry is this: **Ministry begins with rest; otherwise, you will simply become part of the burnout statistics.**