



Leading Well without Losing Your Soul

Grady D. King, D. Min • grady@hopenetworkministries.org

Introduction~Why this subject?

- 1) Personal: 40 years of ministry in 5 congregations; 75% of time in two churches.
- 2) Communal: HOPE Network has worked with hundreds of leaders and churches
- 3) Essential: Healthy leaders, healthy churches

All Too Familiar

"As I entered into my fifties and was able to realize the unlikelihood of doubling my years, I came face to face with the simple question, "Did becoming older bring me closer to Jesus?" After twenty-five years of priesthood, I found myself praying poorly, living somewhat isolated from other people, and very much preoccupied with burning issues. Everyone was saying that I was doing really well, but something inside was telling me that success was putting my own soul in danger. I began to ask myself whether my lack of contemplative prayer, my loneliness, and my constantly changing involvement in what seemed to be most urgent were signs that the Spirit was actually being suppressed. It was very hard for me to see clearly, and though I never spoke about hell, or only jokingly so, I woke up one day with the realization that I was living in a very dark place and that the term "burnout" was a convenient psychological translation for a spiritual death."¹

Henri Nouwen

"You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you."

Augustine

Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Matthew 10.28

For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life [soul]? Or what will they give in return for their life?

Matthew 16.26

He said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."

Matthew 22.37

May the God of peace himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thess 5.23

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Heb 4.12

¹ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, p. 20

We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul...

Heb 6.19

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul.

1 Peter 2.11

The Essence

1) Leading Well is more about WHO I am rather than WHAT I do.

Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching (doctrine)...

1 Timothy 4. 16

Asking the Right Questions²

What's right?

- Where do you sense God's blessing?
- Where have you been affirmed
- Where do you see God at work right now?
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What's Wrong?

- Where are you experiencing your greatest struggle?
- Where do you need to focus greater efforts?
- Where are you in your journey with God?
- Where do you find yourself resisting God?
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What's Confusing?

- Where do you feel the most bewildered?
- Where are the pieces not coming together?
- Where does God want you to go, but you can't? Why not?
- Where is the greatest dissonance coming from?
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What's Missing?

- Where is the greatest gap between problems and answers?
- Where do you feel free? Where do you feel most bound?
- Where do you need the greatest help?
- Where is your heart telling you that you should go?

2) Losing Your Soul is more about a DARK PLACE than ETERNAL DESTINY!

"To use the expression, "to lose one's soul" is not necessarily talking of eternal damnation. To "lose one's soul" is to become in contemporary jargon, unglued—to fall apart. Hence, when I feel my inner world hopelessly crumbling, when I do not know who I am anymore, and when I am trying to rush off in all directions at that same time, but do not know where I am going, then I am losing my soul."³

Ronald Rolheiser

² From Living a Life that Counts by Tom Patterson on page 34 of STUCK by Terry B. Walling.

³ Ronald Rolheiser, Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality. Random House, New York (1998, 2014)

A healthy soul must do two things (Rolheiser) . . .

1. Put fire in our veins...life, energy, hope
2. Keep us glued together

Getting Practical

1. Recognize where you are—reality check.⁴
2. Identify your emotional patterns.
3. Evaluate the role expectations drive you—self, others, church.
4. Take inventory of disappointment—with God, self, others.
5. Avoid neglecting family in the name of doing ministry.
6. Sabbath is not optional—God’s Holy Stop! Say NO and mean it!

Resources

Books:

In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership. Henri Nouwen, The Crossroad Pub. Co., New York (1989)

The Way of the Heart. Henri Nouwen, Ballantine, New York (1981)

The Sense of the Call. A Sabbath Way of Life for Those Who Serve God, The Church and The World. Marva Dawn, Erdmans, Grand Rapids, (2006)

Holy Longing: The Search of Christian Spirituality. Ronald Rolheiser. Random House, New York (1989, 2014)

The Emotionally Healthy Leader. How Developing Your Inner Life Will Transform Your Church, Team and the World. Peter Scazzero. Zondervan, Grand Rapids, (2015)

STUCK: Navigating the Transitions of Life and Leadership. Terry B. Walling. ChurchSmart Resources, (2008)

Self-Evaluation:

Emotionally Healthy Leader and STUCK contain self evaluations, checklists and strategies for health and growth.

www.hopenetworkministries.org/resources

- Burnout Inventory
- Theological Worlds Inventory

⁴ *STUCK* is a great resource for identifying transition times in your life and how to move through them.