

What to Do When Ministry Has Worn You Down

If you are under 50 years old, you don't need to read this article. However, if you have been sucking in oxygen for the better part of five decades, read on, my friend, read on.

Are you weary? Do you wonder if your life has made any difference at all? Are you tired of the rut of day after day after day of slogging along through the mundane of ministry?

What do you do when purpose is playing hide and seek with you and the hopes of your youth have been dashed upon some middle-aged shore?

What do you do?

Paul found himself in a ferocious storm, and I believe that those of us who are storm-tossed by the lack of accomplishment and are discouraged by unfilled dreams can learn from this storm in Paul's life (Acts 27).

First of all, in order to make it through the storm, the captain and the sailors on Paul's water-logged ship began to jettison the cargo. What is it in your life that you can discard in order to make your vessel lighter and more seaworthy? Are there programs or commitments that are no longer meaningful? Are there relationships or demands that just need to be tossed to the side?

Secondly, Paul heard from the Lord, "But now I advise you to take courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship" (Acts 27:22).

When was the last time you took the time to hear from the Lord? Perhaps the wisest decision you could make in order to go the distance is to take some time off with only your Bible

and a notebook. Ask God to speak to you and then begin to write down all He is saying to you. Open up the sacred pages of the Word of God and expect God to give you wisdom and direction. The same loving Father who spoke to Paul will also speak to you!

And remember that Paul heard the Lord say, "Keep up your courage!" If you long to live vibrantly for Christ in this season of life, you must keep up your courage! Whenever I get discouraged in ministry, I remind myself to encourage myself in the Lord. The simple yet powerful manner in which I encourage myself is twofold. First, I sing songs of worship out loud; I sing choruses and hymns of the faith and I belt out every praise song that I can remember. Secondly, I declare the promises of God out loud. I out-declare and out-shout discouragement as loud as I can for as long as I can! And you know what? It works every time.

The third thing that Paul did was that he encouraged others, "Therefore, men, take courage, for I believe God that it will be exactly as it was told to me" (Acts 27:25).

There is always someone who is more discouraged than you are and who is more disappointed with life and with ministry than you have been. Find that person and spend time encouraging him or her to keep up his or her courage. You will find that miraculously the encouragement you give will come back to you.

And finally, Paul and the members of the crew on this deluged and storm-weary boat cast out four anchors and wished for daybreak.

What are the four anchors of your faith? For me it has always been worship, the Word of God, prayer and service. When you are in a storm of gargantuan proportions, keep singing, keep reading the Word, keep praying and keep serving the body of Christ. Those four anchors will keep your ship from crashing upon the shores of burn-out and frustration.

Paul and the entire crew “wished for daybreak.” These men stayed in a place of hope even when they couldn’t see their hands in front of their faces. These men continued to hope for the best even when they were gulping in saltwater and seaweed.

I hope that today, regardless of what you see in your circumstances or in spite of what you feel in your emotions, that like Paul, you will hope for daybreak! The sun will rise again and you, my weary friend, will be given the gift of a new day to serve the Lord.