

Confessions of a Former Ministry Addict

The key to more effective ministry is found not in accomplishing more, but in taking time for spiritual and physical refreshment.

My name is Larry Keefauver, and I am a recovering ministry addict!"

To my salvation as a young child, I added eight years of ministerial education as a young adult. For more than 20 years I fed my addiction daily with unending appointments, meeting with people who "needed" me in counseling, planning, teaching, equipping and administration.

To those 12-hour days I added three to four services weekly in which too often I became the one who was high and lifted up on the platform entertaining and performing for those who paid for my addiction.

My ministry addiction brought my marriage and family to the brink of destruction, until God graciously leveled me with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, breaking my pride, my addiction and, most of all, my absorption with the heresy of "doing something for Jesus" instead of "being in Christ."

Practical pastoring begins at home—if we don't have church at home then we'll never have church at church. Here are some simple steps for building up our relational and spiritual immune systems so we can head off this addiction:

Rest. God places a higher emphasis on rest than He does on tithing. We are to give one-tenth of our resources, but we are to rest with one-seventh of our time! Every ministry leader needs a minimum of one day's rest every week! This should also include at least three to four evenings a week with family.

Relational skills. It's time that our Bible schools, Sunday schools, small groups and cells, retreats, conferences and camps begin to focus (at a young age) on family relational skills, involving marriage and parenting relationships. We need to equip this generation and successive ones with God's way to parent.

Required family getaways. Once a quarter, a ministering family needs to take a weekend completely away at the church's expense. No preaching at a conference and dragging the family along! The purpose of the trip is family—not feeding an addiction of having to minister someplace every time we leave town.

Refreshing vacations. At least once a year, a family needs to take a vacation. Some in ministry build such co-dependent churches and ministries that they feel that nothing can happen without them being around.

Effective ministers reproduce themselves so that others can carry on when they are not present.

It often takes three to seven days to “detox” from ministry “doing” so that they can be whom God created them to be—a child, a spouse and a parent. Some tips are:

Turn off the cell phone. If necessary, take 30 minutes each day to return calls.

Turn off the computer. Again, have a set time to return e-mails, and take charge of your time. In other words, manage your rest time as efficiently as you manage your work. Don't become a slave to interruptions.

Give your spouse and family your undivided attention. Don't allow your mind to stay at work when your body is with your family.

Spend some time alone. When on vacation, do some things by

yourself as well. Love others and yourself. Instead of reading the Bible and praying to prepare for ministry, spend time alone with God just for yourself!

Listen. Listen to your spouse, children, parents and relatives. In ministry, we dump so much verbiage on others that they rarely “get a word in edgewise.”

Stop worrying. Don’t worry about the finances. Plan for rest and refreshing in your ministry and personal budget. Some protest that they can’t afford time away. Just the opposite is true. Their ministries can’t afford not to fund rest.

Be encouraged; take a deep breath of the Spirit, and let His refreshing wash over you and your family in practical ways so that His blessing will keep you and your family together until Jesus comes.

Larry Keefauver, ., ministers internationally with his wife, Judi, in equipping leaders through Your Ministry Consultation Services () for ministry, marriage, parenting and inviting God’s presence.