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PETR ČINČALA, EDITOR

“SELF-CARE:” NOT JUST A BUZZWORD

The phrase “self-care” is frequently used in our culture today. If you Google “self-care,” countless articles are sure to populate your search results. And while it seems as if our society in general struggles to engage in self-care, the deficiency seems especially pertinent for leaders.

In the recently published book *Mending Ministers on Their Wellness Journey*, Pastor Phil explained how his lack of self-care has come with a cost:

Helping navigate life challenges, encouraging life changes, and facilitating people’s personal journey with Jesus have been deeply fulfilling. Sadly, for many years I did that at the expense of my own personal well-being Sadly, I’ve paid the price. Through the years, I became more sedentary resulting in significant weight gain My health was a mess, and I was a heart attack waiting to happen. (Williams, Činčala, & Drumm, 2022, p. 107)

For this pastor, recovery was not easy. It was not until he came to the realization that he had to first take care of himself that true change could begin. As he put it, “The paradigm shift I’ve had to make is that if I’m going to be serious about caring for others, I must be serious about taking care of myself first Total self-care is essential for pastoral leaders if they are to be effective caregivers for others” (Williams, Činčala, & Drumm, 2022, p. 108).

In an article for *Ministry*, René Drumm and I suggested eight ways to successfully and practically practice self-care:¹

¹ You can read the full article here: <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2022/11/The-biblical-imperative-of-pastoral-self-care>

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1. Learn to say no.
2. Soften your no.
3. Try, “That does not fit (or work) for me right now.”
4. Get enough sleep.
5. Get regular physical exercise.
6. Eat healthfully.
7. Practice daily gratitude.
8. Laugh often. (Činčala, & Drumm, 2022)

As Christian leaders, it is important to experience holistic health in our own lives so that we can minister and lead to our fullest potential. Our last issue of the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* (issue 16, volume 1) examined various aspects of healthy leadership. This issue will serve as a continuation of the topic and will further examine ways that leaders can become healthier in various aspects of their lives.

We kick off this issue with a Biblical Reflection brought to us by J. David Pitcher. Pitcher walks us through biblical leadership themes found in the New Testament, including the “among” of leadership, the “unsung” of leadership, and “the God-brung” of leadership. I hope and pray you will find this article inspiring and compelling.

We are honored to share a Leadership Interview in this issue with Dr. Ella Simmons—the first woman elected as a general vice president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Dr. Simmons shares her journey from childhood to retirement, highlighting many of the obstacles she has overcome in her ministry. She also dives into the importance of interpersonal health, discussing racial and gender discrimination and how to become more like Christ—specifically how we can apply Jesus’s example of acceptance and openness—as we overcome difficult situations. This is an interview you do not want to miss!

In our first Feature Article, David Sedlacek from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University shares findings from a quantitative study that collected from 607 seminary students at the Seminary from 2019 through 2022 on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) they have suffered. The data reveals at- or above-average trauma in seminary students, pastors, and administrators in several areas of the participants’ lives as children. Research shows that, if left untreated, this trauma would likely result in higher rates of chronic illness, mental and emotional challenges, and self-destructive behavior. The implications of this article go beyond just the physical health of leaders, extending to mental, emotional, and even interpersonal health and well-being.

Our second Feature Article is brought to us by Kevin Spratt. Spratt suggests that a lack of emotional intelligence is a potential predictor of pastoral leadership failure, ultimately leading to unhealthy churches that struggle to plant or be revitalized. Many current church authors and researchers miss emotional intelligence as a key individual competency. This article raises the importance of emotional intelligence and suggests that an emotionally competent pastor is a leader who is self-aware and socially aware—and can relationally manage both for the purposes of church leadership.

Pastor Dwight Nelson brings us this issue's Leadership Lived article. In this article, Nelson discusses the role expectations that many pastors (and likely, Christian leaders at large) experience and how these can negatively impact the pastors'/leaders' lives. He shares six practical ways that pastors and Christian leaders can experience vocational health and balance.

Our first Dialogue article, a companion to our second Feature Article, comes from Louis Brown and also takes a look at emotional intelligence. Brown writes that

despite the exciting and growing variety of [emotional intelligence] writings, many researchers have seemingly neglected the Christian community, resulting in the unique and exciting profession of Christian leadership and church ministry remaining acutely underexplored. This lack of research interest is quite surprising due to the various social and emotional interactions Christian leaders encounter in church ministry and in their personal and professional lives.

Again, because emotional intelligence will help leaders become aware of their emotions and the emotions of those around them, often leading to better communication, this is an important read for leaders in any arena.

Katia Garcia Reinert, an associate director for Adventist Health Ministries, brings us our second Dialogue article. Reinert tackles the extremely difficult subject of leaders and addictive disorders, writing, "Addictive disorders affect people from varied backgrounds, and faith leaders are not immune." With a special focus on pornography addiction, Reinert walks us through the cycle of addiction and explains its hallmark symptoms. Identifying red flags and recognizing risk factors/protective factors among leaders is key for prevention and recovery strategies. Reinert suggests that experiencing recovery can support leadership development and result in a more positive leadership impact.

Our issue wraps up with reviews of books recently published in the area of Christian leadership, as well as the latest dissertations released on various aspects of healthy leadership.

I hope and pray that this issue, combined with its sister issue, 16.1, will remind you of the importance of being a holistically healthy leader and that it will inspire you to make some positive changes to your own work and ministry.

References

- Činčala, P., & Drumm, R. (2022, November). *The biblical imperative of pastoral self-care*. Ministry. <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2022/11/The-biblical-imperative-of-pastoral-self-care>
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