

# Energy & Enthusiasm

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## **Leader's Guide**

*How to use "Error! Reference source not found." by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.*

*Welcome to BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS: Your Complete Guide to Leadership Training. You've purchased an innovative resource that will help you develop leaders who can think strategically and biblically about the church. Selected by the editors of Leadership Resources/Christianity Today International, the material comes from respected thinkers and church leaders.*

*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS is not just another program. Each theme contains materials on the topic you choose—no tedious program to follow. The materials work when you want, where you want and the way you want it to. It's completely flexible and easy to use.*

*You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with board members or with other committees or groups of leaders. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS at the beginning of a board meeting or committee meeting:*

**1. Select a learning tool.** In this theme of "**Error! Reference source not found.**," you'll find multiple types of handouts from which to choose:

- ◆ Bible Study
- ◆ case study
- ◆ activities
- ◆ interview
- ◆ devotionals
- ◆ resources
- ◆ assessment tools
- ◆ how-to articles
- ◆ sample retreat

**2. Select a handout.** Suppose, for example, you have decided that your board or team needs to assess its understanding of church membership. There are three assessment options in this theme: "Am I Too Tired?"

(p. 6), "Signs of Hurry Sickness" (p. 7). and "The Way of Contentment" (p. 8). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

**3. Photocopy the handout.** Let's say you selected "Am I Too Tired?" Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

**4. Prepare for the discussion.** We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

**5. Lead the discussion.** Most handouts can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes (except the Bible study, which may take longer). Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at [www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com)

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## **When I Need a Boost**

*An inductive Bible study to help us find motivation for the long haul.*

1 Corinthians 15:1–32

**Background** The older couple stared as a low, red convertible raced past. In the sportscar, a couple, also of a certain age but noticeably more energetic, waved and lifted a can of fortified energy drink.

Sometimes we wish we could give our co-workers in ministry a boost. We often need one for ourselves. If only enthusiasm for ministry came in a six-pack.

The words energy and enthusiasm have something in common. In their original forms, both are compound words beginning with the preposition “in.” Energy is “en-ergon,” meaning “in the work.” At times we are energized by the work itself. It matches the curvature of our souls; we find ourselves willingly and joyfully engaged.

The word “enthusiasm” is a similar compound: “en-theos,” meaning, “in god.” Enthusiasm, in its basic meaning, can be applied to the Christian who is “en Theos,” that is, in God. For believers enthusiasm comes not primarily from the task (although we may love what we’re doing) but from the presence of the One who commissions the work. Paul points to this approach: “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

**Bible Study** *For this inductive study, a clean copy of the passage and color markers may be helpful.*

**1. Read and Mark (10 minutes)**

Individually, read 1 Corinthians 15:1-32. Mark paragraphs or verses that speak about:

- past events
- Paul’s experience and attitude
- present-time or ongoing activity
- future events. (*This is a long passage. Don’t be concerned about marking every verse.*)

**2. Small-Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

In groups of two or three, look over your highlighted phrases and begin to draw some conclusions:

- List a few past events. What foundation is our work built on?
- To what does Paul attribute his success?
- Did you find phrases that refer to present-time activities? What was Paul doing? What were his readers at Corinth doing?
- Make a short list of future events. In light of those, what is the importance of all we are now doing for the Lord?

**3. Large-Group Discussion (10 minutes)**

- What fuels the work we do for God? What impact does it have?
- How does this affect the kinds of service you choose to do?
- How does this motivate you—even if you feel your work is “in vain”?
- How will this change the ways you motivate others?

**4. Prayer (5 minutes)**

Think quietly and then pray about: “Am I fully in the work, in the Lord?”

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## **Finding Joy in Christian Service**

*Only the thankful can burn brightly without burning out.*

Isaiah 40:28–31; Hebrews 12:3

*Ministry is not a quick sprint; serving the people of God is often a marathon. When exhaustion sets in or failure occurs, how do you find an enduring source of strength? Ministry veterans Ben Patterson and Zig Ziglar talk about one key to endurance: finding joy in all things.*

### **Is loss of energy and joy inevitable in ministry?**

*Zig Ziglar:* Our natural inclination is to say, “I just don’t have the energy I used to have,” but that only adds fuel to the problem. Our belief determines our behavior. According to research, roughly 50 percent of us are born as optimists, and 50 percent are born as pessimists. The good news is, research conclusively shows that you can change from pessimism to optimism. I’m a born optimist; I’d take my last two dollars and buy a money belt with it. But there’s a big difference between the joy of optimism and the joy that comes with knowing you’re in God’s will, that he has already won this deal called life. All I’ve got to do is collect. It’s not what I do; it’s what Christ did.

### **Was there a moment when you discovered the meaning of genuine joy?**

*Ben Patterson:* I can tell you when I became a Christian, and I can tell you when I began to “get it” about joy. I’m sorry to say my discovery about joy was only about eight years ago.

I didn’t want to go back to work after vacation. I was overwhelmed with the problems in the church and the struggles in our family. But I was going to be obedient to God. I gritted my teeth, pulled out of Minneapolis, and headed east to New Jersey. One night in a prayer meeting, the Lord spoke to me: “I don’t need you to serve me this way. If you can’t do this joyfully, why don’t you get a real job? You can choose to be joyful about this. That night the meaning of joy became so plain to me; while joy is a gift, it is also something I need to choose. Fundamental to being unjoyful is being ungrateful. Joy is what you feel when you’re thankful.

### **The Bible tells us to rejoice always. How do you do that in difficult times?**

*Ziglar:* Our oldest daughter died on May 13, 1995. How do you rejoice under those circumstances? We’re still weeping. However, we can rejoice in the assurance that we know where she is and that we loved her and provided her the best medical care available. Psalm 139:16 says God set her death date from the foundation of the earth. In weeping, we can still have joy, but joy is a condition you’re in because of a decision you made.

Her death is the most difficult thing I’ve experienced, and yet I’ve felt God’s presence so strongly since then. The longest 24 hours of my life were those after my daughter’s death. I took a walk and was praying and crying the whole way. When I returned, the Lord spoke in such a distinct way: “She’s fine. She’s with me. And you’re going to be fine, too. I’m all you need. You just keep walking. Keep talking. Keep praying. Keep crying.”



## Finding Joy in Christian Service *continued*

*Patterson:* Not long after deciding to be grateful, I was sitting in church one evening. As the choir was singing a beautiful piece, I felt, as C. S. Lewis describes, the stab of joy. I sensed God's presence. My first thought was, *Lord, that is worth anything in the world. Whatever I have to do, I'll do, if I just get a look at your face once in a while.* For all I knew, I was going to be serving that church, a job I didn't like, for a long time. That four-year period was about coming to the place where I could say to God: "To see your face is so worthwhile that nothing in this life is bad enough to outweigh your presence."

### **How can we overcome the tendency to be ungrateful?**

*Patterson:* For me, not letting my circumstances steal my joy means making a conscious choice to return to the goodness of God and not to let the darkness control life. That's not to ignore what's bad or evil. It's simply a stubborn refusal to let the accusatory voice define the situation, but to return always to the grace of God. Even when we receive something good, Satan, the accuser, will come and say, "You don't deserve that."

I think that joy for those not predisposed toward optimism still comes down to the rigorous discipline of giving thanks. My continual prayer for one person in my family is for him to practice gratitude even when he doesn't feel it. He told me that has made a big difference.

*Ziglar:* In *Confessions of a Happy Christian*, I put a "gratitude list" at the end of each chapter. I remind readers that the more you express gratitude for what you have, the more things you will have, to express gratitude for. Grateful people are happy people. They're achievers. They have friends.

*Patterson:* Sometimes, though, I'm afraid of joy. To be joyful, you've got to be capable of abandoning yourself to something. For me, the fear of joy finally comes down to my being in control. I think, *If I give myself completely over to God, what if he drops me? He might not keep his promises.* Every major failure in my life can be traced back to my taking matters into my own hands.

### **Discuss**

1. Are you a pessimist or an optimist? What can help alter your outlook?
2. What is likely to steal your joy as you serve others?
3. For what aspects of your Christian service are you grateful?

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## **Am I Too Tired?**

*How to determine whether your fatigue is normal or serious.*

1 Kings 19:1–9; Matthew 11:28–30

How serious is your fatigue? Enter a score after each question according to the following scale:

0—I seldom feel this way.

1—I sometimes (once every month or so) feel this way.

2—I often (more than once a month) feel this way.

3—I almost always feel this way.

Add up your total score and use the guidelines at the end to interpret the results.

### **Fatigue Symptom Checklist**

- \_\_\_ 1. Do you feel moody and have difficulty getting up in the morning?
- \_\_\_ 2. Do you experience slight fevers, signs of flu, sore throat, or tender lymph nodes?
- \_\_\_ 3. Is the morning your worst time of the day, with the evening being better?
- \_\_\_ 4. Do you fall asleep easily but wake early without being able to fall asleep again?
- \_\_\_ 5. Have you ever found yourself staring at a computer monitor, keyboard, or book, barely able to keep your head from dropping (“microsleeps”)?
- \_\_\_ 6. Do you feel mentally sluggish, confused, and unresponsive?
- \_\_\_ 7. Has your short-term memory declined, and do you have trouble concentrating?
- \_\_\_ 8. Has your daily activity dropped below 50 percent of what it was before?
- \_\_\_ 9. Are your emotions relatively blunted and apathetic?
- \_\_\_ 10. Does your body ache all over and feel as if it is weaker than it used to be?
- \_\_\_ 11. Whenever you exercise, do you feel debilitated for more than 12 hours afterward?
- \_\_\_ 12. Does your work stress you to the point that you want to escape from it?
- \_\_\_ 13. Do you experience headaches?
- \_\_\_ 14. Do you find yourself desperately wanting to avoid being with people?
- \_\_\_ 15. Are you more impatient, irritable, nervous, angry, or anxious than before?

**TOTAL SCORE:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Scoring**

*0-12: Fatigue is within normal limits.*

*12-22: Fatigue is temporary.* You can reverse it by lowering your stress level, taking a vacation, a sabbatical, or increasing your rest and sleep time.

*23-32: Fatigue is serious.* A break won't relieve it. You are suffering from chronic stress, depletion of adrenaline, immune system deficiency. You can relieve this form of fatigue only by making major lifestyle changes, including possibly finding a new work situation. You could possibly benefit from professional help.

*33 or above: Fatigue is in a “disease state.”* It requires urgent diagnostic evaluation from a physician or psychiatrist to exclude endogenous depression, hormonal imbalances, and physical disease.

—ARCHIBALD D. HART, PH.D., FPPR

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**Discuss**

1. How long have you felt fatigued? What is causing it?
2. What is fatigue signaling about your life and relationships and priorities?
3. What steps are you going to take to address your fatigue?
4. What is Matthew 11:28-30 saying to you now?



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## **Signs of Hurry Sickness**

*How to know if you're moving too fast.*

Luke 10:38–42; Proverbs 14:29

**1. Speeding up.** You are haunted by the fear that you don't have enough time to do what needs to be done. You chafe whenever you have to wait. At a stoplight, if there are two lanes and each contains one car, you read the year, make, and model of each car to guess which will pull away most quickly.

| <i>Often</i>             | <i>Sometimes</i>         | <i>Rarely</i>            | <i>Never</i>             |
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**2. Multi-tasking.** Psychologists call this polyphasic activity (it could be called doing-more-than-one-thing-at-a-time, but that would take too long). The car is a favorite place for this. Hurry-sick people may drive, eat, drink coffee, listen to tapes, shave or apply make-up, direct business on the car phone—all at the same time.

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**3. Clutter.** Take a look at your desk. One researcher noted that the average desk-worker has 36 hours worth of work on the desk, and spends three hours a week just sorting through it. The hurry-sick often carry around a time organizer the size of Montana.

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**4. Sunset fatigue.** We come home after work, and those who need our love most end up getting the leftovers. This is part of what author Lewis Grant calls “sunset fatigue”—all those end-of-the-day behaviors that signal hurry-sickness:

You rush around at home even when there's no reason to.

You speak sharp words to your spouse and children, even when they've done nothing to deserve them.

You hurry your children along. You set up mock races (“Okay kids, let's see who can take a bath fastest”), which are really about your own need to get through it.

You tell your family that everything will be okay in just a week or two.

You indulge in self-destructive escapes: watching too much TV, abusing alcohol, or scanning pornographic websites.

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**5. Love impairment.** The most serious sign of hurry sickness, though, is a diminished capacity for love. Love and hurry are fundamentally incompatible. Love always takes time, and time is the one thing hurried people don't have.

When I get hurried, I begin to resent the very people I'm supposed to minister to. I also start thinking about people in strictly utilitarian terms: how can I get work out of them? I use them instead of love them.

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—JOHN ORTBERG

**Discuss**

5. What fears may lie beneath our busyness?
6. What is the “one thing” Jesus refers to in Luke 10?
7. How can we keep busyness from stifling our ministry and our ability to love others?

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## **The Way of Contentment**

*What makes the difference between a Christian who is frustrated and one who is content?*

Philippians 4:11–13; Proverbs 30:8; Psalm 131

Contentment doesn't mean a problem-free life. Paul was in prison when he wrote, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11). Contentment is a state of mind. As Abraham Lincoln said, "A man is about as happy as he makes up his mind to be."

Contentment is something not easily or quickly learned. The late Dr. Noel Smith told an old friend from his hospital bed, "Just about the time a man learns how to live, it's time to die." Sadly, for some people, they never learn how to live.

What makes the difference between a servant who is frustrated and one who is content? Here's what I've learned.

### **1. Contentment comes in exercising your spiritual gifts.**

Discontentment sets in when people want to minister, but their gifts don't coincide with their duties. Many Christians are performing tasks that they don't enjoy and are not spiritually equipped to perform.

*I am exercising my spiritual gifts:*

*True of me*      *Somewhat true of me*      *Not true of me*

          

### **2. Contentment comes in enjoying your ministry right now where you are.**

If you cannot enjoy your week-by-week Christian service, it's a cinch you won't enjoy the accomplished goal. If you don't have satisfaction in the journey, you won't be satisfied when you reach the destination.

*I am enjoying my ministry right now:*

          

### **3. Contentment comes in financial stability, not financial security.**

The number-one killer of contentment is financial instability. Many people never settle into their ministry of Christ because they are married to their credit cards. Financial stability does not come with an increase of money supply. Blessed is the person who learns the art of money management. Regardless of annual income, he or she will know contentment.

*I have financial stability:*

          

**4. Contentment comes in knowing the true value of things.** Lack of self-control is a sign of instability, especially in the area of possessions. Perhaps it was necessary for me to move to Kenya and work with destitute tribes before I could understand the meaning of Agur's prayer, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is my portion" (Prov. 30:8). Happy is the one who can say with Paul, "If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content" (1 Tim. 6:8).

*I don't hunger for more or better possessions:*

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—RICHARD LEWIS

**Discuss**

8. What are your gifts? How could they be better used?
9. Specifically, what wars against your ability to be content?
10. What might you need to offer God as part of your journey toward contentment?

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## **The Super Couple**

*Finding balance in Christian life and ministry*

Exodus 20:8–11; Isaiah 30:15

**The Case** The Super Couple! That’s what everyone called Bill and Donna. After selling his successful dentistry practice, Bill and Donna flung their lives into the ministries of Grace Church. They came early to pray with the pastor on Sunday mornings. They stayed late to discuss church business after council meetings. Both of them served as members of the Healing Prayer Team. They came to every Bible study their church offered. Bill and Donna informally mentored a handful of young men and women. And unlike the “crabby” Christians in every church, Bill and Donna did it all with gusto and grace.

It was a win-win situation. Not only did they help the church grow, Bill and Donna also received huge doses of affirmation. “You two are amazing,” they often heard from members and the community alike.

There was just one problem: After three years of this frantic pace, their lives started to unravel. Bill was neglecting his health. Donna was neglecting her emotional health. They became too busy for their children and grandchildren. Words of resentment began to penetrate their “super couple” shield. Church work was choking their life of faith.

**What Would You Do?**

How do churches usually handle a situation like this?

If this couple were in our church, what do you think we should do?

If you were Bill and Donna, how would you like the situation to be handled?

**What Happened**

An unhelpful friend confronted Bill and Donna about their “hankering to run the church.” Stung by this criticism and by nagging from family members, they withdrew from most church activities. They felt hurt, angry, cynical, and burned-out.

The pastor encouraged Bill and Donna to take a Sabbath from church activities. “We appreciate your many gifts,” he said gently, “but the healthiest thing you can do is step back, rest in God, receive His grace, and renew your marriage and family life. When you feel led, choose a few areas for re-entry into ministry. But always remember: you don’t need to perform for God’s grace.”

Six months later, Bill and Donna were still healing from the criticism and the overcommitment, but they were on the right path. They weren’t as involved, but their lives were focused and they actually enjoyed church again.

—MATHEW WOODLEY

**Discuss**

11. What do you think are the motives, both positive and negative, that cause someone to become overinvolved?

12. What symptoms show that someone’s life does not have enough Sabbath rest? (See Exodus 20:8–11; Isaiah 30:15.)

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How can we encourage people to balance their Christian living? How do we hold each other accountable in this area?

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## **Good News for the Weary**

*Even your fatigue may bear good fruit for God.*

2 Corinthians 12:8–9

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**Read** *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it [a thorn in my flesh] away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me (2 Corinthians 12:8-9).*

**Comprehend** I’ve been tired all my life. I’m not tired because I’m lazy, not eating right, or not praying enough. I’m tired because I have a rare type of anemia.

Some time ago I gave up trying to be like my high-octane brethren and started to grapple with what it means to be me, and to be tired. I’ve birthed a kind of fatigue theology: the good things fatigue brings to my life and ministry

*Fatigue softens my soul.* My soul often resembles soil in need of a good upturning. Having lived in the prairies and southwest, I have seen some of God’s most stubborn soils. When we garden at my house, we rent a jackhammer (no fooling) to break up the dirt. It actually resembles concrete.

Clichés, one-upmanship, higher education, and battle wounds often harden our souls so little may enter, be it spiritual seed, water, or plow. Fatigue is good because it softens the soul.

*Fatigue motivates personal change.* Just when I think I need to work harder, I realize I may simply need to change how I’m working. Fatigue is a powerful motivator for changing personal work habits. It forces me to invest in a few rather than everybody. That’s hard because I’m used to jumping in and doing whatever needs to be done. Fatigue is my Jethro [in Exodus 18]. He comes and says, “This thing you’re doing is not good—not for you and not for the people you claim to be serving.”

When I offer the old “But they need me” excuse, Jethro replies, “They’re not getting you, just a tired facsimile.” It’s then that I realize I must change my habits.

*Fatigue makes room for God.* Where do I say with Paul, “I’ve learned that his grace is sufficient for me”?

Weariness causes me to fall before God and confess ultimate dependence upon him. He reminds me it is “not by might nor by power but by my Spirit.” I then connect with the biblical heritage in which God encouraged his people to be still and watch the Lord fight for them.

Effective ministry often begins at the end of our rope, not the beginning.

—ANTHONY LAIRD

- Discuss**
14. When have you seen or experienced that “effective ministry often begins at the end of our rope, not the beginning”?
  15. What might God want to upturn in your life? Spend some moments in quiet reflection before him, asking him to reveal your heart to you.
  16. What battles are we tempted to fight on our own strength—individually, and as a church? How can we give God more control over these situations?

**Pray** Together, thank God for your weariness. Ask him to use it for his good purposes in your life.

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## **Today's Busy, Worried Christian**

*Jesus invites us to move our attention from the "many things" to the "one necessary thing."*

Luke 12:27–34

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**Read** *Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and all these things will be given to you as well. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:29–32).*

**Comprehend** We experience our days as filled with things to do, people to meet, projects to finish, calls to make, and appointments to keep. Our lives often seem like overpacked suitcases bursting at the seams. In fact, we are almost always aware of being behind schedule. Thus, although we are very busy, we also have a lingering feeling of never really fulfilling our obligations.

The strange thing, however, is that it is very hard not to be busy. People expect us to be busy and to have many things on our minds. Often friends say to us, “I guess you are busy, as usual,” and mean it as a compliment. Being busy and being important often seem to mean the same thing.

Beneath our worrying lives, however, something else is going on. While our minds and hearts are filled with many things, and we wonder how we can live up to the expectations imposed upon us by ourselves and others, we have a deep sense of unfulfillment. We seldom feel truly satisfied, at peace, or at home. A gnawing sense of being unfulfilled underlies our filled lives.

Jesus does not respond to our worry-filled way of living by saying we should not be so busy with worldly affairs. He does not tell us that what we do is unimportant, valueless, or useless. Nor does he suggest that we should withdraw from our involvements and live quiet, restful lives removed from the struggles of the world.

Jesus’ response to our worry-filled lives is quite different. He asks us to shift the point of gravity, to relocate the center of our attention, to change our priorities. Jesus wants us to move from the “many things” to the “one necessary thing.”

It is important for us to realize that Jesus in no way wants us to leave our many-faceted world. Rather, he wants us to live in it, but firmly rooted in the center of all things. Jesus does not speak about a change of activities, a change in contacts, or even a change of pace. He speaks about a change of heart. This change of heart makes everything different, even while everything appears to remain the same.

When we worry, we have our hearts in the wrong place. Jesus asks us to set our hearts on the kingdom of his Father, to make the life of the Spirit within and among us the center of all we think, say, or do.

—HENRI NOUWEN

- Discuss**
17. What are you worrying about right now?
  18. What examples from Jesus’ life can help us understand how to work and keep our relationship with God?
  19. What are practical ways to keep your focus on Christ amid all you have to do?

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## **Restoring Your Joy amid Ministry**

*5 fountains to drink from.*

Psalm 92:1–5; John 15:9–12

*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS asked Richard Swenson, M.D., author of Margin, and Director and Founder of the Future Health Study Center, how he finds joy and refreshment.*

**1. God created two special gifts—laughter and music.** It's been shown that laughter has positive effects on the immune and cardiovascular systems. People who laugh readily get well quicker. So I seek laughter any way I can find it. Laughing at myself is one of the best things I do.

**2. Music has the capacity to go straight through multiple emotional levels and sail right past my defenses.** Music massages me at the deepest level. When I'm hurting, sometimes music is the only thing that reaches me, and it reaches me fast. I have no explanation for this except God has ordained it to be so.

**3. Reconciliation brings me joy.** I try not to get into situations where I have conflict or enemies, but everybody on the face of the earth does. There is a feeling that comes when you've made your enemy your friend that is unlike anything else.

**4. Doing something creative brings joy to me.** I'm sometimes mad at God that he's asked me to be a writer, because it's such hard work. But when I start with a blank sheet of paper and later see what I've written, that brings joy to me. It's the same as mowing my lawn or roto-tilling the garden. There's something about bringing order out of disorder, bringing something out of nothing, accomplishing something worthwhile or beautiful, that at the end of the day brings joy.

**5. Successfully getting rid of things that sabotage my joy brings me joy.** When I'm upset about something, and then I'm able to jettison that stuff out of my life, I feel good. I can take a breath of fresh air.

—RICHARD SWENSON

### **Discuss**

20. Which of these 5 items bring you joy? What would you add to the list?
21. What practical ways can you "get rid of things that sabotage joy"?
22. In John 15:9–12, Jesus tells his disciples, "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you." What is "this"?

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## **To Abide or To Abound?**

*The disciple's dilemma: sit at His feet or serve in His name?*

John 15:4; 1 Corinthians 15:58

My daughter Mallory loves Greek mythology. One of her favorite parts of *The Iliad* is when Odysseus navigates a narrow passage with a lethal rock on one side and a fatal whirlpool on the other. Steering between Scylla and Charybdis has been part of our vocabulary ever since.

In the Christian life we have our own Scylla and Charybdis to navigate, but their names are “Abound” and “Abide.”

I want to abound, to devote myself to God’s work: “Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, be steadfast and immovable; always abounding fully in the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Cor. 15:58).

But on the other side of my life is Jesus’ statement in John 15:4: “Abide in me, and I will abide in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must abide. Neither can you bear fruit by yourself. You must abide.”

Abide, Jesus says. This, too, is an important New Testament word: to remain, to dwell. In our day we would talk about this as having deep roots, or being centered.

What will make this work? If I’m going to both abide and abound, I need to practice certain principles.

**1. I need to focus on what matters most.** Each morning I make a W.A.M.M. (What Activity Matters Most?) list. I need crystal clarity on what’s important and what’s peripheral.

**2. I need to be fully present.** Jean Pierre de Caussade described the “Sacrament of the Present Moment.” It means being fully present to God’s call right now.

It means devoting myself fully to the task with my whole being. It means when I come home, I must learn the difficult art of leaving work behind and being fully present with my family.

**3. I need rhythm.** One striking aspect of the Creation narrative is that God didn’t get all his work done at once. Why not? It wouldn’t have been hard for him. God was establishing a pattern, a rhythm, for people made in his image. God worked. And when he was done, God rested. He called it a day.

**4. I need a plan for my leisure.** Some time ago I noticed a pattern: my days off would come up, and I had no idea what I wanted to do with them. So I ask myself these days, “What activities will I both genuinely enjoy and will also give me a chance to be with my family?”

**5. I need to focus on abounding where God has gifted and placed me.** To abide and abound, I have to be very clear about the gifts and passions God has given me. And so often ego gets in the way. It’s one thing to embrace my gifts. It’s another to embrace my limitations. But to take an unblinking look at my limitations is one of the greatest tests of character I know. My guess is that all of us have at least one limitation that is especially painful to acknowledge. I know I do. And every time I try to pursue a task as if I didn’t have this limitation, I cease to abide and abound.

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—JOHN ORTBERG

**Discuss**

23. Which of these suggestions would help you most right now?
24. Are you more likely to “abide” or “abound”? What can you do to foster the other side of the Christian life?
25. What is a limitation you can embrace? What does that say for the ministry you do?

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## **Setting Healthy Boundaries**

*Learning from Jesus how to be productive without becoming frantic.*

John 8:28–29; 2 Corinthians 4:16–18

**Boundary 1:** *Listen to the Father, not the crowd.*

When I feel out of breath from doing too much, I ask myself, *How did I get into doing all this? How did it all end up on me?*

At first, I list the immediate reasons: The project took longer than I thought it would. I wasn't planning on two people quitting the committee.

But when I dig deeper, I usually find buried in my heart the real reason: I wanted people to like me. My desire to help was partly a desire to love and help someone, but it was also my insecurity saying, "Love me! Affirm me! If I volunteer, maybe I'll get that!"

Jesus never operated that way. If he had, he would have had thousands of bosses, because literally thousands of people wanted his help. But Jesus had only one boss—his Father. "I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me" (Jn. 8:28).

Obedying his Father, Jesus sometimes helped people so much he didn't even have time to eat (Mk. 3:20-21)! He obeyed and gave up dinner.

But other times, Jesus' Father must have said, "Leave those people behind and come away with me," because Jesus abandoned the crowds and went off by himself, to pray and rest (see Mt. 14:22-23).

**Boundary 2:** *Find your specific mission.*

God hasn't asked us to do everything, to go everywhere, to help everyone.

Jesus had a specific, narrowly defined ministry. While Jesus was on earth, he could have traveled the Mediterranean world—Greece, Italy, Turkey and Spain. But Jesus stayed within one tiny chunk of the world, mostly within the regions of Judea and Galilee.

Why? That's where the Jewish people were, and they were his primary calling (Mt. 15:24). Jesus poured himself out for people, but within the limits of the calling God the Father had given him. He focused.

**Boundary 3:** *Accept your human needs and limitations.*

In Jesus' time, there were no cars or planes, so he had to walk—miles. Walking miles takes a long time. You can't do much ministry during that time. All you can do is look at the countryside and talk with friends and recharge. At night, there were no electric lights, so Jesus looked at the stars and then went to sleep. For Jesus simply to make it through one day, He had to have slow times, rest times, recharging times.

God designed us with human limitations. We need to eat, sleep, and rest. We get sick and have to slow down. We need time to work hard but also time to play.

Yes, we may choose to sacrifice sleep in order to pray, or give up food in order to serve people. But those situations tend to be exceptions, not rules.

But, be willing to risk. Although I try to set healthy boundaries for my life, God sometimes calls me to risk. That doesn't undermine anything I've already said. It's simply a reminder that the Christian life is an adventure. To live it, we are going to have to depend on an adventurous, powerful God. He is the only true source of strength.

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—KEVIN A. MILLER

**Discuss**

26. Which of the three boundaries is easiest for you? Most difficult?
27. How can healthy boundaries actually help you to take risks outside those boundaries?
28. What does 2 Cor. 4:16-18 say to this topic? To your life right now?



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## **Ministry Mapping and Video Interviews**

*2 activities to help explore faithfulness for the long haul.*

Psalm 27:25–40; Psalm 92:12–15

### **Ministry Mapping**

Give each person a large piece of paper—as large as possible—or posterboard. Make colored markers available. Encourage people that there's no right or wrong way to do this activity; they should feel free to be creative. Then have each person do the following:

1. Create a map, timeline, drawing or chart that shows various ministries you have been involved in during your life. "Ministries" need not be organized activities in a local church, but activities in which (a) you helped others (b) for Christ's sake. The list might include, for example, "attended a Bible study," "helped several friends pack their moving van," "provided a foster home for a child for 2 years," etc.

Mark the ministries in which you felt the greatest stress.

Mark the ministries in which you felt the greatest joy.

2. Have each person show his completed map/timeline/chart. Then discuss:

What do you know now about ministry that you didn't know starting out?

What does your map/timeline/chart tell you about what brings you joy and what brings you stress?

If a young person asked you, "How can I serve Christ with energy and enthusiasm throughout life?" what would you say?

What do Psalm 27:25-40 and Psalm 92:12-15 say about this question?

### **Video Interviews**

Several weeks in advance of your meeting, have a couple of group members use a video camera to record short interviews with people in your church or community who have served Christ with energy and enthusiasm. Be sure to involve "senior saints."

1. While the video rolls, ask these people:

What kinds of ministries have you done during your life?

What one ministry stands out in your mind, and why?

When did you face discouragement or difficulty?

What has kept you going for Christ all these years?

2. Then, when your group convenes, show the videos. Afterward, discuss:

What struck you as you watched these interviews?

What could you do now to become a person who can serve with energy and enthusiasm for the long haul?

What do Psalm 27:25-40 and Psalm 92:12-15 say about this question?

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## **Further Exploration**

*10 resources to help you find and keep energy and enthusiasm.*

### **1. Leadership Journal—Special Issue on “Energy & Joy.” (Fall 1998)**

The premier practical journal for church leaders devoted an issue to “Energy & Joy.” Read this issue online for free: [www.leadershipjournal.net](http://www.leadershipjournal.net), click on “Archives,” scroll down and click on the issue. You’ll find outstanding articles by Dallas Willard, Earl Palmer, Gary Preston, and others.

### **2. Ordering Your Private World by Gordon MacDonald**

A practical favorite, recently revised. Helps people move beyond being organized to ordering life in a way that gives their most important relationships priority. (Thomas Nelson, 1997; ISBN 0785271619)

### **3. Yearning by M. Craig Barnes**

A thoughtful book about our longings, and a realistic view of earthly contentment in light of our state as fallen creatures. (InterVarsity, 1992; ISBN 0830813780)

### **4. The Life You’ve Always Wanted by John Ortberg**

Ortberg, a teaching pastor at Willow Creek Community Church and regular contributor to LEADERSHIP Journal, writes about priorities and how to live a life of spiritual vigor. (Zondervan, 1997; ISBN 0310212146)

### **5. The Jesus Prescription for a Healthy Life by Leonard Ira Sweet**

A lighthearted book on physical and spiritual health. Looks at Jesus’ life and his model for healthy living. (Abingdon, 1996; ISBN 0687014913)

### **6. Margin by Richard A. Swenson**

Family-practice physician Swenson shows how life today has become faster and more cluttered, thus causing stress and often damage in every area of life. (NavPress, 1995; ISBN 0891098887)

### **7. Beating Burnout: Balanced Living for Busy People by Frank B. Minirth, editor**

A compilation offering practical insights on managing stress and overwork. (Budget, 1997; ISBN 0884861627)

### **8. Adrenaline and Stress by Archibald Hart**

Hart shows how we can become addicted to our own adrenaline—to our peril—and how we can break free. Clear insights from a Christian perspective. (Word, 1995; ISBN 084993690X)

### **9. The Sacrament of the Present Moment by Jean-Pierre De Caussade**

A classic devotional book that encourages readers to make the most of the present, rather than living only for future events. (HarperSanFrancisco, 1989; ISBN 0060618116)

### **10. Secrets of Staying Power: Overcoming the Discouragements of Ministry by Kevin A. Miller**

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A bit dated but helpful because it focuses on the specific trials of church leaders and how to overcome those.

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## **Sample Retreat Schedule**

*How to create a weekend retreat on the theme of  
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*BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS expands easily into a retreat format. Here is a sample retreat schedule you may follow for the Energy & Enthusiasm theme. The purposes of this retreat are (a) to encourage and revitalize weary leaders and (b) to teach how to minister in healthy ways for the long-term.*

### **Friday Evening**

8–8:45 P.M. Opening Session: Hand out copies of “Finding Joy in Christian Service,” the interview with Ben Patterson and Zig Ziglar on pages 4-5, and allow time for each person to read it. Then form groups of three or four. Have each group discuss the questions at the bottom of the page. Reconvene for the last 20 minutes and have the groups share their comments and consider what it may mean for the church.

9–9:45 P.M. Bible Study: Then move to “When I Need a Boost,” an inductive Bible study on page 3. You can either photocopy and pass out the study or use the handout as your notes.

### **Saturday Morning**

9–9:45 A.M. Devotional: Set the tone for the day by handing out (or presenting) the devotional, “Today’s Busy, Worried Christian” (p. 11). Discuss the questions at the bottom of the page and consider how busyness and overwork might be symptoms of deeper spiritual issues. Also discuss how Jesus handled the pressures of his ministry.

10–11 A.M. Activity: Do the activity, “Ministry Mapping” on page 15, which will help your group draw closer together.

11 A.M.–NOON. Assessment: Hand out “Signs of Hurry Sickness,” an assessment on page 7, to each participant. After each person has read and completed the assessment, discuss specific areas of personal stress and ways to ease the pressures of work and ministry.

NOON–Lunch.

### **Saturday Afternoon**

1–2 P.M. Final Group Session: Close the retreat with the how-to article, “To Abide or To Abound?” on page 11. Have each person spend some time alone to quietly read and respond to the questions on the handout. Have the group come together to share what God has taught them about themselves and about balance.

Ask, “What is one thing we can commit to as a group to encourage spiritual and emotional health among our people?” Pray together, asking God for guidance and wisdom as you take these new steps together.

You can create similar retreat plans for any of the other BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS themes. Simply determine what you want to accomplish and select the handouts that support your objectives.