

## Leading for the Long Haul: Caring for Your (Weary) Soul

Ministry can be busy or slow. It can be stressful or stagnant. Either way, the passage of time and long-term drain of ministry can take a toll on a pastor's soul. Leadership is demanding. Diligent study is hard work. What can we do as pastors or church leaders to care for our souls so that we not only survive, but thrive for the long haul?

**Jay Mosser** has served in pastoral roles for nearly 40 years – about 20 years in various assistant pastor capacities and the rest as senior pastor. Through those years he has served in three churches ranging from small (less than 50) to large (about 1,000). Along the way he has worked with children, teens, worship ministry, pastoral care, and preaching and leadership. Jay has an M.Div from Western (Conservative Baptist) Seminary and a D.Min from Bogan University in Oregon, where his doctoral thesis was titled “How a Pastor’s Theology of Shepherding Affects the Health & Growth of a Church.” He is married to Kathy and has three daughters and three grandchildren. In his spare time, he loves to read, hike, travel, watch sports, and spend time with his family.

### I. A *Brief* Look at the Alarming Statistics

- A. Surveys reveal the devastating toll that ministry takes on marriages and family.
- B. There are good reasons why Paul David Tripp calls Christian ministry a “Dangerous Calling.”
- C. A visit with the literature...

LET’S TALK: From your time in ministry, would you tend to believe these statistics, or do you doubt them? Do you think these surveys are accurate in *your* ministry context? What do you see in your field of ministry or in your country?

### II. Encouragement from God’s Word

- A. “You have need of endurance” (A brief journey through Hebrews – joyful endurance)
  - 1. 10:32-39
  - 2. 1:1-4
  - 3. 2:1-3
  - 4. 3:12
  - 5. 4:1, 14-16
  - 6. 6:10

7. 12:1-3

B. “The journey is too much for you” (A visit with an exhausted prophet)

1. I Kings 18-19

2. Psalm 103:6-14

C. “We despaired of life itself” (Shocking words from the great Apostle)

1. II Corinthians 1:8-11

LET’S TALK: What do you see in these texts *about God* that encourages you? And, what *warnings* do you see in these texts that speak most powerfully to you?

### III. Practical Considerations

Let’s acknowledge first that there is no “magic cure” to the dangers and weariness of ministry! Having said that, let’s state the obvious:

A. Do your homework on surviving ministry! Read books. Ask other ministry leaders. Find out what you need to know about the road ahead. Different seasons of life DO bring different struggles and temptations.

1. Dig into biographies of those who have gone before you in ministry

2. Get a mentor

3. Take the time needed to find out how you’re “wired” – Be honest about what invigorates you and what drains you. What do you need in order to thrive, not just survive? Get realistic feedback from your spouse or from a close friend.

4. Take the “Danger Signs” seriously – Watch out for private sin (Don’t keep baby alligators – I’ll explain that!)

B. Take care of your physical body

1. Go to the doctor

2. Eat right, sleep well, lose weight, get exercise

3. Take time off (practice Sabbath rest) ... daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, sabbaticals

4. Remember that one day you WILL be replaced; if you don’t take care of your body, it might be sooner than you think!

C. Cultivate your spiritual life

1. Practice life-giving spiritual disciplines
2. Worship
3. Let others speak into your heart

LET'S TALK: What things would you add to the above suggestions? What have you found helpful in cultivating your physical & spiritual health? What advice would you give to a younger person if they asked you how you keep going?