

CHAPTER 6

SOUL CARE

Our first and greatest need in the church today is not primarily for new strategies and programs, additional financial resources, or the innovative use of technology, as important as these all are. Our greatest need is for better, more equipped, fortified, Spirit-filled, gifted men and women committed to the Lord, who have the capacity to serve for a lifetime of ministry. The Gospel, and its essential proclamation to the world, does not begin with software, computers, or the best and latest thoughts or trends—the Gospel begins with men and women who are set apart for God and His holy use. Yes, there is a physical element, an intellectual element, an educational element, even an emotional element to a pastor's service for Jesus Christ, but everything rests upon the spiritual element of the pastor's closeness to God and his/her daily, monthly, and yearly communion with the Holy Spirit. When we scrutinize the lives of men and women God has greatly used, we see clearly that they all gave great attention to *soul care*. The pastor as a leader and spokesman for God must step to a higher, nobler spiritual level. His prayer life must be deeper. His absorption of Scripture must be richer. He must have times where he sequesters himself, alone with his God, hearing only His voice. In these moments, the spirit, soul, and body are calibrated together and the power of the Holy Spirit is infused in God's servants. If we serve the Lord from a well that is continually drained and never refilled, in time that reality will catch up with us and we will be completely depleted. When we are drained, the enemy of our souls takes supreme advantage over us. In these technologically enhanced days of speed and sound, the body

can rush ahead of the spirit and, alas, pastors can begin to sound like a simple and dreary recording as they minister with no spirit, no depth, no passion, and no anointing.

When were the moments in your life when you needed to “come apart” so you would not “come a-part”? Did you miss those spiritual promptings? To err in hearing God’s voice is to be like a driver taking the wrong road. In Scripture, God not only speaks in the storm, but most often He shows His great strength in our greatest weaknesses and trials. No wonder Paul confessed, “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Soul care requires waiting on God in times of distress and difficulty. Soul care takes every wandering thought and uncontrolled emotion and makes them captive before the cross of Jesus Christ. Soul care reminds us on a daily basis that God has subjected every great servant of His to innumerable afflictions so as to make them pliable and usable by God.

The most miserable people in the world are Christian leaders whose intimacy with God has gone cold. And it’s so easy to let that happen by becoming consumed with the “rituals” of our duties. We can delude ourselves into thinking we’re experiencing intimacy with God by virtue of our busyness for him. In reality, we may only be experiencing religious activity.²¹³

More than four million people visit Arlington National Cemetery each year; it is one of the most frequently visited places in the Washington, D.C. area. It is a fully operational, national cemetery operating since May 1864, and it conducts an average of 27 funerals each workday—final farewells to fallen heroes from the fronts of Iraq,

²¹³ Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman, *Preventing Ministry Failure: A ShepherdCare Guide for Pastors, Ministers and Other Caregivers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 41.

Afghanistan, as well as veterans of World War II, the Korean conflict, Vietnam, and the Cold War. Arlington National Cemetery contains the remains of those who have served the United States and provides a tribute to the service and sacrifice of each individual and his or her families, including the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. On March 4, 1921, Congress approved the burial of an unidentified American soldier from World War I in the plaza of the new Memorial Amphitheatre. The tomb's sarcophagus was placed above the grave. Inscribed on the back of the tomb are the words: "Here rests in honored glory an American soldier known but to God."

In one unforgettable church staff meeting, I had to share with our team members the news of one of our pastors who had fallen morally. In my imagination that day, it was as if I saw an endless spiritual cemetery with the gravestone markers of thousands upon thousands of pastors whose ministries were cut short by wrong decisions, spiritual inattention, and the clutter of the world. With great sadness we have read about these men in this dissertation. The only thing that can protect God's men and women is soul care—a careful attention to keep one's heart and life close to God.

Prayer and Soul Care

Faithful men and women of God who learned this spiritual secret perpetuated the faith that we have received. Andrew Bonar (1810–1892) wrote, "Very few ministers keep to the end the spark that was in their ministry at the beginning."²¹⁴ Robert Murray McCheyne (1813–1843), who died at 29, learned the Greek alphabet at the age of four,

²¹⁴ Andrew Bonar, *Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms* (London: Nisbet, 1859).

and enrolled in the University of Edinburgh at fourteen. With the prayers “less like myself, more like my Master” and “Lord, purify me,” the writings of both Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd, as well as the letters of Samuel Rutherford, shaped his soul.²¹⁵ Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847) who instigated the movement of over 400 clergy to leave the established church and form the Free Church in Scotland wrote, “I give myself over in my whole mind and whole person to the authority of a whole Bible.”²¹⁶ Francis Asbury (1745–1816) was a circuit-riding Methodist preacher who set New England on fire for God, preaching some 16,500 sermons. The memorial statue of Asbury in Washington, D.C., dedicated in 1924 by President Coolidge, is that of a weary old man and a tired horse with a drooping head. The President paid tribute to Asbury as one of the builders of the nation, who spent his life as a circuit rider making strong the foundation on which our government rests. (Half the circuit riders died before they were 30 years of age.) Asbury challenged his preachers: “When you go into the pulpit, go from your closets ... take with you your hearts full of fresh spring water from heaven, and preach Christ crucified and the resurrection, and that will conquer the world.”²¹⁷ It was said of the first president and professor of Princeton Theological Seminary, Archibald Alexander (1772–1851), that he experienced great outpourings of the Holy Spirit. One listener hearing him preach wrote, “He appeared absolutely overpowered by the truths he was presenting and his every feature was illuminated and glowing with the fire within.”²¹⁸

Soul care for the pastor begins with prayer. We must develop a deep, disciplined, daily, private prayer life. Prayer is our lifeline to God and heaven. As pastors, the more

²¹⁵ Andrew Bonar, *The Life of Robert Murray McCheyne* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1844, 1962), 16ff.

²¹⁶ G. D. Henderson, *The Burning Bush: Studies in Scottish Church History* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew, 1957), 201.

²¹⁷ A.K. Curtis, “Spiritual Awakenings in North America,” *Christian History* 3 (1989): 6–35.

²¹⁸ James A. Alexander, *The Life of Archibald Alexander* (New York: Scribner’s, 1854), 39ff.

we are effective for Jesus Christ, the greater the object of attack by the enemy will we be. Prayer is our shield, prayer is our refuge, and prayer is our relief from the heat of the spiritual battle in which we shall forever find ourselves. Charles Finney (1792–1875) was the maverick preacher who insisted that women’s participation in prayer meetings was the key to spiritual renewal in the many cities where he preached. Prayer and revival was the theme of his ministry. Finney said:

I gave myself to a great deal of prayer. After my evening services, I would retire as early as I could; but rose at four o’clock in the morning, because I could sleep no longer, and immediately went to the study, and engaged in prayer. And so deeply was my mind exercised, and so absorbed in prayer, that I frequently continued from the time I arose at four o’ clock till the gong called for breakfast at eight o’clock. My days were spent, so long as I could get time, in searching the Scriptures. I read nothing else, all that winter, but my Bible; and a great deal of it seemed new to me ... the whole Scriptures seemed to me all ablaze with light.”²¹⁹

Finney’s ministry was a ministry of renewal and prayer that evidenced 500,000 professions of faith in Christ. And it was the prayer of two women in England who told Dwight Lyman Moody (1837–1899) that they were asking God that he would be “filled with the Spirit” that set his heart on a search for spiritual power. At the time, Moody was pastor of the largest church in Chicago. By his own admission, up until that time, he said he was “satisfied.” On a trip to New York City, walking down Wall Street, Moody said the Holy Spirit descended on him and he was overwhelmed by the presence of God. In fact, in prayer Moody begged God to hold back His power because he was so overcome by God’s Spirit. Later, worldwide, Moody’s ministry produced the fruit of nearly 1,000,000 converts to Jesus Christ. It was Henry Varley who accelerated Moody’s passion for God when he issued the challenge to him in Dublin: “The world has yet to see

²¹⁹ Lewis A. Drummond, *The Life and Ministry of Charles G. Finney* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1983), 115.

what God will do with and for and through and in and by the man who is fully consecrated to Him.”²²⁰ Without prayer, the pastor cannot breathe spiritually, and in time will asphyxiate on all the problems and pressures of ministry. Prayer can resolve all our failures through ministry, through service for Christ. David Livingstone (1813–1873), the great missionary to Africa who is buried in Westminster Abbey, failed miserably when he preached for the first time. He began reading his Bible text and then said abruptly, “Friends, I have forgotten all I had to say,” and fled.²²¹ Deep in the heart of Africa’s interior, where no white man had previously gone, his faithful valet, Susi, found Livingstone dead, kneeling in prayer by his bed, on April 29, 1873. I remember distinctly praying over his cemetery marker at the Abbey in London, asking God to purify my own soul so He could use me in a greater way. Pastor, how long has it been since you were broken before God in prayer, desperate for His presence? This is what soul care is.

The Holy Spirit and Soul Care

Soul care for the pastor is strengthened through the Spirit-filled life. The Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:20 to be “giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” But how do we give thanks for the adversities of life? How do we give thanks when a church will not seem to grow and troubles mount? Paul preceded the admonition with the command, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). The Holy Spirit indwells the believer at salvation. “Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His”

²²⁰ William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody* (New York: Revell, 1900), 137.

²²¹ Jessie Kleeberger, *David Livingstone: Missionary Explorer of Africa* (Anderson, IN: Gospel Trumpet, 1925), 10.

(Romans 8:9b). The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity, fully God. We can pray at any moment and ask the Holy Spirit for strength, wisdom, and guidance in any situation in life. “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him,” Jesus taught in Luke 11:13. Through the many trials God has graced me to endure, I have asked the Holy Spirit to fill me and give me wisdom many times.

Then there is the example set by James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905), whose quest for the power of the Holy Spirit allowed him to discover the “exchanged life.” Through his singular effort for the lost of China, by the time of his death 750 other missionaries had entered China to preach Christ under the umbrella organization he founded, the China Inland Mission.²²² It was the Holy Spirit who allowed Adoniram Judson (1788–1850), running from God, to lodge one night in 1808 in a country inn where he was deeply troubled throughout the night by a man in the next room who was yelling out and seemed to be dying. The next morning Adoniram was shocked to learn that the man, Jacob Eames, a friend in his days of unbelief, had died right next door to him. God used it as a decisive spiritual turning point in Judson’s life. Only the Holy Spirit could have sustained Judson and his wife as they labored fruitlessly in the Gospel in Burma (known today as Myanmar) for seven long years without one single convert to Jesus Christ. At the time of his death in 1850, there were 7,000 converts to Jesus, worshiping in 63 different churches Judson had started. At his death, after a long illness, his body was interred at sea in a French ship off the coast of Burma.²²³ It was the Holy Spirit who gave B.H. Carroll (1843–(after a long illness) 1914) the conviction to stand for truth as he led

²²² J.C. Pollock, *Hudson Taylor and Maria* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1962), 22.

²²³ Courtney Anderson, *To the Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956), 219.

Southern Baptists against heresy. To Carroll, preaching was a sacred trust: “Just think of it seriously. Eternal interests hinge on every sermon. Every sentence may be freighted with eternal life or woe. Every word may be the savor of life unto life or death unto death.”²²⁴ Alexander Maclaren (1826–1910), energized by the Holy Spirit, left a legacy of some of the greatest expository sermons ever delivered. His pastorate in Manchester, England, lasted for 45 years, and his sermons were typically printed on Mondays in the *Manchester Guardian*. Maclaren knew how essential the Holy Spirit was to spiritual renewal:

We are crying out for a revival. Dear friends, the revival must begin with each of us by ourselves. Power for service is second. Power for holiness and character is first, and only the man who has let the Spirit of God work His will upon him, and do what He will, has a right to expect that he will be filled with the Holy Ghost and with power. Do not get on the wrong track. Your revival, Christian ministers, must begin in your study and on your knees. Your revival must be for yourselves with no thought of service. But if once we have learned where our strength is, we shall never be so foolish as to go forth in our own strength, or we shall be beaten as we deserve to be.²²⁵

In this brief quote, we learn the secret of soul care. Maclaren stressed that for pastors revival, inspired by the Holy Spirit, “*must be for yourselves with no thought of service.*” This legendary preacher, who graduated from the University of Glasgow, realized that ministry flows out of the Holy Spirit’s fullness in our lives. Further, our aim for the Spirit-filled life should not be primarily for our service for Jesus Christ, but *rather for ourselves*. This is precisely the secret to soul care and the Spirit-filled life. Could

²²⁴ Al Fascol, *With a Bible in Their Hands: Baptist Preaching in the South 1679-1979* (Nashville: Broadman, 1994), 85.

²²⁵ E. T. McLaren, *Dr. McLaren of Manchester* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 241. E. T. McLaren was the cousin and sister-in-law of Alexander Maclaren, which explains the change in the spelling of the name.

there be any other explanation for the global impact of the ministry of Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892) than the Holy Spirit? Spurgeon was never ordained and had no formal theological training. When he was nineteen, he began his ministry at the New Park Street Baptist Church in London, following Benjamin Keach, John Gill, and John Rippon. Despite his lack of formal training, Spurgeon was intimately familiar with the Holy Scriptures and had a personal library (now owned by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City) of 12,000 volumes. God used him so mightily. Three hundred million copies of his printed works have been in circulation worldwide, most of them of his printed sermons. Five hundred thousand copies of his *Lectures to My Students* have been printed, a book which emerged from his Friday afternoon lectures and visits to his pastor's college. He planted 200 churches in England through his ministerial students. As a humanitarian, 20 different social ministries were established, including perhaps his most favorite, the Stockwell Orphanage, where he would often visit to bring gifts and to encourage the children. He enjoyed a close relationship with his wife, Susannah Thompson, who became an invalid at the age of 33 and was seldom able to attend church services. It is interesting to note that he suffered from severe depression throughout this entire ministry and prayed without any relief for God to take it from him. Most historians refer to Charles Spurgeon as the greatest preacher in the nineteenth century. When asked to explain his eminent success, he simply replied, "My people pray for me."²²⁶

²²⁶ Lewis Drummond, *Spurgeon: Prince of Preachers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1992), 116.

The Scriptures and Soul Care

Soul care for the pastor is reinforced through the word of God. Although we study the Bible for teaching and preaching, we must remember that the Scriptures provide our very sustenance, food that nourishes us and allows us to walk with God and be fruitful in His service. G. Campbell Morgan (1863–1945) preached for 60 years on both sides of the Atlantic. God used the evangelist D. L. Moody to wake Morgan from a spiritual sleep and slumber that had come over him and his ministry. In his own words, Morgan revealed his problem:

For two years my Bible was shut; two years of sadness and sorrow. Strange, alluring materialistic theories were in the air, and to these I turned ... I became well versed in philosophies that were the vogue in England at that time, but from them I got no relief. In my despair I took all the books that I had, placed them in a cupboard, turned the key, and there they remained for seven years. I bought a new Bible, and began to read it with an open mind and a determined will. That Bible found me. The Book gave forth a glow, which warmed my heart, and the Word of God, which I read therein, gave to my troubled soul the relief and satisfaction that I had sought for elsewhere. Since that time I have lived for one end – to preach the teachings of the Book that found me.²²⁷

After this spiritual turning point in his life and ministry, G. Campbell Morgan made the Bible, as one listener exclaimed, “come alive.” Doubt toward Scripture was replaced with trust and confidence. Morgan served at Westminster Chapel in London, England. The Chapel seated 2,500, but it had never been full since the new building was dedicated in 1865. Morgan’s Scripture-laced sermons packed that building twice every Sunday. By the end of his amazing ministry, Morgan had made 54 trips across the Atlantic and, by 1930, he had written 72 books. He answered the question of ministerial endurance this way: “You may depend upon one thing, the only ministry that will last,

²²⁷ John Harries, *G. Campbell Morgan: The Man and His Ministry* (New York: Revell, 1930), 27.

and be as fresh at the end as it was at the beginning, is a biblical and expository one. Mere anecdotes fail and in the long run exhaust themselves, the Word of the Lord abideth forever.”²²⁸

Arthur T. Pierson (1837–1911) filled in for Spurgeon at his great Metropolitan Tabernacle when Spurgeon was ill (1891–93) and later wrote the biography of George Muller. So confident was he in God’s word that he believed that preaching is more the discovery of what the Bible says than it is the invention of ideas for discourse. Out of his study and confidence in the Bible, he wrote over 50 books and preached 13,000 sermons.²²⁹ When evangelist Samuel P. Jones (1884–1906) died, some 30,000 people passed by his casket in Atlanta, Georgia where he was buried. Jones was a highly controversial preacher. Many said he was the greatest master of an audience they had ever heard. He made “sinners smell sulphur,” and even Robert Ingersoll, the famous agnostic orator, would not debate with him. The fire in his belly came from his unwavering belief in God’s word, and it allowed him to win many thousands of people to Jesus Christ.²³⁰ Another evangelist, J. Wilbur Chapman (1859–1917), who was led to Christ by evangelist D. L. Moody, never doubted the authority of the Bible. He was unbending in his defense of the full inspiration of the Scriptures, and his sermons revealed the effective power of that conviction:

What was it that held such vast audiences spellbound as if eternity itself were closing round them? It was the simple story of Jesus. Never in all these meetings did Dr. Chapman or any member of the part make a single apology for the Word of God. They believed in it, in its inspiration from Genesis to Revelation, and preached it as men preach who believe

²²⁸ Ibid., 65.

²²⁹ Arthur T. Pierson, *The Divine Art of Preaching* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1892), 84ff.

²³⁰ Kathleen Minnix, *Laughter in the Amen Corner* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1993), 7.

themselves to be ambassadors of Christ and messengers of the Most High God to a world of sinners.²³¹

Soul care anchors itself in the authority of the Bible and remembers God's promise, "For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Hebrews 13:5b). The men and women of God who have been effective, have staked their very lives and their ministries on this truth. Whatever difficulty comes our way, we have the assurance the Lord will walk with us through it. Reuben Alexander Torrey (1856–1928) encountered D. L. Moody at Yale University, and there he taught the young man how to win the lost by proclaiming the Scriptures. It was as if Moody's mantle fell on him. So effective was Torrey, because of his confidence in the Bible, that he won many thousands of people to Christ and, in 1908, he became the founding dean of the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA). Repeatedly, Torrey preached his sermon, "Why I Believe the Bible is the Word of God."²³² In his great Toronto crusade, Oswald J. Smith and his brother found Christ as Savior in Massey Hall, a performing arts theatre. Smith would later found the People's Church in Toronto and have a great impact on the cause of missions globally. In 1988, it was my honor to be invited to preach the diamond-year evangelistic crusade for the People's Church at Massey Hall in downtown Toronto, the very auditorium where Torrey had won Oswald to faith in Christ.

William Ashley Sunday (1862–1935) became J. Wilbur Chapman's advance man for two years and served an apprenticeship that prepared him for one of the greatest evangelistic careers of all time. Sunday's Christology was strong, and his knowledge of

²³¹ Ford C. Ottman, *J. Wilbur Chapman: A Biography* (New York: Doubleday, 1920), 256.

²³² Roger Martin, *R. A. Torrey: Apostle of Certainty* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord, 1976), 244.

the Scripture impressive.²³³ His crusade made a great impact in New York City and because of the size of the crowds, even Andrew Carnegie could not get a seat at Carnegie Hall. The word of God was adequate for the 16-year ministry of William Edwin Sangster (1900–1960), who served at Westminster Central Hall, which seated 3,000 people, and was located across the street from Westminster Abbey. During World War II, Sangster preached with a glowing light on the pulpit that issued warnings of German bombing overhead. Yet he continued to preach and did not vacate his pulpit even in those harrowing times. God so mightily used Him because he so fervently believed and embraced the Scriptures as the word of God.²³⁴

Ministry Partners and Soul Care

Soul care includes the selection of godly, gifted men and women to serve at our side. Nothing can drain a pastor so much as disloyal, spiritually shallow staff who do not perform their assignments or take responsibility for the success of the organization, and who disrupt the spirit of unity and harmony. Jeff Iorg, in the *Painful Side of Leadership* writes:

Quarreling followers drain energy from ministry leaders. Their bickering and its collateral damage can take an emotional, spiritual, and even physical toll on you. Learning to manage conflict situations you didn't cause and can't control is a delicate balance of organizational responsibilities (including legal issues with employees) and interpersonal

²³³ Lyle W. Dorsett, *Billy Sunday and the Redemption of Urban America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 26.

²³⁴ Paul Sangster, *Doctor Sangster* (London: Epworth, 1962), 33.

dynamics. It can be made even more complicated by your friendships with followers.²³⁵

For over 30 years, I have had to employ men and women in the work of ministry and ultimately be in the senior position of the church or organization where they work. It is a wonderful experience to find the right staff who flourish and help build and bless the work of God. And it is important that we enjoy working with those people who are on our team. But that is not always the case. On several occasions, I have had to fire a non-productive staff member. A comment made by more than one incompetent person I have had to terminate is this one: “I thought we were meeting because you were going to give me a raise or commendation.” This comment is a stark reminder that people who qualify for dismissal are not objective about their inability to do the job they are being paid to do. In each of the painful circumstances in which I, as leader made the decision, along with our board, to fire someone, that individual was invariably biased about his or her own contribution and, simultaneously, was a hindrance to the organization. As John Maxwell so appropriately said, “Leaders make tough calls.” About this, Iorg writes:

We go to great lengths, sometimes to the detriment of our organizations, our missions, our other followers, and even to the person being terminated, to avoid saying those two potent words. But if you lead any size church or ministry organization, even if your workers are all volunteers, you will eventually need to terminate a team member.”²³⁶

According to Proverbs 13:20, “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.” I interpret this verse particularly in the context of a church or Christian organization. The wrong, carnal, lazy, unspiritual, disloyal, prayerless, gossipy staff member will destroy a church or Christian ministry. We are stewards

²³⁵ Jeff Iorg, *The Painful Side of Leadership* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2009), 151.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

before God, and only responsible, mature, efficient people should be kept on our teams. Bill Hybels has used the litmus tests of *character*, *competency*, and *chemistry* in screening staff.

Conclusion

Acts 6:4 outlines the basis of the pastor's spiritual obligations to the local church. "But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." A pastor's spiritual development is a lifelong calling that requires discipline and determination. God has armed his leaders with the resources of prayer, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and godly, gifted men and women to challenge and hold them accountable. The greatest aim of the pastor should be to complete his ministry with great zeal and in communion with Jesus Christ, who initiated his calling.