Feeding your soul

It is not as easy as it sounds!

I mean, there are driveways to shovel soon, and people to care about with actions such as hospital calls and listening to pain, and children to love, and sermons to have ready again.

Whatever happened to those quiet times in the mornings in junior high?

How shall we take care of our own souls? And who can help? If it is not going very well, who do I tell? Both the board and my family would prefer someone a little closer to perfection.

That does not seem to be happening here. It is indeed what I would like to see—a little closer to perfection. But we seem to grow in spurts, through challenges, and I have got to get more of this sermon done now.

How shall we then feed our souls? May we try to help?

Slowly but surely,

Knute, with Jeff and Jim
Define what you mean by good spiritual health? When do you need that?

Jeff Bogue

- Good spiritual health is when my love and understanding of the heart and mind of God are growing deeper and deeper. I think of Philippians 1:9: “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.” I’m doing well spiritually when I am eager to know God, when I’m eager to love His people, and when I’m passionate about my role in the kingdom.

- When my motives are off and my motivation is lacking, I know the core of that is my relationship with God. Those become indicators that I’m not where I need to be spiritually. When those things are in place for me, and I’m walking consistently in the Spirit, that's spiritual health.

- All the time. I know certainly when I’m fatigued or feeling isolated or criticized, that's when my cynicism and selfishness go through the roof— but I have also found over the years, that at times of great victory I am equally as vulnerable. When I'm worn out or beat up, the temptation is to feel like a failure and to want to quit. When I’ve hit a home run, the temptation is to become arrogant and self-reliant.

- Remembering and being aware that what we do is a spiritual endeavor on all fronts all the time and is a very important part of being in ministry, especially in a vocational capacity.

Jim Brown

- Jesus grew in areas as mentioned in Luke 2:52: intellectually, physically, relationally, and spiritually. If one of those areas is out of whack then it poisons the other areas.

- I know personally if I am spending regular time with the Lord and with my wife and family that I am in a good place spiritually.

- I also have found that when I share my faith God unleashes His power in my life.

- Personal accountability keeps me heading in a healthy direction also, and helps me deal with the areas in my life that need addressed.

- If my joy begins to wane in my life it also is an indicator that I need to address the area that is overwhelming me, stressing me out, or gaining too much of my attention away from Jesus.

- When the “check engine” light comes on I need to take a closer look at my personal relationship with Jesus.

- I must have my heart in a good place before I can serve God and others in a compassionate and loving way.

Knute Larson

- When I feel good with God and the people I love. I know that sounds shallow, but I mean that there is peace and joy. When I know we're talking.

- When there is Hebrews 4 kind of Sabbath rest. I am not trying to earn anything from Him, and instead I am believing His promises and resting in His grace.

- Physical and emotional health are usually closely tied with the spiritual; so good spiritual health usually shows in other areas also. Usually then I am getting enough rest, eating well, and not carrying a grudge or hiding a sin.
What are your regular habits for such good health? What is different in a crisis?

Jeff Bogue

My regular habits for good health... diets of these are important:

- Spending time with God and time in prayer. Being still. I need to separate in order to think deeply. I am by nature a doer. I like to move, I like to work, I like to problem-solve. Time alone around the fire pit, for me, is a time when I can break the busyness of my thoughts out and interact and be with God.

- Worship is a big component for me. I love to worship and feel connected to God.

What is different in a crisis?

- I bring more people around me at that time, so they can pray with me, worship God with me, and seek God with me.

- The multitude of counselors—whether that's Heidi and/or our elders, etc.—helps me to read things properly and to affirm or change my responses to things.

Jim Brown

- I daily put on the armor of God so I can stand firm in the Lord.

- I pray daily that I will not be led into temptation.

- I run and exercise regularly to keep myself physically fit.

- I eat a healthy diet so my body runs at optimum performance.

- I take time to celebrate the wins in my life so that God can get praise. Praise and testimonies push back darkness.

- Sharing my faith keeps my passion strong for the Lord.

- Finding ways to get out in creation and refueling pours life into my soul.

- Spending time each morning reading God’s Word keeps me connected to the power of Jesus.

- Daily confessing of my sin keeps my heart centered on our Lord.

Knute Larson

- Do not allow the sun to set if I have a grudge or “ought” against someone. That is a goal I have failed at many times. But good spiritual health certainly means I feel clean with God and others.

- The regular habits for growth and spiritual vigor will carry us through the hard times also. Perhaps a crisis time should bring more prayer and careful thought.

- Everyone needs a really good friend or two, or small accountability group made up of equals who are also all men if you are a man, with whom you can vent or express frustration and not fear the Washington D.C. kind of leaks.

- I know we are talking spiritual health, and that centers on relationship with God. But closely tied with that is the comfortable relationship in marriage. We must keep this healthy and full of grace, truth, kindness, and love...
What do you do so your regular studies (for sermons, talk) help you personally first?

Jeff Bogue

- One of the biggest things I do is isolate myself. My regular study habits are Tuesday morning from about 8am till around noon. My assistant literally puts a sign on my door that says don't bug him.

- And that's because I want to be with the Lord. I need to organize a sermon, but I want to do that from a spiritual position where I'm communing with God, praying, and asking God to weave it into my heart so that I can be a part of weaving it into somebody else's heart. I can't do that in pieces, I can't do that months ahead of time, and I can't do that in 10-minute chunks. I need a few hours to sit in it.

- I like doing that with some level of worship music playing. It's a habit that kicks me into a gear and makes that sermon or talk deeper than just “Jeff's 10 Tips for a Better Life.”

- Prayer is a big deal, asking God to work in those moments. We ask Him to work when we're preaching, so we should ask Him to work in us when we're prepping. From beginning to end it's a spiritual communion with God.

Jim Brown

- I always pray, “Lord, work in my heart before I deliver this message!”

- I have a routine that I stick to for sermon writing, and I work hard to protect that.

- I spend large amounts of time in prayer as I prep for the message.

- I go to bed early on Saturday night so that I can give my best for all three services on Sunday.

- I never preach mad at people because then it would come from a bitter heart.

- I must believe what I am preaching is true before I deliver it.

- I pray for a holy boldness!

Knute Larson

- First, I give thanks for the privilege of doing things in my job or calling that feed my own spirit. What a benefit! And why should I not approach all study first for my own edification and growth even before thinking how I can communicate that with listeners?

- I still like “the three hearts of preaching”: God’s, and by study we seek to know what He meant when He had it written; mine, and by study, prayer, and care we allow the thoughts to affect us first; and the hearts of the listeners—involving the hard work of communicating and motivating.

And if the thoughts do not first grab our own hearts, we will surely flunk the third step!

- Why not seek to make all study-for-sermon time also be devotional and personal?
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