

## **A Crash Course to Staying Healthy in Ministry: A Practical Plan for Staying the Course**

CO7501 Independent Study on Pastoral Health

For Dr. Don Lichi

By Carmen Beasley

### **Introduction**

Have you ever tried balancing a bicycle while standing still? I did once. It didn't work so well. While trying to balance my husband's bike in place and simultaneously test his toe clip pedals, I fell right over in the driveway with the bike on top of me. There I lay: sprawled out in the middle of the driveway for all to see with a bruised hip and bruised ego.

In life, trying to find balance is comparable. The trouble is as soon as we find a "balance point" some other life circumstance knocks us off kilter. We're left bruised. Rather than looking for "balance" in life, perhaps similar to cycling, we should be aiming for fluid movement. In both cycling and life, there's no arguing that balance is an integral piece of the puzzle, but balance only comes out of movement, fluidity, cadence and rhythm.

My husband is a cyclist. I've never quite understood how he and the bicycle become one. Until this week. With all the kids out of the house, he pulled out my youngest daughter's road bike and raised the seat to somewhat fit my longer legs. I scrounged around her room for a pair of bike shorts. Grabbed her helmet and we set off. Circling several times around the block of our neighborhood, my husband called out instructions for changing gears. Once I had an idea of how to shift up and down, we crossed the street and headed for the bike and hike trail.

Being a true blue newbie to road biking, my goal was not necessarily "to ride," but to simply keep moving. To "simply keep moving" seems like a worthy goal, doesn't it? Yes. Sometimes in life the best we can do is to simply put one foot in front of the other, to push and plow forward. However, "to ride" denotes a pleasurable and smooth fluidity that comes from steady rhythm. There is momentum and flow.

For about a half mile out of the ten miles on this first little biking adventure, I found rhythm. Cyclists refer to this as cadence. Dave noticed. It pleased him. It pleased me! With cadence and rhythm there is a sense of freedom and exhilaration. Dave calls it, "Feeling like a kid again." Although I experienced it only momentarily, it gave me a taste for more. My husband regularly finds cadence on bike rides. It's near addicting.

Eric Liddell was a Scottish athlete and missionary. The movie *Chariots of Fire* depicts his story of refusing to compete on a Sunday. In the 1924 Summer Olympic games in Paris, he missed his favored 100-meter race because the heats were on the Lord's day. Instead he competed in the 400 meters which he won. Liddell, known as "the flying Scotsman" found cadence in running. A noted scene in the movie shows Liddell explaining the resulting sensation to his sister, "I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast. And when I run I feel His pleasure."

I don't know about you, but I want that. I believe that God made you and made me for a purpose. I want to live life, to run the race, feeling his pleasure. Caution is required here. We're easily deceived and led astray by our "feelings." But, I hope you get my point. I want to live to know God, to know the fullness and abundance of living the Christian life and to bring my Savior glory. Finding healthy rhythms in life enables us to accomplish God's purpose.

Rhythms of life are found throughout Scripture. Beginning in Genesis, God reveals Himself as a God of order when He puts "lights in the expanse of the sky" to mark rhythmic seasons and days and years (Genesis 1:14). The cycle of festivals and sacrifices provided the Israelites with rhythmic and orderly worship of God. The Sabbath provides yet another rhythmic example.

Life denotes constant growth and steady movement forward. When anything stops growing, decline is imminent. Rarely, do we see stagnation correlate to life. In fact, when observed in Scripture, God typically is not pleased. Consider the Tower of Babel. God was not pleased with mankind remaining stagnant and in place. Rather, God desired mankind to go, to be fruitful, to multiply and to rule over his domain.

Parents of little ones know intuitively that establishing healthy rhythms simply make good, common sense. Life moves purposefully and more pleurably for everyone in the family when the children are fed, bathed and put to bed at regular hours. Without these regular rhythms, chaos quickly ensues.

I'm convinced that wherever we are in life, healthy rhythms are important to growing and serving God and others. The simple exercises and spiritual disciplines that follow are meant to be aids in finding healthy rhythms appropriate to your needs. There is nothing magical. Rather, these tools are based upon both biblical and Christian counseling principles and are intended to bring us into deeper relationship with Christ.

The ideas and concepts presented are a synopsis of a semester long Biblical counseling course with Dr. Don Lichi. As a Christian psychologist and counselor with over thirty thousand clinical counseling hours to men and women of fulltime ministry, Dr. Lichi is passionate about helping servants of the Lord Jesus Christ finish well. He offers godly wisdom, methods and experience to help Christ's servants run and persevere in Kingdom building ministry. I've had the great privilege to sit under his tutelage. For this, I'm grateful. His teaching has proved invaluable in my own life and ministry to others. It's my prayer that the following supplemental exercises to Dr. Lichi's conference teaching will prove fruitful to finding healthy rhythms and living an abundant life as you seek to faithfully serve our Savior and feed His sheep.

Gratefully,  
Carmen Beasley

**I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me  
heavenward in Christ Jesus.**

**Philippians 3:14**

Our race is heaven bound. As we seek to serve Christ, we like Paul, are ever aiming higher. A healthy rhythm of life is our goal. However, this is not a self-serving goal. God has a divine purpose for you and for your life. The ultimate goal of establishing a healthy rhythm of life is that we might fulfill God's divine purpose and bring glory to His Name. For this we "AIM HIGH-R:"

1. **Assess**
2. **Identity and "I" messages**
3. **Mission**
4. **Humility & Hurts**
5. **Intent**
6. **Goals**
7. **Heart**
8. **Re-assess (or Rest)**

**Section 1: Assess today. Pre-PIESS Assessment (Is this important? Worthy?)**

Periodical assessment is important. When looking at a large map, it's helpful to find the spot that says, "You are here." Next, you find the point of destination. In order to get from "here" to "there," you then plan your route.

Jordan Spieth, a young 21-year-old American golfer, recently competed in his first Masters Tournament. Overall, he came in fourth place. Afterwards on a T.V. interview, Jordan assessed his own play, both the good and the bad. Jordan's interview impressed my son. Specifically, he was impressed by Jordan's fair and straightforward assessment. Without beating himself up, Spieth noted the problems in his play, but also noted his successes. From an honest assessment of both the good and the bad, Jordan makes a plan forward.

Before beginning, let's briefly and honestly assess the current state of affairs:

- How is life for you at the moment?
- Are you in a smooth groove? Is there a steady cadence to life? Is ministry flowing well and flowing from a fullness of heart??
- Or are you stuck in the same rut or maybe even "sprawled out on the driveway?"
- Perhaps you're somewhere in between? Perhaps some areas of life are "smooth sailing" while others could use a little reconfiguration?

1. Before taking the more formal assessment below, informally assess your current situation. When reading through these questions, what comes to mind? Write your thoughts here:

2. Write one thing that is going well for you that you would not change.

3. List here your top concerns in life and ministry. If you could change anything, what would it be:

4. Complete the following questionnaire. Question for Dr. Lichi: Is there a personal self-assessment form usable here?

5. According to the results of the more formal assessment, list your top five concerns here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

6. How well do these match your informal assessment? Do any issues surprise you?

7. As you review your personal assessment, consider your ministry and think about a typical week, list those items that consume most of your time, energy or thoughts? Explain.

8. Which of these align with your life purpose and mission? Which do not?
  
9. Do you have a personal mission statement? If so, list it here. If not, you may begin formulating one here, but try not to get bogged down. A life mission statement may begin to unfold as you proceed and there will be opportunity to later define this more clearly.

**Pray:** In a written prayer, relate to God as you are. Can you praise Him? Do you need a time of confession? Can you offer up thanksgiving?

**Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.**  
(Proverbs 19:21 NIV)

## Section 2: Identity and “I” Messages

**The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.**

(Matthew 7:25 NIV)

Chances are if you’re serving others in ministry, you aren’t always on the receiving end of positive feedback. In the midst of life’s ups and downs, the complicated world in which we live, and the many broken, hurting people to whom we minister, it’s easy to lose our focus: Christ. It’s easy to forget who we are: children of the Living God. And it’s also easy to forget why we do what we are doing: Serving Christ and building His Kingdom. A clear mission and an action plan can often help keep us focused. However, before defining a mission and establishing an action plan for healthy rhythms, it’s imperative to be grounded in our foundation. In this section, we’ll review our identity, what God’s Word says about Him and about us. Then in the next section, we’ll review our mission, why we do what we do. In the long run, this review will be important in helping us keep first things first. Please do not skip.

In life and in ministry it’s easy to get bogged down in “you” and “I” messages. Negative “you” messages are harmful. For example, recently on the news there was a story of a three or four-year-old little girl who thought her name was “Idiot,” because this is what her mom’s boyfriend consistently called her. Ugh! The “you” message of the live in boyfriend, became “I” messages in the young child’s mind, “I am Idiot.” Heart wrenching. Many of us harbor some negative “you” messages as “I” messages.

However, positive “you” messages can also turn into harmful “I” messages. “Pastor, you preached a great sermon, today.” “You nailed that sermon again.” “Wow! God has really gifted you for preaching.” “I’m so thankful that you’re our preacher.” As the accolades pile up, these “you” messages have the potential to turn into an “I” message, “Wow! I am a great preacher.” Now, please don’t misunderstand me, it is extremely useful to know our area of giftedness. And yes, we should complement and encourage one another (something we don’t practice enough). We must always recognize that all good gifts come from God. If my identity is wrapped up in being a “good preacher,” then I stand on shaky ground. If my identity is wrapped up in being a “good mother,” a “good businessman,” a “good student,” a “good soccer player” ... name any good thing, what happens when this we experience failure? Do you see how this sort of “I” thinking could turn into the slippery slope? Our identity must go deeper than the things that we do, good or bad. As a child of God, our identity is firmly rooted in Christ.

That’s worth repeating.

As a child of God, our identity is rooted in Christ alone.

Perhaps now is a good time to pause, reflect and pray. Can you praise God for your identity in Christ? Is confession required because you’ve sought identity elsewhere? Or perhaps you need

to deal with “you” messages that have turned into “I” messages? Do you need God’s help to forgive others for their negative “you” messages?

**Pray:** May God’s Spirit lead and guide as you seek to honestly relate to Him concerning your identity.

The focus of Scripture is to reveal God. As God reveals Himself through His Word, He also reveals something about who we are in relationship to Him. Therefore, God’s Word is a great place to help us identify “Who is God?” and “who are we?”

- What does it mean to be “a child of God (John 1:12, Ephesians 1:3-8)?”
- In your own words, how does one become a “child of God?” (Please note scripture used to back up your answer.)

As God’s child, what does God say about you? Scripture reveals that God is love. If God loves us, loves you, that means:

1. We are lovable. You are *lovable*.

How can we know? His Word. What do the following verses say about God’s love for you?

Romans 5:8-

Romans 3:38-39-

I John 4:10

It's okay. Go ahead and give yourself a positive "I" message from God and say it out loud: "I am lovable." Again: "I am lovable."

Not only does God see us as lovable, we can be assured of our identity in Christ in other ways, too. Here are a few more:

2. You are *valuable*.

John 3:16

I Corinthians 6:19-20

Revelation 5:9

How do we know we are valuable? God gave His mostly costly gift, His one and only Son, to ransom, to purchase our freedom.

Please say out loud, "I am lovable. I am valuable."

3. You are *forgivable*.

Acts 13:38

I John 1:9

God's word makes it clear. Continue in a similar pattern: Please say out loud, "I am lovable. I am valuable. I am forgivable."

4. You are *changeable*.

I Corinthians 13:11

"I am lovable. I am valuable. I am forgivable. I am changeable."

5. You are *never alone*.

Joshua 1:5

Hebrews 13:5

Finally, putting it all together: "I am lovable. I am valuable. I am forgivable. I am changeable. And I am NEVER alone."

Did you say it out loud? If not, go back!

**We demolish arguments and every pretension  
that sets itself up against the knowledge of God,  
and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**

(II Corinthians 10:5 NIV)

Time and again in Scripture, God tells us to control our thoughts. Let's listen to Him. Are you in a pattern of negative self-talk or "I" messages?

- What would it take for you to listen only to God talk?

- Give yourself positive “I” messages. Review your identity in Christ out loud say, “I am lovable. I am valuable. I am forgivable. I am changeable. And I am never alone.” REPEAT as needed.

- **PRAY:**

Insert Who I Am In Christ here... (From *Victory Over Darkness*, by Dr. Neil Anderson)

### Section 3: Mission

**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”**

*Mark 12:30-31*

God loves us. He wants what’s best for us. Knowing that we are easily bogged down by worldly things, sin, and even rules, God even keeps things simple for us. Therefore, when Jesus is asked by a teacher of the law, “Which of the commandments is most important?” Jesus simply refers back to Israel’s shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) and responds: “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*” Brilliantly, Jesus defines our objective. New Testament connects to Old Testament. There is remembrance. Connection. Cohesion. Simplicity.

God’s commandments have not changed. From beginning to the end of Scripture, God consistently requires that we: 1. Love Him and 2. Love others. Is this for God’s benefit? Of course not! God’s commandments are a testament to His great love for us. His desire is that we enjoy the best possible relationship with Him and with others.

When our oldest began kindergarten, she was blessed with an wonderfully gifted and experienced teacher, Mrs. Diener. This dear woman had taught kindergarten for over twenty-five years. She embodied wisdom, grace and patience. She also knew a thing or two about teaching kindergarten students. On the day before school began, parents and five-year-olds eagerly flocked to the cheery classroom in order to “meet the teacher.” As we sat on tiny chairs at tiny tables, Mrs. Diener announced to all, “Ladies and gentleman, boys and girls, I have only one classroom rule.” Being a mother of several little ones, my head literally spun around to catch a better view of this woman. I marveled, “Only one rule?” Calmly, Mrs. Diener continued, “This is my rule: ‘Be kind to everyone and everything.’” How brilliant! How simple! Indeed, five-year-olds know whether or not they are being kind, and in Mrs. Diener’s classroom, a five-year-old is expected to be kind to everyone and everything.

Just as Mrs. Diener’s rule simplified the law of the kindergarten classroom, so does God’s greatest commandment simplify our life’s goal. God has our best in mind and heart. He knows that when we obey these two simple commands, we’ll be healthy. Healthy in heart, mind, soul and strength. Healthy in our entire being. Healthy in relationships.

In this way, the greatest of commandments holds the keys to enjoying healthy rhythms of life.

PIESS (physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual) goals are personal growth goals that practically help us love God with our entire being and love others. These goals are intended to help us for the long haul heavenward. These are not self-seeking goals, but rather God seeking goals. Our mission is to love God and to love others in such a way that Christ might be

magnified and glorified through our lives and ministry. This is the main thing: To love God and love others that Christ's name might be glorified. This is why we do what we do.

**PRAY:** Are you focused on the main thing? Talk to God honestly about where you are and where you want to go. Do your objectives mesh with His objectives? Are you hung up on the little things or flying on the ones that truly matter? Perhaps continue "fleshing out" your own personal mission statement...

**Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.**

(Proverbs 19:21 NIV)

## Section 4: Humility and Hurts

**Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.**

(Hebrews 12:1-2)

So far we've covered our **AIM**: **A**ssess ("we are here"), **I**ntity (knowing God plus knowing who I am in Christ) and **M**ission (why I do what I do? To obey Him). In order to keep life simple and to the point, all we need is to: Know God. Obey his commands. These give us identity and mission.

Before discussing specific **PIESS** goals, let's briefly look at two other aspects of the "**AIM HIGH-R**" crash course in healthy rhythms. First, in this section we'll consider **H**umility and how to effectively deal with hurts. In the next section, we'll consider our **I**ntentions.

Yes, if we are children of God, our identity is secure in Christ. This does not mean we are entitled to have trouble free lives. One thing Jesus promises: in this world we will have trouble. (John 16:22). As His children, we are not immune.

When trouble hits, how do you respond? With thanksgiving and praise for a new opportunity to learn and grow and trust God? Do you ever find yourself grumbling and complaining? Fearful? Anxious? When hurt, do you like to nurse the grudge for a while or do you quickly disregard and toss the burden to God? As a servant of Christ, do you identify with Jesus's humble and submissive obedience or do you identify as the entitled "little emperor"?

The country of China has had a one child policy for about twenty-five years. (Fortunately, this rule is beginning to relax.) The Chinese people have a nickname for these only children: "Little Emperors." It is not uncommon to see a toddler with both parents and *both* sets of grandparents dotting on him or her. For you see, given that children will one day provide for elderly parents and grandparents, high expectations are placed on the shoulders of these only children. With six adults dotting on one child, it's easy to see how one might grow up with a sense of entitlement.

We humans like to have our way, don't we? I know that I'm guilty. Everything in our culture today seems to scream, "Have it your way!" Humility is unnatural. It takes practice. It also takes the super-natural attitude of Christ:

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit [through factional motives, or strife], but with [an attitude of] humility [being neither arrogant nor self-righteous], regard others as more

important than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Have this same attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus  
[look to Him as your example in selfless humility...  
(Philippians 2:3-5 AMP)

The attitude of Christ did not give way to his entitled privileges of being God's son. Rather, Christ sacrificed his divine privileges in order to save us. Furthermore, in His humility, He "scorned the shame" of the cross. Did going to the cross hurt? Absolutely. Did being rejected by the very men He came to save hurt? Of course. Did being forsaken by His Heavenly Father hurt? We will never know how much.

Did Jesus nurse these grudges or hurts? No! Rather, He scorned them. He scorned the shame of it all, He endured the cross and then took His privileged seat at the throne of God. The throne of God. Jesus treated the hurts with complete disregard. That's humility.

In order to be healthy in ministry for the long haul, we need humility. We need it bad. In order to honestly and regularly deal with pride, we need to honestly and regularly deal with hurts. For a practical "how to" on praying through hurts, please see the following synopsis adapted from Dr. Richard Dobbins.

Healthy Confession of Hurts: Add in slide for *Talk to God Honestly About Your Hurts and Praying Through* (adapted from Dr. Richard Dobbins)

**These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go to the house of  
God under the protection of the Mighty One with shouts of joy and praise  
among the festive throng.  
(Psalm 42:4 NIV)**

## Section 5: Intent: Running to Win the Prize

**Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize?**

**Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore, I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.**

**(I Corinthians 9: 24-27)**

Some things remain popular throughout the ages, even Paul sometimes uses *athletic* metaphors in his teaching in order to picture the effective Christian life. Got to love it! In I Corinthians 9:24-27, he uses what sporting metaphors?

In this case, he says that all in a race run, but not all in the race run as if to win the prize. In Christian life and ministry, all are living it, all are “running the race,” but not all are running as if to win the prize. Some even run aimlessly. Let’s consider Paul’s thoughts.

- What does the Christian life look like when running the “race as if to win the prize?”
  
- What does life look like to run *without* the goal of winning the prize?

Have you ever run a race aimlessly or without your eye on the prize? I have. Literally, a number of years ago, I remember a particular 10K running race. A 10K race equates to about 6.2 miles. The race started out *fun*. I enjoyed the anticipation of running the race. I enjoyed the excitement of the start. I enjoyed the rush at the beginning where the crowd is thick. I enjoyed the first couple of miles as each runner found their own pace and the running pack began to thin.

However, somewhere at about mile five, I ran out of steam. The race suddenly felt long. It wasn't fun anymore. Rather than digging down deep and running like a champion bound for the prize, I began to run aimlessly. Pretty soon, I heard footsteps behind me. Rather than passing others, I watched as people began passing me. One gal in particular stood out. I had passed her a couple of miles back. Was I going to let her pass? Here was my good reminder to focus on the goal, dig deep and run faster. Did I? No. Instead, my heart and mind and soul became hardened. Deep inside I knew that I could run faster and better. However, that would be "uncomfortable." I stubbornly chose to maintain my slow pace. At the end of the race, I watched this woman cross the finish line before me. I knew I could run better, but chose not to make the changes necessary to do so.

A short while later, when prizes were being passed out, I learned that this gal was indeed in my age bracket. She won first place. I won second. Now second place isn't bad if you're running the race "as if to win the prize." However, if you're merely running the race and not looking for the prize, second place becomes "the first place loser," as Jim Giffigan likes to call it. I had the reserves. I could have dug deeper. Instead I chose comfort, I lost sight of the goal and hence, I lost the prize.

- In life and ministry, what can it look like to run "aimlessly?"

Running aimlessly entails a sense of running with no direction. For my example, I became tired and uncomfortable in the race. Focused on the pain rather than the prize, I completely lost sight of the prize. Rather than persevering through pain and discomfort, I gave up and meandered across the finish line. Pain, trouble, boredom, sin all affect how we run the race.

- Perhaps you can relate this to ministry? What was it like to begin your race? Where are you in the race now? How have your feelings about the race changed?

- What are you doing *now* in order to finish "the race" well?

In Christ, we always have the reserves. He can and will supply our every need.

**And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**  
(Philippians 4:19 NIV)

We can drink deep of His Word and His Spirit. Let's not choose comfort and lose sight of our goal.

Rather: **Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.** (Hebrews 12:1-2 NIV)

Olympic champions don't just wake up and decide, "Oh! I think I'll run a race today." An Olympic champion has a comprehensive training plan for their bodies, hearts and minds in order to run for the prize. Likewise, as servants of the Lord Jesus, we need an action plan. In our human weakness, we are apt to get distracted from the things that really matter. We're easily led astray. An action plan is just that a plan to get us from "here" to "there". Goals help give us direction and keep us from "running aimlessly."

**His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'**

(Matthew 25:21)

Christ, Himself, modeled the good and faithful servant. He ministered with endurance giving all He had to give. Spend time with Him to know Him and His ways.

**PRAY:**

## Section 6: Goals

**PIESS Goals** represents: **Physical, Intellectual, Emotional, Social and Spiritual Goals.**

When God created mankind, He created us in His image. If we are created in the image of God, then similar to God, we are multi-faceted beings. Each of us has physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual needs.

These five areas of the person are intricately connected. If just one area is off-kilter, then the entire being suffers. Imagine an orchestra where all the musicians are finely tuned to the same pitch, but the violins did not tune to that same specific pitch. That performance will not go so well. For healthy rhythms, to run the race well, we seek to ensure that each area of our being is finely tuned.

### **1. PHYSICAL: Loving God with all of our *strength*.**

Let's begin with the physical. We are called to love God with all of our heart, mind, soul and *strength*... our entire being. Touch your nose. Wiggle your toes. You are present in a body. Although we may not fully understand all the intricate connections, there is a reason that God put our souls and minds into physical bodies. If God deems it important to put our souls in physical bodies, then it makes sense that we are called to be good stewards of these bodies, to love and honor Him with our bodies.

Gary Thomas has written a marvelously challenging book on this topic: *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*. In it, he states, "Christians who don't take their health seriously don't take their mission seriously."<sup>1</sup> Thomas is renowned for his first book: *Sacred Marriage*; the premise being that marriage is not about our happiness, but how God uses marriage to grow us up in holiness. In *Every Body Matters*, Thomas makes the argument that just as God uses marriage as a teaching tool in holiness, so He uses our bodies as a teaching tool for holiness. Hence, honor God with your body.

Thomas makes the argument that honoring God with our bodies includes avoiding sexual sin, but also includes other sins such as avoiding gluttony and slothfulness. Thomas admits that concerning his own body, these two areas "weren't damning me, but they were making me less useful and less prepared to do any good work."<sup>2</sup>

Referring to II Timothy 2:20-21, ("In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use."<sup>21</sup> Those

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<sup>1</sup> Gary Thomas. *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), page 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 21.

who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work),” Thomas continues:

Many people address physical fitness for lesser reasons- to live longer, to look younger, to enjoy physical health. These are the motivations the world clings to, and while they may have some merit, there is little of lasting value in them. The apostle Paul presents a far superior motivation for making a serious effort to grow: to become “instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work.”<sup>3</sup>

Viewing our bodies as instruments rather than ornaments, is crucial to transforming our outlook on the care and discipline of our bodies. Our physical bodies matter to God:

**In light of God’s grace, Paul calls us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice.**  
(Romans 12:1)

Dr. Lichi’s preliminary research results supports the conclusions of Thomas’ book and show a strong connection between physical well-being and fulfillment within both ministry and marriage. The initial results are similar for both males and females.

The well-being of our physical body is important in marriage, in ministry and in honoring God. It showcases our souls. How are you taking care of your body?

In considering personal growth goals, choose SMART goals: specific (knowing what you will do and how), measurable (having a precise way to measure it), attainable (goals should push you but also be achievable), realistic (is the goal and time frame realistic?) and time-bound (what is your deadline).

An example for a physical SMART goal could look like this:

- I will train 3-4 days per week for 30 minutes a day in order to run the 5K race two months from today that supports the local crisis pregnancy center.

This goal is very specific. It is measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. Once it is completed, it can be checked off the list and a new goal established.

For setting physical goals consider these issues: exercise, nutrition, sleep, weight, hygiene, medical checks, and rest. Ask questions and give specific answers:

- Am I exercising? If so, what activities and for how long each week. Is this enough exercise? Too much?

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 21-22.

- Am I feeding and energizing my body with healthy nutrition? How often? What types of food and how much? Answer as specifically as possible.
- How am I sleeping?
- How am I caring for and grooming my body? Do I have regular and healthy habits of hygiene?
- Do I need to visit the doctor, the dentist, nutritionist, fitness trainer, etc.?
- When do I rest from work?

Personal goals are just that: personal. These are set for your own specific needs. In helping my young adult children establish healthy rhythms and goals, it became apparent that my son needed regular physical and hardcore exercise. Having been a college athlete, the lack of physical activity left him feeling rather depressed and discouraged. Joining a gym and participating in regular fitness classes 5-6 days a week for 30-45 minutes made a huge difference in his outlook and ability to pursue ministry and studies.

On the other hand, one of my daughters who had entered into her first year as a middle school teacher was tired and frazzled after just a couple of months on the job. After discussing, it became apparent that she needed more sleep. One of her physical goals? Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep each school night.

Both found they needed more regular and healthy nutrition. Each determined a regular and specific eating schedule and also devised a list of healthy snack options that could be readily

accessible whether at home, work or school. Their plans were personal and specific to their own needs and calorie intake.

Viewing our bodies as instruments rather than ornaments, is crucial to transforming our outlook on the care and discipline of our bodies. Our physical well-being enhances our mission to love God with all of our strength.

For further reading and a fresh perspective on how physical fitness directly impacts your spiritual growth, I highly recommend Gary Thomas's *Every Body Matters*.

**Pray:** Offer up your body as a living sacrifice to our Holy and Living God...

**Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.**

(I Corinthians 6:19-20)

## Section 7: Heart, Mind and Soul

**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.**

**Mark 12:30**

In the previous section, we discussed loving God with all of our strength and honoring Him with our physical bodies. In this section, let's address the other four **PIESS Goals**: Intellectual, Emotional, Social and Spiritual Goals. Just as it is important to establish healthy rhythms for our physical bodies, so it is important to establish healthy disciplines for the rest of our being, for the inner person: hearts, minds and souls.

Within the Hebrew language, the inner man can include the various seats of the inner person including the heart, the mind, emotions and the soul.<sup>4</sup> This holds true for Proverbs 4:23:

**Guard your heart for it is the well-spring of life.**

The inner being is also a part of our domain. Just as our outer shell affects our inner shell, so does the inner shell affect the outer shell. Even Sigmund Freud said, "What is on the inside of a person has a way of coming to the outside." Everything we do is some reflection of who we are and the overflow of our hearts. Therefore, it is imperative to "guard our hearts."

### Intellectual and Emotional Goals

**Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.**

(Romans 12:2)

One way we love the LORD our God is with our minds. Renewing of the mind is critical. Did you know that your thinking can change the structure of your brain?

Every thought you have causes neurochemical changes, some temporary and some lasting. For instance, when people consciously practice gratitude, they get a surge of rewarding neurotransmitters, like dopamine, and experience a general alerting and

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<sup>4</sup> Leb, Strong's Number 3820, *The NAS Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*.  
<http://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/hebrew/nas/leb.html>

brightening of the mind, probably correlated with more of the neurochemical norepinephrine.<sup>5</sup>

It's not too surprising then that God teaches us to:

- Guard our heart... “for it is the well-spring of life.” Proverbs 4:23
- Do not be anxious... Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7
- Think on these things... “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” Philippians 4:8
- Take our thoughts captive... “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” II Corinthians 10:9
- Fix our thoughts on Jesus... “Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest.” Hebrews 3:1
- Challenges our thoughts... “Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?” Matthew 9:4
- To put off the old self and put on the new... “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Ephesians 4:22

God knows how intricately we're created. Like physical goals, establishing goals for the inner person help us stay on course. Set specific goals for each of these areas: Emotional, Intellectual, Social and Spiritual. (Remember to create SMART Goals: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time Bound).

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/debbie-hampton/how-your-thoughts-change-your-brain-cells-and-genes\\_b\\_9516176.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/debbie-hampton/how-your-thoughts-change-your-brain-cells-and-genes_b_9516176.html)

## Intellectual goals

These can involve: reading, thinking, books, tapes, research, ideas, memorizing, study, education, and professional courses, financial goals:

## Emotional goals

Include activities that utilize: creativity, journaling, music, art or something that is joyful to you.

## Social Goals

Love others as yourself. God intended that we grow and serve in community and in relationship with others. He has designed us with relationship needs. The importance of developing healthy, deep friendships and relationships cannot be stressed enough. It is dangerous to be emotionally alone. We are each an integral part of the body of Christ and together we run the race heavenward.

- Set social goals. Consider attainable goals in order to develop personal, family and friend relationships:
- Find a friend similar to you of the *same* sex. (This is a crucial safe guard in maintaining healthy marriages.) If you don't have one, begin praying for one. Iron sharpens iron.

## Spiritual Goals

**Love the Lord your God with all your soul...**

**But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,  
and all these things will be given to you as well.**

Matthew 6:33

**But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him  
with all your heart and with all your soul.**

Deuteronomy 4:29

Spiritual Goals include: Bible reading, Bible study, fellowship, Bible memory, worship, prayer, service, Shabbat, quiet...

- Reflect: Lord, how am I doing spiritually?
- Lord God, what is necessary for me to know You better? To grow in my relationship with You?
- **Pray:** Align your heart with God's heart.

**The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.**

(1 Samuel 16:7b)

Insert Personal Growth Goal Worksheet here...

## Section 8: Review

Congratulations! If you are “here,” then you have successfully completed the *Crash Course to Staying Healthy in Ministry*. Enclosed in this final section is a Real-Time Master plan and a brief review.

In our **AIM-HIGH-R**, we have examined:

1. Our need to properly **Assess** where and how we’re doing in pursuing healthful ministry.
2. Understand that our **Identity** is grounded in Christ and listen to His “**I**” messages.
3. Understand that our **Mission** comes from His commands.
4. Seek to model the **Humility** of Christ and deal directly with Him in regards to **Hurts**.
5. Run with the **Intent** to “win the prize.” Run with our entire being.
6. Set **Goals** beginning with physical goals and honor God with our bodies.
7. Set **Heart** goals that deal with the inner person: Emotional, Intellectual, Social and Spiritual goals.
8. **Review**

Enclosed in this Review Section is a real time Master Plan. Now that you’ve established **PIESS** Goals, it’s important to visualize them into a normal week. Drawing on 41 years of pastoral experience, Knute Larson now coaches pastors and church leaders. He is adamant to coach pastors to set up a master schedule. In regards to setting his ideal week, Knute says, “I never hit my goal. But if I don’t set a goal, I will always miss it.”

The purpose of a spiritual discipline is not the spiritual discipline; the purpose of the spiritual discipline is so you can do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. If this becomes legalistic, it’s gone to seed. Periodically, REVIEW your plan. Ask and honestly reflect, how you are doing in the PIESS areas:

- Body: Eating, sleeping, exercise.
- Mind: What have you been thinking about?
- Emotional: Consider your mood and energy.
- Relationships: Note how the significant relationships are growing.
- Spiritual: How is your time with God? Are you growing deeper with Him?

Blessings and peace to you as you press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Insert Master Plan Schedule here...