

Published based on [5 Ways to Keep Ministry from Sucking the Life Out of You](#)

5 Ways to Keep Ministry from Sucking the Life Out of You



My husband and I have been in ministry for 27 years now. We have lived through great mountain top highs and successful seasons, and we have lived through some low valleys and seasons of failure. There have been moments when we both have had to ask ourselves if we would choose the path of ministry again if we had it all to do over. My heart always finds the answer to that question is yes, although I humbly acknowledge that I don't always feel that way. There are days and weeks and months when living in the ministry fishbowl and living a life dedicated to the service of others costs more than I wish to pay. But yet, deep from my innermost being the call of God still speaks and I know there is no other path that I would choose.

This morning, I pause to think of the many of you who live a life of ministry. I breathe a prayer for you even now as I write, and I offer these five ways that I have found to be anchors for true ministry. I am not offering this list as an all-inclusive; just a list of things that were on my heart today.

1. **1. Check your balance.**

Balance is an extremely rare commodity in the life of ministers and their families. Sadly, we often allow the needs of the people, their demands, and their ideas of who and what we should be to dictate how we live. Yet if Jesus is to be our example, and he is, that is not how we should live. Jesus ministered intensely at times and at other times, he drew away from the crowds for rest and restoration. There were times when he, in his humanity, was not available for the demands of the people or even the demands of his intimate circle. What a challenge for us today! We have cell phones, email, pagers, etc. We are immediately available at the beck and call of many people and often pride ourselves in this. We remove the healthy boundaries around our lives (if there ever were any), and we invite people to call on us "at any time". And they do. We give and we give and we give until we find ourselves depleted and resentful of "ministry". Spouses find themselves married to someone whose mistress is called "ministry" and feel unable to question that lifestyle because, after all, the ministry is the same as God, right? Not so, dear friend. In fact, sometimes we are so married to ministry that we really don't have any time to pursue our relationship with God. Remember, your priorities are God first, spouse second, family third, and ministry fourth.

How is your balance? Are there changes you need to make so that you can minister for the long haul and not find yourself burned out and/or broken?

2. **2. Stock your pond.**

It is vitally important to have your pond stocked. What I mean is that you should live in such a way that your life, if represented by a pond, is filled with living, breathing fish, teeming with life. This process is different for each one of us. For me, stocking my pond means making sure I have time with friends and family, making sure I enjoy myself by doing things I love such as reading a good book, taking in a sunset, sharing life-giving experiences with people I care about. Ministry can deceive us into making the sum total of our lives about helping other people. However, then we can find ourselves empty and resentful and truly unable to give any more because we haven't kept our own ponds stocked, so to speak. Looking to the life of Jesus, remember, he went to parties, celebrations, weddings; he took time to talk to children; he drew away from the demands and stocked his pond. Some called him a winebibber. They said his lifestyle was wasteful and criticized his choices. Yet the Word says he only did what he saw the Father doing and was not controlled by the people.

Would you evaluate your calendar? Are there life-giving, pond-stocking events and activities there? Would you acknowledge your humanity, as Jesus did, by making time to stock your pond? (for more thoughts on this, read my blog post [Stock The Pond](#).)

3. Be aware of the plans of the enemy.

Yuck, you may say. You've heard too much about this already in ministry. However, we must acknowledge that we have an enemy. He wants to destroy us, and he really doesn't care how he does that. If he can make us too busy to hear God and others who care about us, that is a victory for him. If he can trick us into living without boundaries, he has a victory. If he can deceive us into giving more than we have to give and we find ourselves empty and disillusioned, that is a victory for him. And then, of course, there are the obvious ways we all are aware of but the door to many of the obvious things is the door of busyness, boundary-less living.

Are you aware of the plans of the enemy against your life? Can you identify how he is seeking to kill, steal, and destroy you?

4. Listen to your heart.

God speaks to your heart. You must learn to listen. My greatest mistakes in life and ministry have come because I ignored my heart. Sometimes we are not quite sure why something doesn't feel right or we rely too heavily on our mental reasoning and ignore the voice of our hearts. If your heart is crying that something is wrong or doesn't feel just right, STOP AND STOP NOW! The voice of the heart is often a quiet one and if we choose to push past it, we can silence its voice. The results are often disastrous. Yes, you may find that your heart speaks out of its woundedness at times, but you should always pause long enough to listen to the voice. Ask God if the voice you hear is true. Ask Him why you feel the way you do? Remember, not everything that is urgent is truly important. You must make time to slow down and hear your heart. God leads; Satan shoves. I believe that God is willing to confirm things to us if we will but ask. Honor the voice of your heart.

For me, this is an important part of my "quiet time" with God. As I spend time quieting myself and seeking His voice and wisdom, He often shows me how my own heart is speaking and why that is important.

Do you often spend time in quietness, focusing your heart and life, listening for His Spirit? If not, I encourage you to establish this practice, not out of obligation, but from a position of receiving the breath of life so you can live fully to the glory of God.

5. 5. Let your life story speak.

As you try to discern what things God is leading you into in ministry, look at your life story. The pains and failures can be used by God to guide other people if we will allow Him to use them. During the last two years, I have learned how to look at my total life story and learn more about the plans of God for my life. Everything belongs; nothing is wasted with God.

What does your life story say about how God wants to use you?

St. Irenaeus once said that the glory of God is man fully alive. I believe this is true. When we live "fully alive", it draws people to God. There are difficult choices we must make in order to do this, but these choices can help us go the distance in ministry.

If you continue to minister the way you are today, what will your life look like in 10 years? Can you ask God that question? Perhaps you see success, money, and fame, yet God sees burnout and failure. Invite His Spirit to search your heart.

What change can you make today, this week, and this month, which will allow you to live and minister from a place of life as Jesus did?

What are the life-sucking habits, practices, mindsets, etc., that you have that do anything but stock your pond?

Today, ask God to help you become more aware of these five ways we can minister from a perspective of life for our own good, the good of our families, and the good of others. Resist the urge to succumb to the voice of man

when you know God is calling you to change. Remember, Jesus came to give life – abundantly – and not just for eternity but for today as well.

You can also find this article published on [5 Ways to Keep Ministry from Sucking the Life Out of You](#), and on the tag pages [balance](#), [balance in ministry](#), [burnout](#), [devotionals for Christian women](#), [encouragement devotions](#), [free devotional](#), [God's voice](#), [heart](#), [life-giving](#), [Ministry](#), [Pastor Encouragement](#).