

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH FOR STEWARDSHIP LEADERS



Self-Care for Leaders in Resource Development

Our society is spiritually rather shallow and fragile at best. It is weighed down with marketing and advertising, materialism, envy, possessions, over-stimulation, over-scheduling, and over-work. At the same time, the church is perpetually anxious about decreasing revenues, decreasing membership and changing social norms about church involvement and investment.

We, the people who come forward to help to church host conversations around financial development and membership growth face significant resistance, stress, frustration, and fear. People in our churches are not greedy. They are scared. Their greed is just the way they choose to scream. That fear will move their responses to the amygdala—the reptilian center of fight or flight in our brain.

In this work, we, as teachers, will face clergy and congregations who are afraid of doing what we are teaching them to do. We will be asking clergy and laity in our church to:

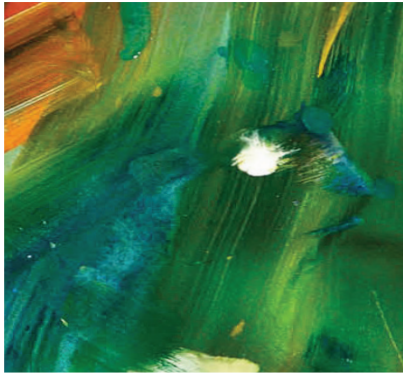
1. lead and speak about giving.
2. ask others for money.
3. engage in work which is easily measured.
4. ask people to engage in active evangelism.
5. pledge conversations they will have about religion.
6. hold others personally accountable to measurable objectives.
7. openly name success and failure in campaign management.

We know some statistics that clergy and many lay leaders find themselves over-worked, over-scheduled, over-stimulated, and overtired such that their ability to lead effectively is sometimes deeply compromised.

It makes absolutely no sense to teach our diocese or our churches how to raise money and how to raise people if, along the way, we neglect to teach these same leaders self-care along the way. This is why the art of iconography and the related theology and prayers are so foundational to the resources we will use as we meet with churches to teach this material. Spend time with these icons. Get to know these Bible passages. Learn



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these prayers or write your own. But ground each and every class you teach, meeting you chair, and presentation you make, in spiritual support and growth on both ends of the encounter as you teach adults to do this work.

Were there not statistical proof regarding clergy burnout and misconduct, there would be no need to even discuss self-care for leaders. However, work on financial development and membership invitation is work on the front lines of a society increasingly distracted with fear and overwhelmed by too many messages.

It will be tempting to ignore issues of spiritual self-care; either because we think we are doing it well, are fearful of sounding “preachy,” or are so ashamed of this area of our own lives that we will avoid its discussion.

A brief consideration of the self-care of leaders:

1. Your own spiritual lives – in an airplane, the stewardess tells parents to place their masks on first in order to remain strong enough to help their children. We **MUST** care carefully for our own spirituality or choose **NOT** to lead in such a demanding area of ministry.
2. Philanthropy – a stewardship leader needs to be a giver so that you have a bold integrity. If you do not give robustly, the people you teach will sniff you out in seconds.
3. Prayer – a stewardship leader needs to be a person of prayer.
 - a. Rule of Life – write and live by one.
 - b. Sabbath – keep one.
 - c. Scheduling – make time for leadership and define your ability through a reputation of effectiveness.
 - d. Presence – kindness, patience, emotional intelligence, modeling giving, centered.
4. Consider your own issues regarding your fears around money.

Why self-care and spiritual centeredness is so important when facing difficult conversations:

They say that when Martin Luther King, Jr. hosted his rallies, people would drive and take buses and walk from great distances to show up and work



for the cause. But King would stand at the door to those meetings and greet each new arrival in their sweat and dust from the journey.

He asked one question of them after a warm and loving greeting: “What is your spiritual practice back at home?” Some would say, “I pray daily.” Some would say, “I meditate.” Some would say, “I study scripture and pray over passages that encourage me.” Some would say, “I meet regularly with a small group to pray and read and discuss life as a Christian in a hard world.”

Each one would be welcomed inside for the rally.

But sometimes a visitor would have nothing to say. They would say they worked hard for justice or they gave lots of money, but they had no regular spiritual practice that fed them in relationship with their God. Those people King would turn away at the door — yes, even the rich ones — the tired ones. They would have to make the long trek home, not having been welcomed into the meeting. They would object, reminding him of their fervor for the cause and their fight to get to the meeting. Righteous indignation can be so invigorating! But he would hold his ground, and politely ask them to leave the meeting and go home.

When asked later why he did this seemingly unkind thing — why he sent these people home at the door, an act that reduced the ranks and coffers of his rallies, the great man said, “If you do not have a spiritual practice, then you will not have the voice you need to speak against injustice, and you will not be able to remain still when the police set the dogs on you.”

Your spiritual practice will till the soil, water the soil, and fertilize the soil as you teach and lead in resource development. Your giving will emerge but not from knowing you are doing the right thing. Your giving will emerge from knowing that you are desperately loved by God. And more than loved, that you are even liked by God. That you were made good and that your life is for letting that goodness sprout, grow, and flourish like the palm tree in the hot sun of the love of a God who is absolutely crazy about us. So find or keep your spiritual practice and you will change this church, and the world, one person at a time. Abandon it and you set yourself in the path of great violence and fear.

Do not lead or teach on resource development in your churches or dioceses without a deep and maintained spiritual practice. And teach the importance of a spiritual practice to the lay and clergy leaders you teach.



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