



Good BOOKS

"Pastors at Greater Risk"

by H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman
Regal Books, 2003

A two-part Review by Dr John Lim

We continue from where we left in the last BTW.

In chapter six, *"We Suffer Alone With Money Problems,"* the authors take up the struggle many ministers face in trying to provide leadership in an often-affluent community of faith, when they themselves usually do not share that affluence. In the 1992 *Leadership* magazine survey, 70% of pastors said their compensation contributed to marital conflict. The pastorate falls far short of most other professions in providing motivation for growth or promotion.

Like their parishioners, clergy and their families are susceptible to overspending and debt. In an interview with Christian financial counselor Ron Blue, London and Wiseman explore ways to ensure financial stability for the professional minister. Some of the ideas Blue shares---tithing, eliminating not only debt but unnecessary borrowing, saving for retirement, clear communication concerning financial matters, and taking advantage of certain tax breaks for ministers, such as housing allowance---are not exactly new, but can make a difference when consistently practiced. Perhaps more importantly, the authors admonish pastors to look at money in new ways, keeping God's perspective on wealth while coming to terms with such contemporary realities as dual incomes and bivocational job/ ministry situations.

"Recovery From Stress and Burnout" is dealt with in Chapter Seven in an interview with someone known for his research on depression, anxiety, stress, sexuality and the hazards of ministry. *"In the following conversation, Archibald Hart ... offers a unique take on helps for the prevention, diagnosis, prescription and restoration of stress and burnout among pastors"* (p. 173).

This is perhaps the most practical section of the book. It grapples with the phenomena of burnout. London and Wiseman take pains to warn and equip the modern minister against its devastating effects. "Type A" personalities in the pastorate are vulnerable to stress, which may evidence itself in classical physical manifestations like heart disease, high blood pressure, or ulcers---all well known, clear, and present health dangers for the ministerial professional.

There is a distinction between physical stress and emotional or psychological burnout, which may take a more profound, if less obvious toll, on the

entire ministerial profession. This type of burnout appears to more severely affect the "Type B" minister, who being less driven, may be more easily disillusioned. Rather than in physical ailments, emotional or spiritual burnout may result in self-destructive behaviours like abandoning the family or ministry, marital infidelity, or other acts of irresponsibility, which could cripple or end a ministerial career.

One of the most important factors in combating burnout is a peer support system where warning signals---for example, paranoid responses to petty problems or physical ailments---can be flagged and dealt with. Here is their prescription for pastors and burnout:

- Rethink your day off; wean yourself from the "adrenaline-addiction" of task-oriented time.
- Understand your personality type, recognizing the ways burnout is most likely to affect you.
- Welcome your spouse into prevention; she knows and understands you best.
- Reach out across the isolation to a trusted confidant, and avoid the "lone ranger" syndrome.
- Take charge of your prevention or recovery---no one else is likely to.
- Confront your addictions, the areas in which you are most vulnerable to burnout's attacks.
- Limit the "clinging vines," for example, people or activities that dilute your ministry and family time.
- Get back to doing what you want to do; it is what you do best.

In chapter nine (*"Pursue Personal Holiness"*) the authors remind pastors that their best weapon against stagnation and burnout is nurturing their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. By developing the spiritual discipline of holiness and spending time with Christ in prayer, ministers can rediscover balance in their ministry.

In the concluding chapter, the authors link what the support of the church program" for the minister fall in love with his their "Twelve Steps

- Resist personal Without a through, all hollow.
- Commitment Gratitude will that otherwise
- "Re-vision" y clear, "under mind, motivat



- Choose the “abundance mentality.” Rather than being satisfied with mere survival, realize that God wants to abundantly bless your ministry.
- Cultivate a breakout spirit. Take your cues from creative leaders in church history like Paul, Luther, and Wesley, who found fresh ways to offer their societies the healing grace of the gospel.
- Question the “quality vs. quantity myth.” Quality is often the determining factor in the quantity of growth many successful churches experience.
- Transform ambiguities into authenticities. Communicate clearly in your preaching by avoiding theological jargon, “insider language” or “Christianese,” pop psychology, or high-sounding but empty speech.
- Cherish people. Apply the “Common Harry test”---will your ministry meet the needs of the ordinary citizen of your parish or community?
- Fuel perseverance with passion. Find the ministry project you are most excited about, and you will probably maintain the motivation to see it through.
- Treasure the pleasure of God. Like Eric Liddell of Olympic fame, keep your eyes on the One for whom you are running (Heb. 12:2) as you maintain your internal equilibrium.
- Dare to lead. Leadership is not simply bestowed upon the pastor; it is earned by humble service, true concern for people, and creative vision and initiative.
- Exegete your environment. Pastors skilled in “rightly dividing the Word of truth” must also become proficient in reading the needs of the community in which they minister, and understanding the great challenges of their day.

(This book is available from BGST Library: LC 253 LON.)



Chapel Notes

In our last Chapel Service, Rev C.V. John of New Life Ministries in India spoke on the need of being trained and of training others to reach out to the “nations” of the world.

Chapel on 25 August will be chaired by our Dean, Dr Quek Swee Hwa.

NEWS BITS

1. **The Christian Spirit (TS251). Lecturer: Prof. James Houston. Tutor: Mr Chong Ser Choon.** The orientation has been scheduled on 23 August, 8.00pm-9.30 pm, at Bishan campus, Room 302.
2. **Change of Commencement Date.**
 - **Who is Jesus? (NT210, 1.5 credits) by Dr Aquila Lee** will be commencing on 15 September and covers four Wednesday sessions at Bishan.
 - **Curriculum Theory & Development for Education Ministry (CE256, 3 credits) by Dr Ng Peh Cheng** will be commencing on 21 September instead of 14 September. This course covers eight Tuesday sessions at Park Mall. If you have registered for these courses, kindly take note of the new dates.
3. **Caring for Today's Youth.** 21 August, Saturday, 2.30pm-5.30pm, [cost: \$20]. You may still register by calling Admin. office on 63538071. Library will close earlier at 1pm as all staff will be involved in the preparation for the panel presentation.

BGST GENERAL FUND UPDATE:

Budget for the month of Aug 2004 =	\$ 51,200
Funds received to-date (19 Aug) =	\$ 19,760
Funds needed for current month =	\$ 33,566
 Budget for Aug - Dec 2004	 = \$271,735

A Blessed Birthday to ...



Mr Francis Lim	23/8
Dr Peggy Yeo	25/8
Ms Tan Yeow Khuan	25/8
Mr Sim Cher Khee	25/8
Ms Christina Swee	26/8
Mr James Chua	28/8
Mrs Tan-Heng Siang Hoon	29/8
Ms Ruth Hing	29/8