

# QuietWaters

C O M P A S S

May 2012, Volume 17, Number 1

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QuietWaters Pastor's Retreat



# The Greatest Calling

**“Our calling is to take the living and enduring Word of God, study it, and proclaim the never-changing message to an ever-changing world.”**

R E N E W I N G C H R I S T I A N L E A D E R S



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# Your Starbucks Pastor

from the President *Jim Schlottman*



I still chuckle when I visit a Starbucks for the smallest-sized cup of tea I can find. To get the smallest size I have to order a “Tall.” If I’m particularly thirsty, I might select a larger size, a “Venti.” And we all heard recently about Starbucks new “Plenta,” 128 ounces of beverage. That’s big! Or the new “Micra,” weighing in at a mere two ounces. But if I ask for a “Small,” I still get the blank stare.

Is Starbucks trying to confuse me? To fool me? No! Starbucks’ game is just good marketing—to never give the customer the inkling he’s getting anything *less*—and it has been very effective.

Pastors come in different sizes, too. However, members of the congregation often take a Starbucks approach and place expectations on their pastors to be *more* than the size they are. Instead of just being a good average preacher, he/she is expected to be a “Plenta” preacher, a bigger, more *dynamic* preacher. Or maybe they want their pastor’s family to be a *trendy* version of the “All-American Family” with none of the issues and conflicts that *every* normal family faces. That would be the 31-ounce “Trenta,” in Starbucks terms.

Yes, pastors come in all sizes, shapes and types. They are God-fitted for small churches, large churches, seeker-churches and country churches. However, there is one thing that all pastors have in common: They are “Called by God.”

There have been several books written on the topic of the call to ministry. In *On Being a Pastor* by Derik Prime and Alistair Begg, they write: “The ministry of undershepherds and teachers is not simply a job. Rather it is a vocation, the answering of a specific call from God. It is the high calling in Christian services.”

In 1 Timothy 5:17 we read: “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.”

In this issue of the *Compass*, Dr. Ronald D. Moore in his article “The Greatest Calling” comments that: “With all the challenges of ministry we wouldn’t want to do anything else!” He goes on to write about this call to ministry. You will be encouraged and challenged by his words.

Then Dave Ragsdale writes about a *hazard* of this call to ministry—“Compassion Fatigue”—something we see all too often at QuietWaters. Ragsdale provides seven protective strategies for avoiding, reducing and recovering from the costs of caring, so you can maintain the strength you need to continue your call.

Every pastor—regardless of their Starbucks size—needs to read these articles to help them remain strong in this High Calling. So pass this issue along to someone not on our mailing list. You know they need it. ■



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Psalm 23:2

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# The Greatest Calling

by Dr. Ronald D. Moore

I have been a pastor at the same church for over 20 years and, like you, understand the challenges of ministry. Pastors experience the great joy of leading people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the gut-wrenching emotion of watching a father serve as the lone pall-bearer carrying the casket holding his infant son down the aisle and setting it at the front of the church. And then we are supposed to get up and say something meaningful.

Not long ago I stood in an Intensive Care Unit with a mom and dad whose son had been in a terrible accident. I was there when the doctors came in and told them that he had less than a 10 percent chance to live. I prayed that God would give me something to say and at the same time every emotion in me wanted to be somewhere else. I also rejoiced with that family several weeks later when they sat in church with their son.

You know the drill. Every week we are expected to lead our staff in such a way that morale is high and the church is running like a well-oiled machine. We are to provide appropriate peer leadership for our elders and deacons. We are expected to give vision talks that propel people to action. There are weddings with rehearsals and long receptions. There is always a funeral to perform. And then every weekend we stand to deliver a well-studied well-crafted message that moves people to action.

Despite all the challenges of ministry we wouldn't want to do anything else! On our worst day we lay our head on the pillow and say, "That was one tough day, but I wouldn't trade what I get to do for anything in the world." And we can say that because God has placed his sovereign call on our hearts. We know that ours is the greatest calling!

Yes, you know the drill, but here's what else you know: Despite all the challenges of ministry we wouldn't want to do anything else! On our worst day we lay our head on the pillow and say, "That was one tough day, but I wouldn't trade what I get to do for anything in the world." And we can say that because God has placed his sovereign call on our hearts. We know that ours is the greatest calling!

Every weekend we speak to churches full of people from every walk of life. Our churches are filled with CEOs, CFOs, and COOs. There are teachers and doctors and lawyers. In our congregations, there are factory workers and farmers and bus drivers and those who work concessions at the ball park.

We pastor people from all walks of life and numerous vocations. We love them. We need them. And we thank God that he has called them to do what they do. But we also thank God that he didn't call us to do what they do. We thank God for putting the desire and the fire for ministry deep into our hearts, for ours is the greatest calling.

Regarding a pastor's calling, C. H. Spurgeon said:

*The first sign of a heavenly calling is an intense, all-absorbing desire for the work. "Do not enter the ministry if you can help it. . . ." If any[one] in this room could be content to be a newspaper editor, or a grocer, or a farmer, or a doctor, or a lawyer, or a senator, or a king, in the name of heaven and earth let him go his way. . . for a man so filled with God would utterly weary of any pursuit but that for which his inmost soul pants.*

*The desire should be one which continues with us, a passion which bears the test of trial, a longing from which it is quite impossible for us to escape, though we may have tried to do so; a desire, in fact, which grows more intense by the lapse of years, until it becomes a yearning, a pining, a famishing to proclaim the Word.*

—Lectures to My Students, 25

(Continued on page 6)



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Think of the privilege we have!  
Our calling is to take the living and  
enduring Word of God, study it,  
and proclaim the never-changing  
message to an ever-changing  
world. Apart from the Word of God  
we have nothing to say. As Paul put  
it, “We do not preach ourselves,  
but Jesus Christ as Lord, and  
ourselves as . . . servants for  
Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Certainly we experience our share  
of tough times personally and  
professionally. We grow weary  
under the test of trials. The Apostle  
Paul had a few of those days,  
didn’t he? Paul wrote:

*Five different times the Jewish leaders  
gave me thirty-nine lashes. Three  
times I was beaten with rods. Once  
I was stoned. Three times I was  
shipwrecked. . . . I have faced danger  
in the cities, in the deserts, and on  
the seas. And I have faced danger  
from men who claim to be believers  
but are not. I have worked hard and  
long, enduring many sleepless nights.  
I have been hungry and thirsty and  
have often gone without food. I have  
shivered in the cold, without enough  
clothing to keep me warm. Then,  
besides all this, I have the daily burden  
of my concern for all the churches.*

—2 Corinthians 11:24-28

“Yet,” Paul said, “I am compelled to  
preach. Woe to me if I do not preach  
the gospel!” Men and women, be  
encouraged! Ours is the greatest calling!

And it gets even better. Not only is ours  
the greatest calling, we get to tell people  
about the greatest message! Pastors, we  
get to proclaim the timeless truths of  
God’s inerrant word! The prophet  
Jeremiah described God’s Word as a  
hammer that breaks a rock in pieces  
(Jeremiah 23:29). Jeremiah said,  
“[God’s] word is in my heart like  
a fire, a fire shut up in my bones.  
I am weary of holding it in; indeed,  
I cannot” (Jeremiah 20:9).

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Prior to the 2008 Super Bowl,  
CBS News’ *60 Minutes* did an  
exposé on the life of New England  
Patriot quarterback Tom Brady. The  
story focused on Brady’s football  
accomplishments and his celebrity  
status off the field. But in response to  
his success, Brady asked this question:

*Why do I have three Super Bowl rings  
and still think there’s something greater  
out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot  
of people would say, “Hey man, this  
is what it is.” I reached my goal, my  
dream, my life. Man, I think, “God,  
it’s got to be more than this.” I mean  
this isn’t. . . what it’s all cracked up  
to be.*

Now we know that there are some  
who will stoop to teach whatever  
itching ears want to hear. And many  
of those churches will be filled  
to capacity to hear some smiley-  
face sermon with about as much  
substance and nutrition as cotton  
candy. But we have been called to  
preach the word when it is popular  
and when it is not. Alexander  
Whyte wrote, “Never think of  
giving up preaching! The angels  
around the throne envy you and  
your great work.”

When the interviewer asked, “What’s  
the answer?” Brady replied:

*I wish I knew. I wish I knew. I love  
playing football and I love being the  
quarterback for this team. But at the  
same time, I think there are a lot of  
other parts about me that I’m trying  
to find.*

That is not only the cry of Tom  
Brady’s heart. That’s the cry of every  
heart. St. Augustine said that every  
man suffers from an inward famine.  
Man is starving for God. And we  
have the answer! We know where  
the food is! We have the privilege of  
proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ  
that fills the empty heart! We know

that “it is not with perishable things such as silver or gold that man is redeemed from the empty way of life but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” (1 Peter 1:18-19.) There is something deep within that compels us to “Preach the word . . . in season and out of season.” (2 Timothy 4:2.)

Now we know that there are some who will stoop to teach whatever itching ears want to hear. And many of those churches will be filled to capacity to hear some smiley-face sermon with about as much substance and nutrition as cotton candy. But we have been called to preach the word when it is popular and when it is not. Alexander Whyte wrote, “Never think of giving up preaching! The angels around the throne envy you and your great work.”

Now there is one more thing. We understand our great calling. We are privileged to be preachers of the greatest message. And we also understand that our assignment is a weighty one. Addressing the responsibility of leadership and the vulnerability of leaders, one has written, “Men hang heavy weights on thin wires.” We know that to be true. So we ask the question: Will the battles be worth it? We know the sacrifices of ministry. We know the hard work of leadership. We know the temptations. And sometimes we ask, “Is it all worth it?”

Joshua, the Old Testament leader of Israel, was given a heavy assignment. Following the great leader Moses, God charged Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land. Joshua knew the challenges and the risks. Seven groups of people inhabited the Canaan and

**When we are following Christ we can be sure that every battle is worth it. We are leading people to an eternal inheritance. And one day . . . if we do this thing right . . . we will look into his face and he will say, “Welcome home, good and faithful servant.” Yeah, every battle is worth it!**

there would be many battles to fight. Right after crossing the Jordan when Joshua looked at the walled city of Jericho, he had to be asking: How in the world will we conquer such a fortified city? How would he lead God’s people to take the land? How many husbands, fathers, and sons will give their lives for what God has called us to do? Joshua asked the same question we do: Are the battles worth it?

You tell me. Our ministry is one of leading people—empty, hurting, broken, fallen—to inherit the eternal promises of the eternal God. Jesus has gone before, fought and won the battle. He is the One who leads us into the eternal promised land. And as those called to proclaim his message we get to follow him and simply encourage others to come along and follow us as we follow Christ.

When we are following Christ we can be sure that every battle is worth it. We are leading people to an eternal inheritance. And one day . . . if we do

this thing right . . . we will look into his face and he will say, “Welcome home, good and faithful servant.” Yeah, every battle is worth it!

The great pianist Paderewski was holding a concert in a grand hall. A mother took her young son to the concert and, while she was talking to friends as the hall filled with people, he slipped down the aisle, crawled onto the stage, made his way to the piano . . . and started playing *Chopsticks*. The crowd, waiting for the great pianist, was aghast. From the wings, though, Paderewski saw what was taking place, slipped onstage behind the boy and whispered in his ear, “Keep playing . . . don’t stop . . . keep playing.” Paderewski accompanied the boy’s *Chopsticks* with a brilliant harmony that turned this simple piece into a masterpiece.

That’s what God does for us. When we are filled with fear, doubt, and discouragement, he puts his arms around us and says, “Don’t stop . . . keep playing . . . Don’t stop.” When we trust him, he strengthens our frightened hearts, bolsters our feeble efforts, and chases away the discouragement. He can turn a life of *Chopsticks* into a brilliant masterpiece. ■



**Dr. Ronald D. Moore**

*Dr. Ron Moore, Senior Pastor, The Bible Church, McMurray, Pennsylvania and radio teacher with The Journey Radio Ministry*

# Compassion Fatigue

by David L. Ragsdale LPC

## Recovering from the costs of caring

**T**he ministry of “Pastor Burns” has been one marked by the true calling of a shepherd leader. A pastoral caregiver in every way, Burns has touched the lives of many people in his church and community on a very personal basis. Innumerable hospital visits, countless funerals and untold hours in pastoral counseling have established him as a leader in ministry. In his growing congregation the need for his up-close-and-personal style of ministry has grown as quickly as his soon-to-become-mega church.

Some of the funerals he has conducted were for young children, for teenage suicides, for losses from natural disasters that affected the entire community. And, not unlike society at large, his church members have been victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence and other tragedies. In other words, Burns has just about seen it all.

While he continues to rise to these challenges, Pastor Burns has been noticing in himself an increasing sense of fatigue, irritability and anxiety. Contrary to his usual empathetic nature, he has grown weary of listening to traumatic stories; he finds he is unable to leave ministry at work. Replaying events in his mind, he grows restless and weary, even indifferent and emotionally numb. This pastor doesn’t realize it yet but he is on the road to developing a full-blown case of CF, or Compassion Fatigue. Pastor Burns is on the verge (please forgive the pun) of flaming out.

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While a fictitious character, Burns is an example of many of the clients who come to QuietWaters overwhelmed, depressed, even doubting their calling, all due to this type of fatigue. Throughout the world Christian leaders are generally overworked and overextended. While burnout gets a lot of general attention these days, CF is frequently not understood and its conditions under-diagnosed.

While a work-addicted ministry organization is often culpable in reinforcing burnout and boundary problems in its caring leader, CF is frequently that leader’s own fault.

Stretched to the breaking point by their own heroic over-functioning, and lacking a theology of self-care, many caregivers lose their resiliency trying to serve God while running on empty. For some, they just do not realize they are suffering from CF until it’s too late. The costs of caring have added up unchecked, leaving them worn out, cynical and disillusioned.

Burning out can also lead to forms of acting out. Many leaders we see at QuietWaters are facing the consequences of addictive behavior as they have been self-medicating the pain often associated with CF. The longer the symptoms go unnoticed and untreated, the more arduous the road to recovery.

Over the past decade the concept of CF has emerged more frequently in the literature. Webster’s Dictionary defines compassion as “a sympathetic consciousness of others’ distress with a desire to alleviate it.” Pastors, missionaries and mental-health professionals are frequently in close proximity to emotional suffering and trauma. Those who seek to intervene come face-to-face with the ravages of personal, national and global trauma, putting themselves at risk of secondary or *vicarious trauma*, the after affects that come with prolonged exposure. The work of compassion taxes our mental, emotional and spiritual resources. Even the most emotionally resilient caring professional can end up experiencing a “caregiver crisis.”

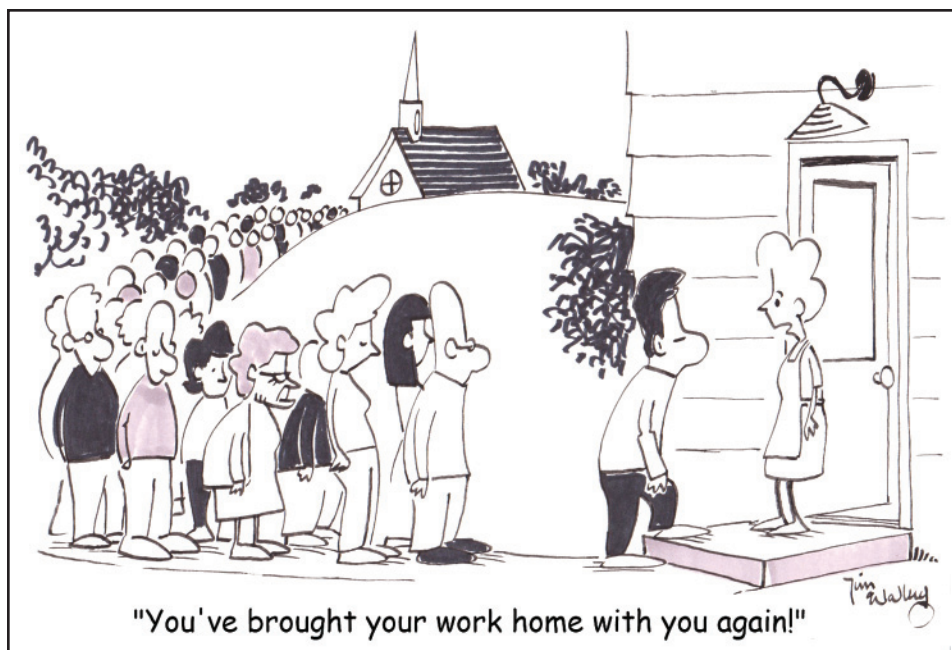


Finishing well in the caring professions requires a prevention/intervention plan. While by no means a comprehensive approach, **I believe every leader who will utilize the seven self-protective strategies discussed below will guard him or herself against the depletion of Compassion Fatigue.** This begins with a working awareness of CF's risks and symptoms.

## Understand the symptoms

It is now more commonly understood that providing medical, psychological or spiritual help to victims of traumatic events can be exceedingly stressful. Nurses, for example, face the emotional demands associated with exposure to death and dying. Rescue and disaster workers who respond to emergency situations may be distressed by suffering, death and body recovery. Christian leaders, pastors, missionaries and chaplains also serve in the midst of lives ravaged by death and dying.

First, we must recognize the early warning signs and accept the reality that CF may be taking a significant toll on our emotional and spiritual well-being. We must also recognize the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), as they will affect the caregiver as well. We are not immune to nightmares, hyper-vigilance, avoidance or a preoccupation with traumas we have witnessed. We listen to peoples' stories of incest, rape, domestic violence and childhood abuse; we validate their feelings and their experiences and we share in



their burden; we bear witness to their victimization. As witnesses and healers, we can't help but take on some of their emotional pain. We may even have pictures in our mind, flashbacks or intense feelings running throughout our bodies. While sympathizing and relating can be energizing, the draining effects are inescapable. Like inhaling hazardous fumes without a mask, the emotionally laden toxic material to which we are exposed will compound over time. Repeated exposures can actually work lasting alterations on our mental functions, leaving a significant impact on a caregiver's feelings, relationships and life.

Consider the following questions; the more of them answered "yes," the more likely CF is an existing or emerging problem.

- I am preoccupied with more than one person I help.
- I find it difficult to separate my private life from my life as a helper.
- I am losing sleep over a person I am trying to help with traumatic experiences.
- I think that I might have been "infected" by another's traumatic stress.

- I feel trapped by my work as a helper.
- Because of my helping, I have felt "on edge" about various things.
- I am increasingly agitated and angry.
- I sometimes feel I just don't care anymore.
- I feel overwhelmed by the amount of work or the size of my caseload.
- As a result of my helping, I have unwanted anxious thoughts.

Fellow caregivers, we must also consider the damage done from dysfunctional organizational conflicts, embattled boards and church splits. These events can batter clergy couples, family systems and entire congregations, leaving them with symptoms of distrust in leaders and cynicism about the Christian life itself.

We must learn to cope with the effects of CF in our personal and professional lives. Knowing the warning signs and symptoms is an essential strategy and, whenever possible, we must take care to avoid the repeated invasion of trauma into our lives.

*(Continued on page 10)*

## Limit your exposure

Early in my counseling career I was a young and naïve practitioner of my new ministry. I would see clients from nine to six and throw in a group-therapy meeting to finish the night. I bounced back the next day with no problem, so I thought.

In a given day, I might see four or five people suffering from major depression, along with several clients experiencing PTSD from childhood abuse or sexual trauma. Little did I know this kind of client load could take such an emotional toll. But, because I was young and fairly resilient, I survived a couple of near burnout experiences. Last year, however—my 30-year mark in ministry—I hit an emotional wall that worried not only myself but others close enough to read the symptoms. With the progressive wear and tear of caregiving as both a counselor and a pastor, I developed a severe case of CF coupled with adrenal fatigue syndrome. With the help of my Board (see “Expand your support,” below), I made some significant attitude changes and schedule adjustments. While I pray my workaholic days are really over, I know that limiting my exposure to trauma is a real key in staying healthy.

Along with adjustments in your work style and becoming more realistic with your expectations, there are also some effective “techniques” good caregivers can learn to protect themselves from over-exposure. You have probably learned the skill of “empathic mirroring,” but try un-mirroring for a change. If you are working with a traumatized person or confronting an emotionally charged situation, end the session well

**While a work-addicted ministry organization is often culpable in reinforcing burnout and boundary problems in its caring leader, CF is frequently that leader's own fault. Stretched to the breaking point by their own heroic over-functioning, and lacking a theology of self-care, many caregivers lose their resiliency trying to serve God while running on empty. For some, they just do not realize they are suffering from CF until it's too late. The costs of caring have added up unchecked, leaving them worn out, cynical and disillusioned.**

before the meeting time is over by purposefully disengaging. Use some “non-attending” body language when you are getting tired as a way of saying “shop's closed” for now.

And reschedule! There is only so much empathy in your caring tank for any given day. If you keep giving and giving as if there's no limit, you send the wrong message to yourself and everyone else. This is just good common sense. You can't keep letting your mind write checks your body will not cash. Since unconscious and unchecked somatic empathy is such a significant factor in producing CF, disengagement cues must be consciously sent to those we are trying to help or we put ourselves at risk. We do not want to send the message that we are limitless; this only enables over-dependency.

## Respect your limits

A number of years ago I got a serious speeding ticket and elected to attend driver's school to reduce my penalty and points. An important lesson I learned in driver's school—along with the one about not speeding—is that a good driver will recognize danger and act appropriately, in time. The thinking behind this reminds me of the Proverb: “The prudent see the danger and hide themselves, the naïve plunge in and are harmed.” There is far too much naivety among caregivers. Christian leaders would do well to discover a mantra that reminds them of the risks of caring and the limits of their own capacity. There's only so much emotional energy in the tank.

Being surrounded by needy, traumatized people all day affected Jesus too. While our Lord was the Son of God he was also the Son of man. He got tired, needed rest, and took time away from the masses to commune with his Father. We see him “withdraw” frequently. Yes, even Jesus had to practice self-care to sustain Himself amid the stress of ministry. He became sad, angry, bewildered and weary like the rest of us. One scene in the gospels that stands out is the healing of the woman with incurable hemorrhaging. After she touched His cloak, the account says Jesus perceived “in Himself that the power proceeding from Him had gone forth.” (Mark 5:30 NASB.) In other words, the omnipotent Son of God was *aware* of a depletion of power because He had been touched by this needy woman who, for many years, had been beyond medical help.





Caregivers who know their limits will practice good self-awareness. Do you even know when your power is tapped, your batteries drained? Do you take appropriate action to withdraw and recharge? Are you having an out-of-body experience while you minister? Being dissociative will hurt you. Denial will sneak up on you. We need to become increasingly self-aware of the power and influence we are both using and losing amid those who are hemorrhaging around us. Failing to respect your limits *can* result from an ego-driven ministry.

## Check your ego

I worked with a burned-out leader once who told me he simply had a hard time resting. I looked into the history of his so called times of R&R and quickly saw the red flags. He had never taken a sabbatical. He described his vacations in terms of just more ministry, making a difference wherever he went.

“I’m going to burn out for Jesus,” would be his legacy. How noble! While “helping victims of Katrina” and “rebuilding lives in Haiti” gave him a needed break from the pulpit, this was *no* vacation. The man’s appetite to make a difference just set him up for more CF.

Christian caregivers love to live in the place where they “walk and don’t grow weary, run and do not faint,” and this is a great promise of scripture. But *while* serving Christ victoriously in the strength of the Spirit, there are times when the best ministry is the caregiver’s paradox: “His strength is perfected in my weakness.” A fully empowered ministry is certainly an

**If we respect the warning lights on the dashboard of our psyche we will secure the timely service our soul needs most; that’s why the blinking light tells us to “service engine soon.” Men, it just doesn’t work to ignore the warning and hope the signal turns off. Ladies, don’t go looking for duct tape to cover it up. If you do you’ll need an overhaul instead of a tune-up. So pull over to the nearest shop and look under your hood. And when you seek help make sure you find a trusted resource for treating CF.**

*ideal* but we must watch out for those idealized ways of looking at ourselves. Being in demand can be intoxicating. “Looking good” to ourselves and others can be a form of idolatry, the worship of our own grandiose self-image. We get enough hero projections from those who need us to come through for them in their crisis.

I realize there are seasons of sacrifice when we serve those traumatized and suffering with no apparent downside to our soul. But, if the stress that goes with that just becomes your new normal, you are setting yourself up for ministry failure. Let me be your therapist for a moment and give you permission to be *tired*, and know that He is God! Embrace your fatigue and ramp up your self-care plan. Steward your weariness by appraising the state of your soul. If not, I’ll give you my phone number; go ahead and schedule your first CF-recovery session.

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## Manage your anger

As we work with those who suffer injustice or experience tragedy, other symptoms of CF may include our disillusionment and anger; the other side of feeling sad is feeling mad. Often stuck in their PTSD, true victims may have trouble healing, or may even *settle* into an identity of victimhood.

If you have ever said (or felt like saying) “get over it” or “grow up” to someone with a chronic problem, it was likely due to your having become flooded with your *own* frustrations in the caregiving role. When those who are suffering seem stuck in their victimization or relish in their martyrdom, a caregiver may find his or her anger welling up. Anger, coupled with psychic numbing, can produce an array of reactions ranging from exasperation to indifference and intolerance, with passive or aggressive forms of resignation or retaliation. When a caregiver finally hits a wall, you can almost hear him or her singing along with Don Henley’s personal-outrage song—*Get over it!*—about victims and their victimhood.

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Out of their own anger, caregiver preachers may be tempted to offer little sermonettes, complete with band-aid bible verses to those with gaping holes in their lives. This can add justifiable anger to the screaming emotions of those who are already suffering. Now you've compounded their problems with a lack of empathy.

To see how ministering to those who perpetually act like victims can trigger a leader's own sense of victimization, let's look at Moses as an example of the classic over-functioning caregiver who finally reaches his own boiling point with both God and his people. Consider my paraphrased interaction between God and Moses (as taken from Numbers 11:11-15), with Moses speaking out of his CF: "Why have You been so hard on me, God? You have laid this impossible burden on me! They are demanding meat, Lord, so *where's the beef?* They are a bunch of babies, God. You expect me to nurse them along, but I would rather *die* first. If You are going to deal with me this way after all I have done for You and them, do me a favor, God, *just kill me!*"

"Just kill me" sounds like rage, doesn't it? In Moses's leadership journey, the hero finally feels like a zero, and the Savior becomes the scapegoat. The caring shepherd finally just doesn't care anymore. While at the end of his ministry career Moses was considered by God to be one of the most humble men on the planet, Moses did not finish as well as he could have because his anger issues kept welling up. Due to that angry incident in the desert, he displeases God and disqualifies himself from the Promised Land in one fateful moment of arrogance. As a tired and bewildered leader, sick of the Israelites' bellyaching, he takes matters into his

**But if you need to vent, you should do a *lament*. Take your raw emotions to the Lord Himself by writing your own psalm of grief and protest.**

**A third of the beloved Psalms are emotionally honest laments, with the authors pouring out their broken, bewildered hearts to God.**

**Share your lament with your spouse or close friends, let them bear witness to your struggles, let that be solace to the raw edges of your CF. This will also protect against the inappropriate effects of anger being released on your people through poor boundaries.**

own hands and, with white-hot fury, twice strikes the rock instead of just speaking to it as God had commanded (Numbers 20:9-13).

This is a picture of a leader acting out his aggression, displeasing the Lord; a caregiver who has hit his own rock wall spiritually and emotionally. What a sad legacy for such a great leader, a servant who has sacrificed so much for his suffering people, only to finish poorly. As CF wears us down in its "sacrifice syndrome," our own anger can get the best of us. In order to manage our anger well we need to be aware of what therapists call *countertransference*. An accepted psychoanalytic term, "countertransference" basically refers to the convoluted relationship of how a counselor feels about a counselee's feelings *toward* him or her.

Our own anger issues are often triggered because we cannot fulfill others' expectations of us to be the "perfect object"—that is, solving all their problems, addressing all their woes. Those who suffer attach themselves to us by an imaginary emotional umbilical cord, so it's no wonder Moses complained to God about feeling like a bad mother. And it's not only anger, but we must become aware of and appropriately manage *all* our feelings in the complex role of caregiver.

Consider guilt. How much of your ministry is guilt- and shame-motivated because you feel you cannot please your people? That may give you further clues to where your anger comes from and how to prevent it. Stop feeling guilty when there is no real guilt. There will be no fuel for your anger then.

Without emotional awareness and discipline, our reactions will put ourselves and others in jeopardy, compromising our ministries and damaging our credibility. But we need safe places and safe people to whom we can express our emotions. The final section on expanding your support systems will help in this regard.

But if you need to vent, you should do a *lament*. Take your raw emotions to the Lord Himself by writing your own psalm of grief and protest. A third of the beloved Psalms are emotionally honest laments, with the authors pouring out their broken, bewildered hearts to God. The authentic and cathartic nature of this form of writing can be a way of laying your soul bare before God and finding refuge in Him for your most difficult emotions. Share your lament with your spouse or close friends, let them bear witness to your



struggles, let that be solace to the raw edges of your CF. This will also protect against the inappropriate effects of anger being released on your people through poor boundaries.

## Create your self-care plan

So instead of letting your emotions get the best of you or being too ego driven in your ministry, leverage your CF into an accountable self-care plan. Make it a life-giving work in progress. Taking good care of yourself can vary a lot with circumstance, season and current stressors. Come up with a good list of “best practices” in your own *soul-care*.

Schedule those visits to your Spiritual Director, and *keep* them. Do an intensive with a psychotherapist. Plan that overdue sabbatical. Hire

a good leadership coach. Treat yourself to a massage and unpack some of that grief you’re carrying in your shoulders. Along with your physician, you might consider adding a personal trainer, chiropractor or other specialists in body-oriented self-care to foster relaxation, fitness and stress reduction. Spend more time with friends that help you laugh. You may be walking around endorphin-deprived under the weight of all that serious ministry.

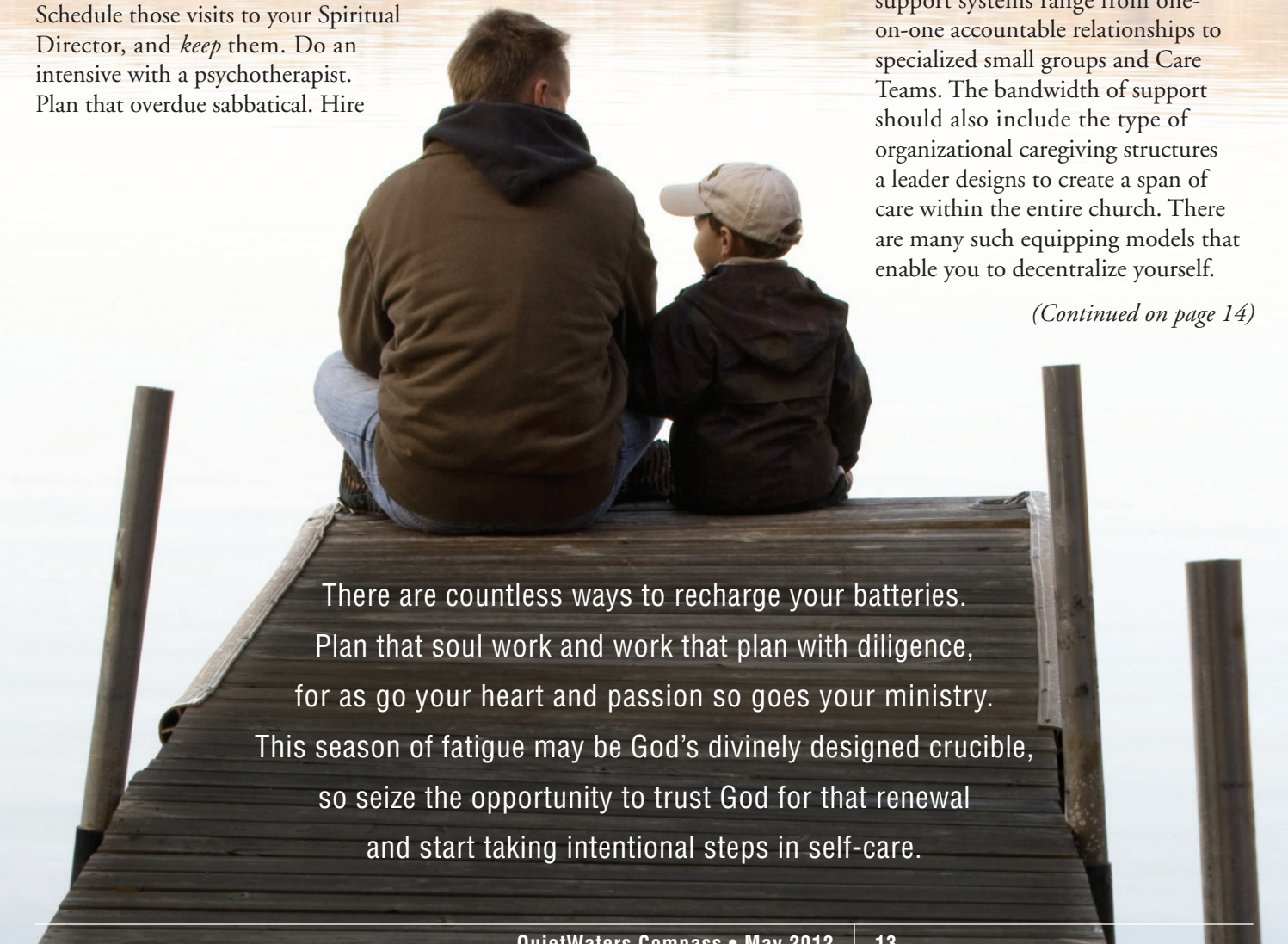
There are countless ways to recharge your batteries. Plan that soul work and work that plan with diligence, for as go your heart and passion so goes your ministry. This season of fatigue may

be God’s divinely designed crucible, so seize the opportunity to trust God for that renewal and start taking intentional steps in self-care. One of the key components of all intensives at QuietWaters is helping leaders write their Growth Plan. Remember that a good plan is only as good as the accountable people with whom we surround ourselves—all the more reason to foster your prevention and recovery with healthy support systems.

## Expand your support

As you write your plan, consider which relationships are needed most for your support. Good personal support systems range from one-on-one accountable relationships to specialized small groups and Care Teams. The bandwidth of support should also include the type of organizational caregiving structures a leader designs to create a span of care within the entire church. There are many such equipping models that enable you to decentralize yourself.

*(Continued on page 14)*



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and start taking intentional steps in self-care.

Forming same-gender leadership-support groups can be an effective way to surround your life with men or women who will help you balance caring for others and caring for yourself. Any group that will help you focus on maintaining boundaries and sustaining your resiliency can be life giving. Just make sure it is not a heavy handed legalistic accountability group where you don't feel safe. Spiritual Care Teams comprised of key couples who focus on keeping marriage and family lives healthy are proven models. In our ministry we are big believers in Care Teams. You may contact the QuietWaters office for further information to help your leaders form these types of teams.

The other day a pastor called asking for my perspective about a complicated family situation in his church. As I listened I could tell he was trying hard to not become personally overwhelmed with all the grief and trauma the family was experiencing, which left them with complicated bereavement issues. During the call it became clear he was planning to refer the family to a good grief counselor in their area. For his sake and that of the needy family, I was relieved to hear they would be in good hands.

This leader's wisdom stands in sharp contrast to pastors who try to rise to such challenges themselves, getting in over their heads only to eventually create a sense of abandonment with those they seek to help. Wise and self-protective leaders are proactive about creating systems and networks

**When dealing with CF, understand the symptoms, limit your exposures, respect your limits, check your ego, manage your anger, create a plan and expand your support.**

of referral to appropriately delegate care-giving beyond their expertise or capacity.

Perhaps you simply perform too *many* funerals, too *many* hospital visits. You may need to consider your options for reducing these types of exposures. If you have a growing church consider adding an associate qualified to share the caregiving load.

And don't forget, you often need to be your own advocate because most boards are neither well acquainted with CF, nor willing to budget the funds to prevent it. Train your deacons and elders to provide this form of ministry. Develop a Caregiving Team or launch a Stephens Ministry. I realize this may be easier said than done for solo pastors in settings that have fewer resources or serve an aging congregation, but nevertheless look for new ways to mobilize others in the task of caregiving. Again, there are proven models working in many churches.

But first you just need to have a Jethro in your life to tell you how to get organized. As we return to the life of Moses we see a leader on the verge of burnout. From sun up to sun down, long lines of needy people wait for wise man Moses to rule on complicated cases. Can you imagine the stories of trauma and injustice?

He's burning the candle at both ends when Jethro confronts him, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out." (Exodus 18:17.) You know the rest of the story: Jethro, the leadership-team designer, builds a caregiving infrastructure that meets the needs of an entire nation. Moses became decentralized. His ministry shelf-life grew. His life was saved through the sage advice of a good father-in-law. He recognized the danger and acted appropriately in time.

Systems are a beautiful thing! Go forth, find your own Jethro and implement a model. You will not only protect yourself from CF but you will set the stage for finishing well. Plus you will be teaching your church to really care for itself, instead of you having to over-function in the role of sole provider.

When dealing with CF, understand the symptoms, limit your exposures, respect your limits, check your ego, manage your anger, create a plan and expand your support. If you utilize these seven protective strategies you will be able to sustain an empowered ministry, the ongoing work of compassion that will bless your people for years to come. ■



**David L. Ragsdale, LPC**

*David L. Ragsdale, LPC, is Vice President of Counseling and Team Training at QuietWaters Ministries.*



# QuietWaters Pastor's Retreat

## *at Glen Eyrie*

June 3–5, 2012



The QuietWaters retreat at Glen Eyrie in Colorado Springs, Colorado is designed for Christian leaders and their spouses to find rest and renewal from the challenges and stress of working in ministry.

During the retreat, the QuietWaters team of expert Christian counselors will guide you through a weekend of soul care and marriage strengthening. Receive a biblical perspective on relevant life issues: finishing well as a resilient leader, leading and managing yourself, being missional in marriage and in ministry, and other useful tools for finding balance, investing in and prioritizing relationships.

**Be Renewed • Get Recharged • Leave Refreshed**

**About QuietWaters:** QuietWaters is addressing an urgent Kingdom problem. Pastors, missionaries, and Christian leaders face greater odds today than ever before. Many who began their work with fervor and idealism have lost their joy in ministry and are experiencing burnout.

QuietWaters is a ministry focused on the spiritual, emotional and physical health of Christian Leaders and is dedicated to facilitating and encouraging transformational change at the core of Christian Leaders' life. It is their desire to see men and women strengthen in their families, life, work, leisure and in all of their relationships. Glen Eyrie is excited to have QuietWaters facilitate this marriage retreat that will increase the impact that ministry leaders have on the Kingdom.

### Topics and themes to include:

- Finishing Well as Resilient Leaders
- Leading and Managing Yourself
- Being Missional in Marriage and Ministry
- Collaborative Skills and Marriage Boundaries
- Biblical and Practical Self-Care

### You will also receive tools including:

- An approach to forming a growth plan
- A model for clarifying your Marriage Mission
- 5 Styles in Conflict Management
- A plan for Marriage Staff Meetings
- Methods for forming Spiritual Care Team
- A map for refining role clarity

**This retreat is intended for a Christian leaders and their spouse and is well suited for:**

- Pastors
- Church Elders
- Leaders of Christian Organizations
- Missionaries
- Chaplains
- Lay Leaders in the Church

### Pricing and Registration

Package includes 3 nights lodging, all meals, conference fee, gratuities, and conference materials.

Premier room: \$775.00 per couple plus tax  
Deluxe room: \$730.00 per couple plus tax  
Standard room: \$655.00 per couple plus tax

Call 1-877-488-8787 to register by phone!

Ask about Come Early, Stay Late options!

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**“He leads me beside quiet waters.” Psalm 23:2**



#### **QuietWaters Ministries**

The comprehensive ministry to pastors, missionaries and other Christian leaders and their families.



#### **QuietWaters Leadership Counseling Intensives**

A one or two-week counseling program to create transformational change in the Christian leader conducted at our Colorado Retreat Center.



#### **QuietWaters Leadership Retreats**

Family, marriage, and church leadership retreats with internationally recognized speakers to encourage and edify ministry couples and lay leaders.



#### **QuietWaters Ministry Assistance Program—CareLine**

Professional and confidential, 24/7 phone consulting for pastors and other Christian leaders provided by contract to denominations and ministries