

# Rejuvenation for Church Leaders

## 10 practical ways to refresh your soul

By Skye Jethani

How does a soul find rejuvenation? That is the question LEADERSHIP JOURNAL asked dozens of church leaders. Here are 10 things they have done to benefit their souls. You might just find something that will work for you too.

**Take a walk.** Regularly taking a long walk can quiet your soul and help you draw near to God. Many pastors report using walks to internalize their sermons and prepare their souls to preach.

**Pray the daily offices.** In the early centuries, Christians gathered at designated times during the day for prayer. These prayer times, known as “offices,” are still practiced by many believers today. With the aid of a prayer book, you can pray alone knowing that others across the globe are sharing in your prayers at the same time.

**Say no.** People are always clamoring for our time and energy. Learning to say no, even to good ministries and opportunities, will give the soul room to breathe and find rejuvenation.

**Fast from media, even ministry books.** The amount of information available today is never-ending. But it’s not only Facebook and Twitter that take up our time. Even ministry books can have negative effects. While they can clearly be beneficial, sometimes we need to rest from filling our heads with new insights and the pressure to implement them.

**Exercise.** Many pastors told us regular exercise is critical to the health of the soul as well as the body. And research has shown that a healthy body positively impacts a person’s emotional and mental capacities.

**Laugh.** One leader says, “After a difficult Sunday at church I like to come home and watch my DVD collection of Tom and Jerry cartoons. The slapstick humor helps me fight the temptation to take ministry, or myself, too seriously.”

**Find a spiritual director.** Not exactly therapy, not quite coaching, a spiritual director offers something else: a God’s-eye view of your soul. Dieter Zander, pastor of spiritual formation at Bay Marin Community Church in Novato, California, visits his director, Father Tom, once a month. “Just the discipline of going to him and submitting to his insights has been a rich experience for me,” Zander says.

**Meditate on the Lord’s Prayer.** The Eastern Church has a tradition known as hesychasm. This is the practice of repeating a short prayer, such as the Lord’s Prayer, over and over. Try sitting in silence for five minutes, and then say the Lord’s Prayer reflectively aloud. Afterward, center your thoughts on one word or phrase and allow it to inspire your own prayers.

**Begin a hobby.** When we asked pastors and church leaders how they refresh their souls, many said they rely on a hobby unrelated to ministry. Some hobbies were highly physical, like surfing or rock climbing. Others were more contemplative and creative, like model-building or painting or writing poetry.

**Write an encouraging letter.** Proverbs 12:25 says, “Anxiety weighs down the human heart, but a good word cheers it up.” The proverb does not specify whether the benefit is for the heart that receives the good word or the heart that gives it. Take time to reflect on a person who has blessed your life and ministry. After thanking God for him or her, write the person a letter of gratitude and encouragement. The exercise might bring cheer to both of your hearts.

1. What positive experiences have you had with these activities?
2. Which activity would you most like to make a regular part of your week?
3. What would you have to do in order to regularly participate in some of the activities listed above?

—SKYE JETHANI is the executive editor of Leadership Journal; copyright 2007 by Christianity Today. This article originally appeared in Leadership Journal.