

# Building a Sustainable Leadership Life

## Lesson 4: Rest and recreation

Welcome to Lesson 4 of Building a Sustainable Leadership Life.

In this particular lesson I'm going to talk about R&R - Rest and Recreation. It think it's worthy of noting that in Genesis 2:2 we're told that on the 7th day God had finished his work of creation, so you know what he did? He took a day off. So He rested from all of His works.

So let me give you some tips on rest and recreation because we're talking about lasting the long haul. We're talking about building a sustainable leadership life that will see us decade after decade serving Christ with joy and with strength even through times of complexity, difficulty and trial and things that even confuse and frustrate us, I believe we can last the long haul.

So let me give you some very pragmatic tips about how to build a sustainable leadership life through rest and recreation.

### 1. Take a day off

The first one is take a day off every single week. Now this is a specific direction to pastors who can have a tendency at times to be workaholics. To learn to take a day off.

Sunday, as much as it is a day where you worship, it's also a day where you're labouring, you're in your vocation, your calling, you're preaching, you're shepherding, you're caring, you're doing all those things related to pastoral ministry on Sunday. Therefore you need to take another day off during the week to make up for that massive output.

I think also for people who are Christian leaders, but don't operate in a pastoral ministry, I think it's important that you take a day off from work every single week and maybe if you're heavily involved in volunteering in your church, have another day that's your day, that's your family day, that's your marriage day or for yourself, time out.

Let me talk to pastors in terms of a day off. For many years I took a Monday off but over the years I changed that to a Friday because I found that if I had nothing on a Saturday, I'd actually get a full weekend. A Friday and a Saturday. I'd get a weekend like a lot of people in my church get a weekend off from work. I never felt guilty about that, I didn't feel bad about that.

Taking a day off is vital. If the Lord took a day off after 6 days of creation, who are we to think that we can work for 7 days a week and sustain our leadership life. It's impossible.

## 2. Turn off your phone

Here's another idea. This is going to shock and horrify a lot of people.

Turn off your phone for 36 hours every single week. This is my habit in pastoring. Thursday night I finish work, at the end of the day or after a meeting, my phone would go off and not come back on until Saturday morning. I'd leave it off Thursday night, once I was kind of finished with work, all of Friday, Friday night and Saturday morning I'd turn it back on and deal with anything that was on there.

So with my phone off I wasn't tempted to get into emails, into all areas of work life. I was able to switch it off, put it away somewhere and forget about it. If anyone wanted me for a disaster or a crisis, trust me they would get a hold of me.

I think those of you who are volunteering in the church as well, turn your phone off for 24-36 hours a week. Detach from that digital world and just pretend it's the 1980s again! I think it's a great idea to do to help rest and recreation get strengthened in our life to make us more sustainable.

## 3. Annual holidays

One of the shocks in the over 100 consults I've done in churches in the last 6 years is the number of pastors and Christian leaders who don't take good annual vacations and holidays.

I think, let me talk again to pastors, you need a minimum of a 3 week block every year out of your church. The adrenaline build up you have within your physical frame needs a good 10 days of holidays to unwind you and unravel you, in a good healthy way unravel you, in such a way that you actually begin to relax. I don't think pastors actually relax within 7 days - 10 days of their holidays.

If you have to straight back to work after 10 days off you're really not detoxing as it were. You're not really unwinding and therefore a good three week holiday minimum, 3 weekends off, yep get someone else to preach, the church will be fine. It will be there when you get back, trust me! Those problems will not have solved themselves. Well maybe they might with you away but who knows!

Take good annual holidays. Absolutely vital.

## 4. Positive distractions

It's vital for R&R to have positive distractions. What do I mean by positive distractions? Well I love reading crime novels and I'll read them during my holidays, during the year. My day off, I'll dive into a novel. I can spend hours reading novels and just love it because it's got nothing to do with church or ministry. I love reading them.

I also like photography so I get into photography every now and then through the year. Generally in my holidays but at other times of the year I'll get into photography.

What's your positive distraction? What's your hobby? Pick it up. Maybe its bike riding, maybe it's jigsaws, maybe it's going to the movies. Get a positive distraction that gets you away from the run of mill of your life.

For those of you in ministry it gets you out of church ministry activities. Don't worry there's plenty of time to do that during the week. Those of you who are volunteering in a key leadership role and have a work place that's a bit stressful, find something totally different that you can do, that renews you, recreates energy within you.

## 5. Friends

Friends. I think friends are vital for rest and recreation. Hanging out, talking, sharing, holidaying together, chilling together, having a meal or a movie together. Absolutely vital in your life of getting rest and recreation through your friends.

## Next steps

### Diarise a day off

Diarise a weekly work free day off, 24 hours where you don't do anything related to your work. Treat it as a following of God. On the 7th day he had a break, you're going to have a break every 7 days.

### Turn your phone off

Experiment with turning your phone off for 24 or 36 hours a week. Just do an experiment. See what happens. Live on the edge with your phone off!

### Book a holiday

Book a 3 week holiday. Have a really serious break from your work or ministry.

### Audit your positive distractions

Also I'd like you to do an audit of your positive distractions. Do you have them? Do you have enough of them? Do you give yourself to them regularly enough?

## Have a meal with a friend

Ring up a friend and have a meal with them. Go and hang out for lunch or dinner or breakfast and just talk about stuff and life. It will refresh you, it will rest you, and it will recreate for you that emotional energy you need.

So there you go, Lesson 4 - rest and recreation is vital in building a sustainable leadership life.