

# The Seven Deadly Siphons

*Reasons we lose enthusiasm.*

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Loss of spiritual passion seems to be the inevitable result of:

1. **Words without action.** We are tempted to think that saying something actualizes it. We have a momentary feeling of spirituality when we talk about wanting to pray more or "have more time in the Word."
2. **Busyness without purpose.** Ministry produces activities, programs, conversations. If our choices of time-use are not disciplined by call and purpose, our energies become like a lazy, shallow river.
3. **Calendars without a Sabbath.** A datebook filled with appointments but absent of significant hours (days) of quiet and reflection—written in first—is an abomination (an old and harsh word) to the God of the Bible, who said, "Six days you shall labor ... the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God."
4. **Relationships without mutual nourishment.** Pastors tend to be acquainted with too many people but know too few people. The spiritual masters have told us for centuries that without soul-friends, we won't gain spiritual momentum.
5. **Pastoral personality without self-examination.** Too much ministry is built on unresolved anger, unhealthy needs for approval, and the instinct to control. Failing to explore our soul for unwholeness ultimately takes its toll.
6. **Natural giftedness without spiritual power.** A pastor can go a considerable distance in ministry with catchy words, people skills, political savvy, and a facility for organizational dynamics. But kingdom work demands qualities that only a filled-up soul can offer.
7. **An enormous theology without an adequate spirituality.** A pastor cannot represent a view of reality that includes Creation, evil, reconciliation and conversion, sacrificial service, and eternity—a mind-boggling expanse of conviction—and have a spiritual-exercise regimen that is pea-size in contrast. A great theology demands a great spirituality.

—Gordon MacDonald

# Seven Secrets of Stress Management

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*Then Jesus said, "Let's get away from the crowds for a while and rest." There were so many people coming and going that Jesus and his apostles didn't even have time to eat. (Mark 6:31, NLT)*

Jesus experienced enormous stress and pressure, yet it didn't seem to disturb his peace of mind. In spite of opposition, constant demands, and little privacy, his life reflected a calm sense of balance. What was his secret?

1. \_\_\_\_\_: **Know who you are (John 8:12)**  
18 times Jesus publicly defined himself. There was no doubt in his mind as to who he was. If you are unsure of your identity, you'll allow others to pressure you into their molds. Trying to be someone you're not causes stress!
2. \_\_\_\_\_: **Know who you want to please (John 5:30)**  
You can't please everyone. Even God can't do that. Just about the time you get Crowd A happy, Crowd B will be upset with you. Jesus never let fear of rejection manipulate him. No one can pressure you without your permission.
3. \_\_\_\_\_: **Set clear goals (John 8:14)**  
Jesus said, "I know where I came from and where I am going." Preparation prevents pressure but procrastination produces it. You work by either priorities or pressures.
4. \_\_\_\_\_: **Focus on one thing at a time (Luke 4:42-44)**  
You can't chase two rabbits at the same time! Jesus knew how to handle interruptions without being distracted from his primary goal.
5. \_\_\_\_\_: **Don't try to do everything yourself (Mark 3:14)**  
We get tense when we feel it all depends on us. Jesus enlisted 12 disciples. Don't allow perfectionism or the fear that others may do a better job keep you from involving others in the task.
6. \_\_\_\_\_: **Make a habit of prayer (Mark 1:35)**  
No matter how busy Jesus got, he found time to get alone to pray every day. A daily quiet time is a great stress decompression chamber. Use this time to talk to God about your pressures and problems, evaluate your priorities, and discover the rules for successful living by reading the Bible.
7. \_\_\_\_\_: **Take time to enjoy life (Mark 6:30-31)**  
Balance is the key to stress management. Work must be balanced with fun and worship.

