



SPIRITUAL VITALITY

CHURCH PRACTICES SERIES

OCTOBER 2022



GTA Region



WELCOME

Over the last few years serving as GTA Regional Director in the Western Ontario District, it became clear that there were some common challenges facing church leaders in the Greater Toronto Area.

As a result, we decided to develop The Church Practices Series to assist our leaders in addressing these challenges in their unique context.

In the following few pages, you will find links to interviews with those with an academic perspective on these challenges and those who have personally worked to address them. In addition, you will find links to resources and a curated summary of what we have seen in our research.

We hope this package helps spark conversation as we work together to see our region impacted for God.

Joel Spiridigliozzi with Jonathan Gallo



INTERVIEWS

WATCH / LISTEN HERE: <https://vimeo.com/756541439/b65adeaa45>



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SPIRITUAL VITALITY

We all experience challenges that affect our spiritual life. We must be honest about our challenges, use the available tools, and reach out for help.

EXTERNAL CHALLENGES OF SPIRITUAL VITALITY

There are several challenges to maintaining spiritual freshness. Here are a few external challenges we might face. Take a moment to outline some of the challenges specific to you.

Expectations

We all face the expectations of those on our staff, our board, our congregation, and the greater community. Sometimes these expectations are expressed, and sometimes they are not. Here are a few: the programs we ought to start or stop; what we should have or not said in our latest sermon; how we ought to behave, dress, or talk; what our political leaning ought to be; how we should be involved in our community; how we ought to lead.

Internal Struggle

Sometimes, churches deal with struggles internally: polarizing views that divide people; competition for power and prominence; jealousy over who gets to do what; legalism vs. licentiousness; and hurting people who hurt people.

Pressure

The pressure to perform can challenge our spiritual vitality—the need to grow and manage church buildings, assets, and finances. The need to find, manage, care for, and recruit church staff. Sunday attendance, volunteer involvement, discipleship activity, and being active in outreach and caring for people in need and offering enough pastoral visitation and counseling.

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

In addition to the challenges we face in leading a church, we can deal with personal challenges that affect our spiritual vitality.

Finances

Personal financial challenges can place extreme pressure on a leader. In many cases, ministry compensation might not be enough to service debt or the cost of living. As a result, leaders are forced to hold multiple jobs and fear upsetting the local church environment over the fear of losing ministry compensation.



Relationships

Stress in marriage and nuclear or extended family can challenge our spiritual vitality. Sometimes, church-related issues can add pressure to our close relationships. Personal loneliness and the lack of trustworthy friendships can also compound these issues.

Physical Health

Our health and caring for the health of loved ones can cause stress on our spiritual vitality. It is often hard to maintain spiritual energy to care for the spiritual needs of others when you are personally dealing with these types of challenges.

Emotional Health

We all know that trauma of all kinds, whether we have gone through counseling or healing prayer, can affect us when we experience challenges in the local church context. Situations can trigger us to fight, flee, withdraw, or seek relief in unhealthy ways.

WHAT WE CAN DO

Not only do we need to be aware of the challenges to our spiritual vitality, but we also need to be aware of the different proactive and reactive approaches to these challenges.

Prioritize Personal Quiet Time

With all the demands of ministry and life, scheduling our devotional time as a non-negotiable appointment in our calendar cannot be underestimated. Personal devotion time helps us hear God for ourselves and obtain "fresh manna" from Him. This must be a separate sermon/devotional preparation time for ministry.

Sabbath

Intentionally making it a priority to rest from work and ministry is not only a Biblical principle we need to advance in our churches but model in our own lives. Rest seems impossible with all our demands until we prioritize creating margin and pushing back on expectations.

Church Context

We are called to lead in developing healthy churches where authenticity is accepted. Moving a church to a healthy space can take time and be challenging. Our [Regenerate Process](#) can help you with this, including help with mediation in times when severe conflict is present. If you are dealing with a specific challenge, reach out to your section pastor or regional director for help. We want no one left behind.



Grow in Leadership

As individuals, our first role in leading is learning to lead ourselves: to understand who we are created to be; to learn to establish boundaries; to find inner healing from life's hurts; to manage time and priorities; to get a grasp on finances and ways to increase income and reduce expenses, and managing our personal life. At the WOD, we have specific courses to help grow in these areas.

<https://wodistrict.org/here-to-serve/leadership-resources/>

Intentional Relationships

Take advantage of connecting and building mutual relationships with other pastors in section meetings. These connections help bring us into authentic relationships with others with whom we can walk and walk with us. Building relationships with pastors outside our context takes intentionality and is crucial to developing a personal support structure.

Counseling

At the WOD, we have resources for all our credential holders to experience personal and confidential professional Christian counseling. Counseling is a way to help work through individual, marriage, or family challenges as they arise. Counseling helps us open to ways we can see trauma healed and managed. For more information, go to <https://wodistrict.org/here-to-serve/counselling/>

Coaching

At the WOD, we can connect our credential holders with a certified coach who can help build accountability to help us balance life's demands.

<http://www.leadershipcoachingcanada.com>

Support Groups

Support groups are another way to help work through different internal issues we are dealing with. Christian Twelve Step, Celebrate Recovery, Freedom Sessions, GriefShare, and other programs for pastors are available both online and in person in our communities.

Spiritual Director

A spiritual director can help us in our spiritual quest to discern God's voice and presence. Our [Spiritual Direction Team at the WOD](#) can help you find a spiritual director who can work with you.

Have a story or experience that you would like to share? Section meetings are a perfect place to debrief. We would also love to hear from you and help pass on what you have learned.

