



MY FIRST 90 DAYS IN MINISTRY

How to make a splash
without getting all wet

MY FIRST 90 DAYS IN MINISTRY

How to Make a Splash Without
Getting All Wet



Loveland, Colorado
group.com



Group resources really work!

This Group resource incorporates our R.E.A.L. approach to ministry. It reinforces a growing friendship with Jesus, encourages long-term learning, and results in life transformation, because it's:

Relational

Person-to-person interaction enhances spiritual growth and builds Christian friendships.

Experiential

What we experience through action and discussion sticks with us up to 9 times longer than what we simply hear or read.

Applicable

The aim of ministry is to equip people to be both hearers and doers of God's Word.

Lifelong

Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.



My First 90 Days in Ministry

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Introduction

Welcome to the wonderful world of ministry!

No doubt about it—your next three months will be filled with many firsts. We'd like to walk next to you during this exciting time. We'd like to be your partner in ministry and help you make the most of the next 90 days.

Why? We've been "doing ministry" for decades now. We've learned what works and what doesn't. And during that time we've worked closely with many of the movers and shakers in the field. In fact, we've done a bit of moving and shaking ourselves!

This little book contains lots of the pearls we've discovered along the way. Practical tips to help you manage your ministry, balance your life, and navigate the unknown waters on the horizon.

Think of us as your friends. We're on call and ready to help. And think of this book as your ministry primer. Your scrapbook. And the memoir of your first 90 days in ministry.

Congratulations!

Fondly,

Your friends at Group Publishing

Your First Day: Getting Your Feet Wet

OK, this is it.

This is what you've been waiting for, studying for, praying for—your first day on the job!

Excited? You bet.

Nervous? Probably.

Ready to jump in and change the ministry world? Possibly. But first, take time for these three important steps:

- 1 Find the bathroom.
- 2 Find the coffee pot.
- 3 Find a handy place to keep this book. You'll refer to it often during the next 90 days.

All set? Great! Turn the page and let's get started.

MY JOURNAL PAGE

Why Are You Here?

Do you remember why you wanted to work in ministry in the first place? Write what you remember about that time—about what prompted you toward ministry.

What were your goals at that time?

What were my first ministry goals and dreams?

Now that I'm ready to begin, what do I hope to accomplish?

What is my definition of a *successful* ministry?

Ideas:

Date:

Is God in Your Goals?

One thing that we've heard from seasoned pastors over the years is the need to keep God in your goals. Without God, you'll accomplish nothing of value. Without God, your work will be in vain.

The key to success? Keep God at the center of your work, your day, your life. Read your Bible. Pray. Then read and pray some more.

God is looking for a friendship with you—really! It's easy to think that ministry and discipleship is all about teaching and communicating facts about God. But the heart of ministry and discipleship is your own deep, loving friendship with God that draws you closer to God and transforms you from the inside out.

So even if you find yourself on the church payroll now, remember that God isn't your employer—God is your friend!

"Through Jesus, we enter into a relationship with God that's joyful and fulfilling, not one that's all about duty and drudgery."

—Friends of God: The Discipleship Experience

It's time to get started. With God, you can accomplish great things for his kingdom!

"So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God."

—Romans 5:11

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Take the Plunge: Tips From Seasoned Swimmers

Standing on a diving board, looking down at that expanse of water is kind of like starting your ministry. You're about to plunge into a new environment. It can be a little dizzying, but also exhilarating.

What are three words that describe how you feel right now, as you're ready to take the plunge?

To help you dive gracefully into your new role, we've compiled these practical tips from some of the seasoned swimmers we've worked with over the years.

Find Some Friends

Of anyone in the building, the folks on your church's building maintenance team need to become your best friends—soon.

They'll be the ones to talk to about painting that ghastly gray wall.

They can help you decide if carpet or tile would be better for the preschool room, and whether you can afford either.

They can help you remove that sagging ceiling tile right over your desk.

These talented people will be worth their weight in gold in your ministry. Buy them coffee. Bring them snacks. Thank them profusely.

And then they can introduce you to your next best friends—the technology team!

In today's world, using technology well can help you excel (it's a joke; get it?) in managing your time, your budget, your goals, your staff—as well as letting you look like a star in your presentations.

Find your techie team and make your introductions. (Coffee and pastries wouldn't hurt, either.)

Start Slowly

You're raring to go. Right off the block, you see things you want to change. Things you want to implement. Things you can't wait to try.

Advice from the trenches?

Slow down. Dream big. Start small.

Test the waters.

Get the feel of your job before remodeling the entire ministry.

Get to know your boss...your colleagues.

Get to know your budget.

Be realistic in your expectations.

Once you've assessed the situation and you're ready to begin, consider the following.

Prayer

Make sure that the changes you propose line up with God's plans for your ministry. Pray for guidance.

"Do trust God for growth. Don't rely on yourself."

—Thom & Joani Schultz, *Don't Just Teach...Reach!*

Safety

Your first change, if necessary, should be made in the interest of safety. Depending on your ministry, consider these questions.

- Have you performed background checks on all staff and volunteers?
For more information click link. [Shepherd's Watch](#)
- Do you have a top-notch check-in system for children?
- Do you have adults in the hallways as a "presence"?
- Are your grounds safe? How about your vehicles?
- Do you have all the proper legal forms on hand for your activities?

When it comes to making your church both safe and welcoming, the Shepherd's Watch Safe and Secure Church kit can help! Your church doesn't need to seem like an armed fortress to be safe. This comprehensive, ministry-focused church security kit helps you recruit, train, and equip a safety and security team that both protects and serves your congregation.

Plus! You can keep your ministry safe and secure with Shepherd's Watch Background Checks. It's critical to take steps to protect those in your church's care. Properly screening your staff and volunteers is an important step in that process! With Shepherd's Watch Basic Membership, you receive a monthly safety newsletter, videos for volunteer safety training, and articles and forms to use with your team.

Timing

When is the right time to implement your change? Do you have all the pertinent information you need to make a good decision? Have you checked with the people your change will affect, and gotten their input?

Church Policy

Does your proposed change line up with church policy? With your pastor's vision? Check to make sure.

Hopefully God has called you to ministry for the long haul. So you don't have to change the world right away. It takes time to build a team, build trust, and build a plan.

Caveat: After considering the above, realize that some immediate changes may be necessary. If sound biblical teaching is being compromised, make a change. If it's a matter of safety, make a change. If you face something immoral, make a change.

Otherwise, take it slowly. There's a time for every change you envision.

"For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven."

—Ecclesiastes 3:1

Three

Grab Your Goggles— You Made the Team!

In the corporate world you hear all kinds of talk about being a team player. Well, it's no different in ministry. Being a team player means that you have the mentality to work well with others, and to commit with others to a common goal. Jesus' disciples were the first ministry team, you know!

But being a member of a team also provides perks that you could never find on your own.

Develop a Dream Team to...Plan

Joani Schultz, Chief Creative Officer at Group Publishing, knows all about dream teams. She developed a children's ministry team at her church.

First, the church announced a meeting open to anyone who was interested in the kids of the church. (Who wouldn't want to attend, right?) She said, "Come dream with us!"

At the meeting, they did just that. What important Bible truths did they want to teach kids? What might that teaching look like? How could they best reach kids?

From that meeting, they developed a core group of volunteers, who in turn funneled into a leadership team. One important component of the final leadership Dream Team was that two people represented each area of children's ministry. No one person was solely responsible for an area or program—there was always a pair. So no one felt alone or overwhelmed.

It was like a ministry buddy system. If scuba divers do it, why can't we? Plus, Jesus sent his disciples out two by two, so the buddy system must work!

The team then got down to the "how to" practical business of developing a children's education program. When it came time to choose a curriculum, the team had already defined its goals—they just had to choose a program that delivered.

The Unveiling

After the Dream Team had decided on a new approach to children's education, it was time to unveil their plan to the congregation. Why? Because it was important for the whole church to see how children's ministry fit in with the church doctrine and vision. And it was good for the whole church to know what was going on in the kids' program and to feel good about it. (This approach applies to changes in any ministry area.)

Predictably, Joani had a creative way to announce the Dream Team and the changes they were making. Each duo came forward with a prop that represented their area. The children's Christmas program leaders carried a gift box wrapped in Christmas paper. The nursery leaders carried an actual baby (yes, it belonged to one of the nursery leaders).

You get the picture. It was a fun and memorable way to introduce the team to the congregation. It was a good way for the team to make a positive first impression. It was an affirmation for the team.

And it provided a natural opportunity to invite participation. Joani ended the presentation by saying, "If you want to get connected in children's ministry, we'd love to have you!" Then she gave contact information and arranged convenient entry points into the ministry.

Hint: Never, ever pass up a chance to ask for volunteers! For more on volunteers, check out chapter 5.

"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."

—Ephesians 2:10

Develop a Dream Team to...Share Responsibility

You have an obligation to work hard in your ministry. But that doesn't mean you need to—or should—work alone.

You can't do it all in ministry. If you try, you'll burn out. It's that simple.

Part of your job is to equip others in the work of the Lord. Doing so faithfully will help you avoid burnout, will allow others to do the work God planned for them, will build ministry ownership, and will make your ministry stronger.

Here are a few tips to help along the way:

Prioritize

God gave you unique talents and skills. Identify them. Use and strengthen them. You've heard it before: What can *only you* do?

"Less is more. When you have the discipline to do less, you move past teaching and end up reaching."

—Thom & Joani Schultz, *Don't Just Teach...Reach!*

Delegate

After you've determined what only you can do, find others who can do the things you can't. There are people waiting in the wings who want to help, who can help, who God designed to help. Let them. (But remember to check in regularly with those people. You're still responsible for the tasks you delegate.)

"Delegated volunteers *must* ask. They're not empowered to act on their own. Empowered volunteers *don't* have to ask. They make decisions, solve problems, and create solutions without running every question up the chain of command."

—Jonathan McKee & Thomas W. McKee,
The New Breed: Understanding and Equipping the 21st Century Volunteer

Manage Your Time

- Write down and evaluate how you spend your time. Too many meetings? (You can do something about that if you're the one calling the meetings. Even if you're not, you may be able to bow out of a few.) Too much time on the phone? (Are all your calls essential? If not, limit them.)
- Is your time gobbled up by e-mails? Designate only one or two times a day to read and respond to e-mails and text messages.
- Get a good day planner. Or make a habit of entering tasks and meetings into your digital calendar (with reminders). When you commit a task to your schedule, you're less likely to get sidetracked.
- Determine when during the day you're most effective. Then use that time for your most challenging tasks.

Develop a Dream Team to...Offer Support

Whether you call them mentors, coaches, or just good friends, you'll need people to turn to for support. In the secular business and health worlds, you can find lots of resources that explain the benefits of having an intentional support system.

But the Bible said it first, of course. Consider Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:

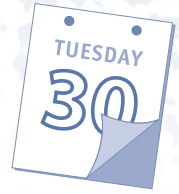
“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

Develop your support network. It might include pastors from other churches, your senior pastor, or faithful friends. The key ingredient is that whoever you choose must be willing to be brutally honest with you—and you must be willing to listen.

These relationships can help you through tough times, re-energize you, counsel you, and help you keep your priorities straight. And then you can turn around and help someone else!

Proverbs 27:17

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.”



Stop. Think. Write.

My First 30 Days: What I've Learned So Far...

Ideas:

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing.

Date:

A single horizontal dashed line for writing the date.

Swim Lessons: The Best Teaching Tools

Once your dream team has helped you formulate a plan for your ministry, it's time to dive in and decide what teaching materials you'll use in your ministry.

Ultimately, it will be your responsibility to choose the resources and to defend your choice, both financially and for content. So you'd better know what to look for in a good curriculum or other teaching tool.

If there's one thing we know here at Group Publishing, it's how to reach and teach people. We've done exhaustive research. We've done more focus groups than we can count. We field test our products and we *know* they work.

So we're confident that if you use one of our resources, your audience will learn. (And you'll look like a genius!) But even if you don't choose one of our products, make sure the teaching tools you choose address the following.

Keep it R.E.A.L.

What's R.E.A.L.? Thought you'd never ask.

Relational.

Learner-to-learner interaction enhances learning and builds Christian friendships. Isn't that what you want from a resource?

Experiential.

What learners experience through discussion and action sticks with them many times longer than what they simply hear or read. When learners experience emotion during an activity, they will automatically remember it—it's how our brains work.

Applicable.

The aim of Christian education is to equip learners to be both hearers and doers of God's Word. Good resources include ways for learners to apply the Bible truths they've learned to everyday life.

Lifelong

Experiences transform the heart, moving faith beyond the walls of church and into everyday life for years to come.

Ask the Right Questions

Make sure that the resources you choose ask effective questions. There are questions, and then there are questions.

Good questions make people in your audience think before they answer. Good questions don't let people slip by with the expected "right" answers. Here are a few tips to help you evaluate the questions in resources.

- Good questions can't be answered with a "yes" or "no."
- Good questions are open-ended.
- Good questions don't have one "right" answer.
- Good questions aren't wordy.
- Good questions involve emotions.

Those are just a few examples of what to look for in a great teaching tool. There are lots of other qualities to be on the lookout for, but we don't have the space to cover them here.

The team at Group would love to help you discern the best ways to teach and the best resources to help you. Visit the "[Contact Us](#)" page at [group.com](#) to receive customer support, view frequently asked questions, or connect with one of our team members who can't wait to talk with you!

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Gone Fishin': Finding Volunteers

Once you've found the perfect resources, the next thing you'll need is people to teach them!

Gathering together a group of qualified volunteers can be a daunting task. In fact, according to our experts, attracting and retaining great volunteers will be an ongoing blip on your sonar screen.

But it can be done! Here are some helpful tips.

Honor the Past

As the new kid in town, you'll inherit a program and its volunteers. No matter what shape that program is in, and no matter how effective the volunteers, honor your predecessor.

There's no need to come in and slam everything and everyone. Keep your opinions to yourself, and slowly make the changes you deem necessary. And it's a good idea, before you make changes, to ask why certain policies and practices are in place. There's plenty you don't know, and there may be a perfectly good reason for that padlock on the supply closet door.

Put Safety First

Make sure—make absolutely sure—that every volunteer and member of your paid staff has gone through a quality background check. Do not skip or procrastinate this step.

Shepherd's Watch Background Checks is partnered with the leading global background check company, *First Advantage*. Because of our long-term partnership, we're able to offer you best-in-class background checks at affordable prices.

Shepherd's Watch

[Click link to learn more.](#)

Make It Easy to Serve

More people than you can imagine are ready to serve in your ministry. They just don't know it yet. It's your job to enlighten them. How? Here are some things we've learned over the years.

- Make sure people know your needs. How can people volunteer if they don't know what positions are available?
- Make it easy to step into a role. Some people won't volunteer because they think it will take all of their time. Some don't think they have anything to offer. Let people start small.

"Most people in your church aren't serving because no one has asked them to. So the fix is simple: Ask!"

—*The L.I.F.E. Strategy of Equipping Volunteers* Group U course

- Try to match people's spiritual gifts with appropriate positions. Volunteers will be happy to serve when they're using the gifts God gave them. Interview potential volunteers and use a detailed application to assess their strengths.

"Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ."

—Ephesians 4:12

Offer and Expect Commitment

As the leader of your ministry, you need to make certain commitments to your team. Among them, you need to:

- clearly explain expectations;
- offer ongoing training;
- give timely evaluation and feedback;
- foster a sense of unity;
- encourage, praise, and celebrate success; and
- handle problems with integrity and grace.

From your staff, whether paid or volunteer, you have the right to expect commitments to:

- honor a specific term of service,
- openly communicate,
- adhere to the faith tenets of your church, and
- attend training sessions.

Last but Not Least...

Make serving on your team fun! It may not seem important, but it really is.

Bring goodies to meetings. Go for a walk together. Celebrate success. Go overboard in your praise. Have fun as you serve God together!

Matthew 9:38

“So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.”

MY JOURNAL PAGE

Go Fishin'

What am I looking for in a volunteer?

How does my volunteer situation look at the moment?

What do I need to be doing?

Ideas:

Date:

Be the Strongest Swimmer: Leadership 101

Deciding which resources to use and attracting volunteers to lead them are only two of the many responsibilities you'll be expected to fulfill.

But no matter how many tasks you have to manage, you can tackle them like a true leader!

In no particular order (except for the first few), here are a few prime practices of a great ministry leader.

A great leader in ministry:

Puts Jesus first. Your relationship with Jesus is what your ministry will hinge on. Keep that relationship strong.

"No matter how long we've known and trusted Jesus, there's always a next step for us to take. There's always room to grow. There's always more to discover about his heart for us."

—*Friends of God: The Discipleship Experience*

Seeks the will of God. As you consider the course you want your ministry to take, consult God. He may have some ideas of his own.

Prays. You're going to be busy, so set aside time to pray. Be deliberate and intentional about your prayer life.

Reads the Bible. Staying in God's Word is essential to a healthy ministry and a healthy life.

“And *that’s* the purpose of the Bible—to help you discover the heart of God, to become familiar with the pulse of his love. As you see what and who God values, as you hear his words speaking through the Bible, you get an even better sense of who he is.”

—*Help! How Do I Read the Bible?*

Listens to the Holy Spirit. God wants to talk to you. He wants to lead you in your ministry. He’ll be in touch.

Supports the senior pastor. Show your allegiance to your senior pastor. Don’t question senior pastor decisions behind his or her back. Show your support. Keep your senior pastor apprised of your plans. And make sure your ministry vision is in line with that of your senior pastor.

Shares the ministry vision. Don’t just share your vision with your core team. Share it with every volunteer. Share it with the entire congregation. Your enthusiasm will be contagious!

Models Christian behavior. Walk the talk. ‘Nuff said.

Extends and asks for forgiveness. It’s inevitable—you’re going to step on some toes along the way. And a few of your own may get crunched, too. Forgiveness is a mending medicine.

Manages money well. If numbers aren’t your thing, find someone who loves them. Accurate record keeping helps you stay within your budget and plan effectively.

“For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength.”

—Philippians 4:13

Ready for more? Here are some more characteristics of a great leader.

A great leader:

Disciplines in private. If you wouldn't like to be raked over the coals in public, don't do it to someone else. The Golden Rule still applies.

Praises in public. The opposite of above.

Encourages staff members. Your staff members, both paid and volunteer, need your support. This includes not only training and keeping them in the loop, but regular "atta boys" as well.

"Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now."

—Philippians 1:3-5

Openly admits mistakes. You're going to make them. Everyone does. Just admit it and move on. (Oh yeah, and try to learn from them.)

Plans ahead. Whether it's next year's Christmas program or next year's budget, don't procrastinate the planning. If you don't know when your church usually orders curriculum or when you need to submit your budget, ask! Ask soon. Don't start out by getting behind.

Brings an agenda to every meeting. A simple thing, yet so important. You'll be surprised how off-track discussions can get if you don't have a plan for your meeting.

Returns phone calls and e-mails. At Group, we have a 24-hour goal of responding to all calls and e-mails, both internal and external. It works well, helps us stay on task, and shows respect for our colleagues and customers.

Never stops learning. Go to conferences that relate to your ministry. Read books on ministry leadership, books that pertain to your specific ministry, and books that will make your job easier along the way (see the reading list at the end of this book). And then network, network, network with other pastors. (Who knows? Maybe you'll write a book someday that will help a rookie pastor!)

Don't be afraid to take risks in your ministry. Pray, do your homework, seek wise counsel—and then take a step of faith if God gives you the green light.

“It quite simply isn’t about you. It’s about how well you pointed people to Jesus at every opportunity and then stepped out of the way so they could see and hear from him.”

—Thom & Joani Schultz, *Don’t Just Teach...Reach!*

Uses technology to an advantage. Even if you’re not technologically savvy, you’ll probably want to use audio, video, and computer-based technology in your ministry. So if necessary, start the search right now for someone to help. (Hint: You may find some likely prospects in your church youth group.) You can bet that your audience is used to—and will expect—content to be delivered in an up-to-date manner.

Respects others’ time. This goes both for your staff and for the families in your ministry. Take their schedules into account as you plan meetings and events. And if you don’t know what times are convenient, ask.

OK, let’s take a breath. There are more attributes of great leaders, but that’s enough to last you for a few years, right?

And even if you don’t possess and can’t conjure up all of the leadership qualities above, take heart. God will surround you with capable people to help—people who will exhibit the very qualities you may be low on.

Don’t worry. You have God on your side. You have Jesus in your heart. You have the Holy Spirit in your soul.

God wants you to succeed. He has called you to this ministry, and he will be with you every step of the way!

Philippians 1:6

“And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.”

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Beware of Undercurrents: Resisting Temptation

Let's face it. Jesus was tempted by Satan. Do you really think you're going to get by without being tempted?

Not likely.

In fact, the Bible says we'll be tempted. And it says what to do when it happens—turn to God. Use his strength and his Word. As they say in today's language, the best defense is a good offense. Be ready. Be prepared. Be armed.

"Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

"Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm."

—Ephesians 6:11-13

Unfortunately, we've all read the headlines. Pastors who have fallen into sexual sins, have lied, or who have misappropriated funds. And with every newscast, Christianity takes another knock on the chin.

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives."

—Galatians 5:24-25

Only you can safeguard your soul. That's between you and God.

So remember, stay close to Jesus—your rescuer and friend. With Jesus' help, make sure the *things* you say match the *way* you live.

Thankfully, you aren't the only person God has called to be his friend. And you aren't in ministry leadership alone. Look around and see the friends nearby who can support and hold you accountable. When you surround yourself with positive friendships and ministry mentors who have been-there-done-that, you have people to turn to when temptation comes. They'll help you make and keep safeguards to let you minister with integrity and wisdom.

For example, one-on-one meetings with individuals in private may not be the best idea. Always make sure there's another person around in the church building or meet with volunteers in a public place like a coffee shop. Personally follow the safety policies and procedures you've put in place for your ministry team. When you do, you'll be modeling how to honor others as you minister with compassion and wisdom.

“So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires...Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”

—Colossians 3:5, 12

Sins of a sexual nature aren't the only temptations you may face. How easy is it to gossip or complain about a co-worker or volunteer to someone other than that person? When you're tempted to “vent” or talk badly about another person, pause and pray. Remember, you are called to love God and love others—including the person who's driving you crazy.

With great power comes great responsibility. Are you the kind of leader who lets power go to your head? Do you lord your position over others, or are you willing to get down on your knees and wash the feet of those you serve? Like Jesus did. Jesus is our leader, and we follow his example as we lead others.

"You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross."

—Philippians 2:5-8

The good news is...well...the Good News!

You're not alone. God loves you. He'll help you resist whatever temptation comes your way. It's a promise!

"If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can stand. When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure."

—1 Corinthians 10:12-13

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Stormy Seas: Solving Problems

It's a part of every job—problem solving.

Problems may come in the form of finances, staff, time management, stress, criticism, or families.

No matter what, though, God will see you through.

"Each time he said, 'My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness.' So now I am glad to boast about my weakness, so that the power of Christ can work through me."

—2 Corinthians 12:9

Our seasoned swimmers have all dealt with problems, and have some advice to offer. Here are a few practical tips to help you safely ride those stormy seas.

Deal directly. If you have a problem with someone, go right to that person for a discussion. Don't discuss the problem with anyone else.

Agree to disagree, if necessary. Be aware that you just may not agree with some people, and they may not agree with you. That's OK.

"Here's the thing about acceptance: You can accept someone's thoughts without agreeing with those thoughts. That's key if you want to reach imperfect people. People like...well, like you."

—Thom & Joani Schultz, *Don't Just Teach...Reach!*

Don't take it personally. You're going to deal with difficult people. You're going to get criticism. It comes with the job. Try not to take it personally or dwell on it.

“A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted.”

—Proverbs 12:16

Extend grace. How would Jesus deal with your problem? You bet! He’d be compassionate. He’d forgive. He’d offer grace. And he’d do it without compromising what’s right. It’s a tough act to follow, but that’s what we’re called to do.

“When a child stands in front of you, arms crossed, announcing that you can’t make him behave, it’s hard to remember your goal isn’t to prove him wrong. Your goal is to help that child discover the joy of knowing and growing in Jesus.”

—*Children’s Ministry Pocket Guide to Discipline: Quick Tips for a Stress-Free Classroom*

Manage change. Eventually, you’ll want to make a few changes. Probably not this week, but pretty soon, right? Realize that not everyone embraces change. So if you encounter resistance when you try to implement a change, that shouldn’t be a surprise. Make sure everyone understands your reasons for the change, and make sure you have all the information you need to support your decision.

Ask for help. It’s OK to ask for help and guidance. Really, it is. Ask someone you respect what he or she would do in your situation. Better yet, find someone you respect who’s already been in your situation. What worked? What didn’t?

Don’t put it off. The problem probably isn’t going to go away on its own, you know. Might as well deal with it and get it over with.

Pray. Always the best way to deal with any situation.

Trust God. Same as above.

Tough times will come, but with God’s help you can handle them!

Psalm 46:10a

**“Be still, and know
that I am God!”**

Staying Afloat: The Fine Art of a Balanced Life

If there's one goal that the seasoned swimmers we've dealt with over the years have agreed on, it's this: try to lead a balanced life.

It's not easy to do that in ministry. You'll have a lot of people making a lot of demands on you. (And one of the most insistent of those people might be you!)

But balance is imperative if you're to accomplish what God has set out for you. You can't be effective if you're exhausted. You can't be effective if you're constantly stressed and overwrought.

But you can do a good job—no, a great job—in your ministry and still remain refreshed in the Lord and available to him and your family.

You can lead a balanced life, even while doing ministry. Here are some tips from the seniors on our swim team.

Keep God first. Keep your priorities straight, and the rest will fall into place. God first—always.

“And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.”

—Deuteronomy 6:5

Pray. Stay in touch with your Father. He loves you, and has important stuff to say to you.

Plan. We've said it before, but planning ahead will enable you to maintain a reasonable schedule, manage your time, and avoid last-minute dilemmas.

Don't swim solo. You can't do it alone. Don't even try. You'll burn out, and then what good will you be doing?

Rest. The Lord took a day of rest in his week. He tells us to do the same. Take a day off—completely off.

Just say “no.” You don’t have to take on every task everyone asks of you. It’s OK to say “no,” especially if doing so will help you to keep your priorities straight.

Cherish your family. The church can find another person to fill your role. Your family can’t.

Stay connected to God. Spend time nourishing your own spiritual walk. Take time alone to listen to God, to praise him, and to simply spend time with him.

Don’t get discouraged. OK, sometimes you’ll get discouraged, but don’t let it linger in your mind and heart. Discouragement occasionally comes with the territory—actually it comes with any vocation. When it hits, look to God; he’s the source of your strength.

“Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about the things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

—Philippians 4:8b-9

Have faith in God, and faith in yourself. God’s in control. He put you exactly where you are at this very minute. He called you to this work, to this place and time.

- He will never leave you, never forsake you.
- If you’ll let him, God will give you the words to say, the thoughts to think, and the actions to take.
- He knows you can do this—and so do we!

Now get out there and minister!

Matthew 28:19–20

“Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

MY JOURNAL PAGE



Staying Afloat: Scriptures to Help

What are my favorite Scriptures?

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How can I keep them visible in my ministry?

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Ideas:

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Date:

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Stop. Think. Write.

My First 90 Days: What I've Learned So Far...

Ideas:

A series of horizontal dashed lines for writing.

Date:

Welcome to ministry!

You come with vision...passion...
and God-given enthusiasm.

What you lack is experience—
and that could cost you.

Day 01 To-Do list:

- ✓ Find bathroom.
- ✓ Find coffee pot.
- ✓ Find a handy place
for this book.

Relax—here's practical, from-the-trenches advice to keep you on safe ground as you navigate a new church culture...settle into a ministry role...and sort through a pile of priorities.

This little book points you toward quick successes. Keeps you from stepping on relational land mines. And helps you remember why you went into ministry in the first place.

An essential experience for ministry first-timers. Required reading for pros shifting into new ministry roles. And a remarkably good idea for any volunteer who wants to dramatically increase ministry impact.

