

# PASTORPEDIA™

*Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders*

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## ***The Health of the Pastor***

### **“Taking care of number one”**

We should, we must, we can—take care of number one. Ourselves.

That phrase above is usually used in a negative way, with good reason, it defines a selfish way of life. We all know we cannot help others very well or over the long term if we are not healthy in our own spirits, emotions, and bodies.

So let's look in the mirror.

And let's admit right up front that while a marriage can be strong, accountability groups can be helpful, and good friends can encourage, we can really only take care of ourselves to have good health spiritually and physically. Just about every Christian leader who has fallen out of grace admits that he was not privately caring for his own soul or body. (Yes, it is usually a he!)

Like the plumber who had leaking pipes at his own home.

We stand with you as fellow strugglers, but are glad to share some things that have helped us in the journey some of us call “the combination life,” the daily life of being in Christ and having His Spirit in us.

*Hoping to help us all take care of ourselves,*

*Knute, Jeff, and Jim*

## ***How do you define good health—spiritually and physically?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Physically. I'm going to look at my vital signs. I get a physical once per year, do the blood work, check cholesterol, blood pressure, weight, the whole nine yards.
- Spiritually. I think sometimes the physical affects the spiritual and the emotional. When I think about being healthy in a physical and spiritual way, I think about the following:
  - Energy. I have a spiritual energy. Someone once said fatigue makes cowards of us all. I find when I lack energy or feel exhausted, I don't have the desire or strength to fight the spiritual or the physical battle.
  - Clarity. When I feel strong physically and spiritually, I know what to do and I have the courage and energy to do it.
  - Passion. When I am dispassionate about something that I am normally extremely passionate about, I know that I have run out of gas physically, and maybe spiritually; so it's time to focus on those areas in a different way.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Good health is when you are functioning at your optimal performance level and don't have areas that constantly limit you from doing so.
- You are in tune to the whispers of the Holy Spirit.
- You are alert and able to give your best.
- You are not leading from empty.

### ***Knute Larson***

- We are healthy when we are not distracted by our needs. Physically, we are not distracted by pain, interruptions to sleep, work, or play. Spiritually we are not distracted by guilt or unfulfilled promises. It is possible and it is a wonderful way to live.
- Physically, good health is what the doctors and their instruments say, usually (they cannot catch everything). Spiritually is what the Bible says. God knows what we need, how we should live, and gives in Bible content "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us..." (II Peter 1:3).
- Good health is a state of peace and joy, with the ability to love or to care about others; not being distracted by yourself.

## ***What are your best habits in both of these areas?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Eat well—90% of good health is what you put into your body.
- The same is true spiritually. What you put in your heart and your mind affects you.

- Exercise. Exercise is not just about not having a heart attack and not being overweight. Exercise is tied to clarity and energy.
- Rest. I know sometimes when I am spiritually discouraged and emotionally worn out, what I really need is a nap. So, on Sunday afternoons I might need a nap; or Tuesdays are very long days in my schedule, so I need to slow down a bit on Wednesdays.
- Time with Christ. This is important. Sometimes when we're tired and worn-out what we want is time away, so we'll watch a movie, go play golf, etc. We sometimes forget that we just need time with God, just like you would need a walk with your spouse or a good conversation with a friend or your kid. Time alone with the Lord—to think, to be, to talk.
- Making it a habit to be with energizing people. Once a week I have a lunch set aside for someone who energizes me—my friend Jason and my brother Dave. Every week I'm with one of them, and I look forward to that time. I come away energized and rebuilt from it. It's on my schedule for a reason. It can also be friends or families from church that are fun to be with.
- Making sure the crisis isn't always displacing the recharge.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Spiritually
  - Daily time in the Word of God.
  - Sharing and telling others about Jesus.
  - Times of fasting and praying.
  - Accountability with another man.
  - Praying the spiritual armor on each morning.
  - Praying with my wife each morning.
  - Soaking in knowledge from other books and podcasts.
  - Personal worship times and corporate worship.
  - Setting goals and going after them.
  - Giving myself away.
- Physically
  - Daily running and working out at the gym.
  - Laughing more.
  - Eating in a healthy manner.
  - Proper sleep.
  - Spending time outside in God's creation refreshes my heart.
  - Finding activities that keep me moving: golf, basketball, hunting, kayaking.
  - Monitoring health and food choices.
  - Drinking mostly water; no alcohol of any form.
  - Limit evening snacks.

- Play with my kids.
- Workout with my wife.

### ***Knute Larson***

- The physical is easier, in some ways, except for influences such as germs and disease. So back to my hobby horse of “master schedule,” which includes vigorous exercise—workout at least five times a week, good sleep, and guilt-free food (muffins only twice a month when driving, thank you).
- The spiritual is more important, we all know to say, and it is more difficult. Our master schedules or regular habits can include alone time with the Word and its Author, regular and spontaneous habits of confession of sin(s), and church attendance and ministry (almost essential for the pastor).

Then these habits can add strength also:

- A marriage where there is candor and giving.
- A really good friend and spiritually strong person who would tag you out.
- A small, true accountability group where you are open and loving and ask hard questions of each other.
- Working all our lives to understand grace and relationship with Christ and the “combination life” with our Savior, as well as how it works on a daily basis.
- Learning habits of prayer that also include worship, confession, and yielding our lives in dedication—which is why I like P-R-A-Y as a conscious model for private and public praying.
  - Praise—just plain worship and thanksgiving.
  - Repent or confess—this cannot be just for the Lutherans and the Catholics!
  - Ask—the part I am good at!
  - Yield—dedication or desire to obey, in line with the constant of Romans 12:1-2.

## ***What are the main enemies of these habits?***

### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Time, obligations, kids’ sports, meetings!
- Laziness. It takes energy to make energy, and I need to get myself off the couch sometimes.
- Lack of routine. I often come out of summer not where I want to be, because the routine is not the same, so I need to get back into those routines.

### ***Jim Brown***

- Laziness and lack of self-control.
- The Enemy hates you and will attack daily in these areas with distractions.
- Unconfessed sin and pride.
- Lack of discipline.
- Lack of goals and purpose in one’s life.

### ***Knute Larson***

- Urgent duties of the pastorate. They easily replace the important goals that we have.
- Selfishness or pride, duplicity, and sin. When these dominate, we do not care enough about good habits.
- Taking ourselves as seriously as some people take us because we are pastors, and therefore thinking all is well even though we skip the wellness habits.
- Laziness, which might be defined as not doing something because we do not feel like it.

### ***How can we help staff and church members better?***

#### ***Jeff Bogue***

- Model it. We can invite them to be a part of it. When you have a meeting with a staff member, go on a walk. I do this a lot. If we need to brainstorm for a couple hours, we go to our national park and walk so we're moving. We walk around our office or neighborhood.
- Motivate them. We should not be afraid to say something that we're concerned about, because we want them to have better habits.
- You can require a sabbatical. You must take your day off.
- You can create those spiritual spaces for them. In your regular staff meeting or monthly meeting with the team, take five or so minutes of being quiet and still before the Lord and then jump into your agenda.

#### ***Jim Brown***

- Lead from the front and pave the way by your own example.
- Place expectations on them in these areas. You can't inspect without expecting first.
- Place goals in front of them. We have a goal that says we want to be the fittest church on planet earth.
- Teach and preach on these subjects.
- Offer incentives in your health coverage.
- Model a balanced life in these areas. We can't demand and expect it to happen if we aren't practicing it.

#### ***Knute Larson***

- Ask them to have the habits defined earlier, in the second question. Actually do more than ask, in the case of pastoral staff.
- Talk about all this at staff meetings candidly. Urge them to talk about it in groups of two or three regularly.
- Have some kind of indicators on their weekly reports. I know you can lie on paper also, but at least then you're trying to find out how they're doing physically and spiritually.

- Do not overlook or neglect the obvious symptoms—bad moods, friction with other people, lack of joy apparent in their marriage or single life, a critical spirit, a tired body, obesity, lack of disciplined schedule, sitting farther and farther back in church services!
- Never delay confronting a need, following a hunch, or asking kind questions.

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*Jeff Bogue, of [Grace Church](#), in several locations in the Bath-Norton-Medina areas of Ohio; Jim Brown, of [Grace Community Church](#) in Goshen, Indiana, a church known for its strong growth, family and men's ministries, and community response teams; and [Knut Larson](#), a coach of pastors, who previously led The Chapel in Akron for 26 years. Pastorpedia is brought to you by [CE National](#). Visit [cenational.org/pastorpedia](http://cenational.org/pastorpedia) for more issues and to read the bios of our contributors.*