

# The Teacher and His Health

## Self-Care and Empowerment for Life-long Service

### Key Verse

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. (Mark 6:31)

### Lesson Objectives

After this lesson, students should be able to

- Recognize stressful factors and the need for sound holistic health practices
- Practice temple (body) maintenance
- Implement procedures and practices for self-care
- Recognize the impact of stressful work on caregivers
- Identify an eightfold model for personal assessment
- Give reasons preservations of health should be viewed as a sacred duty
- Name six life-long habits conducive to self-care.
- Define approaches to preventive maintenance of good health.

### Introduction

#### Teachers' Needs for Health and Empowerment

Adam was created for service, fearfully and wonderfully made for life-long service. His assigned duties in the Garden fulfilled Creation in cooperation with God, and fulfilled his purpose in life. The harmony was disrupted as a result of the Fall to make him become helplessly dependent upon God, subject to death, to

illness, disease, physical and emotional weaknesses, and subservient to the Devil. His carnal desires gravitated toward the world, and the flesh resulting in gratifying appetites and desires that would ultimately shorten his life and disempower this service.

When I was a youth, secondary schools in the US fostered an extracurricular program called 4-H. Leaders encouraged students to initiate and develop projects during the year utilizing the 4-H concept. The first H stood for hand, meaning service, skill and work. The second H was for head, equating rational thinking, planning, and organizing. The third H for heart, representing loyalty, faithfulness, enthusiasm, conscience, and compassion. The final H was for health, a desire and goal of better living, life style, and performance. The 4-H Pledge stated "I pledge my hands to greater service, my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty and my health to better living for my school, my community, my country, my world." While all were important, the most important is health, because without good health many youth did not have heart, strength, or stamina to participate with hands and head.

## **I. What Parameters Assure Good Health?**

The important role of instructors in the Bible college teaching-learning situation makes it necessary for teachers to practice healthful lifestyles in order to be strong in every area to meet their leader obligations. A short list of duties of the teachers is to a) be present and lead; b) prepare, present lessons and evaluate student progress daily; c) interact and relate with students and faculty; d) make spiritual decisions; e) be stewards of time, talent and finances; f) model spiritual fruit and gifts—self-control of anger, impatience; g) be moral and ethical in counseling students. In addition, teachers are to plan and harmonize efforts with other faculty and Bible school leaders. Teachers must maintain a holistic balance and have abundant physical stamina, mental acuity, and persistent spiritual zeal to benefit from the past and to project the future.

The work of a teacher in training and preparing Kingdom leaders is a work of compassion that demands our best. We tend lives of young people and pour ourselves into them. Exercising compassion for others drains emotions while taxing spiritual reserve. Expressing compassion calls for creative approaches to meet the needs of multiple personalities that are developing and stretching to

discover their mission in ministry right in our classes. Jews had a weekly day of inactivity, the Sabbath.

The life of a modern spiritual leader and teacher is often full of hassles, deadlines, frustrations, and incessant demands. These conditions cause stress, and stress untended can erode health and cause numerous physical, mental, social, spiritual, and emotional health problems. And yet, the teacher's reward and satisfaction are tied to able performance

Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:19)

This lesson will provide knowledge and suggest activities to implement self-care assuring better health, to reduce the secondary impact of working with students, their families, and other leaders in ministry and empowering the teacher for life-long service

## II. The Impact of Stressful Work on Health

### A. For many people, stress is so commonplace that it has become a way of life.

Stress isn't always bad. In small doses, *eustress* (moderate or normal psychological stress interpreted as being beneficial for the experiencer) helps one perform under pressure and inspires one to better performance. But when you constantly run in emergency mode, your mind, emotions, and body pay the price not only of impaired work performance, but even broken health.

Recognizing the tiring effects of active ministry of traveling, teaching, and advising, healing and restoring people to spiritual and physical health, Jesus taught His disciples to seek solitude to rest.

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. (Mark 6:31)

Jesus knew the limitations of flesh and that spiritual demands cause pressure and stress that must be relieved if good health is to be maintained and top performance in ministry given. This is particularly true in Bible school work where faculty meet and mentor or instruct students daily and often on weekends.

The impact of stressful work or living conditions can cause a person to feel out of control, tired, frustrated, angry, moody and easily upset. Physical health symptoms may be hypertension, sleeplessness, and loss of appetite or poor digestion—all of which impair classroom performance. If you frequently find yourself feeling overwhelmed, it's time to take action to bring your life into harmony and balance. Leaders can protect themselves by learning to recognize the signs and symptoms of stress and taking steps to reduce its harmful effects.

Another impact of demanding and stressful work is called “burnout.” Burnout is the emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that occurs when several events in succession or a combination of stressors impose a high degree of stress on an individual. Occupational and personal burnout is the most obvious reaction to long-term stress. Several factors contribute to burnout in the helping professions such as teaching:

- professional isolation, no colleagues to confer with.
- successes ambiguous, not well defined
- maintaining an unrealistic pace of activity
- “Messiah Complex,” thinking one can “do it all” and
- human finitude— not recognizing boundary limits.

**EXERCISE INTERACTION:** Your vocation proves to be taxing to the emotions and physical stamina.

- What do you do to relax? Unwind? Recharge? Cool it?
- How do you guard your health?
- How do you stay inspired (motivated)?
- What advice would you give others of (a) what to do for health; (b) what not to do for good health.

Teachers experiencing early states of burnout may feel isolated, like Elijah of ancient Israel. They may be indifferent or even feel hopeless over important matters. Symptoms include physical exhaustion, behavioral irritability, faithless, and emotional negativity. Teachers experiencing these feelings may be entering the beginning stages of a problem more complex than burnout—compassion fatigue.

Recognize that the work of the teacher is stressful, and stress results in decline in mental and physical health. Occupation burnout, depression, spiritual malaise, and declining physical health occur as we exhaust resources of the body, mind, and spirit. Feelings of apathy, pessimism, depression, indifference, and hopelessness are common. Accompanying this is physical exhaustion—“tired all the time,” irritable, and impatient; not appropriate qualities for the teacher and mentor.

As noted in Matthew 5:19, the work of the teacher provides great rewards and fulfillment. In fact, of the five-fold ministry, the teacher is the one with listed rewards. However the responsibility is great with opportunities to serve youth and the coming generation, initiate and perform religious tasks (prayer, fasting, devotion, witnessing) for which the teacher is to be the primary model. Teachers also provide spiritual care to people in emotional turmoil or crises faced by young people (loneliness, fear, anger, personal loss). A third area of teacher response is to be an advocate: encouraging, uplifting, exhorting and taking the part of students needing a second or third chance. Teachers promote spiritual healing in addition to many other emotionally draining compassion services specific to the particular setting in which the teacher works.

No matter what the setting, or the personality of the teacher, the demands of providing education and spiritual care for youth will prove taxing on the emotions and physical stamina. Intentionally choosing to walk alongside and share for long periods the burdens of students in development results in physical, emotional, and spiritual fatigue for the caregiver. This often leads to the complex problem of compassion fatigue (CF).

**B. Cost of compassion fatigue is a loss of zeal and empathy and compassion.**

On a personal side, teachers often need assistance at home as they face foes and stresses from financial pressures, marital harmony and parenting, or in extreme cases, abuse of prescription medicines used to offset the stress. The teacher is not exempt or immune from these everyday problems of real people.

Employee assistance counsellor’s can provide referrals, educational materials, and other resources to help a chaplain stay healthy.

Maintain care that this feature of professional life does not affect ones ability to steer a straight course in doctrine. A secondary form of post traumatic

stress, CF, affects leaders in ministry at all levels of activity. It is considered secondary because it comes from inadequate self-care and arises from vicariously experiencing emotional turmoil and trauma of others: (1) listening to their stories of the events that happen to them; (2) experiencing emotional and physical reactions to the trauma via empathy with clients.

Compassion fatigue is a secondary form of post-traumatic stress that affects providing care to others out of a compassionate nature. Of course, the teacher is a prime candidate. Compassion fatigue may occur when a teacher listens to the story of a person experiencing a trauma event or by experiencing the reactions to the trauma through empathetic contact with the student. Vulnerability is usually the result of a “burnout” of personal care resources that no longer keeps the teacher at a critical distance from vicariously experiencing the event. Compassion fatigue is the costly result of inadequate self-care and constant caregiving to students who suffer from crises and traumatic life events.

*Compassion Fatigue Process Model* shows that compassion fatigue results from prolonged exposure to suffering, from traumatic memories, compassion stress, and other life demands. Compression stress, in turn is affected by our detachment, sense of satisfaction, empathetic response. Three factors make up the Empathetic Response—concern, empathetic ability, and exposure to suffering.

### **C. Recognize factors that increase resilience to compassion fatigue.**

Several factors may serve to increase resilience to burnout and fatigue. The process begins with a teacher planning to take care of himself or herself. Self-care planning acts to identify the critical elements of a comprehensive personal resilience plan. Here are helpful ideas.

1. Put the oxygen mask on yourself first. The teacher who think of life-long service begin by following the airline advice: Put the oxygen mask on yourself first, then on those you wish to help. Honor the inner conflict of putting yourself first rather than taking care of others first knowing that if you are in poor health, your service will be poor. This requires constant awareness of where the emergency is and if you are affected.
2. Do not rescue students from their own decisions by taking on their consequences. Instead, help them learn from mistakes.

3. Be as gentle with yourself as you are with the students. Regard yourself with esteem as high as you would your students, staff, or other faculty members.
4. Practicing self-care means to forgive yourself without condemnation for backslides.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Romans 8:1).

5. Do not forget to be thankful and show gratitude in all things. Do the best you can with the resources available at that particular moment in time
6. Plan for progress, not perfection. Accept with gratitude incremental gains from small steps, especially when noted in students.
7. Practice nurturing self-talk
8. Rely on God's all-sufficient grace.

#### **D. Precaution: Risk of change affects loyalty and doctrine**

One of the most profound issues of stress or burnout is the inevitable *change* encountered in the teacher's (or any leader's) life and ministry. Physical changes such as anxiety or high blood pressure are usually temporary when these symptoms follow a sudden traumatic event. Teachers quickly return to normal health and function within a short time. The same is not true when leaders are subjected to persistent long-term stress. Often the resulting reactions of mental and physical exhaustion prevent a quick recovery. Teachers may begin to experience changes in values or beliefs as faith is challenged. That which was held as *sacred* has been violated. Perspectives change and once defended doctrines may be devalued or entirely abandoned. Teachers may experience doubt and uncertainty regarding their calling, the value of their ministry, their standards, core values or even their faith and salvation.

Health and empowerment for the teacher begins with intentional preventive self-care. They are maintained by submitting to institutional, professional, and peer support.

A teacher in crisis should STOP immediately and get help. Begin to take care of yourself if you hope to be useful to continue in helping others.

The ministry of teacher compassion and caring must come from the *overflow* of God's compassion and caring in your own life. The reservoir must remain full if there is to be an overflow. When life is full of questions, your resources are depleted.

To sum up the risks:

1. Vulnerability increases with depleted physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual resources.
2. Stress increases as critical distance from either the event or those in crisis decreases. Teacher is in the classroom with students daily and cannot escape proximity to events.
3. Potential changes induced in the teacher's life and ministry:
  - Physical – heart rate, blood pressure, body fatigue.
  - Mental – weariness, lack of interest, forgetful, hi-tech overload.
  - Emotional – anxiety, anger, depression, frustration.
  - Spiritual – abandoning values and basic beliefs.
  - Diminished value of the sacred – God is no longer held in high esteem and almighty.
  - Perspectives change and vital standards are abandoned.
  - Entertain doubt and uncertainty about the call of God, the worth of the ministry, and even basics of their own faith and salvation.

### **The sabbatical helps restore health.**

Educators in institutions of higher learning have the option of taking a "sabbatical" from duties after a prescribed number of years of service. Professors in Hebrew universities are encouraged to take a sabbatical leave of absence every six years. The purpose is to de-stress, to pursue studies of interest, gain fresh perspective and restore health.

### **Institution care.**

Many institutions arrange to help maintain employee health through their human resources departments or employee assistance programs. In some instances, teachers are considered a form of counsel and employee assistance!



### **Community care.**

Through community public agencies and self-help groups (YMCA, YWCA, exercise clubs, gymnasium clubs), a teacher may also receive professional, educational materials, and other resources to help him or her stay healthy, after all, healthy teachers are an asset to the community.

### **Professional Organizations.**

Professional organizations recognize the value and vulnerability of teachers. Many provide resources and network opportunity for them available through annual conferences, short courses, workshops, and on-line webinars.

## **E. Teacher Self-care**

Physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health and empowerment well-being begins with the teacher himself. Teachers initiate life-long habits of self-care in order to care for the Temple of God Maintenance.

Five areas to be attended are:

1. Balanced diet—quality and quantity of food and beverage intake
2. Regular physical exercise, walk, jog, bicycle riding, full body workouts, etc.
3. Enjoyable and relaxing, inspiring relationships, drama, humour, hobbies
4. Adequate sleep, rest, and recreation
5. Daily religious exercises: prayer, Bible study, and devotional meditation

## **III. Temple Maintenance**

We should regard the preservation of the health of our body by activity, moderation, cleanliness, and contentment as a sacred duty.

- A. Because the body is God's workmanship.** What God has made so exquisitely (Psalm 139:14), we should treat as something to be protected and preserved in excellent condition.

**B. Because the human body is the dwelling place of the human spirit.**

I live in my body. It is the house of my thinking, reasoning, loving, hoping, striving self. My bodily faculties are the organs of my spiritual activities; therefore, they are sacred.

**C. Because the human body is the dwelling place, temple of God's Spirit** (I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19-20; II Corinthians 6:16).

You may work for years in sickness and pain. But the stronger and healthier you are, the more you are able to do excellent work; the more cheerful the tone of your spirit, the more attractive the aspects of your life, the more strenuous and longer lasting you can continue. – W. Clarkson

The human body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and efforts must be made to maintain it for the purpose and cause of His call. Health and well-being begin with intentional preventive self-care and temple maintenance. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (I Corinthians 6:19)

- Compassion and caring are an outflow, so times of rest and 'drawing apart' are essential to prevent us from 'coming apart'.
- Unrelenting long-term pressure and stress can result in a change in values and beliefs that undermine the ministry we provide.
- We should utilize resources provided by professional organizations to prevent crisis in the personal life of caregivers.
- We should implement a regular program of self-care that maintains the temple of the Lord.

**D. Because Jesus Christ was concerned about the body.** When the crowd was weak from hunger, He told His disciples, "Give ye them to eat." He spent much time in personally seeking out, healing, and restoring wholeness to the body and mind. Never did He turn people away from what was theirs. By His stripes we are healed.

## IV. Three Steps to Self-care

### A. Awareness

The first step in self-care is to become aware of your personal response to conditions that cause stress and anxiety. Awareness allows you to avoid head-to-head confrontations.

### B. Assessment

The second step is to assess the extent of your response and to gauge the impact the situation our conditions have on you and your work performance. Assessment allows the teacher to make the needed adjustments before emergency conditions.

The scope of the health problem can be seen more clearly through an eight-dimensional self-assessment model. These are:

Physical	Mental	Emotional	Spiritual
Financial	Social	Moral	Ethical

How should these be arranged and assessed?

### C. Plan for Change

The third step is planning for change. Once you are aware of conditions that create stress and identified stressors it is time to assess. Evaluate not only the strength of the stressors but the effect they have on you and your response to them. Finally, begin to plan ways to circumvent and negate their effect. A good planning strategy is to overcome stress to set fresh goals for growth and to seek inspiration to maintain progress.

Since health and empowerment for the teacher begins with self-care, teachers must initiate good, lifelong habits to take care of themselves and their families. These habits include

- eating a well-balanced diet,
- regular physical work out exercises,

- maintaining significant relationships,
- getting adequate rest and sleep,
- periodic recreation, and
- having an active prayer and devotional life.

When personal resources for self-care are inadequate to cope with or maintain physical, emotional, and spiritual health, the individual should seek professional help.

In addition, for self-care to be effective it must involve preventive maintenance as well. On a very practical level, preventive maintenance includes

- a diet low in refined sugars, caffeine, fats, salt, and cholesterol;
- increasing cardiovascular exercise;
- six to eight hours of sleep each night;
- being an active participant in a faith community;
- maintaining healthy social relationships with loved ones and associates;
- balancing work and personal life; and
- making time for recreation, hobbies, vacations, or sabbaticals.

Teachers are an asset to the institutions they serve. Intentionally choosing to walk alongside and share yourselves with others will prove to be taxing, depleting your energy reserve. It is important to stay healthy mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

## **V. The Bible Speaks about Health Care and Wellness**

Beloved, I wish above all things that thou may prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. (III John 2)

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. (Joshua 1:8)

To fear God and depart from evil will be “health to the navel, and marrow to the bones.” (See Proverbs 3:7-8.) The constant tendency of fulfilling religious duties and its invariable accompaniment morality is to give (1) health and strength to our bodily frame; pure blood, clear eyes, strong muscles, steady nerves and a vigorous old age. It regularly gives (2) an active mind; and it necessarily imparts (3) a soul that is in health (III John 2). The man who fears God and departs from evil is the man who is fitted and is likely to have the largest show of vigorous, robust, and healthy life in all its forms. (W. Clarkson)

Other verses of Scripture:

- I Thessalonians 4:4: Possess your vessel in sanctification and honor.
- Psalm 103:14: He knows our frame. The frame is more than the body. This vehicle of the human spirit is wholly the plan of God.
- Leviticus 11:3: Health is a duty and blessing. Though God was conveying moral lessons primarily, He also considered the sanitary needs of life. The animals God sanctioned for food remain the most healthful. No nation of people has been more healthful and resilient than the Hebrews.

Health is the greatest of earthly blessings. Without health, we can do little and enjoy nothing. With health, we can accomplish much and triumph over almost every obstacle in our way. A sound constitution is a thing for profound thankfulness. We should guard and seek to enhance it diligently and religiously.

#### **A. The Role of the Teacher in Healing (care, health, wholeness; Matthew 4:23–25)**

The New Testament shows an expanded role of the teacher as taught by Jesus Christ. Not only did he come to teach and to preach, but also to heal.

Jesus traveled all through Galilee teaching in the Jewish synagogues, everywhere preaching the Good News about the Kingdom of Heaven. And he healed every kind of sickness and disease. (Matthew 4:23, TLB)

Healing is an important part of the ministry Jesus left to those who teach and preach. As Jesus taught and preached, he healed. These three main aspects of his ministry shows Jesus’ concern, teaching for understanding; preaching shows

his concern for personal commitment to salvation; and healing shows his concern for health and wholeness. His miracles of healing authenticated his teaching and preaching, proving that he truly was from God.

Jesus healed both physical and spiritual sickness. Jesus preached the gospel—the Good News—to everyone who wanted to hear it. The gospel is that the kingdom of heaven has come, that God is with us, and that He cares for us. Christ came heal us—not just of physical sickness, but of spiritual sickness as well. No sin or problem is too great or too small for Him to handle. Jesus’ words were good news because they offered freedom, hope, peace of heart, and eternal life with God.

### **B. The Release From Bondage (Matthew 9:1–8)**

Soon some men brought him a paralyzed boy on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the sick boy, “Cheer up, son! For I have forgiven your sins!” (Matthew 9:2, TLB)

Physical healing is not the most important gift God can give. Among the first words Jesus said to the paralyzed man were “I have forgiven your sins.” Then He healed the man. We must be careful not to concentrate on God’s power to heal physical sickness more than on His power to forgive spiritual sickness in the form of sin. Jesus saw that even more than physical health, this man needed spiritual health. Spiritual health comes only from Jesus’ healing touch.

God understands every aspect of healing. Both the man’s body and his spirit were paralyzed—he could not walk, and he did not know Jesus. But the man’s spiritual state was Jesus’ first concern. If God does not heal us or someone we love, we need to remember that physical healing is not Christ’s only concern. We will all be completely healed in Christ’s coming kingdom; but first we have to come to know Jesus.

### **C. The Relationship Between Spiritual and Physical Health (Leviticus 14:1–57)**

These, then, are the laws concerning the various places where leprosy may appear: in a garment or in a house, or in any swelling in one’s skin, or a scab from a burn, or a bright spot. In this way you

will know whether or not it is actually leprosy. That is why these laws are given. (Leviticus 14:54–57, TLB)

God's concern for us covers every part of living. God told the Israelites how to diagnose infectious skin diseases and mildew so they could avoid them or treat them. These laws were given for the people's health and protection; they helped the Israelites avoid diseases that were serious threats in that time and place. Although they wouldn't have understood the medical reasons for some of these laws, their obedience to them made them healthier. Many of God's laws must have seemed strange to the Israelites. His laws, however, helped them avoid not only physical contamination, but also moral and spiritual infection.

The Word of God provides a pattern for physically, spiritually, and morally healthy living. We may not always understand the wisdom of God's laws, but if we obey them, we will thrive. Does this mean we are to follow the Old Testament health and dietary restrictions? In general, the basic principles of health and cleanliness are still healthful practices, but it would be legalistic, if not wrong, to adhere to each specific restriction today. Some of these regulations were intended to mark the Israelites as different from the wicked people around them. Others were given to prevent God's people from becoming involved in pagan religious practices, one of the most serious problems of the day. Still others related to quarantines in a culture where exact medical diagnosis was impossible. Today, for example, physicians can diagnose the different forms of leprosy, and they know which ones are contagious. Treatment methods have greatly improved, and quarantine for leprosy is rarely necessary.

God's universal concern for man is to foster a healthy heart. Let not your heart be troubled will mean peace and purity as we give him our burden and take the yoke of His health upon us (Matthew 11:28–29).

#### **D. A Note of Caution (Matthew 14:22–36)**

The news of their arrival spread quickly throughout the city, and soon people were rushing around, telling everyone to bring in their sick to be healed. The sick begged him to let them touch even the tassel of his robe, and all who did were healed. (Matthew 14:35–36, TLB)

Teachers must not focus on physical needs and limit the knowledge Christ. The people recognized Jesus as a great healer, but few understood who He truly

was. They came to Jesus for physical healing, but few sought spiritual healing. They came to prolong their lives on earth, but few came to secure eternal life. People may seek Jesus to learn valuable lessons from His model life or in hopes of finding relief from pain. But we miss Jesus' whole message if we seek Him to heal our bodies but not our souls, or if we look to him for help only in this life, rather than for His eternal plan for us. Only when we understand the real Jesus Christ can we appreciate how He can truly change our life.

## VI. Personal Activities that Promote Mental Health

### A. Activities to Promote Teacher Health

Professor Gail Kinman, a chartered psychologist and an associate fellow of the British Psychological Society, suggests three tips a day for the five days of the work week on things a teacher can do to de-stress and promote a healthy mind, body and soul.

**Monday:** It's universally acknowledged that no one likes Mondays, so you need to begin your day calmly.

- Relax for two minutes before your students arrive in the morning. Visualize the day ahead going as well as possible because this is good for the soul.
- At the first break of the day step out of auto-pilot and clear your mind. Eat a piece of fruit mindfully. Focus on the experience of eating without multi-tasking or letting your mind wander.
- After work or during lunch go for a walk. Focus on what you see, smell, hear, taste, and feel. Don't use the time to make plans or dwell on problems.

**Tuesday:** This is a good day to pay attention to the early signs that you are becoming stressed.

- Think about how the week is going and watch for things that worry you. This will help you spot your trigger points and take remedial action.
- Half way through the day, why not reduce muscle tension? Tense your shoulders without straining, then relax while breathing deeply. Feel the stress fading away.



- Tuesday should be a day for forgiveness. Most of us store up many negative emotions that could be released by forgiving ourselves and others. Quote the Lord's Prayer and emphasize forgiveness.

**Wednesday:** You're at mid-week, and making sure you feel refreshed is important; adequate sleep is vital.

- Avoid the enemies of sleep: irregular sleep schedule, no relaxing bedtime routine, eat healthily and get regular exercise.
- Try a three-minute breathing space during lunchtime. Sit comfortably and focus on your breath. Your mind will wander, gently bring it back.
- You could also take a five-minute lunchtime vacation. Picture yourself in the most relaxing place you can imagine. You will feel more refreshed on your return. Seek out a prayer closet or altar to meditate alone.

**Thursday:** The best medicine for a happy Thursday is laughter; share a giggle with colleagues or listen to your favorite comedy show.

- Laughing has wide-ranging benefits, improves cardiovascular health and helps you connect with others, so start the day with a chuckle.
- Challenge any negative self-talk. Work on reducing the "should/shouldn't/must" statements to reduce stress and increase confidence.
- Identify a buffer zone. Respite from the demands of work is essential for health and performance. What can you do after work to help you recover?

**Friday:** Switch off that mental filter. You're almost at the weekend and it's time to relax and wind down from work.

- Make sure you eat regularly and stay hydrated. This is particularly important (but less likely) when we are busy and mentally or emotionally stressed.
- Think positive. Focusing on your negative traits and behaviors means that you turn a blind eye to your positive qualities.
- Make a list of things that help you relax. Then choose one and do it without feeling guilty.

## B. Mindful Meditation

To meet all the demands of teaching can be challenging. Continual reports and research tell us teachers feel increasing pressure, and stress levels have soared in recent years due to increased complexity and volume of workloads. One study reported that mind-body strategies such as mindfulness meditation are one of the best ways to combat stress and anxiety – especially for teachers. Research confirms this as more than a dozen research studies have investigated the impact of mindfulness for teachers. There is strong evidence that it can:

- Reduce stress and feelings of burn out.
- Improve emotional health, including self-confidence, empathy, compassion and patience.
- Enhance teachers' ability to concentrate and focus.
- Improve health, including reductions in absenteeism.
- Enhance job performance (better classroom management, etc).

Meditation can be broadly defined as any activity that involves controlling your attention. Mindfulness is about focusing on whatever is happening moment-by-moment without being judgmental. In mindfulness meditation, you actively choose to control where your mind goes. For example, you can choose to pay attention to your breath or the sounds around you. While that seems fairly simple to do, you'll discover that your attention easily wanders.

However, it's worth battling that because practicing the regulation of attention ultimately helps you to live more in the present moment, and reduces the tendency to worry about the past or future, and enhance the chance for better memory. This is hugely important because these tendencies are the root cause of much anxiety.

Each time you gently and non-judgmentally notice your attention wandering and actively bring it back to the object of your meditation, you are strengthening your mindfulness "muscles." This is why it's called a practice; mindfulness, like all skills, is something you develop over time.

Here are two practices for teachers to try before class begins, during your lunch break or before you go to sleep.

## 1. A Mindful Moment

Designate something as a signal for you to take a mindful moment, such as the ringing of the bell between classes, getting a text message or stopping at a traffic light on the way to school.

The idea is to bring mindful attention to ordinary activities and just focus and observe. Briefly shine the spotlight of your attention on your breathing body, by first taking a moment to observe yourself inhale and exhale. Don't worry about changing your breathing in any way – the point is to simply notice it.

Next, take a moment to scan your body to see if you are holding tension anywhere. If you are, try to send your next breath to that part of your body to release it. You can do this by imagining the breath entering your body and travelling to the place of tension, and then back out again on the exhale.

Before you conclude the practice, you might want to take a quick moment to give yourself a bit of encouragement: "I've got this, I'm going to take it moment by moment." Or set an intention for bringing the mindful attention you just cultivated with you into the rest of your day: "I'm going to try my best to be present today." Informal mindfulness is very handy – it's when you are at your busiest that you need mindfulness most.

## 2. Mindfulness of Breath

This is the formal meditation practice most people start with when they are first learning. It can be done for anywhere from five to thirty minutes or more; start with a short period of time and slowly spend longer as you get better. The time of the day doesn't matter. Some people like to do it first thing in the morning or before going to bed, and some teachers practice this in the classroom before students arrive. The location doesn't matter as long as you can sit, stand or lie down without being interrupted for the duration.

Find a quiet spot, sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes. Imagine your attention is a spotlight that you can actively shine on whatever you choose to observe. Direct this spotlight on your breathing. Observe the sensation of breath wherever you notice it: the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen, or the air entering and exiting your mouth or nostrils. Without trying to change it in any

way, simply notice the inhale/exhale cycles that occur. When you find that your attention has wandered, gently redirect the spotlight back to your breath.

One technique you might want to try as you're learning to meditate, is counting your breaths. This will help you quiet your thinking mind by giving it a task to complete. After your first out breath, silently count one, and then after the next inhale and exhale, count two and so on, until you reach ten. If you become distracted at any point, gently refocus your spotlight back on to your breath and begin again with one.

When you're ready to conclude your practice it's a good idea to take a moment to acknowledge the time you have just spent cultivating calm and attention. You might try ending with a silent affirmation and intention such as, "I am peaceful and calm. Let me bring this into my life."

Try doing these practices daily and you'll soon reap the benefits of mindfulness meditation in all areas of your life. The next step is to begin to think on good things from the Scripture. Think about the Jesus, the love of God, mercy, and grace.

## **VII. Self-care / Holy Spirit-care (Matthew 15:1-20)**

For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, lying and slander. These are what defile; but there is no spiritual defilement from eating without first going through the ritual of ceremonial handwashing! (Matthew 15:19-20, TLB)

### **A. Spiritual Health Is More Important than Physical Health**

We work hard to keep our outward appearance attractive, but what is in our hearts is even more important. The way we are deep down (where others can't see) matters much to God. What are you like inside? When people become Christians, God makes them different on the inside. He will continue the process of change inside them if they only ask. God wants us to have healthy thoughts and motives, not just healthy food and exercise.

## B. Dos and Don'ts for Physical-Mental-Spiritual Care Interactions.

First Thessalonians 5: 23 shows that we deal with body, soul and spirit. These arenas of life are complex and interact in the physical, mental and spiritual domains that influence our confidence toward God, our sense of well-being and success in social world around us.

What we eat, how we treat our temples, what we think about, read, and watch or hear from media initiates changes that affect our attitude and spiritual perception. It is important to restrict and monitor what we do and allow in our lives. Here are examples:

- **Loaded:** Reduce intake of foods having high levels of refined sugars, caffeine, fats, alcohol, salt, sodium and cholesterol.
- **Non-processed food:** Increase fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts
- **Cardiovascular:** Increase and maintain physical exercise
- **Sleep:** 6–8 hours nightly. Asset: Afternoon power nap!
- **Worship:** Actively participate in spiritual exercises.
- **Fellowship:** Develop a relationship with a few close friends you enjoy and stay in contact.

## C. Spirituality Self-Care

The aim of spiritual self-care is to keep or restore peace, hope, faith, and zeal. Spiritual self-care will focus on practical religious exercises. The teacher should practice four steps, especially when feeling stressed or nearing crisis:

- (1) Stop and analyze,
- (2) Seek help,
- (3) Accept counsel,
- (4) Focus on recovery

### **Stop and analyze by taking the Emmaus Walk (Luke 24:13-22)**

When life is full of questions, your resources are depleted. When facing a crisis of belief, take what many in the Christian tradition call an “Emmaus Walk” (Luke 24:13–22). In this passage two disciples after the crucifixion of Jesus walked along on the road to Emmaus, they were feeling despair, hopelessness and grief at

the murder of their Messiah. Jesus joined them and spoke about himself as prophesied in the Old Testament, then sat to eat with them. At that point they recognized Him and were inspired with fresh zeal and energy, hope, and excitement. Taking an Emmaus Walk to reflect on Jesus restores and renews depleted spiritual and emotional resources! Meditate and allow the spirit of God to walk along with you – to answer questions, to clarify options, and to fellowship with you. When you feel connected once more to the presence of God, you will be restored and empowered to work.

- Allow the Spirit to answer questions, clarify options, and provide communion, communication, intuition.
- Take Action: Going through the motions, pretending nothing is wrong self destructive to yourself and to the work of the kingdom of God.

#### **D. Exercises and Processes at Work in Spiritual Training**

- Family altar
- Devotional time
- Bible study time
- Wholesome recreation
- Daily plan of action to fulfill goals
- Church assembly
- Individual worship
- Religious exercises and processes of self-care that enable Holy Ghost care

# The Teacher and His Health

## Lesson in Review

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Nation: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name two ways teaching ministry work is rewarding to you.

A. \_\_\_\_\_

B. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Tell why and when spiritual compassion fatigue is a problem

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Define self-care and list areas a teacher can control with good habits.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Describe symptoms of burnout.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Why is good health considered a sacred duty?

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6. What are some ways to maintain the temple, our bodies?

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7. What lifelong habits should be practiced for self-care?

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8. Give four ways spiritual and physical self-care can be implemented.

A. \_\_\_\_\_

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B. \_\_\_\_\_

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C. \_\_\_\_\_

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D. \_\_\_\_\_

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9. Describe three steps to self-care

A. \_\_\_\_\_

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B. \_\_\_\_\_

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C. \_\_\_\_\_

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