

## Invest in Yourself

At a recent ministry leaders meeting Pastor Stephen Heleman of Calvary Baptist Church, Bastrop, talked about, "Leading Change in the Small Church." The presentation was built around the acronym GRIT. The "I" in GRIT is "Invest in Yourself." To be an effective ministry leader, one of the difficult things you must do is develop (i.e., change) yourself.

Stephen said he came to the realization that "I am the most likely bottleneck in my church." That item of self-awareness became a catalyst for his personal growth.

How do we ministry leaders become bottlenecks in the ministries we lead? Drawing from Stephen's talk and from other observations, consider these six bottlenecking tendencies.

1. *We ignore our physical health.* We lose stamina and the ability to function at our best because we dismiss symptoms, neglect preventive practices, live sedentary lives, and eat too much. Not only is this a bad example for those we lead, it undermines our leadership credibility and our ability to carry out our calls vigorously.
2. *We ignore our emotional health.* Ministry leadership takes a toll on us, which is why we need to take advantage of counseling resources, get appropriate rest, and use opportunities like sabbaticals and retreats to recharge. We tend to ignore emotional health with a kind of John Wayne mentality about ministry. It is not weakness to deal with emotional matters. It is a sign of strength.
3. *We ignore our spiritual health.* This is where I found myself bottlenecking in recent days. My personal time in Scripture and prayer had become perfunctory. I was rushing on to do "productive" things and neglecting being with the Lord. A simple reset of when and how I listen and respond to Him has made a big difference. Why did I ignore this for so long? Because I am a task-doer like many of you, that's why. Are there spiritual disciplines you are neglecting in your busyness?
4. *We ignore key relationships.* Relationships take time and energy, so they often get put on hold while we take care of more immediately urgent matters. But doing this over the long-haul harms marriages, isolates us from peers, and causes us to view the people in our ministries as interruptions rather than the reason we are in ministry. There are probably one or two relationships in your life that are important to God's work in and through you but have been put on the back burner. It's time to move them to the front burner.

5. *We stop learning.* I do not have in mind the kind of regular study we do as preachers and teachers of Scripture. Certainly, we need to make sure our ministry of the word is fresh. However, I am thinking of the learning experiences that challenge us to see things differently, to develop a new skill, to listen to coaches and mentors, and grow our capacity for leading. Do you push yourself to read widely? Are you challenging yourself to grow in your field of ministry? It is easy to let this slip as the years go by.
6. *We stop trying new things in our ministries.* Ministry leaders are often stuck in the methods that worked well in the past. We are comfortable with these ways of doing things and we can point to times when they achieved significant results. But anything gets stale over time. Freshness comes when we see new possibilities and introduce new facets to our ministries. Is innovation a regular part of your ministry leadership?

It takes a proactive plan to overcome these bottlenecking tendencies. So, I have an offer for you. Generous people who love ministry leaders have contributed to the Minister Care Fund of Bluebonnet Association. We use that fund in various ways to minister to those who minister to the church. Here's the offer: A \$500 "Invest in Yourself" grant from the Minister Care Fund to the first five BBA pastors or church ministry staff members who submit a written plan for personal growth in the six areas above. The plan should include:

- At least one growth goal in each of the six areas to be accomplished within the next twelve months.
- A brief but clear action plan for accomplishing each goal.

Submit your "Invest in Yourself" proposal to me at [robby@bluebonnetbaptist.org](mailto:robby@bluebonnetbaptist.org). The \$500 may be used for anything related to your personal growth plan (books, conferences, gym membership, health check-ups, counseling, coaching, ministry resources, retreats, meetings with peers, etc.). In return, I ask that you share with me a progress report at the six-month point and a final report at the twelve-month point.

Brothers and sisters who serve the Lord and his church, invest in yourself. Be intentional about it. It will make a difference in your life and ministry.