

GOING THE DISTANCE

HOW TO STAY FIT FOR A LIFETIME OF MINISTRY

STUDY GUIDE

BY DENIS KIRKALDY

Introduction

The study guide is set out in three sections:

(i) **Bible study**

Bible passages which are mentioned in the chapter or are related to the content of the chapter are set out with questions to consider. The exploration of the deeper meaning of these passages will lead to a greater understanding of the principles in the chapter.

(ii) **For discussion**

This is designed for you to use with other pastors or with friends. It is meant to allow a sharing of ideas and experiences. As the book suggests, we ought to be very responsive to the help and insights we can receive from others. This section would be best used with others who are reading the book, but it is designed to work without that.

(iii) **Activities**

This is time for your personal response to issues in the chapter. A book such as this is easy to read and then put aside, having mentally noted what it teaches and planned to do something about it 'some day'. This section is designed to help you react in a practical way as you read each chapter. Often it is suggested that you write down your thoughts and plans. You may find it helpful to use an exercise book to write your responses in this section so that you can go back over them throughout your ministry. Many of the questions ask you to consider things which may take on a greater relevance at other stages of your ministry. Plan to keep this book private—and be brutally frank and totally honest in your responses.

Finally, include regular prayer in your time for reading this book and doing the study guide exercises. Many of the issues are complex and many of the suggestions are not easy for Christians to put into practice. You will need God's help, so make prayer about what you are reading a *planned priority*.

Chapter I

Bible study

1. Is Berkeley's interpretation of Acts 20:24 correct (p. 10)? Read the verses in Acts surrounding verse 24. What do they teach us about Paul's view of his ministry?
2. What is the basis for the exhortation in Hebrews 10:24? Read verses 19f.
3. What is the basis for Paul's assessment of his own ministry gifts in 2 Corinthians 11:21-31?
4. How does Paul exhort us not to lose heart in 2 Corinthians 4:7-18?
5. What is the 'cross' Jesus calls us to take up in Luke 9:23? How does this fit with the need for self-care?

For discussion

1. Is self-care selfish or is it the primary responsibility of a pastor?
2. "Pastors are busy because they are lazy!" (p. 21). What does this quote mean? How should pastors set priorities in their ministry?
3. How do you deal with the 'numbers matter' mentality?
4. What, for today's pastor, can you substitute for the horse in the McCheyne quote (p. 20)?

Activities

1. Make a list of things where proper self-care will help you as a pastor. (Begin with 'being aware of false teaching'.)
2. What, in your ministry, could you hand over to others in order to take the pressure off yourself?
3. Keep a diary of time spent in prayer and preparation. How can you change your timetable to give them the priority that they deserve?
4. Analyse your activities and consider whether you have a 'Messiah complex'. How can you change that?

Chapter 2

Bible study

Read Hebrews 11 and ask how many of these ‘heroes of faith’ experienced failures and doubts. What does this tell us about God’s attitude to our desire to ‘succeed’ in the eyes of others?

For discussion

1. What needs to change in your church/denominational structure to allow ‘permission’ to engage in activities which will prevent burnout?
2. Is there an optimum time to work in one parish? Does staying in one place too long lead to a higher risk of burnout—or does moving too often lead to a higher risk of burnout?
3. How can we go about setting goals for our church which will help us to re-organize our ministry priorities?

Activities

1. Go through the symptoms of burnout on page 28f and rate yourself for each one on a scale of 1-10. Then prayerfully consider:
 - a. how close you are to burnout;
 - b. what you can do to change so that you reduce each symptom.
2. Make a list (no matter how impractical) of things you could do to take periods of ‘time out’. Once you have made the list, go through and place a tick beside the ones that are more practical. Set a time to sit down and actually plan to put these into your diary (right now would be good!).
3. Make a list of the things you should have said ‘no’ to in the past month. Consider each one and devise a strategy to help you say ‘no’ next time. (This exercise may be best done in conjunction with a fellow pastor or your spouse.)

Chapter 3

Bible study

1. In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul speaks of his anxiety. What is it for? How did Paul deal with it in his ministry?
2. Philippians 2:1-12 is about servanthood. It seems to run counter to some of the advice in this chapter. Study it carefully and ask how it relates to the concepts in the chapter. Can you find evidence in the ministry of Jesus where he applied the principles set out in this chapter? For example, what is the meaning of Matthew 15:21-8? Why did Jesus leave Palestine and go to the coast? What was his attitude to the woman who interrupted his time with his disciples?

For discussion

1. Commit time over an extended period to work through the chart on page 41 with a few other pastors. Analyse each factor in the first two columns. Discuss their meaning, acknowledge the part they play in ministry, and discuss practical ways of dealing with them.
2. Make a list of the variety of activities in your weekly programme. Rank them in order of importance. Explain to another pastor(s) your reasons for this ranking and then discuss whether changes need to be made.

Activities

1. Take the chart on page 41 to your doctor and ask him/her to give you a complete medical check-up. Ask especially about the issues set out in that chart.
2. Since words of affirmation and encouragement are important, offer these to some people who are important to you. You may do this face to face or by telephone. You would find it a rewarding exercise to write short letters of encouragement to people who have had a significant influence on your life.
3. Make a list of a few things you should have said 'no' to over the past few months.
4. Work through each of the 'Ten Preventative Measures' (pp. 48-49) and write down practical things for you to do for each one.

Chapter 4

Bible study

1. In John 10:10, what does Jesus mean by abundant life?
2. How does Romans 8:28-38 help us to deal with the stress we can face in ministry?
3. Paul's exhortation in Philippians 4:4-7 is very helpful. But what can we do to make this a part of our experience?

For discussion

1. What causes stress in ministry? Discuss this question, identify areas of agreement, and then discuss how these can best be dealt with.
2. How do you find a balance between work and rest?
3. How do you deal with the "4 A's" (pp. 58-59)?
4. Share with others how you spend your day off and how they spend theirs. Are there better ways you can devise which will give you more relaxation?
5. Discuss the issue of choosing friends with whom to share your pressures. What are the limitations of family and parishioners as people with whom to share?

Activities

1. Make a list of regular weekly activities and then consider which ones you would withdraw from in a time of great stress (such as the lecturing mentioned in the book).
2. Think through part of your ministry. Write down times when you were depressed and then see if you can find reasons, as set out in this chapter, which led to this distress.
3. Take your diary for *last week*. Pencil in what you could have done to provide a more balanced programme with "hills and valleys".
4. Make a list of things that you can do (and add to your diary) which will reduce stress.
5. The chapter contains a sample of a programme for sermon preparation (p. 63). Consider how you prepare for your preaching and analyse ways in which you could utilize the lessons of this chapter to prepare 'better' sermons.

Chapter 5

Bible study

1. Go to a concordance and look up all of the New Testament passages that use the words “one another”. How should these change our relationships with others?
2. Hebrews 10:24-25 is important but difficult. How can we “stir up one another”? What are the difficulties with this? How can they be overcome?

For discussion

1. How do you deal with common causes of depression in the ministry, for example:
 - a key congregation member moves elsewhere;
 - you receive criticism which you don't feel you deserve;
 - you receive discipline from a superior;
 - you move from a parish to a new ministry.
2. How much should you share your weaknesses and problems with your congregation? Why is it better to let them see your flaws than to try to hide them?

Activities

1. Analyse where you are at in your attitude to depression (on a scale from naivety to understanding).
2. Make a list of the passages of Scripture that you find most helpful in a time of depression. Consider putting them together in some form and having them in a prominent place in your office or study.
3. Analyse your ministry and ask yourself if there is some unresolved loss/failure which needs to be dealt with. Deal with it first with God and then, if necessary, with others involved.
4. Analyse each of the 11 suggestions on page 80 and consider what changes you need to make to the way that you minister to others.

Chapter 6

Bible study

1. What does James 1:19-20 say about anger?
2. Does Ephesians 4:26 help us to understand when anger becomes sin? What is the context for this verse (4:11-5:21)?
3. What was Jesus' attitude to being treated unfairly, according to 1 Peter 2:23?
4. Go to a concordance and look for 'anger' and 'self control'. Look up each reference and analyse what it says. What practical help can you get from these verses?
5. What practical things should you do to make the ideas expressed in Romans 12:17-21 real in your experience?

For discussion

1. What situations in your ministry lead to you becoming angry? How can these be dealt with positively?
2. How can we deal with 'failures' in ministry?
3. Why does the Bible contain so many passages about anger and self-control? What are the implications of this for our Christian walk and for our ministry?

Activities

1. Think through two or three situations where you not only felt angry but also expressed your anger in an unhelpful way. What were the consequences? How could you have handled the situations better?
2. Write down your goals. Organize them in a general order of importance and, for each one, ask if it is realistic. Think about what people can do to block each of those goals and work out ways of coping positively if that happens.
3. Are there one or more people in your past who have wronged you and whom you have not forgiven? Seek God's help in genuinely forgiving them.

Chapter 7

Bible study

1. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 sets out the requirements for church leaders. Go through each requirement, determine what it means, and then consider why it is so important.
2. How does Hebrews 4:14-16 help us in our family relationships?

For discussion

1. How can you balance your responsibilities to both family and ministry? What practical things can be put in place to help ensure you get this balance right?
2. How important is it to plan 'ordinary' activities in the parish rather than just 'spiritual' activities? Share ideas that have worked.
3. How can we teach our congregations to have more realistic expectations of the families of their leaders?
4. "Would you come back from holidays to take a parishioner's funeral?" Discuss your response with reference to the comments made in this chapter (p. 113).

Activities

1. Take your diary for *last week*. Add to the appointments etc. a list of times you spent with your family. Mark the occasions when this was quality time rather than just being there. What proportion of the week did this fill?
2. Set aside a special time in a quiet place to ask your spouse to share frustrations they have. Commit yourself to not justifying anything but to go away and prayerfully consider what changes you might need to make. Then report back to them on what you plan to do and ask them to help keep you to it. Do the same with your children.
3. Work through the table on working or living the role (p. 108). You will probably find that you do not entirely fit into one or the other. Where are there problems in your attitude? What can you do about them?
4. Plan some periods of 'time out's for the next few weeks.

Chapter 8

Bible study

1. What does Paul mean in 1 Timothy 5:1-2? What is purity?
2. Hebrews 13: 4-7 warns us about two temptations. What are they? Why is faithfulness in marriage so important?
3. If 1 Corinthians 10:13 is true (and it is!), why do so many Christians fall to temptation? What do I need to do to ensure I find the “way of escape”?
4. What reasons are given in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 for the need for sexual purity?

For discussion

1. Discuss the “framework for the proper expression of sexuality” on page 127. Clarify each point and expand on it. Find biblical references to support each point.
2. How do we respond to modern teaching on sexuality, both secular and from within the church, which differs from ‘orthodox’ or ‘conservative’ teaching? How does the Bible help us to determine what is right and wrong when many current issues are not specifically dealt with?
3. How can we encourage each other to remain sexually pure?
4. How do we deal with transference and counter transference in counselling situations?

Activities

1. Read Matthew 5:8. What did Jesus mean in this beatitude? What pressures are there on you to not be pure in heart? How can these be dealt with?
2. Can you identify needs within yourself which could make you vulnerable? What can you do to provide a proper fulfilment for these needs.
3. “There are bound to be a number of people to whom we are attracted” (p. 132). Is this true for you? How have you dealt with it in the past? How should you deal with it in the future?
4. What practical steps can you take to accept your vulnerability in this area and to guard against temptation becoming sin?

Chapter 9

Bible study

1. What do Proverbs 27:17 and Ecclesiastes 4:12 tell us about friendship?
2. What does John 15:9-17 teach about our friendship with Jesus? What are our responsibilities and what are his promises to us?
3. Is the exhortation in 2 Timothy 4:2 to “reprove, rebuke and exhort” confined just to preaching? How can we make each of these a regular part of our pastoral ministry?
4. In Titus 2:15 how does the exhortation to encourage and rebuke with *authority* relate to a relationship of friendship?
5. What are the features of the prayer in Philippians 1:9-11? How can you encourage others to pray for you in this way?

For discussion

1. How did Jesus model friendship in his ministry?
2. How can a pastor develop appropriate friendships? What are the difficulties involved in doing so?
3. What are the dangers of being friends with people in your congregation? How can these dangers be minimized?
4. What needs to be done to your church structures to enable pastors to be pastored more effectively?

Activities

1. Make a list of your close friends. Spend a few moments in prayer for each one. Determine within a few days to contact them simply to say how much you value their friendship.
2. Take this list of friends and note beside each one the role that they fulfil in your relationship—encourager, rebuker, etc.
3. What role(s) do you play in your friendship with others? Which role do you need to work harder at doing successfully?
4. Using Mallison’s characteristics of “a good Christian mentor” (p. 154), make a note of areas you need to work on to become a better mentor. What will you need to do to strengthen those areas?
5. Make a covenant, as suggested on pages 155-156, with at least one close friend. Then work through the 12 questions mentioned on page 157 with that friend.

Chapter 10

Bible study

1. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 what does Paul mean by “glorify God in your body”
2. As you read this chapter, have your Bible open at Luke 10 and read each of the verses referred to in the chapter. It would also be helpful to have a good commentary to help you to gain an even deeper understanding of these important principles.

For discussion

1. What is the Sabbath rest? What does it mean, practically, in the life of a pastor?
2. How can pastors ensure that they continue to learn? Share what you do with others and listen to them.

Activities

1. Take each of the eight principles based on the example of Jesus, set out in this chapter (pp. 160-166). Work through what the principle means and then make a list of things you need to do to put the principles into practice in your Christian life. Put together a strategy that will enable you to implement these effectively.
2. Put together a ‘study programme’ to help you to continue your learning. As part of this, go to a friend or a colleague and get a list of books they consider it important to read. Alternatively you can ask the manager of a good Christian bookshop what new books should be looked at. You could also check sources for book reviews and determine to read one new Christian book regularly.
3. Seek out possible courses you could attend.
4. Consider what you need to do to make your ‘Quiet Time’ (Bible reading, meditation and prayer) more regular and more effective.
5. Organize a regular routine to keep yourself physically fit (if you do not already have one).

Chapter 11

Bible study

Look up the word ‘humility’ in a concordance. Read each verse and note how it might be applied in your life.

For discussion

1. Analyse the quote from Eugene Peterson on page 172 and discuss the truth of each part. What can be done to be ‘less busy’?
2. Find a recording of *Cat’s in the Cradle* to listen to and then discuss Chapin’s insights.

Activities

Devise your maintenance plan based on the principles in this chapter. Make it as detailed as you can. Then set aside a time to share it with others—your spouse and family, other church leaders, members of your congregation, friends who you have chosen as their mentor, etc. *Make sure your plan is workable and your goals are achievable, not impractical.*

Chapter 12

Bible study

1. Read Hebrews 13:17. Why should you obey your leaders?
2. Read 1 Timothy 5:17. What is meant by “double honour”? How do you put it into practice?
3. Read Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-7, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Acts 20:17-28, 1 Timothy 5:17, and 1 Thessalonians 5:12. How do each of these passages help us to better understand the relationship between pastor and people? What special responsibilities does each have?

For discussion

How can we help our congregations gain a better understanding of the relationship between pastor and people?

Activities

1. Work through this chapter carefully, looking at the way you react to your ‘elders’ or those who are in authority over you. Until you have done this in a detailed way, you cannot expect to profitably share it with those over whom you have authority.
2. Given that most of your congregation will not read this book (though they should be encouraged to do so, because most of it applies to them as well as to their pastor), you need to organize some way to make the contents of this chapter available to them for discussion. You can:
 - summarize it and add questions for discussion;
 - photocopy sections such as Ian Mear’s ten tips (pp. 197-200).

Get them to discuss the issues and suggestions in small groups, led by the elders in your congregation and *without you present*. Providing questions for discussion may be helpful.

Chapter 13

Bible study

1. How does Romans 12:3-6 help to put your leadership role in perspective?
2. Carefully read each passage referred to in the section 'Leaders who encourage others' (pp. 203-205) and seek to apply it.

For discussion

1. How can the 'body' image used in Romans 12, Ephesians 4:11-16 and 1 Corinthians 12 be implemented in our congregations? What needs to change for this to happen?
2. What makes the local congregation so important in our Christian growth? How can we convey this to others—especially those who claim that they can be Christians without going to church?
3. Rather than 'have a go at everything', what are principles you can use to determine what you attempt and what you decide is to be left undone?

Activities

1. If you are a local church leader, look at the list under practical matters (pp. 205-213). Go through each of the seven sections and note the expectations of your church in each area. Make a list of the things which need to change and plan how you will discuss this with other decision-makers in your congregation.
2. If you are a pastor, encourage your leaders to read the chapter and do the suggestion above.
3. Here is a list of 11 suggestions as to how you might encourage your pastor:
 - Love your pastor into greatness.
 - Believe in him as a holy person.
 - Apply his preaching to your life.
 - Release him from repetitive routines.
 - Make the logistics of his living as easy as possible.
 - Don't waste his sacrifice.
 - Encourage him to dream big dreams.
 - Treat him as generously as you treat your boss,
 - Start an affirmation campaign about your pastor today
 - Try to see your church through the eyes of the Saviour.
 - Commit to be a holy person who pleases God in all things.

Organize to implement each of these points. When you have done so, jot down the noticeable effect it had on your pastor.

Chapter 14

(The exercises for this chapter are designed for denominational leaders—suggest they read the book.)

Bible study

1. Read 1 Timothy 3:1. Why does Paul see the role of overseer as a noble task? How does this relate to his own experience of ministry?
2. Read the beginning and end of each of Paul's epistles. What sort of model does he provide for a church leader?

For discussion

1. How relevant is this quote for your denomination: "A congregation can not be an authentic Christ-centred church when led by persons who have only seniority, talent, money, and social standing. Above all else, the congregational pillar must know Christ." How should the denominational structures relate to the local congregation? Are they there to serve? Do they hinder the work in the local congregation?
2. How can denominational leaders gain a better understanding of what local pastors are experiencing?
3. How can denominational leaders be pastors to the pastors when they are involved in the furthering of careers?
4. Does your denomination need a pastor for pastors who does not have an administrative or credentialing authority? What can be done to put such a position in place if it is needed?
5. What does your denomination do to ensure that remuneration for pastors is adequate? What changes need to be made?
6. What structure does your denomination have for dispute resolution? Is it fair on all involved? How could it be improved?

Activities

1. Work through the list of pastors you are responsible for and ring each one with a word of encouragement. If this is difficult because you don't know what they are doing then put in place plans to find out more about them.
2. Plan a programme of either inviting the pastors for whom you are responsible to visit you at home or visit them. Make this a purely social getting-to-know-you occasion.
3. Look at your diary for the *past two weeks*. How much pastoring of pastors have you done (this does not include responding to crises that have been brought to your attention)? How can you re-order your priorities to ensure that you do more to encourage and affirm those for whom you are responsible?
4. Make a list of the committees you are on where your input is not really needed. What should you do about this?

Chapter 15

Bible study

1. What do you understand to be the implications of the ‘race’ image in Acts 20:24, 2 Timothy 4:7 and Hebrews 12:1-2?
2. What are the implications for us of Paul’s attitude to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 1:2, 1:4, 16:24)?
3. Work through the other references in the Corinthian letters (as set out on pages 241-242) and relate them to your ministry.

For discussion

1. What would be the advantages of writing times for leisure, prayer and reflection into your diary?
2. How do you deal with the “tyranny of the urgent” (endnote, p. 242)?

Activities

1. How much rest, of both types, do you get each week? What can you do to change that?
2. Are you willing to try use your diary to plan leisure, prayer and reflection? If so, block out times for a period of about a month. Give the answer “my diary won’t permit it” when asked to do things at times you have blocked out. Keep a record of how you feel when you do so. After at least a month reassess whether this is a technique that will work for you.
3. If you do not have clearly set out short and long term goals for your ministry then you should begin to set them. If you are not sure how to do this, ask someone—almost every business sets goals and many people can help you to do it effectively.

Chapter 16

Bible study

1. What is the doctrine set out in 2 Corinthians 5:7 and Romans 5:1? Go to a book on theology and refresh your understanding of this central doctrine.
2. How does Paul's experience in 2 Corinthians 3:2-6, 10:17-18 and Philippians 1:15-18 help us to face criticism and hurt?
3. How does Ephesians 2:8-10 put you and your ministry proper context?

For discussion

1. What examples are there in Jesus' ministry to show that he did not try to please everyone or do everything?
2. How can we help pastors cope with failure?

Activities

1. Write down some evidences in your life that show that God accepts you and cares for you. How does this effect your self image?
2. Write down some examples of your failures. Analyse them. Those that were due to your own sinfulness confess before God and seek forgiveness. How many others are there? Are they really failures? How would God treat them
3. Work through some examples of irrational thought (p. 253) which you have experienced. Note what the rational response would be.

Chapter 17

1. Spend some time going over the notes that you have taken. How successful have you been in following through plans you made to change?
2. Make a single page list of resolutions that you plan to implement permanently and then commit them to God.
3. If this book has been helpful, as a part of your ministry of encouragement, send a brief note to the author, Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Brain.