

MTMFoundation

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Sent: Friday, January 28, 2011 4:35 PM
To: mtmfoundation@verizon.net
Subject: From heavy-laden to renewed strength



Ministering to Ministers Foundation, Inc. Newsletter January 28, 2011

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From Heavy-Laden to Renewed Strength

You may already know the expression, "If it don't kill you, it'll make you strong." None of us feels strong while we're going through a crisis, worrying about the future and our loved ones, or when we're looking for (or enduring) a warm-body job that pays a fraction of what we need to get by. I had over four years to learn some of these lessons, following six years serving a church where things ended unhappily. I wondered if God had removed His call, but I could not understand why He hadn't removed the desire along with it.

I took comfort in Jesus' invitation where He said, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." In the original language, "heavy-laden" meant "worked to exhaustion." If you think about it, exhaustion is a matter of perception. A valid one, to be sure, but a perception, nonetheless. Some of us reach the breaking point before others. The good news is, Jesus put no restrictions around how "heavy-laden" we must be in order to receive His gift of rest. Except one: "Come to Me."

What happens when we **don't** come to Him? We remain heavy-laden. It's not that Jesus *withholds* His gift of rest; it's that we look for it in other ways: compulsive sleeping, overeating, wasting time on the internet or watching TV, and other forms of self-imposed isolation.

Even when we do come to Him, we may not "feel" any different. But changes will start to happen! I compare it with resistance training. When we push, pull or press the maximum weight we can, we feel weak and exhausted-because we've expended our available energy. Our muscles

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MTM Website

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In This Issue

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What's MTM all about?

Our Mission:

The Ministering to Ministers (MTM) Foundation seeks to be advocates for clergy and their families in all faith groups who are experiencing personal or professional crisis due to deteriorating employment or congregation-clergy relationships.

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actually restore themselves-after they've had time to rest. The shepherd in Psalm 23 said of God, "He *restores* my soul"-rest is built into the very word! You may not be able to measure fatigue, but you definitely can measure increased strength. It's not about numbers-some people can push, pull or press more than others. But if the next time, you can push, pull or press more than the last time, or get in an extra couple of repetitions, that's proof you ARE stronger! I am still on the journey toward healing, but I have grown stronger in many of the places that were weak, or even broken.

Naturally, when we're in crisis, discouraged or depressed, we rarely "feel like" working out-or coming to Jesus. Thank God for the priceless gifts of work-out buddies, walking companions, fellowship friends, and prayer partners. Before there was any evil in the world, God said, "It is NOT good for the (hu)man to be alone." I will always be grateful for the MTM Healthy Transitions Wellness Retreat I was able to attend at no cost-because someone else who knew my pain made it possible. I learned my circumstances were not unique, and that I was neither alone nor "damaged goods." I found strength and hope in Charles Chandler's affirmation, "They can take away your job, but they can't take away your ministry."

I asked some of my co-workers what are some of 'restorative' ways they find rest-how do they 're-store' their strength? Several responses included "bowling," "grandchildren," "pets," "volunteering," "music" (especially making music or playing with friends). One of my Jewish friends said, "Time." Time means remembering other winters of the soul that eventually gave way to spring. The psalmist said, "I trust in You...**my times are in Your hand.**" Isaiah said, "Those who wait for the Lord [who expect, look for, and hope in Him] shall change and renew their strength and power...they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint or become tired." (*Amplified Bible*)

Waiting is not being passive: ask any parent who "waits up" for their child to return safely home. Fortunately, our Heavenly Father also waits up. Jesus waits for those of us who labor and are "heavy-laden" to come to Him. Rest is not something we work for, earn or deserve: if Jesus says, "I will give you rest," that means rest is a gift.

God's grace is also a gift. Remember Paul's "thorn in the flesh"? He asked God three times to remove it. Would you pray a second or a third time if you felt like you "got through" the first time? Imagine, even Paul knew what it was like to feel he wasn't being heard! Finally, God responded-"My grace is sufficient for you." The thorn remained. But Paul came to see his weakness as an asset, an opportunity for God's strength to become his own. Elsewhere he told some believers, "Comfort yourselves together, and *edify* one another." To edify is to encourage, build up (another word for building is 'edifice').

It's okay to be discouraged, weak and exhausted. It's not okay to self-isolate, avoiding God, loved ones, and life. May we be encouraged to accept His invitation to come, to receive rest, to reconnect, and in time, to discover new strength. Perhaps God is calling you to invest in healing a wounded pastor? Your gift to the Ministering to Ministers Foundation can make the difference that helps someone else move from heavy-laden to renewed strength.

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Thank You For Your Investment

In the December issue of the *MTM Messenger*, I made an appeal for both prayer support and financial support for the MTM ministry. Your response was heart warming. We consider your response an investment in the lives of some of God's chosen but wounded servants. Many are reclaimed for ministry as a result of your investment. All of those whose lives were touched by the MTM ministry during 2010 join me in expressing appreciation and asking God's blessing upon you.

The calls continue to come in 2011 at a very rapid rate. Even the near record snow falls that swept the south earlier this month could not dampen the spirits of those who gathered for the *Healthy Transitions Wellness Retreat for Ministers and Spouses* in East Tennessee. Your gifts helped make this experience possible and enable them to begin the journey toward healing. One participant wrote, *"God worked a miracle in my life this week. He did it through those who led the retreat. I came with a broken heart and without hope. My spirit has been renewed. I have learned ways to take better care of myself and gained insights into more effective ways to minister. Thank you for being there for us."*

Thank you for being there for the MTM ministry. Your continued prayer and financial support are essential to meeting the needs of those who continue to call day after day.

Charles H. Chandler
Executive Director



Past Issues of *MTM Messenger* on Line

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