

Clergy Care - Unpacking Clergy Baggage

Bishop Malcolm Harding

"After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of His Body."

Ephesians 5: 29

We all have a past and developmental history, and bring our "baggage" into ministry. What is that baggage? It is a collection of psychological, emotional, and spiritual factors that have shaped our lives. Some of these factors will be sound and positive, while others will be negative and emotionally destructive. Self care is all about getting in touch with one's "baggage", and, with our Lord's help, starting to unpack the bag.

Research has revealed a high degree of stress and actual burnout among church leaders, who, for instance, work very long hours, and frequently compromise their day off.

One of the excellent books on the Resource List is entitled:

Liberated to Lead – Healthy Leaders Grow Healthy Churches, by Colin Buckland.

- A case illustration of a pastor suffering with "victim mentality" and counseled by Colin Buckland (pp.28 – 29).
- A reflection on conflict avoidance and the beginning signs of burnout.
- Recalling Paul's words: "Be transformed by the renewal of your mind" Romans 12: 2.

What does emotional maturity look like?

- You feel comfortable about yourself, recognizing some areas in which you still need to grow.
- You have discovered your particular gifts and they have been affirmed by others.
- You are aware of your own personality type.
- You have accepted a daily discipline of spiritual devotions.
- You are able to interact with others in a mature and caring manner, with no need to be "centre stage".
- A brief reflection on Mark 12: 30 – 31 as a consideration of self care.
- A brief reference to another helpful book on the list provided:
When to Say Yes – When to Say No, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend.