

**THRIVING
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Is It Well With Your Soul?



by Chaplain George

One of the many things I love about God is found in Psalm 23:3a, "He restores my soul." In the Amplified Bible, it reads, "He refreshes and restores my life (my self)."

Can you think of specific instances when your soul needed restoring—when you were discouraged or bowed down by the pressures and demands of family and ministry? Remember, an event doesn't have to be catastrophic to pose a serious threat to the health of the soul. More often than not, the real danger lies in the piling up of small irritations and burdens—little things that keep building, one on top of the other, until the accumulated weight produces despair. You continue to perform, but you lack emotional vitality. You go through the motions, meeting the expectations of others, but inside there is a growing numbness—a weakening of the soul, a depletion of your inner self.

When people reach this state of inner exhaustion, they often turn inward and become overly self-focused. Relationships are strained as emotions wear thin. Thought processes become clouded and the moral fabric of internal life begins to unravel. They maintain an outwardly religious persona while the authenticity and joy of their relationship with God slowly deteriorates.

It's at this point that the soul becomes increasingly vulnerable to various temptations. If the need for spiritual refreshment and renewal goes unrecognized, things will only get worse. Given time, this gradual erosion of the human soul can lead to severe consequences. It can cause people to stray further and further from God. It can make them actively pursue sinful desires. It's a slow and progressive process that has brought many a good minister down.

When confronted with the seriousness of this condition, those at this stage usually slip into ego

management. They deny that there is any reason for concern: "Why are you attacking me? Everything is fine." If you question the state of their soul, they make light of the situation: "It's not as bad as you think." Often they will try to shift the blame while playing the victim. If you've known someone in this position, you understand how gut wrenching it can be to watch a loved one become caught in this vicious downward spiral. You realize how much it hurts when that person refuses to listen to sound advice and counsel—when he or she complains, "Why don't people just live their own lives and leave me alone?"

Space doesn't permit me to examine in detail the many creative ways in which our loving God patiently pursues the weary and thirsty soul. But suffice it to say that, you are never too "far gone" to receive His tender care. Your soul can always be restored. Whether you're discouraged, as Elijah was when threatened by Jezebel (1 Kings 19:2-8); whether you're enduring severe temptation, as Jesus did in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11); whether you're in the grip of fear, like Peter when he denied Christ (Matthew 26:69-75); or whether you're plagued by doubt, like Thomas, who could not believe Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:26-28)—whatever your specific challenge or concern, be assured that God will meet you at your point of need.

Even in the extreme cases where ministers, like the prodigal son, walk away from their loving Father, God's grace never ceases to seek the wayward soul (Luke 15:11-24). The Lord pursues His lost sheep like a Good Shepherd (Matthew 18:10-14). He is unfailingly determined to heal the soul of its backsliding and restore it to His favor (Hosea 14:4). Wherever we may be in life's journey, we have His promise that the Holy Spirit will draw us to Himself, refresh us, and comfort our thirsty souls, leaving us with renewed discoveries of His love and the promises of His word (Psalm 19:7; 51:7-12). Our part is simply to respond (Isaiah 55:1).

We are here to help you thrive in your family relationships and in your ministry challenges. If we can offer support and guidance, call and talk with us on our Pastoral Care Line at (877) 233-4455 (Monday - Friday).

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Pulse Check



Caring for the Flock

"Pastor" is the Latin word for "shepherd." And no wonder, since the pastor's role is very much like that of a wise keeper of sheep. Among other things, it involves knowing how to feed the flock (preparing spiritually nourishing sermons) and keeping a sharp eye out for potential threats and hazards (staying in touch with cultural trends). You'll learn more in this week's [Pulse Check](#).

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