

For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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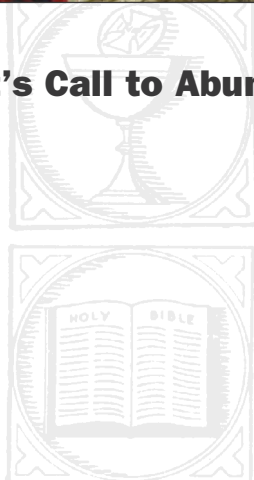
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By John D. Eckrich, M.D., Founder and Director of Grace Place Lutheran Retreats, Saint Louis, Missouri

Lutherans, particularly Lutheran clergy, continuously burn themselves up trying to balance, integrate, and negotiate personal life with commitment to their Call, as if the two could be unraveled. In fact, I would suggest that vibrant and lengthy Christian service springs from balanced, ordered, and integrated personal health, centered and empowered in one’s personal relationship with Christ and rehearsed in the family and home life.

7 Renewal of the Mind

By Dr. William C. Weinrich, Academic Dean, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana

If one wishes to consider the “renewal of the mind” and what that includes, one would do well to read and to contemplate the wisdom literature of the Scriptures, especially Psalm 119 and the *Wisdom of Solomon*, which is in the Greek Old Testament (called the Septuagint). Note *Wisdom* 6:11: “Set your affection upon My words; desire them, and you shall be instructed.” The formation of the mind (instructed) is not apart from affection and desire for the words of God. The mind is renewed in that it “hears” the speaking of God.

9 Renewal of the Spirit

By the Rev. Paul E. Shoemaker, pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church, New Haven, Indiana

While I may learn many things and share in wonderful insights from commentators and my own personal study of the Word in preparation to teach the Word or to proclaim the Word, there is a difference when I take time for personal, private devotional time. Renewal of the spirit begins with spending time with the One who gives and sustains spiritual life through His Word.

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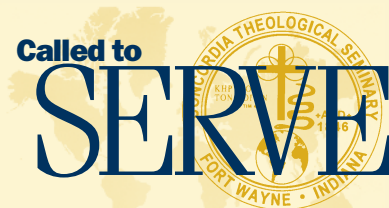
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Renewal of the Spirit

By the Rev. Paul E. Shoemaker

There are times in the life of a pastor when everything seems to be going well. The music in church sounds sweeter. The choir sings each and every note precisely. Boards and committees are hard at work, accomplishing their appointed duties. Sermons seem almost to write themselves. Bible classes are enlightening and entertaining. Every Sunday School class has a teacher and a helper. What could be better? There is a spring in the pastor's step. He believes that he is serving the right congregation at the right place in the right time. There is a sense of joy in ministry. There is satisfaction in a job well done.

But there are those other times in ministry. There are the times when it takes a monumental effort to get even the little things accomplished. Instead of church being a well-oiled machine every gear seems to whine and grind. Sermon ideas come slowly. An afternoon at the computer only produces a few disjointed thoughts. It is hard to get a clear theme. Bible classes seem plodding and lifeless. The few old faithful Sunday School teachers arrive to teach, but more need to be recruited. Church services feel uninspiring, even to the one who conducts the liturgy and preaches the sermons. Worst of all, there is a feeling of isolation. There seems to be no one with whom you can share your thoughts, observations, and feelings. Your wife loves you and is a great listener, but you cannot put the burden on her. Besides, if you were to share all of this with her, what would she do with that information? She is not in a position to effect a change.

All who are in the pastoral office know of the times of challenge. Living in a sinful world means there will be more days of rough sailing than smooth sailing. That's especially true because the pastor labors with the same Old Adam as everyone else. It's during those times that the pastor, and all who have received the gift of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, needs to remember who is in charge and who it is we serve. We must look to the God of heaven and earth to give us strength and courage to meet the days ahead. Our God will bless us with a perspective that will



Living in a sinful world means there will be more days of rough sailing than smooth sailing. That's especially true because the pastor labors with the same Old Adam as everyone else. It's during those times that the pastor, and all who have received the gift of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, needs to remember who is in charge and who it is we serve.

serve us as we serve Him and His people.

It happens so slowly and imperceptibly. One can barely discern the encroachment of the loss of joy in serving the Lord and His Church. But we know that happens. The key to keeping this at bay is deliberately to feed our need for spiritual things. There needs to be a renewal of the spirit.

Renewal of the spirit begins where spiritual life begins—it begins with God. We can no more renew our own spiritual life than we can give ourselves spiritual life. All life, physical and spiritual, is a gift from God. We know that when the life-giving water of Holy Baptism flowed over us, we were born anew of water and the Spirit. God created spiritual life in us. It is He who sustains that new life in Christ. That new life is nurtured in Christian homes and in Christian churches where the family of the faithful encourage one another in the faith. The Word of God nurtures. No matter how it is communicated God's Word renews the spirit. Personally, I enjoy the sung Word. Nothing is more refreshing to me than a hymn. I have always said, "I do not sing well, but I sing with confidence." Perhaps I will be forgiven by those who must listen to my singing sins. But as long as God gives me breath I will enjoy singing every stanza of every hymn. Singing renews my spirit. The words, so carefully crafted by God's musicians, reflect God's love for us all. The words remind me of God's mercy and renew my spirit. There is the key to the renewal of the spirit. It is taking time to allow God to communicate with you.

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Sometimes the business of the pastoral office encourages one to skimp on private time with God's Word. I separate time in sermon preparation and Bible class preparation from my own personal time. The purpose and focus of sermon preparation and Bible class preparation are far different from my time with God. While I may learn many things and share in wonderful insights from commentators and my own personal study of the Word in preparation to teach the Word or to proclaim the

Word, there is a difference when I take time for personal, private devotional time. Renewal of the spirit begins with spending time with the One who gives and sustains spiritual life through His Word.

After I had been a parish pastor for 16 years or so, our congregation called a candidate from the seminary to serve with me in the pastoral office. I soon realized that his seminary education introduced him to things I had not had an opportunity to study while I was at seminary. Realizing this I enrolled in some classes at the seminary. Soon I was reading books I never knew existed. Certain synapses of my brain were reawakened. I

made new friends. Instead of watching a rerun on television I was reading challenging and thought-provoking books. It was a refreshing change of pace. A book that addresses our topic is Eugene H. Peterson's *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing House, 1989). Both of our seminaries offer extension classes for parish pastors. Talk about renewal of the spirit! The intellectual exercise and sharing the faith with brothers in Christ were renewing and refreshing. A most excellent investment of your time would be to take advantage of these classes.

Spiritual renewal is not only a personal, private matter. If God has blessed you with a family, spiritual renewal begins and is supported at home. How easy it is to find oneself so busy caring for the needs of others that one neglects his own family. Spiritual renewal begins at home. It is important to take time to be with your family. How spiritually renewing it is to hear one's child or one's grandchild say the family prayer at meal-



time. This summer we played our Vacation Bible School's songs on a CD in my car. Even though it has been weeks since VBS, these songs are still being played when a special child of God gets in my car and sings his heart out to each and every one.

There is nothing as humbling as praying to God for each and every member of one's family. Wife, children, grandchildren, each has special joys and needs. Remembering each one before the God of heaven and earth changes one's feelings for each of these special gifts from God. Seeing the members of one's family as spiritual people who are gifts from God renews and revitalizes.

Spiritual renewal begins with God. It is He who has made us and it is He who will sustain us in life's journey. As we stay connected to Him through His Word and celebrate that Word of life with those who are near and dear to us, God's renewing and life-giving Spirit continues to renew our spirit.

The Rev. Paul E. Shoemaker is pastor of Emanuel Lutheran Church, New Haven, Indiana.

