

RESILIENCE:

FINDING WHOLENESS IN MINISTRY
BY WAY OF THE CROSS

STUDY:

Self-Care in Ministry

Individual Study Guide

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Grand Rapids
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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Self-Care in Ministry

OVERVIEW

The goal of this study is to help pastors and ministry leaders understand what wellbeing is, why it is important, and how to cultivate it. During this study, pastors and ministry leaders will reflect on their level of wellbeing and experiment with self-care practices.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this study, learners will be able to

- + Reflect on the appropriateness of self-care for pastors and ministry leaders;
- + Examine their self-care practices;
- + List new practices that may enhance their wellbeing;
- + Begin to cultivate two new self-care practices; and
- + Make a plan for continued engagement in self-care.

LESSONS

- + What Is Wellbeing?
- + Pursuing Wellbeing: Four Steps
- + Rest
- + Play
- + Storytelling
- + Prayer

MATERIALS NEEDED

- + Internet access for videos
- + Computer, projector, and/or speakers to show videos
- + Whiteboard, poster board, or large sticky notes
- + Dry erase or bold markers



What Is Wellbeing?

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will compare your understanding of wellbeing to what researchers have discovered about it. You will also reflect on your sense of wellbeing.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: PROVERBS 2:1-11

ACTIVITY

Try to come up with a definition of 'wellbeing'.

Wellbeing is _____

- + What do you think contributes to a person's sense of wellbeing?



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A DEFINITION OF WELLBEING

In his book, *Flourishing in Ministry: How to Cultivate Clergy Wellbeing*, University of Notre Dame professor Dr. Matt Bloom writes about wellbeing:

“Wellness is typically used for our physical health, while wellbeing is used for our psychological, social, and spiritual health. Wellness is about a healthy body and mind; wellbeing is about a flourishing life.”¹

- + What does Dr. Bloom’s definition add to your definition of wellbeing?

- + What comes to mind when you hear the phrase, “a flourishing life”?

VIDEO

Watch the video, “Four Components of Wellbeing.” Dr. Bloom offers a research-based framework for understanding wellbeing. Take notes in the space provided below.

¹ Bloom, M. (2019). *Flourishing in ministry: How to cultivate clergy wellbeing*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, p. 2.

REFLECTION

Reflect on the video by responding to the following questions:

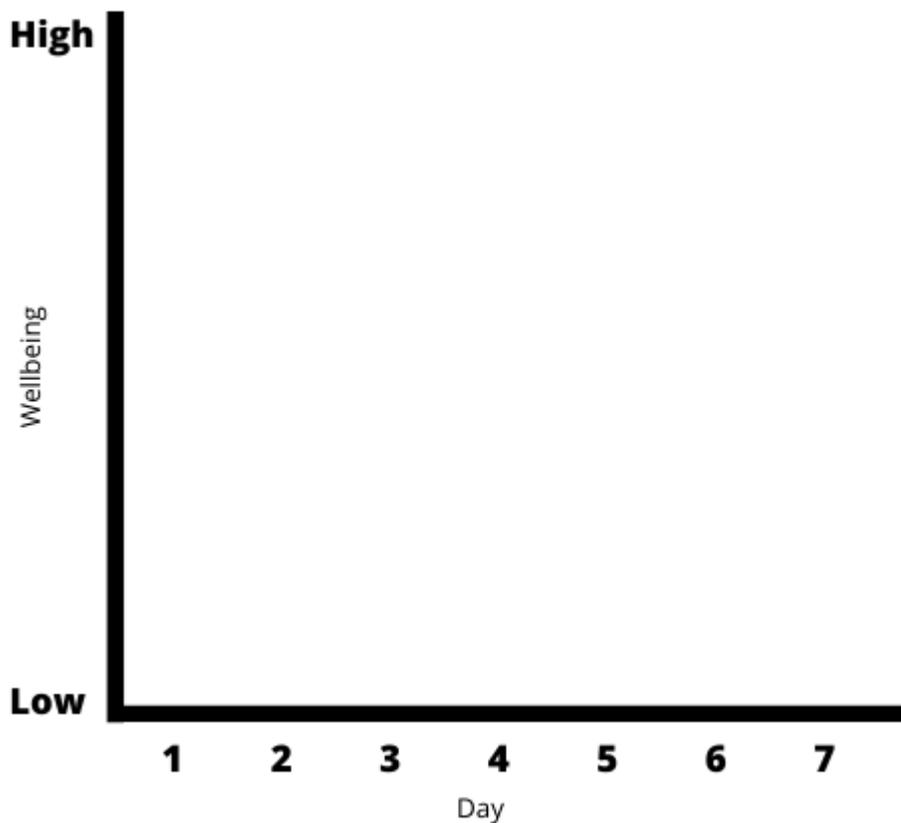
- + In the video, Dr. Bloom described four components of wellbeing. What were they?
- + In what ways do these four components of wellbeing relate to the definitions and lists we generated earlier?
- + What resonated for you in how Dr. Bloom described wellbeing?
- + What did his framework add to your understanding of wellbeing?



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SELF-ASSESSMENT

Dr. Bloom challenges pastors to “step back” in order to assess their level of wellbeing. On the chart below, plot your daily wellbeing from the last week, indicating if it was high or low.





Pursuing Wellbeing

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will discover four ways to enhance your wellbeing and then assess your wellbeing practices.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: PROVERBS 4:1-9

ACTIVITY

Imagine a friend comes to you and confesses that they feel absolutely exhausted, nearly burned out from ministry. What advice would you offer to your friend in terms of ways to pursue wellbeing?

VIDEO

Watch the video, “Four Simple Steps” in which Dr. Matt Bloom describes four steps you can take to enhance your wellbeing. Take notes in the space provided below.

- + Step 1:

- + Step 2:

- + Step 3:

- + Step 4:



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INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

Review the four steps Dr. Bloom shared. Then, consider what is going well and which steps you might need to take. You can use the chart below to organize your thoughts.

Step	What is going well?	What else might you do?
1		
2		
3		
4		

- + Of the four steps Dr. Bloom described, which is a growth area for you?

- + What do you discern to be some of the small steps God is calling you to take to enhance your wellbeing?

Rest

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will consider the role of rest in enhancing your wellbeing.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: PSALM 91

REFLECTION

One of the small steps Dr. Matt Bloom mentioned that helps with resilience specifically and wellbeing generally is getting adequate rest. Answer the following questions.

- + When do you tend to rest?

- + What do you do when you rest? (Circle all that apply.)
 - + Sleep/nap
 - + Read a book
 - + Watch TV
 - + Listen to music/podcasts
 - + Hobby (gardening, models, painting, photography, cooking)
 - + Exercise

- + Place a mark on each of the continuums below to describe the quality of your rest.

Inadequate-----Adequate

Not Restorative-----Restorative

- + What sorts of conversations or changes need to take place in order to make all four a reality for you?

PRACTICE

Read Mark 2:27. Ask God to show you what he wants you to learn about rest.

If you are comfortable, meditate on the verse by repeating it silently as you breathe.

- + (*Inhale*) “The Sabbath was made for man,
- + (*Exhale*) not man for the Sabbath.”

Try to continue this form of Scripture meditation for at least five minutes.

- + What do you believe God wants to say to you about rest?

Play

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will consider the role of play in enhancing your wellbeing.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: ECCLESIASTES 11:7-10

ACTIVITY

- + Write down the first five words or phrases that come to mind when you hear the word “play.”

- + Reflect on what you wrote. How many of those words or phrases relate to activities you do on a regular basis?

- + Should pastors and ministry leaders engage in play? Why or why not?

VIDEO

For his doctoral dissertation, Dr. Danjuma Gibson studied Frederick Douglass’s autobiographies to understand, from a psychological perspective, Douglass’s resilience. In this video, “Time for Play,” Dr. Gibson shares one of three themes that emerged from his research.

REFLECTION

Reflect on the video by answering the following questions.

- + How did Dr. Gibson define “play” in the video?
- + In what ways could that sort of play be beneficial to pastors?
- + In what ways do you engage in the sort of play Dr. Gibson described?
- + If you don’t engage in this sort of play, what imaginative or creative activity would you like to incorporate into your wellbeing practices? What resources or support do you need to get started?

Storytelling

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will consider the role of storytelling in enhancing your wellbeing.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: ECCLESIASTES 12:13-14

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION

If you were to write your autobiography, what would you title it?

VIDEO

In the last lesson, we learned that one of Frederick Douglass's resilience practices was play. In this video, "Telling Your Story," Dr. Danjuma Gibson explains another one of Douglass's practices.

REFLECTION

Reflect on the video by responding to the following questions.

- + Have you ever written down all or part your life story? If yes, when? Under what circumstances? If not, why not?
- + What do you think could be the benefit of writing down your story?



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VIDEO

Watch the video, “Your Life Narrative,” in which Dr. Matt Bloom describes the relationship between our identity and our life narrative.

ACTIVITY

Dr. Bloom shared that he and his team encourage pastors to tell the story of their call to ministry over and over again. Write down your call to ministry story in the space below. Then, consider reading what you wrote with a friend or family member.

Prayer

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, you will consider the role of prayer in enhancing your wellbeing.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: PSALM 102:1-2

REFLECTION

The youth minister asked you to teach the high school class about spiritual disciplines, and you chose to focus on prayer. At the end of your presentation, Susie Jones raises her hand and asks you how you pray and what you pray for. How do you respond?

ACTIVITY

Based on what you know about different spiritual disciplines, Christian practices, and traditions, make a list of different types or forms of prayer.

VIDEO

Watch the video, “Rethinking Spiritual Practices,” in which Dr. Matt Bloom describes how spiritual practices, such as prayer, can impact a minister’s wellbeing.

REFLECTION

Reflect on the video by responding to the following questions.

- + How do you respond to what Dr. Bloom said about intercessory prayer and Scripture study?
- + In what ways might you need to shape your prayer practices so that they’re more likely to support your wellbeing?
- + Dr. Bloom mentioned several prayer practices such as centering prayer and the Prayer of Examine. What prayer practices have you tried and found to be life-enriching?

VIDEO

Watch the video, “Pastors’ Self-Care Practices.” As you watch the video, pay attention to how these pastors describe the role of prayer in their lives.

REFLECTION

Reflect on the video by responding to the following questions.

- + What resonated with you as you watch the video?



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- + What are some current self-care practices that help you anchor your identity and navigate ambiguity?

- + What practices might you like to integrate into your regular rhythms?

PRACTICE

If you are comfortable, spend 10-20 minutes practicing centering prayer.

- + Find a quiet, comfortable space to sit.
- + Consider choosing a word or phrase to remind you to focus on God and being in his presence. Examples: Father, God Who Sees, Faithfulness, God with Us, Peace, Be Still.
- + As thoughts enter your mind, return to your word or phrase and again focus on being in the presence of God.

If you are new to centering prayer, you may wish to start with 10 minutes. Try to practice centering prayer every day for one week. At the end of the week, respond to the following questions.

- + How was your experience with centering prayer?
- + In what ways did centering prayer contribute to your wellbeing this week?
- + What are some of the challenges you face in making centering prayer part of your regular rhythm?
- + What could be the benefits of practicing centering prayer regularly?



NEXT STEPS

One of Dr. Matt Bloom's four small steps for enhancing wellbeing is "Step Together." You can learn about this small step in the *Wholeness in Community* study.