



CHRISTIAN  
MENTAL HEALTH  
*Conference*  
BY CMHA, ACCS & PROMISES

**15 - 16 JULY 2021**

[www.cmhconference.org](http://www.cmhconference.org)

# PASTORAL SELF-CARE

*Rev Dr David Wong*

*Christian Mental Health Conference, 15-16 July 2021*

# Safety Instructions



“In the event of decompression, an oxygen mask will fall from the ceiling. Pull the mask towards you, place it over your nose and breathe normally. If you are travelling with young children, **attend to yourself first before attempting to help others.**”

# Shepherd or Sheep?



“He chose David his servant and took him from the **sheep** pen; from tending **sheep** he brought him to be the **shepherd** of his people Jacob.”

*Psalm 78.70*

“The LORD is my **shepherd**.... He makes me lie down in green pastures....” *Psalm 23.1-2*

**Secure your own mask  
first before trying to help  
others.**



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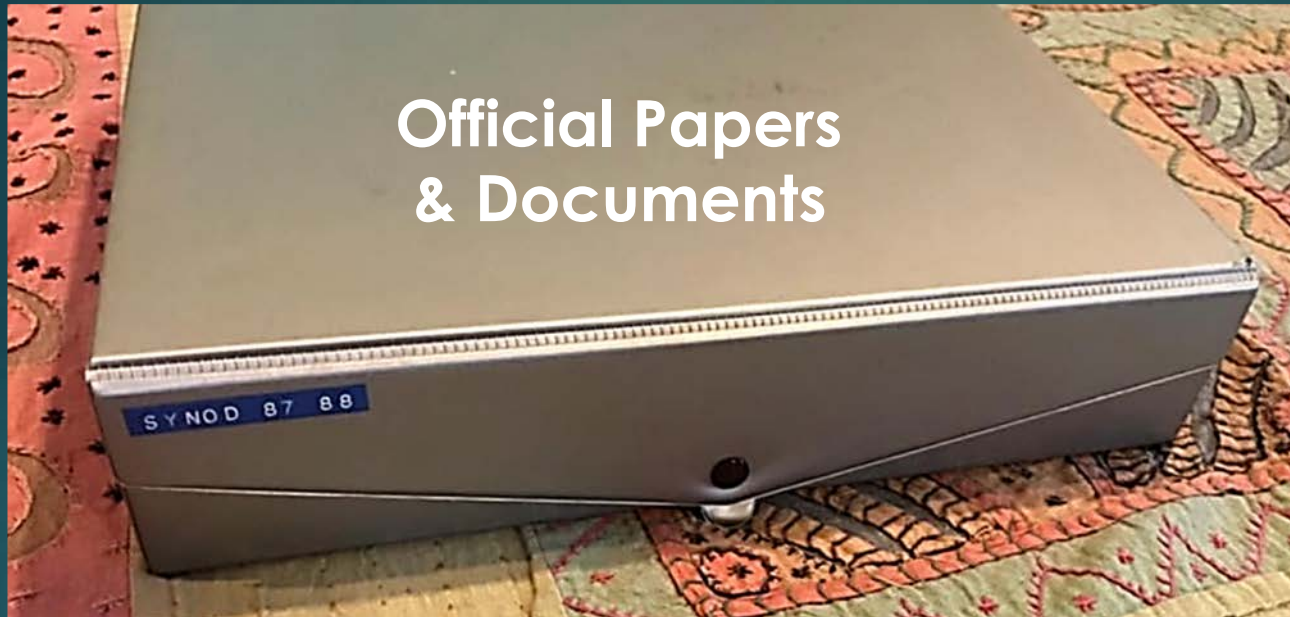
[www.cmhconference.org](http://www.cmhconference.org)

**Remember you are  
a sheep first before you are  
a shepherd.**

**PASTORAL SELF-CARE**

**Taking Care of Yourself as You take Care of Others**

# Story of a Box



**“One of the saddest episodes of the 1980s must be the dissolution of the Bible-Presbyterian Church of Singapore.”** Bobby Sng, *In His Good Time* (1993)

# Story of a Box

- ▶ **Dissolution of Denomination 1988**
- ▶ **Sabbatical, Vancouver 1990**
- ▶ “I opened the box, read a few pages... then put everything back. I felt something like a tsunami of emotions: hurt, disbelief, outrage, distress, grief.... I did not open it again till 30 years later.”
- ▶ *The Owl & the Fellowship of the Wise (2019)*



# Sabbatical

- ▶ A Time to Step Back
- ▶ From Edge of Ministry Burnout
- ▶ God's Word
- ▶ God's Community
- ▶ God's World



Regent  
College,  
1990


# Sabbatical

- ▶ Self-care?
- ▶ Or God-care?
- ▶ “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit....”
- ▶ God’s Word
- ▶ God’s Community
- ▶ God’s World

*John 15.16*

**“Means of  
Grace”**





**Day by day** and with each passing moment,  
Strength I find to meet my trials here;  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.

He whose heart is kind beyond all measure  
Gives unto each day what He deems best  
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

*Karolina W. Sandell-Berg, 1865*

- ▶ Do we avail ourselves to God's means of grace?
- ▶ We are shepherd giving care.
- ▶ We are sheep needing care.

- ▶ God's Word
- ▶ God's Community
- ▶ God's World

**“Means of Grace”**

# Story of a Box

- ▶ **Dissolution of Denomination 1988**
- ▶ **Sabbatical, Vancouver 1990**
- ▶ **Box** remained closed till...
- ▶ **Writing Retreat, Chiangmai 2017**
- ▶ **Almost 30 Years Later**



# Reflection Questions

- ▶ **God's Word:** Do I read it to nourish my soul or to use it for ministry?
- ▶ **God's Community:** Do I belong to a community where I feel safe to be my real and true self?
- ▶ **God's World:** Do I enjoy the beauty found in nature, music, story, craft and ordinary things?

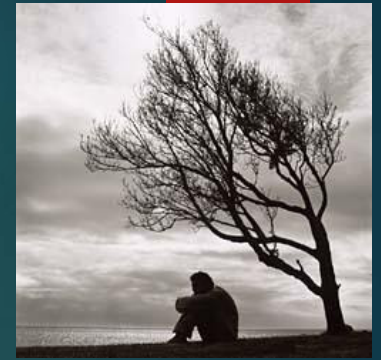
# Elijah: A Study in Complexes



- ▶ “I have had enough, LORD... Take my life; **I am no better than my ancestors.**”
- ▶ “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, broken down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword.
- ▶ “**I am the only one left**, and now **they are trying to kill me too.**”

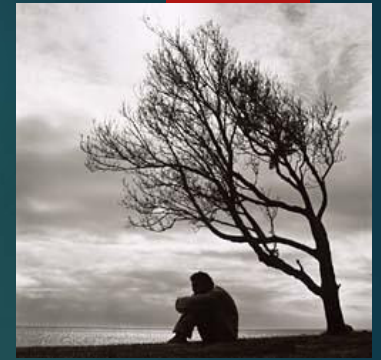
*1 Kings 19.4, 10*

# Study in Complexes



- ▶ “I am no better than my ancestors”
- ▶ “I am the only one left”
- ▶ “they are trying to kill me too.”
- ▶ **Guilt Complex**
- ▶ **Inferiority/Superiority Complex**
- ▶ **Persecution Complex**
- ▶ **Mother of All Complexes =**
- ▶ **MESSIAH COMPLEX**

# God's Prescription



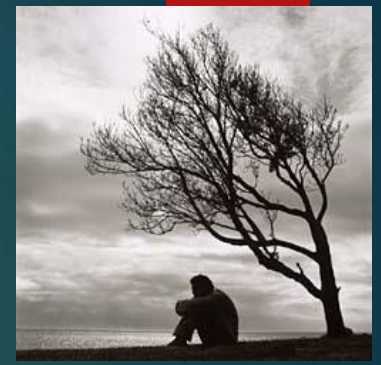
- ▶ **Rest your body**
- ▶ God provided food & sleep
- ▶ **Speak your mind**
- ▶ God asked questions to help clear mind
- ▶ **Share your work**
- ▶ God gave instructions to find others to share work

# Reflection Questions

- ▶ How well do I take care of my body?
- ▶ Do I have someone to help me ventilate my mind?
- ▶ Am I trying to do everything on my own?



# Elijah: “a gentle whisper”



- ▶ “Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind.
- ▶ “After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.

# Elijah: “a gentle whisper”



- ▶ “After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire.
- ▶ “And after the fire came **a gentle whisper.**”


*1 Kings 19.11-12*

\*“a still small voice” KJV



**“God is Easy to Live With.”** A. W. Tozer

“He is not hard to please, though He may be hard to satisfy. He expects of us only what He has himself first supplied.



“He is quick to mark every single effort to please Him, and just as quick to over-look imperfections when He knows we meant to do His will. **He loves us for ourselves and values our love more than the galaxies of the newly created worlds.**”

*A. W. Tozer*

# God of Gentle Whisper and of Fire

- ▶ Ministry Burnout: Gentle on Self
- ▶ Moral Failure: Ruthless on Sin
- ▶ Sinful Nature & Adversary the Devil



# Moral Failure



- ▶ **WHY LED TO FALL?**
- ▶ **Sense of Entitlement:** “After all the good I have done, I deserve something in return.”
- ▶ **Feeling of Invincibility:** “I can do wrong.”
- ▶ **Lack of Accountability:** “I report only to God.”

# Moral Failure

- ▶ **Hedge of Protection:** “People around me will protect and cover for me.”
- ▶ **Rule of Exception:** “This applies to others, not to me.”
- ▶ **Pain Relief:** “This is my way to relieve stress and pain.”
- ▶ **Sinful Human Nature:** “For what I want to do, I do not do, but what I hate, I do.”

*Rom 7.15*

# Moral Failure



## ▶ **WHY LED TO HIDE?**

- ▶ Our organization and ministry comes first: “If exposed, it will devastate our ministry. We will lose everything.”
- ▶ Our leader and family: “We can’t allow our leader and his family to be hurt.”



# Moral Failure

- ▶ **Sincere or Desperate Prayer:** “God will help us to find a way out of this without too much of a fallout.”
- ▶ **Incredulity or Gullibility:** “The accusers are of the devil. We can’t believe the whistle-blowers.”
- ▶ **Sinful Human Nature:** Like Adam and Eve after they sin, we hide from God. Genesis 3.8

# SELF-CARE

- ▶ Recognise you can and will fall.  
*1 Cor 10.12*
- ▶ Have safe place to keep safe.  
*Gal 6.1-2*

# SELF-CARE

- ▶ Write a Code of Conduct.
- ▶ Walk **in** the light—keep short accounts.
- ▶ Walk **into** the light—confess before exposure.
- ▶ Find safe place to recover.



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