



# PARABLE OF THE MODERN AMERICAN PASTOR

BY WES BRYANT

In the spring of 2021, a friend invited me to speak at his church's weekly staff devotion. As I prayed about what the Lord would have me share, I considered what it had been like during my 13 years on staff with a church. I thought about the passion I had for people and the joy of fulfilling my calling. I also thought about the struggles, frustrations, and exhaustion that comes with helping others follow Jesus. I remembered the constant demands on my time and wanted to honor this group of leaders who were so graciously giving me thirty minutes to bring them a Word from the Lord.

As I prayed, the Lord gave me a story of the modern-day pastor, as told through the life of Jesus. I now pray that it leads you to find rest in Jesus and to think critically about the sustainability of your ministry pace.

And I hope you flourish.

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# PARABLE OF THE MODERN DAY AMERICAN PASTOR

Jesus returned to Galilee, and a report about Him went out through all the surrounding country. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. Large crowds began to follow Him, and He performed signs and wonders before them, healing the sick and casting out demons. He knew His mission. He was called to the lost sheep of Israel, so Monday morning He got up early to pray.

On the way up the mountain, His cell phone pinged. He had forty-three emails waiting for Him in His inbox. Jesus sighed, thinking, *I'll never be able to focus in prayer knowing I have this much waiting for me. I'll hammer out a few of these real quick.*

Several of the emails were from members of the crowd that had been following Him. One of them read, "Dear Jesus, I heard your message the other day and I'm concerned about the part where you talked about eating your flesh and drinking your blood. Many people left church that day upset, and I don't think they're coming back. I want to encourage you to stick to the things that draw people in. We'll never be able to be able to build an expansion on the temple if you offend people."

Another was from Bartholomew, one of His disciples. There had been an argument among the disciples about who was the greatest, and Bartholomew was hurt by some of the things that were said. "Don't tell anyone, because I don't want to hurt their feelings, but can you please find me another small group to be a part of?", Bartholomew asked. Jesus typed a quick reply, assuring him that things in the group would blow over, and asked if he could grab coffee with Him on Friday. That was His day off to rest, but seeing that His calendar was already full that week from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. each day, it was His only option.

He skimmed over the titles of most of the emails and flagged fourteen of them to look at later, dropping them alongside the seventeen hundred other flagged emails in His inbox.

As He started to walk back up the mountain, He realized the sun had risen and the crowd had followed Him, and were now pleading with Him to attend to their needs. *Oh well*, He thought. *Maybe tomorrow*. It was the fifth day in a row He had neglected to connect with His Father. He felt a little heavier than He had before, and somehow His mission had become a little less clear, but He figured, *At least I'm doing ministry*.

## Questions for Reflection

The best gift I know how to give you is time. So I want to encourage you to take some time to pray right now. You will be tempted to move on to the next thing on your To-Do List today, but none of that matters if you aren't taking regular time to connect with your heavenly Father.

Set aside twenty minutes right now, or schedule it at a time today when you won't be distracted. I've included a couple of questions to prompt you if you need it.

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28–30 NIV)*

1. What are the circumstances that make it difficult for me to say no? How is this harmful to me? Confess these things to your Heavenly Father, and repent as the Lord leads you.
2. Think about the things going on in your life, your family, the life of the church, and the life of your local community. What burdens are you carrying that Jesus wants you to cast upon Him?
3. Take the rest of your time to connect with Jesus in whatever way is meaningful for you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Thank you for taking the time to read this parable. I hope you will share it with a pastor who can use some encouragement today.

In 2019, I became burdened by the number of pastors I knew who were walking away from ministry. The average tenure of a Sports Pastor, which is my background, is 18 months. Youth Pastors fare a little better at 2.7 years. This is a terrible statistic for a group of people who feel that God has called them to full-time ministry.



This turnover of leadership is not only bad for the leader (some walk away from their churches wounded and bitter). It's also bad for the church. As a former student of three different Youth Pastors, I can tell you about the havoc this wreaked on my peers and our congregation. So why so much turnover?

*Because few churches have a plan for the development of their young leaders.*

To help meet this need, I became a Certified Transformational Coach from Western Seminary and started Commission Leadership. We give churches a plan to develop young promising leaders. To learn a little more about our ministry, you can check out these FREE resources:

[Commission Leadership Podcast](#)

[5 Principles for Longevity in Leadership](#) -eBook