

SCANNING YOUR DASHBOARD

WARNING LIGHTS
& HOLY HABITS

=====*for*=====

A LEADER'S SOUL

ROWLAND FORMAN

Dashboard Indicator #4

Am I Running on Empty, or Learning Unforced Rhythms of Grace?

Caring for Your Own Soul

Effective leaders care deeply for the souls of others. Yet this often comes at the expense of their own soul's well-being—and sometimes that of their family as well.

Scanning Your Dashboard invites you to regularly attend to your inner life. Just as a driver watches the dashboard for warning lights and fuel levels, wise leaders learn to notice what is happening beneath the surface of their lives.

Each **Dashboard Indicator** in this mentoring resource pairs a Warning Light with a Holy Habit—helping you not only to recognize areas of vulnerability, but also to respond with practices that cultivate a healthy, Christ-dependent life.

A dashboard doesn't only warn you when something is wrong—it also reassures you when things are functioning as they should.

Begin by processing Warning Light #4 and Holy Habit #4 on your own. Then, if possible, meet with a mentor-friend or small group, to share what the Holy Spirit is bringing to your attention.

Working with Warning Lights and then Holy Habits, helps you not only to see what you need to work on, but to step into a grace-filled response.

WARNING LIGHT #4

FATIGUE: *Am I Running on Empty?*

When mentoring leaders, my first question is usually, “How are you?” Most respond automatically, “Fine.”

I sometimes follow up with a second question, “How are you really?” That’s when some pause, look down, and quietly say, “Tired.”

When invited to say more, they describe emotional exhaustion and the effort it takes to project that all is well, while inwardly feeling dull and dry. Some stare blankly at the screen during sermon preparation. Others lie awake at night, fearing they may have reached the end of their rope—sometimes wishing they could simply fly away from it all.

How are you really? Is the warning signal of fatigue blinking on the dashboard of your life? There can be a satisfied tiredness at the end of work well done. But there can also be a debilitating tiredness. If you find yourself experiencing the latter, then allow this third warning light to help you pause and recalibrate. In some cases, even a medical checkup may be wise.

If it’s sheer exhaustion through ministry, or life’s stresses and strains, you’re in good company. Faced with the complexity of leading a nation and a relentless barrage of complaints, Moses had had enough. He told Yahweh that he couldn’t carry all these people alone, and that the burden was too heavy for him. In sheer exhaustion, he overstated his case to God: *If you will treat me like this, kill me at once, if I find favor in your sight, that I may not see my wretchedness* (Numbers 11:15).

Elijah is another Bible character who wanted to give up. After a resounding victory over the prophets of Baal, he expected the whole nation to return to the LORD. They didn’t and Queen Jezebel threatened to kill him. He was petrified. Like Forest Gump, he ran—and kept on running. Exhausted, he sat under a broom tree and prayed that he would die. Like Moses, he’d had enough.

Moses’ exhaustion came from carrying too much for too long. Elijah’s came after giving everything he had. There are rhythms that help leaders from burning out.

One way to discern what kind of fatigue you are carrying is to think in terms of capacity rather than commitment. Commitment asks, "Am I willing?" Capacity asks, "Am I able?"

How are you treating the one body God gave you? Do you have adequate sleep? Is exercise part of your weekly routine? Do you have a balanced diet? Do you have times when you rest or are you working 24/7. How often do you use the word "tired" when asked, "How are you?"

Are you willing to pause and take fatigue seriously? Or will you push through it and try harder? It's human to run harder when we have lost our way.

In Isaiah 30:15-16, the Lord describes this very thing in the following words to his rebellious people:

This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says:

*"In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength,
but you would have none of it.*

¹⁶ You said, 'No, we will flee on horses.'

Therefore you will flee!

You said, 'We will ride off on swift horses.'

Therefore your pursuers will be swift!

Fatigue is not a failure of faith, but a warning signal that calls for repentance and rest, and quiet reflection on what God may be inviting you to stop or change.

Reflect & Discuss:

1. Which description of fatigue in this devotional resonated most with you?
2. How do you distinguish between *satisfied* tiredness and *debilitating* tiredness in your own life?
3. What might repentance and rest look like for you in this season?
4. What is one small change the Holy Spirit may be inviting you to make in response to this warning light?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you know me through and through. You were tested in every way and understand tiredness. I confess my tendency to push through exhaustion and ignore the warning signs you graciously provide. When I am on overload, grant me repentance and rest. I receive again your invitation to come to you in my weariness and find rest for my soul in you alone. Amen

HOLY HABIT #4:

RHYTHMS: *Learning When to Engage and When to Disengage.*

Fatigue is not a flaw. It's a signal. Warning Light #4¹ exposed the danger of running on empty: serving faithfully while slowly being sapped of strength and joy.

Burnout is rarely a crash. More often, it is a slow leak. How can we avoid debilitating exhaustion?

Jesus provides a pathway in Matthew 11:29-30: ... *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.*

This way of Jesus sounds deeply attractive to me—soul rest and light burdens. Consider these snapshots into how Jesus lived:

Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest. (Mark 6:31)
But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed (Luke 5:15-16)
Jesus ... withdrew again to a mountain by himself. (John 6:15)

When we learn from him, we uncover his sacred rhythms: serving, withdrawing, resting, praying, then re-engaging. The life of Jesus was not hurried, it was rhythmic. Within a day, or a week, Jesus exemplified the Sabbath principle. Some call the practice of Sabbath 'six and one': six days of work then a literal day of rest. I respect that view. Even more I like the idea of a Sabbath pause, when one retreats *within* a hectic day. I have found that taking a Sabbath interlude of ten minutes, an hour, or an evening pause of solitude and prayer—is both doable and deeply restorative.

Once a month I take a Sabbath day. This provides a nice reflective rhythm—an opportunity for me to drive to my "lonely place," and process what God has been doing in and through me over the last month. Might you consider that practice?

The Sabbath way is not endless output. It is the rhythm of working well, then ceasing, resting, and celebrating.

¹ Warning Light #4 is from the YouVersion plan: "7 Warning Lights for Highly Vulnerable Leaders."

- **Ceasing** from whatever is work for us.
- **Resting** as an act of trust—physically, as in taking a nap, or relationally, such as withdrawing from people for a time of solitude, or spiritually, for example going on a prayer walk.
- **Celebrating** God’s goodness with gratitude through creation, music, friendship, or food.

These are not rules. They are invitations to whole-of-life health. It's human to be tired. Moses’ uplifted hands grew weary in prayer. (Exodus 17:12). Young people grow tired and weary (Isaiah 40:30). Jesus was tired from his journey (John 4:6).

The issue isn’t tiredness. It is working to the point of exhaustion, and ignoring the life-giving rhythms God has graciously put in place.

So, engage fully in the work God has entrusted to you in this season. Then disengage meaningfully: cease, rest and celebrate.

This is the holy habit of God-given rhythms.

Reflect & Discuss

1. When leaders are fatigued, what might it signal?
2. Which of these life rhythms do you tend to ignore: ceasing, withdrawing, resting, and celebrating? Why?
3. What might a “Sabbath pause” look like for you this week?
4. As you reflect on Warning Light #4 and Holy Habit #4, what has the Holy Spirit been saying to you? What steps will you take?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, thank you that your way brings rest. Too often I’ve pushed past my limits and ignored healthy rhythms. Teach me when to engage in service, and when to withdraw to replenish my soul. Help me to cease, rest, and celebrate your goodness. Restore my soul today and lead me into your unhurried pace. Amen.

The 7 Dashboard Indicators

- Indicator #1** Am I Drifting, or Abiding in Christ?
- Indicator #2** Am I Praying Less, or Praying More?
- Indicator #3** Am I Proudful, or Humbly Serving Others?
- Indicator #4** Am I Running on Empty, or Learning Unforced Rhythms of Grace?
- Indicator #5** Am I Slipping Morally, or Guarding my Heart?
- Indicator #6** Am I Isolated, or Investing in Others?
- Indicator #7** Am I Pretending, or Leading with Integrity?



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