

FRESH CALLING

ministry coaching and consulting

“Fresh Calling: Leading with Passion Without Burning Out”

Description: Ministry is amazing—but let’s be real, it can also be exhausting. If you’ve ever felt stuck, drained, or just unsure how to keep going, this session is for you. We’ll talk about how to stay passionate, lead with authenticity, and build a rhythm that keeps you in ministry for the long haul. (Veteran’s and Rookie’s invited!)

Hey everyone, I’m so glad you’re here. If you’re anything like me, you didn’t get into student ministry for the spreadsheets, late-night texts, or the stress of planning events. You got into this because God called you—because at some point, He wrecked your heart for this next generation. But if we’re honest, that fire that once burned so bright can start to flicker. The weight of leadership, the loneliness of ministry, and the constant pressure to perform can leave us feeling exhausted and wondering, is this really what I signed up for?

I’ve been there. I know what it’s like to feel stuck in survival mode, running on fumes, and wondering if I’m making a real difference. But here’s what I’ve learned—**our calling isn’t just about what we do; it’s about who we are becoming in Christ.** Ministry isn’t just about pouring out; it’s about staying connected to the One who called us in the first place.

< *Story of my sabbatical. “I’m not done with you yet.”* >

That’s what this session is about. It’s about reclaiming your passion, leading with authenticity, and building a rhythm that keeps you in ministry for the long haul. Whether you’re in a season of thriving or barely holding on, I pray this time encourages you to step back, breathe, and remember that God isn’t finished with you yet.

I want to give you some encouragements I believe all youth pastors and ministry leaders ought to have in order to remain “fresh” in ministry for the long haul.

Session Overview:

- 1. The Fire and the Fog – When Passion Meets Pressure**
- 2. Soul Care – Paying Attention to What’s Going On Inside**
- 3. Real Over Impressive – The Power of Authentic Leadership**
- 4. The Pace of Grace – Building a Sustainable Rhythm**
- 5. Reclaiming Joy – Ministry From a Place of Overflow**

Let’s dive in.

1. “The Fire and the Fog” – When Passion Meets Pressure

Let’s be upfront and honest from the beginning. You got into ministry because you *love* Jesus and teenagers. You felt called. Fired up. Ready to do whatever it took. But somewhere along the way, **passion got buried under planning. Ministry turned into maintenance. The pressure to perform, compare, and constantly produce crept in.**

Burnout isn’t always dramatic—it’s usually slow, quiet, and disguised as “just a busy season.”

Reflection Questions:

- What originally stirred your passion for ministry?
- What’s clouding that passion today?
- How are you managing everyone’s expectations?

Help to Relieve the Pressure and bring Perspective.

- **You’re not responsible for outcomes, only obedience.** The pressure to change lives isn’t on your shoulders—it’s on God’s. Your job is to plant and water; He causes the growth.
- **Calling is sustained in connection.** Staying close to the One who called you is what gives you strength to keep going. When ministry becomes a job instead of a response to Jesus, burnout isn’t far behind.
- **God’s faithfulness is the foundation, not your performance.** You don’t have to hustle to stay called. God’s call doesn’t expire when you feel weak—it deepens when you depend on Him.
- **Write down your original “why” for stepping into ministry.** Compare it to where you are now. If you’ve drifted from that passion, what needs to change?
- **Spend time in prayer, surrendering the pressure you feel and asking God to renew your sense of purpose.**

Resources: *Developing Your Why Worksheet & Signs of Burnout Questionnaire.* Available right now at www.Freshcalling.org/yps

2. Good Soul Care – Pay Attention to What’s Going On Inside

Scripture: Mark 6:31 – “*Come away by yourselves to a remote place and rest a while.*”

We often care more for others than we do for ourselves. But your soul can’t run on empty forever. Proverbs says to *guard your heart*, not just your calendar. And Jesus modeled retreat and rest even in the middle of revival-level ministry.

If your soul is ignored, your outer leadership won’t last.

Reflection Questions:

- What are the warning lights on your dashboard right now—emotionally, spiritually, physically?
- Where are you pretending to be okay?
- What’s one way you can create margin in your schedule for real soul care?

Here are a couple of simple encouragements to help refocus what it means to care for your soul:

1. **Re-establish personal rhythms with God.**

- Not for prep. Not for a sermon. Just to be with Him. Start with 15–30 minutes a day of quiet, unhurried time with Jesus—even if it means waking up earlier or silencing your phone.

2. **Journal your thoughts.**

- Ask: *How is my heart really doing?* Am I angry? Exhausted? Disconnected? Overextended? Invite the Holy Spirit to speak into those answers—and write down what He reveals.

3. **Practice vulnerability with a trusted friend or mentor.**

- Tell someone what's *really* going on. Not just the “it's been a busy week” version. Ministry can isolate you unless you choose community on purpose.

4. **Take rest seriously.**

- Schedule a real Sabbath. Turn off your notifications. Be unproductive on purpose. Let God remind you that your value isn't tied to your output.

5. **Do something other than ministry while in ministry.**

- Do something you love that has nothing to do with ministry—fishing, reading, music, walks, coffee with a friend. A healthy heart is one that still knows how to enjoy God's goodness.

One of the most freeing truths I've learned through the years, “You are not the Savior of your students.” You're not even the one who makes transformation happen. **Your job is to stay connected to the Vine (John 15) and let Jesus do what only He can. Guarding your heart isn't a sign of weakness—it's the foundation of long-haul faithfulness.**

Schedule a “non-negotiable” time in your weekly calendar for personal time with God that isn't tied to message prep. Whether it's a quiet morning with Scripture, a walk to pray, or journaling about what God is teaching you—protect that time as fiercely as you do ministry meetings.

Books I recommend: *Sabbath*. By Wayne Mueller. *Your Life in Rhythm*. By Bruce Miller

3. Real Over Impressive – The Power of Authentic Leadership

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:1 – “*Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.*”

Students don't need a polished leader—they need a present one. Quit being a fake! Or even better, quit try to impress everyone with your false charisma! The power of authenticity is that it breaks down walls and builds bridges. When you lead from who you are (not who you think you should be), students feel it. They respond to it. And most importantly, they follow Jesus through it.

Authenticity isn't oversharing—it's showing up as your whole self and not hiding behind your title.

Reflection Questions:

- What parts of your life or leadership feel like they're “just for show”?
- Are you leading from your *real life* or just trying to stay ahead of the expectations?
- How are you modeling a genuine walk with Jesus for your students?

- Do they see someone who genuinely loves and pursues Christ, or just someone who preaches about Him?

Students don't need a perfect leader; they need a real one. They can spot fake from a mile away, and they're drawn to leaders who are honest about their faith journey—the struggles, doubts, and victories. **Here's a bit of perspective... ministry is relationships! Your presence in their lives matters more than a perfectly executed program.**

What would it look like to share a personal story with your students about how you've wrestled with your faith and how God met you in it? Be honest and vulnerable—let them see that following Jesus is a real journey, not just a list of rules to follow. Yes, we need to be careful not to allow our youth group to be our counselor or the place to overshare. There is a line, but faking it isn't healthy either!

4. The Pace of Grace – Building a Sustainable Rhythm

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 4:1 – *“Since we have this ministry because we were shown mercy, we do not give up.”*

Ministry is a marathon, not a sprint. But we often run it like it's a full-contact sprint to Sunday. You weren't meant to live maxed out and stretched thin. Jesus invites you into a rhythm of *grace over grind*—a pace that honors both your calling and your health.

If your pace isn't sustainable, it's not spiritual. You are not Superman, and I guarantee your students and parents are not demanding you to sustain that kind of pace. Yes, we are the busiest ministry in the church, but it doesn't have to be that way!!

Reflection Questions:

- Where in your week do you feel rushed, frantic, or chronically overwhelmed?
- What are the rhythms that restore you? (And when was the last time you practiced them?)

Practical Actions:

- **Pick a day this week to be unproductive on purpose—Sabbath, solitude, silence, or something that brings joy.** I believe this is personal and ministerial as well.
- **Plan your calendar *with margin*, not just commitments.** In your family calendar and your ministry calendar are there scheduled downtimes?
- **Have a “reset” meeting with your team or supervisor to talk about expectations and find ways to build healthier rhythms.** Unmet expectation and perceived expectations that are not true or fair is the No.1 reason why youth pastor's burnout! Communicating with your team and supervisor are a great place to start.
- **You are the one in control of the calendar. Yours and the ministries.** I can't stress this enough. You are the one setting the pace. Even if you complain about how crazy it is, it's your own doing. So, take ownership of it.

Ministry comes with hard days—low attendance nights, difficult conversations, and seasons where it feels like nothing is working. But resilience isn't about pushing through on your own strength; it's about remembering that this ministry is a gift from God, not a burden we have to bear alone. The enemy wants to wear you down, but God has given you everything you need to endure.

- What's one challenge in your ministry right now that is making you want to quit or pull back?
- How can you shift your perspective to see it as an opportunity for growth rather than an obstacle?

5. Reclaiming Joy – Ministry From a Place of Overflow

Joy isn't a luxury in ministry—it's essential. It's what keeps your heart soft when criticism is loud, what lifts your eyes when the results don't match the effort, and what reminds you that serving God is a gift, not just a grind. Somewhere along the way, many of us trade in our joy for performance, comparison, or sheer survival. We start measuring impact by numbers, approval, or affirmation, and when those things falter, so does our joy.

Biblical joy is deeper than emotion—it's a soul-level confidence in God's presence, goodness, and sovereignty, no matter what's happening around you. Paul talks about being "sorrowful, yet always rejoicing" (2 Corinthians 6:10), which reminds us that joy doesn't mean pretending things are fine. It means being rooted in the One who is faithful even when ministry is hard.

Reclaiming joy starts with re-centering your ministry around delight, not just duty. Ask yourself: what used to light you up about this calling? Was it watching a student truly get it for the first time? Hearing a small group open up about real struggles? Praying with a parent? Those moments still matter—and they still happen, if we have eyes to see.

Sometimes we need to laugh again. Not as a break from ministry, but as part of it. Joy restores energy, attracts people, and points to the goodness of God. Jesus wasn't grim-faced when He welcomed children or celebrated meals. Neither should we be.

Let's be honest—if ministry feels like a burden 100% of the time, we're doing it wrong. **Reclaiming joy is about getting back to the heart of why we're here.** Not to impress people. Not to produce results. But to walk with God and invite students into the joy of knowing Him.

Reflection Questions:

- What used to bring you joy in ministry that's gotten lost?
- Where is God inviting you to laugh again, breathe again, rest again?

Practical Actions:

- Plan one fun event this month—no teaching, no pressure, just fun and connection.
- Ask three students what they *love* about your ministry—let their words refresh your perspective.

Summary

Each of these five insights are designed to breathe new life into your calling and help you stay in it for the long haul. Rediscovering the fire beneath the fog reminds you why you started and reorients your heart toward purpose, not pressure. Caring for your soul ensures you're leading from overflow, not burnout. Choosing authenticity over impressiveness invites deeper connection and influence—because God works powerfully through the real you. Adjusting your pace to one of grace creates sustainability, allowing you to serve without constantly running on fumes. And reclaiming joy? That's the secret sauce

that keeps ministry from becoming a grind. When you live these rhythms, your calling won't just survive—it'll stay fresh, vibrant, and full of God's presence.

Interactive Discussion

Small Group Reflection: What's one way you need a "fresh calling" in your ministry?

Action Step Challenge: Write down one practical change you will make this week to reclaim your passion and purpose.

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Need some help? Schedule a time to meet with Steve or shoot an email. I'm here to help. You can connect with him at www.freshcalling.org

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