

Minister, embrace your humanity

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Minister, do you know who you are?

Ministry is a tricky thing. Most ministers I have known fully believe they are called to be ministers. Very few I know actually do it because they think they know all the answers. They know they are supposed to preach, teach, encourage and lead, but in the midst of difficulties, they often don't feel like they can do it all.

Oftentimes, the peace of the Holy Spirit seems elusive, at best, perhaps even absent altogether. Answers for tough situations don't come, and the frailty of human existence is a weight almost unbearable.

Ministers are asked to be and know the impossible. In case you need proof, look at the Bible. How often do the priests and prophets really understand what God was doing? How often did Jesus' disciples not understand—even in Jesus' presence? How often did Jesus himself take time away to be alone with God? And then he asked God to change the plan involving his own betrayal, torture and death.

We ask ministers to move beyond this world to be holy like Jesus, but only in the holiest sense of Jesus, not the humanity of Jesus.

What ministers need

Ministers need time away. Ministers need to seek spiritual counsel from others. Ministers need those they lead to pray for them, to minister to them, to encourage them to take care of themselves, to be allowed to be

human.

Ministers also need to know themselves—I mean, really know themselves.

What gives your soul rest? What creates peace when the world is crazy? What about who you are created to be is part of why God chose to call you to ministry? Are you doing the soul work?

Are you working your mind? Is your body being treated as a holy dwelling place for your soul? What about the deepest, darkest places in your life? Are you doing the hard work to understand the amazing person God created you to be?

My prayer for all ministers is that you will see and love God, love people—all people—and strive to love and accept yourself—the good, the bad (which probably needs some work) and the amazing depths of who you are created to be.

What I know about ministry

I say all this understanding how hard it is. My dad was a pastor and is now a director of missions. My sister was a missions minister and now ministers through counseling. My husband and I were ministers to college students. Then, my husband was a youth minister and pastor. I served as a children's team leader.

There is nothing easy about ministry, but ministry is always harder when we strive to appear perfect and to have all the answers. We are human, after all.

Ministers, grace for ourselves is sometimes the hardest grace to give. Love for ourselves is sometimes the hardest love to give. Accepting ourselves is sometimes the hardest person to accept.

But you are created in God's image—fearfully and wonderfully created—called by God, equipped by the Holy Spirit and have Jesus' example to follow.

Minister, remember: You are not called to be God; you are called to be like Jesus.

Dalese Black grew up the daughter of a pastor. She was a collegiate minister and then led with her husband, Eric Black, when he was a pastor. The views expressed are those solely of the author.