

Rest

Yesterday's first article in the *Farm Journal* publication made the dire statement that the suicide rate in the farming community is three times higher than in the general population.

Looking at the current standings of my lifetime profession, the causes of such a statistical crisis are easy to identify. Commodity prices spiraling down as fuel, seed, machinery, and repair costs spiral upwards. Crops failing due to weather anomalies, such as extreme long-term drought or catastrophic flooding and storms. Or the pesky insects, uncontrollable weeds, and diseases resistant to man's concoctions.

The profit margin is so slim that the slightest misjudgment can lead to financial collapse like a house of cards.

Farmers investing everything to keep the farm operational to pass along to the next generation, who many times show no interest in continuing with the same lifestyle. This places continually escalating stress upon the family's finances and health.

And yet, the familiar response as to why a farmer keeps going. It's the lifestyle. It's the way of life that keeps the farmer motivated. Interwoven in the farming and ranching culture is the manly stance of pulling the cinch a little tighter and rising with the morning sun to face today's challenges. To suck it up and face every obstacle like a man. Show no sign of weakness or weariness – and so silently, farmers and ranchers plunge forward until often they feel no alternative, thus leading to the aforementioned crisis.

Ironically, of all professions, farming is one of the two that is ordained of God.

...cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground... Genesis 3:17-19

God ordained man to do backbreaking labor. Toiling from the rising sun until it sets. Doing all he can to make it all work for the best, with the vision as the sun begins its westward descent towards the horizon – that with the sunset will come rest. And, of course, within the Jewish culture, this hope for rest was further increased as they yearned for that weekly day of rest called Shabbat. And the rest of all, that seventh year. A whole year of living off what God provided in the previous year to relax and enjoy – to totally rest for a whole year!

What is missing from the culture of the modern farmer and rancher – that has caused such an epidemic level of suicides – there is no place for rest.

And truly, there is no other profession that will drive a man to his knees to pray for the strength to go another day more than farming. Except maybe the other profession that is ordained of God – the ministry.

As Jesus called the disciples to their new profession, it wasn't with the enticement of the financial benefits; it was with the vision,

...Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. Matthew 4:19

While other professions have their training seminars and annual evaluations, no other profession than the ministry is under the watchful eye of God Almighty, who uses all the circumstances of life – good and bad – to whittle away at the imperfections of his chosen vessels, placing them on the potter's wheel, and within the heat of the refiner's fire.

A true man of God answers the call like no other profession.

Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light. Matthew 11:29-30

There is a silent epidemic within our ministry. We as warriors are trained and encouraged to face all with a stiff upper lip, to suck it up and face all like a spiritual man. Our movement is facing an avalanche of onslaughts by the powers of darkness against the ministry—financial, mental,

spiritual, family, etc. Where we once faced persecution for a message, now we are simply ignored as insignificant. We pour our blood, sweat, and tears into the attempt to save one lost soul from the path of destruction, only to be ghosted when reaching out. The pressures add up. The troubles never cease. The constant rope-a-dope of the enemy wears us down. And yet, at the end of the day, we in the ministry are expected to uphold a life manifesting all the fruits of the Spirit.

Ironically, it's 'at the end of the day' that moment of rest when that can happen. Jesus instructed us to take up His yoke while serving Him – and He will give us sweet rest.

With all the problems, betrayals, troubles, hurts, and offenses that come with the ministry – there is one simple, all-encompassing solution that not only makes the ability to keep going but to grow, thrive, and overcome, and thus, develop into a stalwart example to our flocks. And that is by finding that rest that comes only from entering that secret place of the most high God.

At the end of the day, Jesus left the multitudes and his disciples and got alone on a mountain to pray. If Jesus felt the need to, how much more should we follow his lead and get alone with God long enough that every problem, every weight, every burden is on the outside of our secret place – a place where there is nothing but the love of God. The balm of Gilead soothing our aching heart and renewing the love, joy, and peace! His grace is truly sufficient!

And the sweetness. The richness. The pureness of that life-giving flow – bringing a new song. A vitality to face the new day filled with all its labors will rise up this generation of Apostolic preachers to be a shining example to a people who need to see that there is a people who have a God that is bringing them through these trying times – not just by the skin of their teeth, but with the attitude that we are more than conquerors – through Christ that strengthens us!

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