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Replenish

Leading From a Healthy Soul
by Lance Witt

A book review by Jack De Vries

re·ple·nish

A verb, meaning to fill (something) up again, to restore (a stock or supply of something) to the former level or condition.

I filled up our family's car today – it was running on empty. The supply of fuel had run low. A short visit to the petrol station restored the car's tank to its former level. My visit to the local Caltex reminded me of the time during my college years when I pumped petrol to help pay for my studies. Cars would pull up beside the bowsers and I'd hear those familiar words: "Fill 'r up!" With all the self-serve stations today, you just don't hear those words much anymore. Except, perhaps, when it comes to leadership, especially leadership in the church.

In my years of mentoring pastors and younger men I have come across many who run their lives and ministry on empty. An empty soul, an empty heart, an empty life. My words of counsel to those who run their lives on empty is very simple: "Fill 'r up!" You can't run your life or ministry on empty. You need to get filled up again - replenished!

Lance Witt has a lot to say to anyone who is leading or running on empty in his book *Replenish - Leading From a Healthy Soul*. This is not a long book. And it is an easy read. Each chapter is like a post on a blog – pithy and straight to the point. While there might be 41 chapters, each chapter is 3 or 4 pages long. But don't think you will get through this book rather quickly. That is, not if you take the

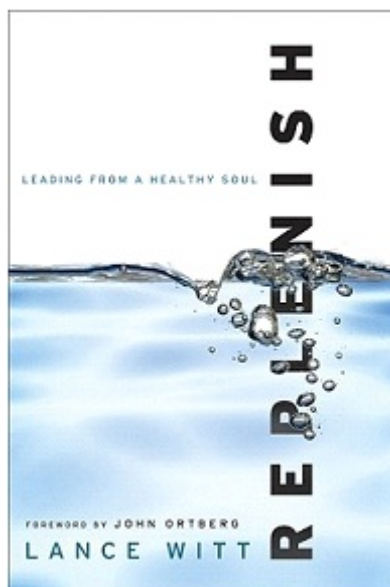
time to reflect on the questions at the end of each chapter. I found myself reading, and rereading, and pausing from time to time, just to allow the wise counsel in this book to saturate my soul. Often just one short chapter at a time.

The book is divided into four major sections:

- De-Toxing Your Soul
- Start Here...Start Now
- Sustaining a Lifetime of Health
- Building Healthy Teams.

The book begins by identifying an unhealthy soul, then suggests

ways to improve health, maintain health, and finally create a culture of health in churches. The structure works! There is a progression which builds throughout the book. But yet, each chapter could be read on its own merit. At times I would just look at the contents page, find an interesting subject, and read that chapter. And there was always much food for thought, ample to reflect on. As such, this book would work well in church leadership meetings, with teams, staff, elders, deacons, and so on. And if you would allow some time for discussion, you can expect some healthy outcomes for yourself and/or your team(s).



The book is full of tidbits of wise counsel and advice that is straight to the point. In this review I like to share a number of key quotes from this book which gave me pause and encouraged me along the pathway of a healthy soul and more effective leadership.

"To keep a lamp burning, we have to put oil in it."

"The older I get, the less concern I have with what I have or have not done and the more concern I have for what I have or have not become."

"You need both a fire in the belly and a spiritual recliner to be healthy. In fact, you must have both."

"Your ministry is not your life ... Jesus is."

"If I've learned anything about the health of churches in the last several years it's this: The weekend experience is a poor indicator of the health of the church."

"Relationship comes before responsibility."

"Never lose sight of the fact that the box (your ministry) is not as valuable as the gift (Jesus). And the only reason the box exists is to deliver the gift. You have dedicated your life to the gift, not to the box."

"It is God who creates waves and movements of His Spirit. We don't get to decide when the wave comes, where it comes, or how big it will be."

The church is "a three-legged stool" and "if any leg were removed, the stool would collapse." (You have to keep reading to find out what the three legs are.)

"Ministry is a character expression."

"Ministry hasn't turned out like we thought it would. We've done the best we could, but more often than we want to admit, ministry has been more babysitting than leading, more

mundane than miraculous, more life-taking than life-giving."

"One of the spiritual health questions every ministry leader must answer is, 'Am I willing to serve in obscurity?'"



"A leader who is isolated organizationally is twice as isolated relationally."

"One survey among pastors found that 70 percent do not have a close friend, confidant, or mentor. Henri Nouwen wrote, 'Most Christian leadership is exercised by people who do not know how to develop healthy,

intimate relationships.'"

"Looking back I realize there's a correlation between my communion with God and my courage for God."

"Paul doesn't say the 'quantity' or my works will be judged, but rather the 'quality' of my works."

"Direction, not intention, determines our destination....Who I become tomorrow will be informed by what I do today."

"In many places, it has become all about the bride(the church) rather than the groom (Jesus).... The bride exists for the groom."

"The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak."

"I need to remember that when my soul isn't healthy, I make the ride rough for everyone else in the car."

"When good systems are in place, leaders stay in the game longer and the people we serve 'go home satisfied.'"

"We are shepherds and stewards; Jesus is the owner."

Perhaps some of these quotes have given you pause as well. And that's the point of this book, *Replenish*. If you and I who are leaders in the church do not pause from time

to time to do some soul care, we soon run on empty. Oh, it might look good on the outside, but on the inside – a very unhealthy soul. As Lance writes: *“The greatest danger is in getting comfortable with...learning how to ‘succeed’ with a disconnected soul. Over time we can become very adept at playing the image-management game. The truth is you don’t have to have a healthy soul to be seen as a success in ministry.”* (36)

So how is your soul? Are you running on empty? It is time to get replenished. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is running and leading on empty, trying to find justification for why they decided to do the work of God in the first place. Lance has plenty to say to you. But not just those running on empty. As he points out in this book – it not just enough to start becoming healthy; maintaining a healthy soul is key. And as leaders, we must build a healthy culture in our churches and among our leadership teams.

Have you figured out the “three legged stool” image of the church referred to above? This is actually a quote from Dr. David Cho, a pastor in Seoul, Korea. Two legs are prayer and small groups. No surprises there. But the third? Cho refers to the third leg as “touch not the glory.” As leaders we must not and we cannot take any glory for ourselves; all glory belongs to God, and God alone. As Lance writes, “It is our job to humble ourselves and leave it to God when and how he honors us.” (48) Good counsel to heed: to God be the glory, now and forever.

So are you running on empty? Fill ‘r up! It won’t take long, but you’ll have to do over and over again, just like your car. Here’s the challenge: pick up a copy of *Replenish*, and read it bit by bit – and ponder on the questions, and take some steps in the right direction. Keep it up! Maintain a healthy

soul. Don’t keep it all to yourself. Help your team and your church become healthy as well. And remember the third leg – it is all about God and his glory. SGD



About the author:



Lance Witt is often called a “pastor’s pastor.” Founder of Replenish Ministries, he has served for over thirty years as a pastor, twenty as a senior pastor. He has also served as an executive and teaching pastor at Saddleback Church. He and his wife, Connie, have two married children and love doing ministry together.