During my dozen or so years of pastoring, I've often had to wrestle with what some call the Monday Morning Blues. After our Sunday evening service, I sometimes feel a palpable and dramatic drop in energy and emotion which often continues into Monday. These blues and blahs are very common for preachers, but most lay people have no idea about the emotional roller coaster their pastor might be riding each week. As it turns out, a lot of pastors don’t understand what’s going on inside them either.

I write the following for those who want to understand their pastor better and for fellow pastors who might not know what to make of these forceful feelings. The Monday Morning Blues occur when emotional, spiritual, and physical factors all collide in an internally dramatic little wreck, and the physical dimension is often the initial and unheralded cause.

Sunday is truly a week-END for me. Many hours of preparation and prayer from the previous days all lead up to a few intense hours. On Sunday I teach and preach three times, and I lead the musical portion of our corporate worship as well (not uncommon for solo pastors). After the long day is over, I head home with the family and crash. Everything goes into slow motion. There are no more people to talk with, no problems to sort through, nor sermons to deliver. Of course, my role as a husband and father in unceasing, but as far as pastoral work goes, the big day is done, and it's time to reflect on what's taken place. That's where the trouble often starts. This lull of activity can easily turn into a low of despondency.

When I was a single pastor, these emotional lows would hit me much harder and more often than they do now that I'm married. Fortunately, I knew enough about physiology to know that I wasn’t a basket case, even when I felt like one. I used to feel so drained after Sunday evening sermons that I would have to physically brace myself to stay upright when talking with people - and I was in the some of the best shape of my life back then. Some of that was probably due to how I processed the stress of being in a new vocation. But I still feel the crush after a weekend of ministry in which I've been especially invested emotionally.

As a married man, the blues tend to come more intermittently and usually with less intensity than before - one of the blessings of having an encouraging wife, I’m sure. But they can still hit with unexpected, blindsiding force. Where does this unscheduled aftermath come from?

**Cause of the Monday Blues**

Much investment goes into each Sunday, and there’s a price on the back end of the big day, too. Physiologically, there's a dynamic at work which many pastors aren’t aware of. It's called PAD: Post-Adrenalin Depression. It's not a chronic clinical depression, just a scientific name for what intermittently affects people in professions with intense periods of exertion followed by lulls. This is not an experience unique to pastors, a fact which the Monday-mangled minister should
remember. Others who face this fallout include actors, performers, public speakers, musicians, athletes, event planners, and almost anyone who is on public display for short, intense periods of time. Many people face this at some point in their careers or personal lives, but some occupations have to deal with it on a fairly frequent basis.

Before the big event (whatever it might be), the individual often ramps himself up as he prepares for the big presentation or performance. Whether he’s aware of it or not, adrenalin is a key part of that. After the intense labor ends, the body tries to reset itself to a more regular pace. All that adrenalin has to be dealt with somehow, and there can be emotional spinoffs as the body processes it. Many newcomers to these professions feel betrayed by their guilds for not telling them to expect these emotional drops. Pastors can be in ministry for years not knowing what to make of these feelings. No wonder so many pastoral resignation letters are written on Mondays - and torn up by Wednesday, usually!

Some might object that a Spirit-filled pastor doesn’t need adrenalin to do his work, but that overlooks the fact that the Message always gets carried about in clay pots. For most of us in ministry, preaching is an intense period of public labor in which our physical and emotional senses are heightened. That heightened sense of excitement, awareness, and readiness utilizes the body’s natural supply of adrenalin. You don’t have to “psych” yourself up like an athlete for this to happen, either. Just building up expectation, anticipation, and excitement about the joy of serving the Lord on the weekend tends to generate adrenalin. Thus, there’s nothing at all abnormal with us if we feel a crash afterwards.

Knowing this bit of physiology can go a long way in sorting through the blues. But sorting through it requires more than just putting a label on it. There are too many intangibles and variables in each of us for it to be that simple. The blues are like phantoms that freely pass through all sorts of emotional doors. Because preaching has so much personal investment attached to it, it's easy for the preacher’s mind to wonder and worry about what's been accomplished. It's often very difficult to gauge whether the effort was "successful" or not. He can wonder, “Did people understand what I was saying? Were they helped by it? Did I communicate clearly without corrupting the message?”

These uncertainties often entangle themselves with other insecurities and expectations the pastor might be facing: "Why have last week’s visitors not returned? What are those who’ve left the church thinking about me? Am I really accomplishing anything here? Am I succeeding as a leader? Should I be doing something different with this ministry? Is there some larger piece of the puzzle that I'm missing?” These are not necessarily invalid questions in and of themselves, and any Christ-honoring pastor should often engage in healthy self-evaluation. When you add to this any of the current church crises and troubles of the day, you’ve got a nasty recipe for doubt and discouragement. But bear this in mind: when the blues blow in, your internal self-evaluator is bound to give off very unusual meter readings.
It's at this point where the spiritual dimension comes to the fore. Spiritually speaking, there’s a battle taking place, but it doesn’t take the shape that you might think. Some pastors blog about Satan sending them the blues as part of his effort to discourage them and destroy their ministry. Make no mistake about it: our Enemy and his evil forces love to take advantage of whatever they can in a pastor’s life. But Satan himself isn't to blame for each cycle of depression. Rather, these natural lows can become occasions for supernatural opposition. Emotional low points aren't the Devils devices. They’re just the valleys in which fiery darts fly. It’s hard to think about fighting a spiritual battle when your energy is drained, but, thankfully, the defensive weapons of the Gospel furnish the mind with armor that works even in times of rest. It’s at these times that rehearsing the promises of God's Word can prove its overpowering effect in our hearts and minds.

The answer to dealing with lows is not to avoid all lulls. Work has to be done in cycles. I can't work non-stop to address every ministerial concern, and I don't need more adrenalin to get through the emotional downturn— not even "spiritual adrenalin," whatever that might be. What I need most of all is rest: physical rest to unwind the body, and spiritual rest in the work of God who never slumbers or sleeps.

**Common But Not Universal**

The experiences I’ve written about are common but not universal to preachers. As I’ve shared these thoughts in other forums, a few have responded that they really can’t identify with what I’m talking about, at least not as a weekly or frequent experience. They say that they’re energized being around people and don’t really feel drained when the big day is over.

We’re not all wired the same, and there’s nothing wrong with you as a preacher if your experience isn’t like mine, or vice versa, for that matter. But it is striking how many pastors DO identify with this experience, even very “successful” pastors. The blues are no respecters of persons. This experience crosses theological and ecclesiastical boundaries, too. Experiencing them has more to with physiology than theology, but good theology is helpful in shaping a grace-oriented, God-honoring response.

Lest you think this is an issue contrived by modern psychology, don’t forget the example of saints like Charles Spurgeon who was well known for his bouts with depression. In a sermon entitled, “When the Preacher is Downcast,” he counsels us with the following:

> Fits of depression come over the most of us. Cheerful as we may be, we must at intervals be cast down. The strong are not always vigorous, the wise not always ready, the brave not always courageous, and the joyous not always happy. [1]

There are striking examples in Scripture worth mentioning here. Both the saints and the Savior were sometimes tired, weary, and even downcast. Elijah fled from Jezebel to Mt. Horeb after a physically and emotionally grueling episode on Mt. Carmel (1 Kings 19). Paul was utterly
bewildered and depressed by the turn of events in his ministry after arriving in Troas (2 Corinthians 2:12-13). And Jesus taught his disciples the need to draw away from the press of the crowds and take time to decompress (Mark 6:31). None of these examples are about Monday Morning Blues *per se*, but they do illustrate that God’s servants are not immune from the crashes that happen when physical and emotional downturns converge.

In conclusion, I offer the following points of counsel in dealing with the Monday Morning Blues. Some of these summarize the discussion above and others are practical pointers. Other pastors and helpful counselors have produced longer lists, but I offer these as starting points that are helpful to me (when I follow them).

1) Pray. It's easy to think that enough prayer has been said throughout the Lord’s Day, but it's extremely helpful for the pastor's soul to turn the efforts and uncertainties of the day over to the Lord. Prayer doesn't always need to be an emotionally draining time of intercession. Resting in the Lord in prayer is no less spiritual than pouring out your heart before Him.

2) Eat wisely and exercise. Don't overload on caffeine and fatty foods after your last session of preaching. A little caffeine and food often help me, but I want my body to unwind, not ratchet up. If you can get in a work out the next day, that’s even better.

3) Avoid watching televised ministries afterwards. Watching the big and "successful" ministries on television at the end of the day can be really deflating, especially if the message being proclaimed is a far cry from faithful preaching of the Word. If you need to do research on what's being taught in the larger Christian world, do it at a time when you're not trying to decompress.

4) Know yourself. Knowing the physical dynamics at work in you and being honest with your own insecurities and uncertainties go a long way. Of course, that’s no answer in itself. If you only come to “know yourself,” you’ll be left more depressed. But knowing your insufficiencies should lead you to lean more on the Lord's sufficiency.

5) Rest without guilt. God built rest into the creative order and ordained it for our good. Maybe Monday isn't your day off, but a change of pace is still a good idea. Some pastors do low-grade office work on Monday's to keep their heads, and the same often take a different day off where they're not so spent. That way their families don't feel like they're getting the dregs of his time. If you’re a bi-vocational pastor, you’ll need to be creative to create a sense of rhythm and change, but even little things can go a long way. Whether Monday is your day off or a day for a different pace, don't feel guilty about it. God ordained the world to run in cycles, and our bodies and souls are part of that creative order.

6) Ask for feedback. My wife is very helpful in giving me feedback, but I also know that she’s blessedly biased. Even after years of preaching, I’m still helped when I know that what I’ve preached has been helpful. In suggesting that you ask for feedback, I don't mean that you should
fish for compliments. It’s never good to search out your own glory. But when someone comments that he appreciated your message, ask him what about it helped him the most.

7) Keep a God-ward focus. I’ve saved this point for last, but it certainly isn’t least. In the end what matters most is what Christ thinks of us. We preach in HIS presence whether the congregation is large or small, receptive or resistant, affirming or unresponsive. A clear conscience about your stewardship of the Word is invaluable.

I wish I could tell you that following all these steps will immediately blow the blues away, but it doesn’t work that way. It's really more about the stewardship of a trial in which we wait on the Lord to renew us.

_At the time this article was written, Scott Bashoor was Senior Pastor of the Bible Church of Buena Park, CA and professor at The Master’s Seminary._

End Note

1 Charles H. Spurgeon sermon “When a Preacher Is Downcast.” You may read the entire sermon at [http://www.gotothebible.com/HTML/downcast.html](http://www.gotothebible.com/HTML/downcast.html). This sermon is also found in Charles Spurgeon’s book _Lectures to My Students_ appearing there as Chapter XI “The Minister’s Fainting Fits” (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), pages 154-165.