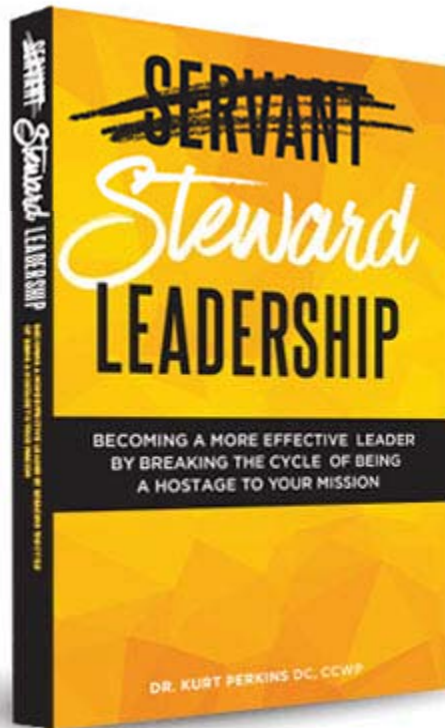


Ch. 8
Sneak Preview!



~~SERVANT~~
STEWARD
LEADERSHIP:

BECOMING A MORE EFFECTIVE
LEADER BY BREAKING THE
CYCLE OF BEING A HOSTAGE TO
YOUR MISSION

Dr. Kurt Perkins

February 2016

Steward Leadership: Becoming a more effective leader by breaking the cycle of being a hostage to your mission

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DEDICATION

To the Women Who Married a Perkins Man.

We are natural workaholics. We love to put our heads down, work, and serve our greater calling in life. It's both a blessing and a curse. Please use this book as a reference guide to create the next generation of the Perkins clan to make sure their servant leadership work doesn't lead to a hostage situation.

Sneak Preview

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Sneak Preview!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

I look at creating health, especially as a leader, as a way to worship Him and honor His creation.

Dr. Kurt Perkins, DC CCWP, views health and leadership from a perspective typically contradictory to mainstream outlets.

Being the son of a preacher man and a nurse gives him a perspective that can help church leaders be more effective in their missions by taking care of themselves. In short, *find rest before rest finds you.*

Dr. Kurt resides in Colorado Springs, Colorado with his wife Lindsay and three sons, Kalin, Lukas, and Cobi.



Ch8: Nervous System 101—It's Autonomic

Your nervous system has a magic role. It has the distinct duty of organizing and coordinating what life throws at you. In split-second decisions, it organizes and coordinates your life experiences in one experience that will enhance your immediate survival and protection *or* growth and repair.

Further, your nervous system will *always* err on the side of caution and promote your internal physiology to immediate survival: survival over sex, life over legacy.

Body, mind, and drug chemistry

When you “break bread” by frantically grabbing an iced coffee grande and a danish, it can trigger the same physiological pathways as the memory of being beaten by dad as a kid. In other words, how we move and eat can create the purity and sufficiency associated with health, or the deficiencies and toxicities associated with stress.

The more stress happens, the more chronic changes in the brain happen. Stress is more than emotional strife; it can be physical, chemical, emotional, social, or spiritual strife. Have a contradiction within your 4 Ps? That's a massive contributor to stress.

Whatever the stress, cells in the hippocampus (your learning center) literally start to shrink. Production of serotonin (a happy hormone) drops. When you add concentration and learning deficiencies on top of depression, that's a recipe for early burnout and, in my dad's case, Alzheimer's.

I first noticed it while visiting my parents a year before Dad retired. Looking for a water glass, I found his meds. Why would a pastor be on antidepressants? With that much

mission and purpose in life, how can one lack joy? Sadly, Dad is a prime example of how the body can affect the mind and vice-versa, and how drugs can only make things worse.

Here's my suggestion. If you want to improve your leadership and problem solving outcomes when dealing with depression and chronic emotional issues, then address the gut: eliminate the foods that make your nervous system go haywire.

Gut instincts

Along with the rest of your body, your gut was created to keep you thriving for 120 years. Your gut consists of your stomach and intestines, a gut lining, and a delicate internal *ecosystem of bacteria* that starts in your throat and ends between your butt cheeks.

The purpose of the gut lining is to keep things within the gut, making sure that bacteria, viruses, and proteins stay in the gut and don't leak into the blood stream.

Now about that bacteria. To have a healthy immune system, you need a balance of beneficial and non-beneficial bacteria. The more bacterial imbalances, the greater the damage to your ecosystem and the gut itself. The good bacteria feeds off the good food we eat and non-beneficial bacteria feed off sugar. Eventually there's a bacterial imbalance and the gut lining is compromised. Instead of bacteria, viruses, and proteins staying put, they leak into the blood stream, putting your body into protection mode.

Why do you think so many get sick during the "flu" season? The flu season is nothing more than a sugar, wheat, and a stress orgy from Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Valentine's Day, St. Patty's Day, and Easter. Lord, bless me with an abundance of marshmallow Peeps so I can get to Heaven sooner!

Your church potluck is filled with breads, pastas, and cookies. The foods that kids with ADHD, autism, and other sensory processing problems *always* crave are sugar and wheat products. The point is that foods consumed through a gut tube that is not intact have the potential to escape into the blood stream; a.k.a. leaky gut. Put another way, when running from a bear, you're not worried about proper digestion or elimination, which is why you experience diarrhea, queasiness, and headaches, and worse.

For the millionth time, the body will err on the side of caution and attack the "foreign" proteins. It doesn't matter if that protein is food or bacteria; it's foreign and needs to be attacked. But instead of your gut lining taking care of the problem in a quiet manner internally, a full blown immune response in the blood ensues. Part of that immune response is building antibodies against future exposure. The other part is recruiting inflammation to quarantine and destroy the invading foreign proteins.

This sets the stage for two problems. First, as more antibodies are created, they will look for anything that resembles the food protein they just attacked. In other words, the body starts building antibodies against other organs, and attacking itself. It could be brain tissue, thyroid tissue, joint tissue, or some combination of tissues. Second, inflammation loves to party. If a little inflammation is good then a lot is fantastic. Autism, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, cancer, heart disease, obesity, and ADHD all have an inflammatory component. And, contrary as it might seem, your body is doing what it's meant to: using inflammation as an intelligent adaptation to stress.

Inflammation is intelligent adaptation

Inflammation is a *huge* word in the health and sickness industry. Everyone is blaming it for something. As much as inflammation is a contributor to *every* disease on the planet, if you couldn't produce inflammation, you wouldn't be around long enough to experience chronic illness stemming from inflammation.

Inflammation is a sure sign that your immune system is actively at work. When your immune system is healthy, then inflammation is temporary. When your system is not healthy, inflammation is chronic. If you have a chronic illness, then you have chronic inflammation.

Your body never does stupid stuff. Your body is always in a state of intelligent adaptation. Sometimes that adaptation is to produce inflammation. Inflammation happens for two life saving, life building reasons: to fight infection and to repair injured tissue.

Fight infection. This is your body's first-line defense. The coughing, sneezing, runny nose, diarrhea, fever, and sweating isn't the fault of the bug. This is your body's response to the bug. You sneeze to expel the bug at 35 mph to a distance of 12-20 feet away (according to the Myth Busters duo, who dispelled the "100 mph to 30 feet away sneeze" mantra).

Repair injured tissue. You work out to get stronger. You are also voluntarily injuring yourself for the purpose of allowing your body to build it back up again. All that soreness you experience the day or two after a workout isn't a buildup of lactic acid. It's the damage you created in your workout. You sliced and diced your cells. Inflammation comes in to clean up the debris and recruit growth factors to help you rebuild.

If inflammation were Clint Eastwood

Ever seen the movie *The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly*? Inflammation is like one character that can play three different roles. In its good role, inflammation is like Clint Eastwood, making things temporarily messy for your body in order to restore order to it. In its bad and ugly role, inflammation is like the bad and ugly characters who repeatedly insult and injure your body. In the movie, Clint Eastwood kills the bad and the ugly. In real life, chronic illness will kill you figuratively and literally.

How good inflammation becomes bad and ugly

No matter if inflammation is produced to fight infection or repair a torn bicep, it's all an immune reaction. We've all experienced the acute inflammatory process of red skin and swelling. Short term, acute inflammation is a result of tissue destruction. Chronic inflammation is tissue dysfunction.

Inflammation can be triggered from external events or internal events. External events are things like bacteria, virus, as well as allergens, irritants, toxins, and foreign bodies. Internal events are often from the normal, every day activities of cell turnover that create inflammatory signals. It could be signals from damaged tissue, malfunctioning tissue, and just the normal breakdown of cells. If cells are breaking down faster than programmed, inflammation goes up.

Along those same lines; if you have pain you have inflammation. BUT, you can be inflamed and have no pain. In one third of all heart attacks, the first symptom is death. You can be inflamed and not feel it.

Medications lead to gorilla blindness

Chronic inflammation is like making love to a gorilla. It doesn't stop until the gorilla stops.

Most medications are geared at treating the symptoms of inflammation or cutting out one of the links in the inflammation chain. People may feel better but until they address the underlying reasons that inflammation is being produced, it's going to be a vicious cycle, a.k.a., a Catch 22.

First, drugs suppress symptoms of illness; they do not cure you of illness. So the steroids, antihistamines, and amphetamine-based cold and cough meds you might be taking make you feel better but also allow the little buggers making you sick to stick around longer, keeping you sick longer. Remember, there is a good (not stupid) reason inflammation is being produced.

Second, as the medicine lowers the inflammation response, the body sends MORE inflammatory signals so it can keep up with demand to fight or repair. Your anti-inflammatory medication is actually setting you up to be in a more inflamed state.

Third, the medicine side effects create more damage internally. What happens when damage occurs? Your body activates the immune system to regulate inflammation.

Whether prescription or over-the-counter, NSAIDS (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) delay your healing and recovery, and destroy your stomach in the process. A very short list of the generics and brands include ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), etodalac (Lodine), celecoxib (Celebrex), and aspirin (Bayer, Ascriptin).

If you keep taking the things that keep injuring you, inflammation will have a hard time healing. This is why, in addition to NSAIDS, I caution about the consumption of caffeine, especially after an injury. Caffeine triggers the

adrenals, which releases cortisol, which has anti-inflammatory effects on the body by suppressing the immune system. The more caffeine, the longer you deal with the injury.

This is your brain on inflammation...

There are some key players in the inflammation game. The players fall under a broad category of proteins called cytokines (from the Greek cyto for “cell” + kines for “movement”).

When you are sick or injured, your immune system cells release cytokines to help protect you. Those proteins may act on the cells they came from, on nearby cells, or on distant cells.

Remember inflammation likes to party. Cytokines can trigger microglial activation. Microglial cells are your first line of defense in your central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). They are the immune cells of your brain.

Remember the purpose of inflammation is to seek and destroy. These microglial cells can destroy the next closest nerve cells, affect neurotransmitter function, or both. The more this happens, the more an auto-immune condition is set up for the brain and mental/emotional conditions.

As a result, MAO (monoamine oxidase) enzyme stimulates the breakdown of the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. Disruptions in these neurotransmitters will affect behavior, mood, memory, concentration, learning, sleep, appetite, and even addiction.

Inflammation can affect the pituitary gland, which disrupts the pathway from brain to adrenals. The more adrenals are fired, the more cortisol is released. The more cortisol is released, the more sugar is dumped into the blood stream. The more sugar is present, the more insulin gets

released. But because cortisol is a protective hormone (saves you from a bear) and insulin is a growth hormone (repairs you after the bear attack), cells favor cortisol, and thus insulin resistance ensues.

In short, temporary cortisol is good; constant cortisol is not. Circulating insulin is good; too much circulating insulin is not. You can't be in growth and protection at the same time.

Inflammatory results of obesity

I want to highlight some of the not-so-obvious inflammatory results of being obese. Obesity isn't the only cause of chronic inflammation. I'm highlighting it because of a dilemma: how people perceive beauty versus how people perceive health. You can be big and beautiful; just don't be inflamed and ignorant.

Look around your congregation or organization, how many have weight issues? For the first time in the history of the world, there are more obese people in the US than merely overweight people. Maybe you're one of them.

Ironically, the obesity problem is especially prevalent in the southern states along the Bible belt. I'm sure the Devil loves to see God's people struggle and cry out for prayers. He loves it even more when their prayers aren't answered, proving the lies that God doesn't care about them.

God won't love you any less based on your size. But as a leader, you won't be wrong when you add improved health as a way to worship Him and honor His creation.

If you have excess weight around your butt, gut, and thighs, you have insulin resistance. *But*, just because you are skinny doesn't mean you can't have insulin resistance. I've analyzed many "skinny" people who have elevated A1C

(glycosylated hemoglobin, med-speak for sugar attached to proteins) values, elevated fasting insulin levels, or both.

But obesity due to insulin resistance isn't the worst of it. As noted earlier, some cells are more resistant than others. The endothelial cells—the ones that make up the lining—of your arteries aren't resistant at all. Those cells don't have the genetic capability to become insulin resistant.

So any free-floating insulin that remains in your arteries triggers mitosis: cell division. As the cells lining your arteries start to divide, then your artery walls get thicker, leaving less room for your blood to flow.

Insulin also causes the blood to thicken and turns macrophages (white blood cells) into foam cells. Foam cells are cells that accumulate fatty deposit plaques.

What is a common feature of Alzheimer's and heart disease? Fatty plaques in the brain for Alzheimer's. Fatty plaques in the artery walls for heart disease.

Alzheimer's is now being referred to as Type 3 Diabetes, an insulin resistance of the brain.

To top it off, insulin in high levels is a powerful stimulator of the sympathetic nervous system (protection side), triggering the whole cycle all over again. Even worse, despite your strong spiritual faith and mental care, you can have full blown bear attacks happening internally that you can't feel.

Are those church socials building community that won't last long since everyone is sick and getting worse? The church isn't the direct cause of its members health problems, but if the church is going to reach more people, they have to offer what people want but don't have. In this case, it can be a culture of health (a judgment free culture of course). Let's serve Jesus more effectively by being able to pour into others more than having to pour into ourselves.

Butt, gut, and thighs: The 24 hour fat store

One of the least resistant areas in the body to store excess energy is that area in the butt, gut, and thighs. We're back to packing on adipose tissue, which releases more cytokines (proteins), which promote C-reactive protein (CRP), and the cycle is happening all over again.

The list of conditions that are affected by inflammation can go on for days. One of the largest areas of inflammation in the body is excessive body fat. Toxins love fatty tissue. The more we are exposed to toxins, the more it's apt to be deposited in fatty tissues. The toxic burden can add to the cytokine load and add more inflammatory insult to inflammatory injury.

Inflammation prevents weight loss

Please hear me when I say this. You can be flabby in the belly but still tight with God. But it's not possible to be healthy and it has nothing to do with you carrying extra weight. It's what those cells produce that lead to volumes of contributing factors for other disease processes.

And also please hear me when I say, it's not about dying with less weight. There are a thousand ways to lose weight that also don't create health.

But do hear me when I say this. You might be having hard time losing weight because of the amount of inflammation happening. Worry about addressing inflammation and weight loss will be a desired side-effect.

Foods that make your nervous system nervous

Processed foods are the source of so many problems, and three are among the worst: wheat, sugar, and caffeine. They all affect your nervous system in similar ways, so let's use just one, caffeine, as our example.

Caffeine is a drug. It's a legal one but it's still a drug. Because it's a stimulant, caffeine directly affects your adrenals. Your adrenals release two "gas pedal" hormones—adrenaline and cortisol—to help ensure you live another day.

Metabolically, the adrenaline rush increases your cardiac markers: your heart rate, blood pressure, clotting factors, respiratory rate, and cholesterol levels. During stress, a combination of adrenaline and cortisol stimulate emotional and anxiety-inducing memories. Those uncomfortable memories dominate because they help you remember to look for the bear when you're hiking. Too much adrenaline and cortisol too often can be a cause of depression, anxiety, bipolar behavior and other mental "disorders" or "diseases."

At the same time that your adrenals are releasing adrenaline and cortisol, your pancreas is releasing a third hormone—insulin—to clean up the aftermath and help move you from protection back to growth.

Short term, the metabolic process for protection will save your life. Long term, it will take your life.

Mind your Ps and foods

Any leader who wants to have an effective and lengthy tenure and still have energy and desire to serve their family, has to take their health seriously. Forget chasing and diagnosing a symptom. This doesn't work.

As you get healthier, your people get healthier. As they get healthier, they have the energy and patience to live out the mission you are preaching. As your flock's energy and passion increases, so does your impact to reach the lost.

With that said, look at your choices of food consumption and run them through the 4 Ps: Philosophy, Purpose, Psychology, and Procedures.

For example, Purpose is your big *why*. So why do you eat a certain way? Is it helping you fuel your mission or helping you fuel your cravings and avoid the next energy crash? I know it's the leadership culture to always show a high energy level, but at some point what goes up must come down.

You can either control the descent or try an Acme parachute. You have to find rest before rest finds you. This is more than just a plea for sleep. If you're using food to keep you going because there's always more to do, the food that gives you sustenance today will be the food that robs you of vitality later.

Your food choices are the easiest habits (Procedures) to change. The calorie in/calorie out notion of health is a farce. You can't exercise your way out of a bad diet. You can't eat your way out of lack of movement. You can't medicate yourself out of chronic illness. And you can't pray your way out of the basic human requirements that are lacking.

How many of your people who plea for prayer requests concerning health crisis are also on medications? They pray for a miracle when in fact God already placed the most amazing ability to heal and repair in their DNA code. They are the miracle. They started as two cells coming together to form one cell and then the miracle of cell division and human development happened.

We all have the blue print for health success; we just have to maintain the blue print with the proper and adequate

building materials. Our bodies are temples. Do we want to build and repair the house of God with materials that create more problems?

Remember the Old Testament temple sacrifices were meant to be the first and *best* 10%. Stop offering the leftovers to yourself. It's not serving anyone.

Sneak Preview!