

## **Overfunctioning**

### **Geri Scazzero**

The journey into a profound spirituality for me began when I finally said, “I quit.” Refusing to continue pretending everything was “fine,” I told my husband, Pete, I was quitting the church –and he was the pastor!

The powerful journey we took together – to “quit” the things that really don’t belong to God’s kingdom and embrace the things that do – changed our personal lives, our marriage and our church

One to the key issues for me related to overfunctioning. Most of us in leadership struggle with this, including myself. Like an archeological tell, the depth of the issue only becomes clearer with time.

*Overfunctioning can be defined as: doing for others what they can and should do for themselves.* One way to remind yourself to work hard at this is to remember the following five truths:

#### **1. Overfunctioning disguises itself as caring**

Martha disguised her overfunctioning as caring for the needs of others. In trying to accomplish too much, she lost sight of herself and her guest – Christ Himself! She offered hospitality at the expense of herself. Martha confused caring about someone with having to take care of them.

#### **2. Overfunctioning perpetuates immaturity**

In Exodus 18, Moses mistakenly believed his self-sacrifice was serving the people. Moses became the largest obstacle, the bottleneck to the people’s growth and maturity. In Numbers 11, the Israelites demanded a rescue from their pain. Moses accepted the role. In doing so, he ensured their continued immature behavior.

#### **3. Overfunctioning prevents me from focusing on my own life direction**

Jesus, at the end of his life, said, “I have completed the work you have given me to do.” Unlike Jesus, we easily get sidetracked from our own life direction by over-focusing on others. Overfunctioning toward others often results in underfunctioning for oneself. When I am overly-focused on others, I lose sight of my own values, beliefs and goals.

#### **4. Overfunctioning erodes my spiritual life.**

One of the subtle yet most insidious effects of overfunctioning is how it separates us from God. We are called to trust and to surrender to His love. When we cross the line into running God’s world for him, we enter into dangerous territory, into the very rebellion of our first parents. When I am overfunctioning, I don’t stop enough to allow God to be God. For this reason, contemplative practices, such as Sabbath-keeping, silence and Daily Offices, help me resist this temptation.

#### **5. Overfunctioning destroys community**

The examples of Moses and Martha give us a visual picture of the negative impact of overfunctioning on communities, whether that community is a church, a workplace, a school or a family.

To quit overfunctioning is foundational to our discipleship ministries and leadership values at New Life Fellowship Church. Quitting is something I have to work on each day as I follow Jesus Christ --- especially as a leader. In fact, I believe that unless we take up this biblical challenge, it will be difficult to raise up healthy, biblical communities that effectively engage the world with the gospel and deeply transform lives.

To read more go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com) *I Quit: Stop Pretending Everything is Fine and Change Your Life* (Zondervan, 2010).

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