

# 'Here I am' means being seen and refreshed by God

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In a TV show about a Jewish family in California, a little girl's father is looking around and calling out to her. The girl jumps out from behind a curtain and calls sweetly, "*Hineni!*"—Hebrew for, "Here I am!"

We have heard that before, haven't we? Great stories of faithful people in the Bible—Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, Isaiah and Ananias—tell of them responding to the Lord's call with, "Here I am."

A separate word, *hi'nih'ni*, means, "I am here." The word looks and sounds similar, but its connotation is a more casual response.

"*Hineni*, here I am" is a response you give when you have given your full attention to the caller. You may not know what will be asked of you, but you lay your whole self out in the open as an act of trust, love and worship.

## Being present to God keeps us going

As a young minister feeling pulled in a thousand different directions, how do I keep going without becoming overwhelmed or burning out? Perhaps you have asked yourself the same question.

We have the opportunity to reflect on when, where and how we have felt most distant and also most close to God. Additionally, we have the opportunity to let God renew and refine us in unique and powerful ways.

What I like most about "*Hineni*, here I am" is it's a simple response to the call of your name. It's not a calculated response; it's a gut reaction. It is like saying: "Hey, I hear you. I don't know what you want me to do yet, but

I'm ready and willing to let myself be totally seen by you."

What a beautifully simple and challenging response. Allowing ourselves to be seen just as we are by the eyes of the Almighty is both terrifying and healing. At the same time, it is exactly what we need if we want to serve with joy and boldness.

The hardest part about church leadership is the tension between serving other people and allowing yourself to be known. It feels like most of what ministers do is listen to others and care for their spiritual and physical needs. But where does the minister go to bare his or her heart? With whom can ministers allow themselves to be fully seen?

## Getting away with God

The good news is God empowers and equips people to do the work God calls them to do.

Cultivate time and space to *be* and not *do*. If you are a church member who loves your ministers, help them and hold them accountable to this.

If you are a minister feeling on the edge of burnout, step away and take time to rest in God's presence. So many recent books about nurturing spiritual health include, and in many cases even center around, sabbath and rest. See Ken Shigematsu's *God in My Everything*, Peter Scazzero's *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, and John Mark Comer's *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*.

If you are feeling overwhelmed, it's probably because you are. Last year, I began to see signs I was moving into some unhealthy habits. Pausing from some projects and making time to talk with a therapist and a spiritual director really changed things for me.

I realized I was not alone or deficient because I was struggling. My

spiritual director helped me see ways God was moving in my life, and my therapist gave me tools and practices that helped me to address moments of stress and anxiety better.

Create space to step away by yourself or with your family.

Be honest with your congregation about what is happening in your spirit and in your life. You might find yourself pleasantly surprised by how supportive your community is of your emotional and spiritual health.

Reach out to and be vulnerable with a trusted friend.

Seek professional and clinical sources of help like I did.

Pull from the many streams of God's faithful provision for you, and know God is present with you through it all.

## **Be seen by God**

Friends, I challenge you to allow yourselves to be seen by God. Offer your full attention to the faithful God who sees you and holds you in every season of life. When there are 17 items on your to-do list, God holds you. When you give tirelessly and feel drained, God sees you. When you do not know how the big project is ever going to come to fruition, God provides for you.

Even when we feel drained, anxious or overwhelmed, we can respond, "Here I am."

God calls us to do great things. I pray for those of us who respond, "Here I am, Lord," that we would not think the offer of our full attention is only about doing work. Our full attention also is about offering our vulnerabilities to God and allowing ourselves to be seen by him. It is just as much about rest in God as it is about doing work for and with God.

In this season of your life, I invite you to join me in praying this simple prayer, like a small child responding to the Father who cares for them: "Lord, here I am."

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