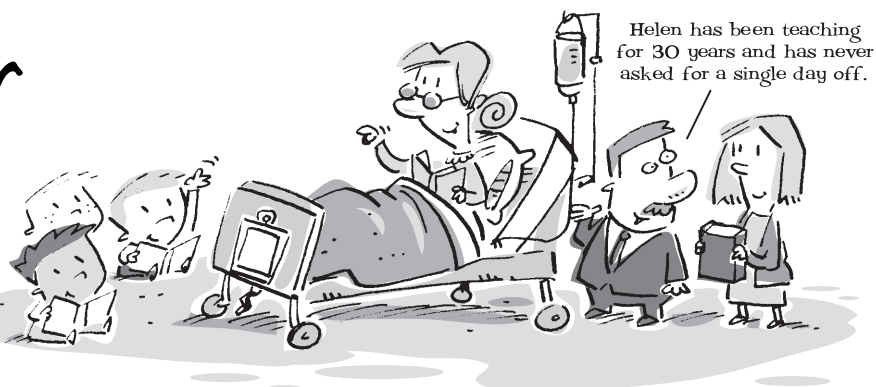


# Taking Off Without Leaving



## Think It Over

Service requires a measure of self-sacrifice. But servants who resent serving, feel burned out, or are just plain bored are most likely doing more harm than good through their service. What will it take for you to serve with a renewed attitude and a right heart?



You feel the tug to quit, but you only want to take a break! Quitting would make your pain go away. It would also create distance with the leader who recruited you. Worst of all, quitting would short-change the investment you've made in the students and cause you to miss out on the opportunity to see the fruit of your good work! Here are a few secrets that will help you keep serving.

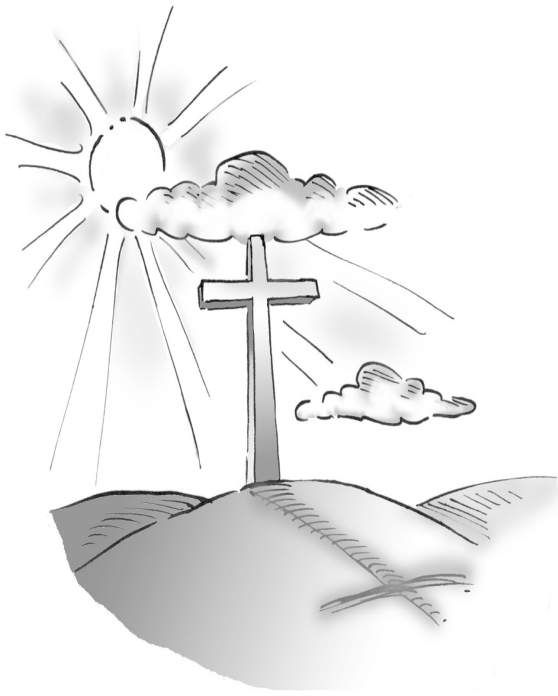
Remember that you are part of a team that needs you. You would never just forget to show up or just show up late because you had a tough time getting going. You are a faithful and important part of the team. Since you matter, talk to your leader about your feelings, and look to your team for support. You'll find that they probably have the same thoughts every now and then!

Make sure your efforts are focused in the right places. Many businesses work to make sure they don't build qualities that customers don't care about in their products. For example, customers aren't looking for blenders that have built-in radios—they want blenders that mix well and that continue to work. Do your children really need you to study the original Greek and Hebrew so they can effectively grasp the point of the Bible passage? What is your goal in teaching? What are you doing that doesn't achieve that goal? Remember why you signed up in the first place, and hold onto the experiences that have helped you make it this far.

It may be helpful to evaluate your expectations. Is it realistic to expect that a large group of eight-year-olds will sit quietly in your class for an hour without getting fidgety? Modify your goals and expectations to the real needs and personalities in your class. Rather than setting out to help children grasp the concept of sanctification, you might want them to simply understand that God helps them grow. Continue to challenge children, but realistically assess what you can accomplish in your class.

Don't be afraid to ask your leader for a break. Leaders want volunteers who are thriving and enjoying themselves. It is much more manageable to cover a break than to replace a position. Rather than taking a long sabbatical, consider scheduling in routine breaks that keep refreshing you. For example, rather than taking the quarter off, consider taking off one week every month for a time. Remember that your first priority should be to your family and then to your adopted family—the children whose spiritual lives you are nurturing each Sunday. ■





## Fan the Flame

Forest fires burn out when a firefighter eliminates one of the three necessary ingredients: oxygen, fuel, or heat. What is causing your fire to go out? In your fire for serving, think of the oxygen as the thing you cannot see: God's Spirit. Think of the fuel as the Word of God and the heat as your own emotional and physical energy. Don't let your fire go out!




**“Restore to me the joy of your salvation.”**

**—Psalm 51:12a**

- How can you lose your joy in teaching?
- According to this verse, who is the one who restores your joy?



Do you have a substitute list? Call a school principal or teacher, and ask him or her two questions: “What is your procedure for finding a substitute?” and “What has surprised you the most about your pool of substitutes?” Talk with your children’s ministry leader or other teachers about creating a substitute list.



**It's time for a CHANGE**

Lord, give me the strength to continue when I feel...



“It’s not work, if you love what you’re doing.”

**—Steve Sears**