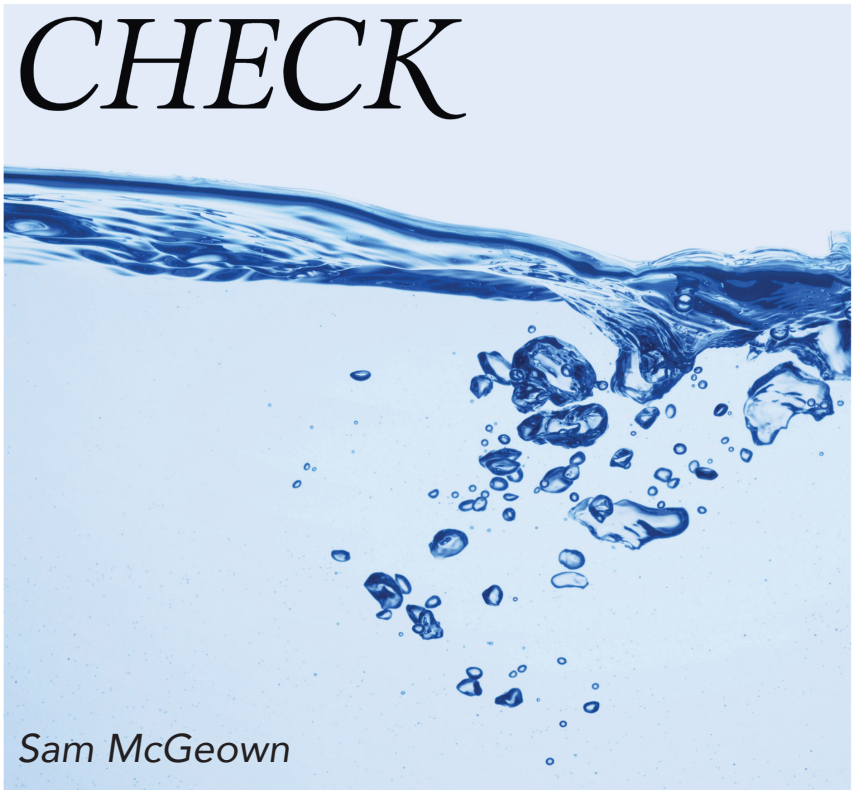


*VILLAGE CHURCH*

A short  
booklet  
to help you  
reflect on  
your inputs  
and outputs.

# *REFRESH CHECK*

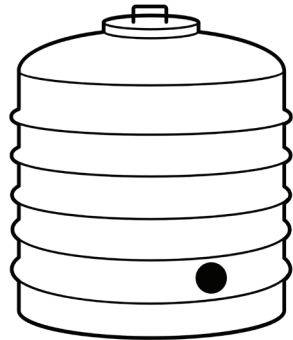


*Sam McGeown*

One of the most common issues that people experience in life is being too stressed, too busy and too close to burnout. A few years ago my friends Steve and Wei Han gave me this tool and I've found it useful to keep me going and protect me from burn out. It uses the image of the water tank.

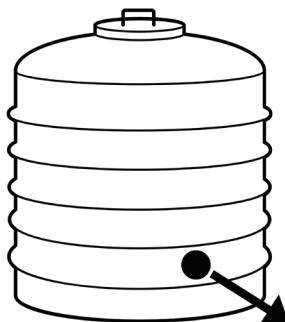
Here is the hole in the bottom to let the water out.

The hole represents the things that drain us. Life is demanding, our energy and emotional resources are not endless. And there is also no tap. We are ALWAYS giving out. Sometimes it's just a drip. Other times it's like a hose is attached and our energy levels are quickly depleted.



It's therefore useful to ask yourself 3 questions.

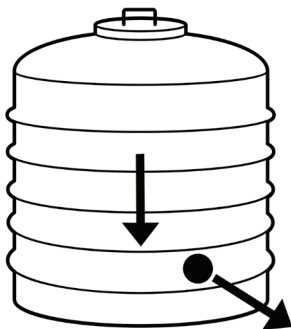
**(1) Where is your level at?** It might be helpful to mark where on the tank you feel your levels are at at the moment:



The tank is a picture of how full or empty you're feeling today. You can be feeling pretty good and rested, with lots of creativity, energy and productivity in the tank. You can also be nearly empty, feeling tired, burnt out and having very little left to give. But you will still have to give out. You will feel lethargic and have less productivity, but still feel the pressure to perform. Here you are in danger of burn out.

You may also be running with absolutely nothing in the tank, but still be giving out. Here you ARE burnt out. The difficulty is that sometimes we wait until we get here before taking time off and putting something back in the tank. But very quickly you find yourself running low again. You can't hope to replenish a tank that's been running close to empty for months (and sometimes years) with a few weeks off. So it's important to ask yourself often, "Where's my level at?"

## **(2) What things drain you?**



The arrow represents the things that drain your tank. These might be: spending too much / too little time with people, spending too much / too little time alone, aspects of your work, having to deal with certain people, health issues, lack of sleep, etc. It's important to recognise what these things are and understand that they are different for everyone.

What are 5 things that drain you? Try and be as specific as you can:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

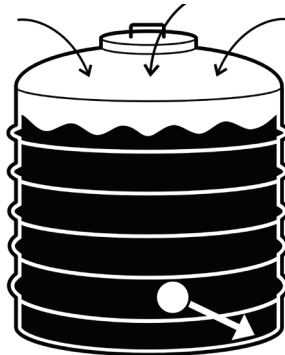
3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

### **(3) What helps you fill your tank?**

If we realise that we are constantly giving out then we must be diligent in making sure that we are topping up our tanks.



I've deliberately drawn three arrows because it's vital that we're deliberate and proactive about filling up our tank. The ideal is not just to be full but overflowing. Did Jesus not say, "I have come that you might have life, and have it to the

full." John 10:10. And the apostle Paul says in Colossians 2:6-7:

"So then, just as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to walk in him, being rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude."

The more that we can be intentional about filling up our tank, the higher its level will be, and the more productive we can be. We can also have more in our tank to deal with the things that are draining us. Too many of us think that we are invincible. We think that we can give and give, sleep less, work harder and still be functional and productive. Also sometimes we can be driven by guilt instead of grace. Guilt however just makes the hole larger. We can even feel resentful towards people: "Why aren't they working as hard as me?" And to God: "God, why are you making me do all these things?"

The Bible is clear. God has saved us for good works (Eph 2:8-10), and that work is to be empowered by love, peace and joy (Gal 5:22). The joy of the Lord (as opposed to guilt) is to be our strength (Nehemiah 8:10).

The more that we can be intentional about joyfully filling up our tank, the higher its level will be, and the more productive we can be. We can also have more in our tank to deal with the things that are draining us.

What might be 5 things that top up your tank?

These can be having a morning devotion, gardening, exercise, window shopping, spending time alone or with people, watching a movie etc. Once again, these can be different for everyone:

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_

5 \_\_\_\_\_

### **How this works**

Make sure that you are regularly filling your tank. If, for example, you know that you are going to have an especially draining weekend, make sure you put things in your tank during the week. Be intentional at saying “no” to things, if it will leave you with room in your tank.

### **Don't minimise small things**

I sometimes pop into my favourite bakery and pick up a Banh Mi. This simple act (along with eating it on a park bench) can help top me up, especially when I've had a tough day.

If you're in a relationship, get to know the "inputs" and "outputs" of your partner. Your spouse, for example, might love going out with others on the weekend, as they have been stuck in the office all week. You, on the other hand, would prefer to stay home, as you've been working with people all week. Both of you may need Thursday for input. If you are having a people-filled weekend, then one of you may need a quiet night in on Thursday. If, on the other hand, you are having a quiet weekend, then Thursday night might be a good night to hang out with friends.

Understanding what drains and fills each other up can save a lot of unnecessary stress and arguments in a relationship. When I say to my wife Yoriko, "I'm going to watch a movie, by myself," she knows that I am running low and I need to take time to fill my tank.

One of the ways that my wife Yoriko fills her tank is by going to Japan, by herself. That means that the weeks before she goes, I need to take time to fill my tank. I can't be giving and giving before she goes. By the time she gets back, I'm running pretty low, but seeing how her tank is overflowing is worth it.

Don't wait until your tank is empty before you decide to do something about it. Stop. Take time to ask yourself these questions:

***Where is my level at?***

***What things drain me?***

***What do I need to do to keep filling my tank?***



2022