

## ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the issue of health challenges encountered by pastoral families after periods of overwhelming ministry stress. The principal objective is to analyze and understand the magnitude of the problem and, through research and case studies, to develop a strategic overall health plan for the pastor that will, in turn, have an exponential effect on his own person, his marriage, his family, and his church. A number of ministry stressors will be presented, and concentration will be focused on four prominent health areas of challenge faced by clergy families: physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual.

The biblical record speaks of many of God's leaders who persevered through incredible obstacles, and they will be studied as examples in paralleling contemporary clergy challenges and concerns. Their audacious faith and uncompromising testimonies will instruct pastors in enduring and remaining faithful in the race.

This thesis will include case studies with pastors, pastors' wives, and pastors' kids. It will analyze findings of comparable and contradictory data with previous research. The results will be considered and utilized as a foundation for the formulation of intentional steps the pastor should implement in order to thrive and survive in the pastorate. Pastoral self-care must be deliberate, with a daily commitment to maintain a balance between family and ministry. The final chapter of this thesis will outline specific steps in an attempt to motivate clergy families to embrace better health practices, practices that, it is hoped, will free them from unnecessary burdens and help them instead experience abundant life.