

ABSTRACT

Many surveys indicate that a skyrocketing number of American clergy are leaving the ministry—as many as 1,500 per month. Moral failure among pastors is at an all-time high with six–nine pastors committing adultery or involved in sexual misconduct every hour, 165–205 clerics every day. These catastrophic numbers do not include associate staff ministers who are being terminated, for a wide variety of reasons, at a rate double that of senior pastors. “An Exploration of Rates and Causes of Attrition Among Protestant Evangelical Clergy in the United States” examines why the tragic trend line has progressed so negatively. Further, to get at the core problems, this thesis defines the causes and the cure of moral failure and provides six case studies. How does the documented decline of church attendance in the U.S. impact the longevity of pastors? Is there a connection between archaic church polity and congregational conflict in the demise of pastors? The author provides a compelling personal story of perseverance in ministry. Why is the pastoral vocation in the list of the top ten occupations in which people suffer from heart disease, along with scores of other physical and emotional maladies? As an antidote to the multiple challenges and problems in ministry, the thesis recommends solutions and challenges in each area such that pastors may be protected, graciously supported, and held accountable to fulfill their noble calling.