

EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES PASTORS AND THEIR FAMILIES ENCOUNTER
EMERGING FROM A PERIOD OF OVERWHELMING MINISTRY STRESS, AND
DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR THEIR OVERALL HEALTH

By

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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.

DEDICATION

I owe a debt of gratitude to two precious women and one faithful man, without whose unending prayers and godly example I would not be in a place to write this doctoral thesis.

In Memory of *Lilian Edna Kaufman Lukesh—missionary*

Who led my parents to Christ in Germany in 1955 and first exposed me, at eight years old, in 1968, to Christian outreach and ministry through her weekly neighborhood bible studies utilizing flannelgraph to illustrate the gospel message. I like to imagine that Mrs. Lukesh did for me what Ira Sankey, D.L. Moody's singer, did for the little gypsy boy in London during an evangelistic crusade. Before leaving a camp of gypsies, Sankey laid his hand on the little boy and said, "The Lord make a preacher of you my boy." Only eternity will tell of the multitudes "Gypsy Smith" influenced for Christ.

In Honor of *Leopoldine Kellner Huf—my precious, godly "Mutti"*

Who gave me physical life and daily displays of selfless character, epitomizing a Christ-like pattern for me to emulate. Only a spirited, surrendered, and self-sacrificing woman could, at 22, board a ship with her husband and two little children, bid her family final farewells, and take the two-week-long journey across the big blue ocean to a new land of opportunity. Her devotion to God, her husband, six children, 17 grandchildren, and 20 great-grandchildren is unending. She may never wholly capture the significance of that one day in the parking lot of a shopping mall when she, through tears, passionately encouraged me to continue my education and realize my dreams. "I'm doing it Mommy!"

In Honor of *Alois Huf—my strong and forever faithful "Daddy"*

Who at a spry 81 years old is more an example of the heart of Jesus in loving the lost than anyone I have ever known. His unwavering courage after escaping communist Czechoslovakia at 18, in March 1949, has left its imprint on my life and ministry. The book he and mom wrote about their life experiences left me laughing, crying, and wanting more. I pray he will write a sequel one day. His audacious weekly commitment to the inmates at the local jail in western Michigan has resulted in hundreds of salvations. He is the most giving man I know, and his model of forgiveness and love for Jesus breathes life into my very being.

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I thank my mentor, Judy Smith, whose persistent prodding in an effort to see me through to the finish line. I commit my unreserved love, loyalty, and genuine appreciation for your faithful guidance and friendship during the most challenging time of my ministry career. Thanks to our beloved church family, and to the leaders who selflessly stewarded their pastors during the writing process because of their genuine love for us. Steve and

Christian Barnes, Rick and Karla Moore, and the deacons—my humble thanks seem lacking. Commendations to Danny Zacharias, Ralph Bates, and Natalie Davis for their hours of dedicated time in reading and suggesting edits that slipped through my grips because of burning the midnight oil one too many times.

The writing of this thesis was not completed without anticipated warfare. I will mention only one instance in conclusion, and with that I applaud the genuinely lovely and dedicated people of Branson, Missouri, who graciously welcomed us into their embrace as we escaped to a quiet cabin during the months of finalizing this project. Together we survived the unexpected tornado that tore through the beautiful rolling Ozark hills with 130-mile-per-hour winds touching down in the tourist area in the early morning hours of February 29, 2012. The tempest ripped roofs from hotels and theaters in the city's famous music tourism site, leaving destruction for miles around in the place we now affectionately call "our second home." With electrical power lost throughout the night we awoke the next morning to find massive damage within feet of our rental cabin, and yet the sovereign and merciful Lord protected us. "Oh, how great are God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How impossible it is for us to understand his decisions and his ways" (Rom 11:33).

INTRODUCTION

The Issue Threatening Pastoral Families

There is a problem in our pulpits. Pastors are evacuating them, and studies reveal that the reasons behind their exits are often connected with health challenges resulting from ministry stressors. The Clergy Health Initiative¹ at Duke University in North Carolina published recent findings of a survey of 1,726 ministers (in a study that began in 2007). Their findings were astonishing, yet not unexpected. “Members of the clergy are more likely to suffer from stress-related illnesses such as obesity, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and depression than most Americans.”² Stress can now be pinpointed as the culprit of “90 percent of all diseases ... [and] anxiety reduction may now be the largest single business in the Western world.”³ What kind of stress would bring about such physical and emotional challenges within the clergy community? The list is overwhelming to say the least. Pastors today have increasingly heavy demands placed upon them. Not only are ministers expected to produce weekly apostle-Paul-like sermons, marry and bury people, commit to an around-the-clock schedule, and be at their congregants’ beck-and-call, they are also expected to operate as the chief executive officers of their churches. Taking this into consideration, imagine then the trickle-down effect on the minister’s family.

¹ The Duke Clergy Health Initiative is a \$12 million, seven-year program intended to improve the health and wellbeing of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina.

² Dr. Z, “Stress and Burnout Endanger Clergy Health,” *Stresshacker* (Aug 2010), www.stresshacker.com/2010/08/stress-and-burnout-endanger-clergy-health (accessed Mar 15, 2012).

³ Rowland Croucher, “Stress and Burnout in Ministry,” www.churchlink.com.au/churchlink/forum/r_croucher/stress_burnout.html (accessed Mar 16, 2012).

Consideration of Favorable Aspects of Ministry

Lest the aforementioned discoveries dissuade anyone from accepting the call of God to the pastorate, consideration should be given to the positive aspects of ministry. Pastoring includes the triad of privilege, responsibility, and reward. This sacred privilege is first realized as the pastor receives and responds to his⁴ God-called directive in declaring, “Here I am, send me” (Isa 6:8). The mission to which the pastor is assigned is redemptive in nature, and it is his privilege to proclaim (1 Pet 2:9) and utilize his gift mix for service (Eph 4:12) in advancing the kingdom agenda in his community. The pastorate provides not only a platform for the pastor to preach and teach; it also offers him a plethora of opportunities through which to edify those entrusted to his care, witnessing their spiritual growth. The mystery of all mysteries is that a Holy God uses human agency to accomplish his plan; he invites flawed and undeserving people to be used by him for his greater good.

Consideration of Adverse Aspects of Ministry

A portion of this thesis will reveal potential adverse sides of the pastorate. With that idea in mind, and so as not to labor the point prior to considering the research analyzed in the chapters of this thesis, a discussion of Paul’s communiqué to the Corinthian believers is worth noting, as it is something to which many pastors can relate. “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries” (1 Cor 16:9). Balancing opportunity with obstacles in the pastorate, although never easy, is nonetheless expected.

⁴ In most cases, “he” is understood in an inclusive sense. When a specific man or woman is in view, the appropriate pronoun will be used.

Incentive for the Study

I am honored to have ministered in both evangelism and the pastorate; I have spent 33 years in ministry, with the first 17 years spent in full-time, evangelistic, city-wide crusades in over 1,300 local North American churches, followed by 16 years in a mega-church plant in the United States. I was humbled to receive invaluable mentoring from the beloved pastors and their spouses in the churches in which we ministered. Through all the trials and tribulations associated with our own ministry, God has blessed me with a happy and healthy 33-year marriage to my best friend, three awesome children who are passionate for God, all married, and in full-time ministry, and four absolutely adorable grandchildren. The road has been difficult at times. There were many years of separation while my evangelist husband traveled the globe, as it was not always expedient for our family to accompany him. My husband would affirm my sincere and humble admission that I virtually single-handedly raised our children, but not without my continually second-guessing my ability to instill within each of them spiritual passion and love for God.

Incentive for my thesis arose from my years in ministry as well as concerns about issues raised by recent statistics provided by The Fuller Institute and George Barna. Their findings acknowledge that “94 percent of ... ministers’ families feel the pressures of the pastors’ ministries while 80 percent report that it has negatively affected them.”⁵ It would be disingenuous of me to fail to admit to personally experiencing similar effects. The rigorous demands of ministry can take its toll on members of the pastoral family, a toll

⁵ *Pastoral Care, Inc.*, www.pastoralcareinc.com/WhyPastoralCare/Statistics.php.

manifested in the decline of physical, emotional, relational and spiritual health. As a minister, I have endured a barrage of challenges over the past five years while serving in full-time local church ministry. I realize the importance of confronting this problem as well as implementing a strategy for the minister's overall health. In my tenure as a pastor/pastor's wife, I have been kissed on and cursed at, high-fived and had a fist in my face, prayed over and pelted with insults, spat at and spoiled, loved on and lied to, fed and forsaken, disappointed and delighted.

For the first 10 years of our church plant, we enjoyed growth and prosperity without any major disturbances. However, on March 11, 2007, after taking a state-wide stand in defense of the 2005 Kansas marriage amendment, which limited marriage to the union of one man and one woman and was met with the approval of 70 percent of voters, and taking a strong stand on abortion (we live in the state where George Tiller performed over 60,000 abortions), as well as preaching a biblically conservative message in an extremely lost and liberal community, all hell broke loose. Since that date, a very antagonistic investigative reporter teamed up with disgruntled former church members and wrote over 20 front-page, and other-than-front-page, slanderous articles against my husband, me, our son, and our beloved church, prompting investigations by the FBI, the Kansas Attorney General's office, and the IRS. We were cleared of all allegations, but only after thousands of dollars in attorney fees and the like were paid. In the process, our family has been threatened and thrilled, depressed and discouraged, brokenhearted and blessed, vandalized and venerated, mocked and embraced, as well as ridiculed and renewed. We remained steadfast after taking the brunt of bombardment from local "talk radio" shows, lasting five hours at a time with live call-ins from hostile, naïve people, as

well as being lied about by bullying bloggers. I have experienced my fair share of panic attacks and taken prescription medications just to get through the terror of it all. And then, just when we thought we were at the end of such major persecution, our church's lending institution called our church loan of \$14 million. The economy of the United States had affected the bank's A-1 rating, and it was downgraded as a result of federal regulations. The bank demanded the entire amount within 30 days, and we were served with foreclosure papers in January of 2011. To our great horror, and after never missing or being late on one payment, the bank foreclosed on our 51-acre church campus and took the building from us on September 11, 2011.

In spite of these dreadful ministry stressors and health challenges, we have, by God's grace, persevered. I offer the aforementioned personal experiences as a foundation and an example of the utter factual reality of my thesis research topic, all the while acknowledging John 15:5b, wherein Jesus declares, "Apart from me, you can do nothing."

Intention of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is twofold: It will analyze the most significant pastoral stressors while exploring four primary health challenges that pastors and their families can encounter while going through a period of overwhelming ministry stress. It will then seek to develop a strategy for the overall health of pastors (and their families).

After over 18 years of researching pastoral trends ... we have found that pastors are in a dangerous occupation ... [it is] the single most stressful and frustrating working profession, more than medical doctors, lawyers,

politicians ... over 70 percent of pastors are so stressed out ... that they regularly consider leaving the ministry.⁶

The exponential impact of this reality, both in churches and in the pastor's home, is alarming. Scripture says, "Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech 13:7). What a brilliant strategy of the enemy: destroy the pastor, his family, and his church, and God's redemptive plan is seriously impeded. Considering the even more alarming recent findings that "doctors, lawyers, and clergy have the most problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, and suicide,"⁷ the pastorate can be viewed as a perilous profession indeed.

Chapter 1 will define stress and its expression in the biblical record, then seek to explore the reality and problem of stress in the lives of God's leaders in both the Old and New Testaments as well as in the lives of contemporary clergy.

Chapter 2 will survey early and contemporary research in regard to stressors within ministry as reported by pastoral families. The pastor's vocational responsibilities according to Scripture will be outlined, and a distinction between stress, burnout, and depression will be considered.

Chapter 3 will examine the four predominant areas of health challenge threatening pastoral families who encounter enduring periods of overwhelming stress: i.e., physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health.

⁶ Richard J. Krejcir, "Statistics on Pastors," (2007), www.intothyword.org/articles_view.asp?articleid=36562&columnid= (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

⁷ Ibid.

Chapter 4 will present research completed through case study questionnaires involving pastors, pastor's wives, and the adult children of pastors. The objective will be to gather and qualitatively analyze information concerning the aforementioned ministry stressors and challenges and the overall impact on real life.

Chapter 5 will present the development of a strategic plan for long-term overall health care for the pastoral family.

The conclusion will summarize the results of the study and draw conclusions about the concern raised in this thesis. Suggestions will be offered about ways to better inform and help educate pastoral families, congregations, and denominational organizations in regard to the dangers of allowing ongoing ministry stressors to spin out of control, creating the perfect storm that can lead to the collapse of the health of the pastoral family.

CHAPTER 1

GOD'S LEADERS AND THE REALITY AND PROBLEM OF STRESS

This chapter will seek to define stress as understood in modern culture and then investigate the expression of stress within the biblical record, while analyzing the problem of stress relative not only to God's leaders in the Old and New Testament but contemporary clergy as well.

The Old and New Testaments are replete with examples of God's leaders, both men and women, who led faithfully while encountering stressful situations. A few notables worth mentioning are these: Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt, Job coping with immense health hardships, David's pain portrayed through the Psalms, Elijah's depression and ensuing disgust with life, Jeremiah's expression of grief through laments, Paul's burdens of ministry, and Christ Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane anticipating the horrific events that preceded his death on the cross.

One constant in regard to the aforementioned individuals, as well as other very prominent biblical leaders, is not only the sizable stressors they confronted but also the challenges they encountered. A cursory read of some of the highlights surrounding these stories of valiant effort affirm that these courageous leaders continue leading while frequently contending with extraordinary stress and at the same time struggling with doubt, insecurity, fear, indecision, rejection, warfare, defeat, despair, and depression, as well as suicidal ideas.

As in biblical times, contemporary culture is fraught with the complexities and challenges of life and, as a result, the current societal landscape appears heavily littered

with lives plagued by disease and disorders. These ailments seem like payback for years of stress, worry, doubt, and despair.

Currently, the demands placed on God's leaders, and clergy in particular, are immense, and the challenges faced are often overwhelming. Not only is the pastor expected to perform all the obvious pastoral duties presented in Scripture, it is also assumed that he will promote team leadership, establish and manage budgets and administration, and dedicate countless hours to counseling congregants. As a result, clergy now experience significant physical, emotional, and relational health challenges that often leave them powerless to fulfill their pastoral roles.

Evidence reveals that if all the dynamics involved in pastoring are not properly balanced, then accepting the call to pastor can be a death sentence; it can be like entering a prison and serving out a life sentence without the possibility of parole. The pastorate is not a calling for the faint-of-heart. The persecutors who sought to devour God's leaders in biblical times still prowl around like a "roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet 5:8). Satan's strategy, to infiltrate and take out⁸ the lives of God's leaders in an attempt to thwart the plan of God in saving mankind, is relentless. His tactics are brutal, and his plot against pastors is creating a problem in the pulpits of our time. Pastors are being worn down. They are discouraged and in anguish. Many are ready to give up the fight. In a sermon entitled "A Call to Anguish," the late David Wilkerson⁹ plainly

⁸ John 10:10.

⁹ David Wilkerson was the Founding Pastor of Times Square Church in New York City. He was called to New York in 1958 to minister to gang members and drug addicts, as told in the best-selling book, *The Cross and the Switchblade*. In 1987, David Wilkerson returned to "the crossroads of the world" to establish Times Square Church. As a pastor of the church, he faithfully led this congregation, delivering powerful biblical messages that encourage righteous living and complete reliance on God. David Wilkerson had a strong burden to encourage and strengthen pastors throughout the world. From 1999 to 2008, he traveled

articulates Satan's vehemence in attempting to harass, hinder, and defeat God's leaders. He argues, "That's all the devil wants to do is get the fight out of you and kill it."¹⁰ Committed clergy are impassioned and feel compelled to go the distance in ministry, with intentions of fighting a full bout without being knocked out. However, the fight—once so powerfully active in many clergy—is now being replaced with pitifully tentative punches as the enemy bombards them with rounds of bloody blows. He will not rest from pursuing pastors as he knows his time is short.¹¹

Conversely, knowing the days are evil,¹² the pastor must prayerfully persevere as he has a biblical mandate to fulfill. He has a work to do for God, and his effectiveness is seriously impaired when he is hindered from ministering at an optimum level because of spiritual warfare with Satan and antagonists in the church. Regardless of the ministry stressors that may arise, the pastor must remain in continual communion with the Lord, seeking his wisdom and guidance to lead, as well as his grace to sustain him through difficult and challenging times:

The Lord has given to every man his work. It is his business to do it, and the devil's business to hinder him—if he can. So, sure as God gives a man a work to do, Satan will try to hinder him. He may present other things more promising; he may lure you with worldly prospects; he may assault you with slander, torment you with false accusations, set you to work defending your character, employ pious persons to lie about you, editors to assail you, and excellent men to slander you. You may have Pilate and

around the globe holding conferences for Christian ministers. See www.worldchallenge.org/en/about_david_wilkerson.

¹⁰ "David Wilkerson - A Call to Anguish," youtu.be/ObfvRIIg4T4.

¹¹ Rev 12:12.

¹² Eph 5:16.

Herod, Ananias, and Caiaphas all combined against you, and Judas standing by to sell you out for 30 pieces of silver. And you may wonder why all these things have come to pass. Can you not see that the whole thing is brought about through the craft of the devil, to draw you away from your work and hinder your obedience to Christ? Keep about your work. Do not flinch because the lion roars. Do not stop to stone the devil's dogs. Do not waste your time chasing the devil's rabbits. Do your work; let liars lie; let sectarians quarrel; let editors publish; let the devil do his worst. But see to it that nothing hinders you from fulfilling the work God has given you. He had not sent you to make money; He has not commanded you to get rich. He has never bidden you to defend your character nor has he bidden you to contradict falsehoods about yourself which Satan and his servants may start to peddle. If you do these things you will do nothing else; you will be at work for yourself and not for the Lord. Keep about your work. Let your aim be as steady as a star. Let the world brawl and bubble. You may be assaulted, wrangled, insulted, slandered, wounded, and rejected. You may be chased by foes, abused by them, forsaken by friends, despised and rejected of men, but see to it that with steadfast determination and with unfaltering zeal you pursue that great purpose of your life and the object of your being until at last you can say; "I have finished the work which you, dear God, have given me to do."¹³ Finishing the work is a concern for many pastors. To finish this significant work for God amidst a whirlwind of distraction, discouragement, and stress, today's clergy need constant reminders that they are not running this race alone; there is One who fathoms the difficulties of their demanding life and vocation. The author of Hebrews affirms, "We do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are" (Hebrews 4:15).

¹³ *Pulpit Helps* (August, 1992), 8. As cited on bible.org/illustration/every-man-his-work.

Focusing on the One who identifies with the hurts, heartaches, and headaches of humanity, as well as finding common ground with God's leaders who have persevered in the past, will give contemporary clergy incredible incentive to stay in the fight regardless of how challenging the rounds may be.

As a framework for understanding the comparable nature of stress among ancient and contemporary leaders, a brief definition of stress and depression will be presented here. A more detailed definition is presented in Chapter 2.

Stress Defined

In contemporary culture, the word "stress" is common, yet it is a very problematic word to define. The range of people experiencing stress is extensive, with stress beginning as early as adolescence and impacting every stage of life through adulthood. When questioned, members of each demographic will explain stress and its impact in their lives in very different ways, which makes it difficult to describe. According to the dictionary, stress is "strain felt by somebody: mental, emotional, or physical strain caused, e.g., by anxiety or overwork. It may cause such symptoms as raised blood pressure or depression."¹⁴

The American Institute of Stress suggests that stress is hard to define, and the list of signs and symptoms is very long.

Stress is not a useful term for scientists because it is such a highly subjective phenomenon that it defies definition. And if you can't define stress, how can you possibly measure it? The term "stress" as it is

¹⁴ www.bing.com/Dictionary/search?q=define+stress&qpv=define+stress&FORM=DTPDIA

currently used was coined by Hans Selye in 1936, who defined it as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change.”¹⁵

Stress As Expressed in the Bible

A natural starting point in attempting to understand stress as expressed in the lives of God’s leaders in biblical times would be to ask an important question, “Does the Bible utilize the word stress?” The simple answer is “No.” There are no biblical references which use the word “stress”; however, the Bible does include various terms or phrases relating to what we would consider as stress: fears (Ps 34:1-22), despair and disturbed (Ps 42:5), troubles (Ps 86:7; Job 5:7), hardships (Job 10:17; 1 Thess 2:9), affliction (Job 36:15; 2 Cor 6:4), adversity (Job 2:10; Ps 49:5; Eccl 7:14), pressure (Job 33:7; 2 Cor 11:28), disaster (Job 30:24; Jer 17:17), discipline or chasten (Job 5:17; 1 Cor 11:32; Heb 12:6), circumstances (Phil 1:2; 4:11), trials (Jas 1:2; 1 Pet 1:6; 4:12), tribulations (John 16:33; Acts 14:22; Rom 5:3; 8:35), ordeals (2 Cor 8:2; 1 Pet 4:12), difficulties (2 Cor 12:10) distresses (Rom 8:35; 2 Cor 6:4; 12:10), persecution (John 15:20; 2 Cor 12:10; 2 Tim 3:12), suffering (Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 4:12, 13), and anxieties (1 Pet 5:7).

Like stress, depression is a word that does not specifically appear in the Bible. It is though an ailment to which many of God’s leaders allude. It is an alternative term relating to stress. Clinical psychologist Gary R. Collins explains:

Depression is a clinical term that is not discussed in the Bible even though the condition appears to have been common. Psalms 69, 88, and 102, for example, are songs of despair, but notice that these are set in the context of hope. In Psalm 43 David expresses both depression and rejoicing.¹⁶

¹⁵ “Stress, Definition of Stress, Stressor, What Is Stress?” www.stress.org/topic-definition-stress.htm.

¹⁶ Gary Collins, *Christian Counseling: A Comprehensive Guide* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 106.

Burnout is yet another popular term describing the situation in which many pastors today find themselves, due to the unrelenting stress related to the expectations of their job. Burnout is described as

a state of physical, mental, spiritual and emotional exhaustion caused by extended and intense levels of stress, causing the body to over-produce adrenaline. It leads to the questioning of one's abilities and/or the value of one's work.¹⁷

The Bible indicates that some of God's leaders experienced symptoms of what would appear to be burnout while ministering during stressful situations. Exodus 18 is perhaps the most familiar event: Moses is drained in dealing with the issues of the Israelites, when a visit from his father-in-law, Jethro, results in steps being taken to protect Moses' sanity and health.

In view of what Paul affirms in relation to the Old Testament leaders, i.e., "All these things happened to them as example, and they were written for our admonition..." (1 Cor 10: 11), consideration should be given to the Old and New Testament heroes and heroines of God as admonition and instruction to contemporary audiences. Paul's affirmation is a premise for this thesis.

¹⁷ "Pastor Burnout Definition," www.pastorburnout.com/burnout-definition.html.

Biblical Precedents of Leaders in Stressful Situations

Adam and Eve

In the beginning, after God created the first man and woman, he provided them with a home of beauty and plenty in an exquisite paradise. From the biblical record, it appears they were able to live and maneuver unencumbered by pressure, worry, and stress. The Bible states that what God created was “good” (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and “very good” (Gen 1:31). Adam, the first created man, functioned as God’s first human leader after God brought “every beast of the field and every bird of the air” (Gen 2:1–20) to him and invited Adam to give each of them a name. This, no doubt, was a daunting task for the normal human but, operating without sin and with an unspoiled mind, according to Scripture, Adam delivered.

Genesis 1 and 2 present a perfect creation, but the biblical narrative quickly segues from this utopian scene to the tragic fall of man. In chapter 3, the serpent (Satan) enters the story, initiating with malicious intent a conversation with Eve, the first woman. He falsely states God’s command, which sows seeds of doubt and temptation, eventually leading to disobedience. The result is that sin entered the world, opening the floodgates to a new human phenomenon called stress.

God confronts Adam and Eve with their sin and renders a guilty verdict. As he sentences them to their punishments, one can only imagine how abnormal Adam and Eve felt, as the first unfamiliar and strange symptoms developed, culminating in stress, as the magnitude and consequence of their sin began to quickly unfold. What began as an exceptional and intimate relationship with the Creator of the world would evolve into an

existence of unknowns. Adam stands before God experiencing angst and fear for the first time since the day God created him. What follows is a tragic scenario in which mankind goes from bad to worse. In the ensuing years, sin would continue to bring about various human sensations encompassing fear, worry, rejection, pain, toil, as well as jealousy and murder.

Abraham

Abraham, the Olympian of faith, was commanded by God to leave all that was beloved and familiar and transition to a place that was remote, unknown, and uncertain. In spite of not having a pattern before him for guidance and encouragement, Abraham obeyed. His compliance with God's call was a blind expression of faith, a faith God accounted to him as righteousness (Gen 15:6; Rom 4:9). Is it conceivable that Abraham's faith was conjoined with a tidbit of stress? Arguably, his faith was the anchor that kept him stable amid angst and fear. The findings of recent studies performed by Professor Michael Inzlicht of the University of Toronto support this notion:

A new study has confirmed what many people already believed: having faith in God can help block anxiety and minimize stress. According to the University of Toronto research, the brains of believers and non-believers work differently under stress ... Compared to non-believers, the religious participants showed significantly less activity in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), a portion of the brain that helps modify behavior by signaling when attention and control are needed, usually as a result of some anxiety-producing event like making a mistake. The stronger their religious zeal and the more they believed in God, the less their ACC fired in response to their own errors, and the fewer errors they made. "You could think of this part of the brain like a cortical alarm bell that rings when an individual has just made a mistake or experiences uncertainty," says lead author Inzlicht, who teaches and conducts research at the University of Toronto [Scarborough campus]. "We found that religious people or even people who simply believe in the existence of God show

significantly less brain activity in relation to their own errors. They're much less anxious and feel less stressed when they have made an error," the expert added. These correlations remained strong even after controlling for personality and cognitive ability, says Inzlicht, who also found that religious participants made fewer errors on the Stroop task than their non-believing counterparts.¹⁸

God promised Abraham, already old, that he would have a son, and Abraham waited on the Lord for the promise for another quarter-century. Although Abraham and his wife Sarah were well beyond the age of childbearing, "He did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb" (Rom 4:19). The late Kenneth Wuest, noted New Testament Greek scholar, points our attention to the specific word *consider*:

"*Considered*" which is *katanoeō* (κατανοέω), means "to consider attentively, to fix one's eyes or mind upon." "The best texts omit the negative before 'considered.' Not being weak as respects faith, Abraham considered attentively his physical condition, stared his obstacles right in the face. The words 'now dead' are a perfect participle in the text. That is, so far as procreative functions were concerned, Abraham's body had died, (ceased to function) and was as a result in a condition in which it would stay dead (never function again). The door was absolutely and forever closed so far as having offspring was concerned."¹⁹

From the biblical record, all communication from God to Abraham would presuppose the likelihood of the presence of stress in Abraham's life, even though he exercised tremendous faith in the midst of unfamiliar territory. But the supreme challenge to Abraham's faith, surpassing the call to leave his homeland and even the promise of a

¹⁸ In the research led by Assistant Psychology Professor Michael Inzlicht, participants performed a Stroop task - a well-known test of cognitive control - while hooked up to electrodes that measured their brain activity. S. Reeraman, "Faith in God Reduces Anxiety and Stress In Believers," www.medindia.net/news/Faith-in-God-Reduces-Anxiety-and-Stress-In-Believers-48317-1.htm (accessed Mar 12, 2012); "Faith in God Reduces Anxiety and Stress In Believers," www.medindia.net/news/Faith-in-God-Reduces-Anxiety-and-Stress-In-Believers-48317-1.htm#ixzz1o75xliok (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

¹⁹ K. S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 71-72.

son so late in life, was the command some years later to sacrifice his son Isaac to God, as we read in Genesis 22.

Joseph

Joseph reminds us that any stress can be endured when we wait on God. Genesis 37:2 tells us Joseph was 17 years of age when his jealous brothers sold him into slavery for 20 pieces of silver, and he ended up in an Egyptian prison. Genesis 41:46 tells us, “Joseph was 30 years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt.” For 13 long years, Joseph was alone in that barbaric confinement. Again and again, his hope for release was bitterly disappointed. We read nowhere in Scripture that God gave Joseph an explanation for his captivity. Nevertheless, we can imagine the torturous thoughts that penetrated this prisoner’s mind and the stressful situations he encountered during his imprisonment. Yet when he finally stands before Pharaoh, he credits God alone with the interpretation and illumination of Pharaoh’s dream. Still he is full of faith in God. We see:

Joseph the prisoner (Gen 39:20–41:39): He is falsely accused and cast into prison. There God tests his character. Joseph the prophet (Gen 41): According to an earlier biblical account (see Genesis 41), Joseph predicts seven years of plenty and seven years of famine and is released from prison. Joseph the prime minister (Gen 41:41–56): The king makes him second in command.²⁰

Joseph’s providential role in Israel’s deliverance is spelled out beautifully in Ps 105:16–22.

²⁰ H.L. Willmington, *The Outline Bible* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), 275.

Moses

The biblical account of Moses is replete with events indicating the close relationship Moses shared with God. The one chosen by God to deliver the nation of Israel from Egyptian captivity is nevertheless the one who later shows signs of depression under great duress. “And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? And wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?” (Num 11:11, KJV) Frustration, due to the Israelites complaining while wandering in the wilderness, arguably drives Moses toward negative thinking, a classic symptom of depression. Doubt, along with a disparaging view of his ability to lead God’s people, consumes Moses, causing him to overlook the favor of God upon his life. However, despite often stressful situations, Moses teaches us a great lesson, that spiritual health includes recruiting strong leaders to stand around us. In Numbers 10:29, Moses reaches out to his father-in-law, Hobab, and says,

“We are setting out for the place of which the Lord said, ‘I will give you.’ Come with us, and we will treat you well; for the Lord has promised good things to Israel ... Please do not leave, inasmuch as you know how we are to camp in the wilderness, and you can be our eyes” (Num 10:29, 31).

Hobab gladly accepted because he felt needed; he could justify the investment of his time. His son-in-law had said: “You will be our eyes.” A helpful paraphrase could read, “You know your way around. We are depending on your experience and leadership to get us through.” And it helps to have family you can count on for direction when you are on a journey through challenges and difficulties:

Moses’ interest in taking Hobab was not merely to enable Hobab to participate in the blessings of the Promised Land. Moses was also interested in benefiting from Hobab’s familiarity with the desert routes

ahead of them (vv. 31-32). Later accounts suggest that Hobab was persuaded to go and that he became an ancestor of certain Israelite tribal units (Jud. 1:16; 4:11).²¹

Joshua

Joshua, the son of Nun, confronted daily stressors, and yet he reveals in one key passage a crucial element to his success: “And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15). Filling the shoes of the great leader Moses was unnerving to say the least. Like his predecessor, Joshua would also lead through times of great distress. Upon the Israelites’ defeat, suffered at Ai and resulting in the death of 36 men, Joshua manifests expressions of unbearable stress:

Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, he and the elders of Israel. And they put dust on their heads. And Joshua said, “Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!” (Josh 7:6–7)

Joshua’s long life started in Egyptian bondage and ended in a worship service in the Promised Land. In between those events, God used him to lead Israel in defeating the enemy, conquering the land, and claiming the promised inheritance. What strengthened him along that arduous journey? Joshua’s entire family was committed to God.

In days when faith is weak and compromise has become general, when the sense of duty is slight or the definitions of duty vague, it is well that the spirit of Joshua should be displayed among the leaders in Israel, and that

²¹ J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 226.

there should be those who will take their stand boldly upon the declaration,
 “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”²²

Deborah

The Old Testament’s lone female Judge of Israel, Deborah stands out as one of many women in the Bible who obeyed God, followed their hearts, observed moral values, and displayed great courage in the face of bias and adversity. Scripture offers glimpses into the unfortunate treatment of women in both the Old and New Testaments. They were company to the poor, the foreign, and the unlearned in situations of prejudice. Biblical women such as Deborah, Queen Esther, and the prophetess Huldah were powerful, effective, and faithful in their obedience to God. They preserved the faith in incredibly stressful situations when many men disregarded God’s will and surrendered to paganism. Deborah reminds us that God uses women just as mightily as he does men. We read about these powerful prophetesses in the Bible: Miriam—Exod 15:20, Huldah—2 Kgs 22:14-20; Anna—Luke 2:36-38, Philip’s four daughters—Acts 21:8-9 and, of course, Deborah—Judg 4:4. Deborah gained renown on her own merit, not because of her relationship to a man. The Bible leaves no room for male chauvinism but, conversely, reminds us that women can be empowered by the Holy Spirit for effective service for Jesus Christ. Galatians 3:28 corroborates this truth: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

What Paul is saying, then, is that all such distinctions—be they racial-religious (‘neither Jew nor Greek’), social (‘neither slave nor freeman’), or

²² H. D. M. Spence-Jones, Ed. *The Pulpit Commentary: Joshua* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, 2004), 350.

sexual ('no male and female')—must be thoroughly and forever abandoned, since in Christ all are equal.²³

Israel is enduring a heavy yoke of oppression under King Jabin's rule. Unquestionably, the domination over Israel by a pagan king set the stage for the position of Israel's judge to be a nerve-wracking one. Deborah hears a divine oracle from God and, upon receiving her orders, she calls for Barak, the Israelite warrior and commander, and directs him to gather 10,000 troops for battle, to go to Mount Tabor to confront Sisera, Jabin's general. Barak consents to the mission, but with one condition—he demands Deborah's presence on Mount Tabor. Barak's response is unique and priceless. "And Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!'" (Judg 4:8). Deborah agreed to go, but prophesied to Barak that the battle would be credited to a woman and not a man (Judg 4:9).

Jael

No matter the extent of daily stressors the pastoral family confronts, physical and emotional health involves being decisive. Jael's resoluteness and quick thinking in the midst of a unique and stressful situation serves as incredible inspiration for the pastoral family. Although the wife of a man belonging to the Kenite tribe, which was at peace with Jabin the Canaanite king, Jael demonstrated her loyalty to Israel, Jabin's enemy. Displaying the customary hospitality of the day, she invited the escapee Sisera, Jabin's general, into her tent, gave him milk instead of water, provided a place to sleep, and then

²³ W. Hendriksen and S. J. Kistemaker, *Vol. 8: New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953-2001), 150.

premeditatedly drove a tent peg into his temple.²⁴ Was there a moment of doubt as this stressful event unfolded realizing she was the key to ending a war? Did Jael advance with steady hands as she slew the general? Deborah, the prophetess in inspired scriptural poetry, reflecting on the God-given victory over the Canaanites, praises Jael for this deed.²⁵ Jael's story is a stark reminder of the strength and wisdom God can give women who are surrendered to the Lord. Pastor, Bible teacher, and prolific writer Warren Wierbse provides this commentary on the account:

When Heber's wife, Jael, came out to meet Sisera and invited him into her tent, the Canaanite captain was sure that he was at last safe. After all, in that culture nobody would dare enter a wife's tent except her husband. Jael gave him milk instead of water and then covered him with a blanket, and he was confident that he had found a dependable ally and could rest in peace. But Sisera made the mistake of telling Jael to lie if anyone asked whether he was there. Being a wise woman, she concluded that Sisera was fleeing the battlefield, which meant that the Jews had won the battle and the Canaanite grip on the land was broken.²⁶

Gideon

Israel's on-again, off-again relationship with God sets the stage for God to sovereignly select great leaders to free His people. Upon God's call, one young man, named Gideon, from the tribe of Manasseh rises to the challenge, but not without uncertainty. The stress of insecurity prompts Gideon to request a series of proofs from God. Gideon provides an example of the proper way to "test" God.

Then Gideon said to God, 'Do not be angry with me, but let me speak just once more: Let me test, I pray, just once more with the fleece; let it now

²⁴ Judg 4:17, 18, 21, 22.

²⁵ Judg 5:6, 24–31.

²⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Available: An Old Testament Study* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 38–39.

be dry only on the fleece, but on all the ground let there be dew.’ And God did so that night. It was dry on the fleece only, but there was dew on all the ground. (Judges 6:39–40)

In reality, all of the stressors and problems we face in ministry appropriately “test” the resources of God. Spiritually, we have times when we lay a fleece before God. Angst and uncertainty often provoke God’s leaders to ask for a sure indication of the Lord’s leadership and hand in their lives. This is not a frivolous thing. And one thing we discover for sure: God is faithful. God is sovereign, but He uses human agency to accomplish His purpose.

Wherever anything is to be done, either in the Church or in the world, you may depend upon it; it is done by one man. The whole history of the Church, from the earliest ages, teaches the same lesson. A Moses, a Gideon, an Isaiah, and a Paul are from time to time raised up to do an appointed work; and when they pass away, their work appears to cease.²⁷

Ruth

Ruth is perhaps the Bible’s most celebrated leader in terms of loyalty. Given the overwhelming obstacles against her that could have kept her from realizing any success—she was a woman, she was poor, and she was a foreigner—her life story exemplifies the triumph of courage and resourcefulness over adverse and stressful circumstances. Presented with the opportunity, she could have agreed to what appeared to be the sensible solution to the dilemma before her. Add to the list of obvious disadvantages the fact that Ruth becomes a widow and is asked to leave her mother-in-law’s side and return to her own mother and remarry. Ruth’s display of devotion toward Naomi is unparalleled.

²⁷ *10,000 Sermon Illustrations* (Biblical Studies Press, 2002).

Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following you; For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The LORD do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me. (Ruth 1:16–17, NKJV)

Ruth gives us the firm conviction that we can trust God’s grace in every situation we face in ministry. Ruth, a Moabite, was outside of God’s covenant. “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever” (Deut 23:3). How then could Ruth enter into the congregation of the Lord? By trusting God’s grace, Ruth threw herself completely on his mercy. Law excludes us from God’s family, but grace includes us if we put our faith in Christ. And it is God’s grace that can carry us in *any* situation we face. The genealogy of Jesus Christ presented in Matthew 4 records the names of five women, four of whom have very questionable backgrounds: Tamar committed incest with her father-in-law;²⁸ Rahab was a Gentile harlot;²⁹ Ruth was an outcast Gentile Moabite;³⁰ and “the wife of Uriah” was an adulteress.³¹ How is it that they were all included in the messianic line? The answer is to be found in the sovereign grace and mercy of God.

Saul

Handsome, standing head and shoulders above everyone else, Israel’s first King, Saul, relishes the successful beginning of his reign. He and his army defeat the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Edom, the kings of Zobah, and the Amalekites. However, the booty from

²⁸ Gen 38:3.

²⁹ Josh 2:5.

³⁰ Ruth 1:5.

³¹ 2 Sam 11:6.

the Amalekite victory proved too tempting for Saul. He took of it, and God took from him—from that day forward God rejected him as king of Israel. The tragic events surrounding Saul’s early reign affirm the warning Scripture poses to all of God’s children who are in the fight and begin focusing on the fortune instead. We are “drawn away by our own desires and enticed” (Jas 1:14). Saul’s fall begins when he surrenders to his desire, and from that point on Saul struggles as he teeters from emotion to evil and then from evil to another emotion, ultimately ending in death. As James 1:15 records: “When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Theologian and Bible scholar, Adam Clarke’s 40-year investment in writing a commentary on the Bible shines in his summation of James 1:15:

When lust hath conceived ... When the evil propensity works unchecked, it bringeth forth sin—the evil act between the parties is perpetrated. And sin, when it is finished ... When this breach of the law of God and of innocence has been a sufficient time completed, it bringeth forth death—the spurious offspring is the fruit of the criminal connection, and the evidence of that death or punishment due to the transgressors.³²

Saul, Israel’s first king, is an historical example of the reality that even after being used by God you can resort to desperate measures and commit suicide. He is not alone in the Bible’s hall of infamous suicides. Abimelech hastily called his armor-bearer and asked the man to kill him.³³ Showing great remorse, Samson took his life.³⁴ Saul’s sin finally caught up with him, and he took a sword and fell on it.³⁵ His armor-bearer followed his example and committed suicide.³⁶ When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, “he put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died; and he

³² Adam Clarke, *Clarke’s Bible Commentary*. www.godrules.net/para/jam/paralleljam1-15.htm. Accessed March 12, 2012.

³³ Judg 9:54.

³⁴ Judg 16:30.

³⁵ 1 Sam 31:4.

³⁶ 1 Sam 31:5.

was buried in his father's tomb" (2 Sam 17:23). Zimri, the evil king, took his life in a fiery death.³⁷ And Judas illustrated the vast difference between remorse and repentance when he hung himself.³⁸ "Judas's remorse was not repentance of sin, as the King James Version suggests. Matthew did not use *metanoēō*, which means a genuine change of mind and will, but *metamelomai*, which merely connotes regret or sorrow."³⁹ It is not uncommon to have suicidal ideas when problems get heaped on us—sociologists tell us most people at some point in their life have had such an ideation, if only briefly. It is in those moments that we not only turn to the Lord, but also to a trusted friend.

David

David, the young and humble shepherd boy, who is next in line as God's choice to replace the wayward King Saul, experiences multiple life situations marked by pressure, anxiety, fear and, at times, even despair. However, the focus of the following vignette suggests the depth of a father's unpretentious love for his child. David's story shows the utter agony and grief a pastor and his wife would manifest over a wayward son or daughter. "O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!" (1 Kgs 16:18). His words only a loving parent could articulate. The sun and wind of the centuries have failed to dry the tears or still the anguish of this exceedingly sorrowful cry. Who was this distraught person? David, the first king in history to be selected according to ability rather than birth, stained his palace with his tears. He was courageous. His character crowned him king. He was considerate

³⁷ 1 Kgs 16:18.

³⁸ Matt 27:5.

³⁹ J. MacArthur, *Matthew* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), comment on Matt 27:1.

and in many ways magnanimous. Twice he spared the life of his enemy, Saul. In spite of his sins, the people of Judah loved him. David was God's leader, a good ruler, a fine soldier, and a wise statesman. He did not fail as a king; however, he failed as a father. Perhaps he was too involved in royal responsibilities to relate adequately to his family. As will be reported in this thesis, stressors are aimed at the pastor's family. Consequently, both the pastor and pastor's wife must be ready for the many trials and attacks that their children will encounter.

Overwhelmed, the king retired to an upper room where he privately poured out his heart before God in unrelenting grief. The depths of his love for his rebel son are couched in his lament, If only I had died instead of you. Two of David's sons, Amnon (13:28-29) and Absalom (18:15), died violent deaths as a consequence of David's sin (12:10).⁴⁰

Jonah

When called to the mission field, the prophet Jonah disagreed with God's instructions for him and, instead of acquiescing, he chose to run away from God. However, Jonah was never out of God's reach. God sent a storm in the middle of Jonah's distress and disobedience, allowing him to confront the stressors of his call. Contemporary clergy can identify with Jonah's dilemma. Perhaps it is a crisis of our calling, the mission, or even a crisis of faith. The pastorate is often about re-learning things we already know and then learning new lessons as a result of the mistakes we make. Jonah's story illustrates that God gives pastors second chances. He uses and re-uses pastors and gives pastors

⁴⁰ Walvoord, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 473.

assurance that when God calls a man for a mission He stands with us in our darkest moments.

Jonah also portrays the vivid emotions that accompany the Lord's work. As we interact with people making wise and poor decisions, it is impossible to "cut the emotional umbilical cord" that attaches us to them. There are days when, for the pastor, it is simply overwhelming to watch the heartache in people's lives. Jonah was the prophet of Israel; Amittai's son⁴¹ of the Zebulunite city of Gathhepher, he is featured in 2 Kings 14:25, which records how he had a major prophetic role in the reign of King Jeroboam II.⁴² Jonah had conveyed a message—encouraging expansion—to the king of Israel, whose reign was marked by prosperity, expansion and, unfortunately, moral decline. Jonah's reluctance to go to Nineveh doubtless stemmed partly from his knowledge that the Assyrians would be used as God's instrument of punishment of Israel. The prophet, who had been sent to Jeroboam to assure him that his kingdom would prosper, was the same prophet God chose to send to Nineveh to forestall that city's and nation's destruction until Assyria could be used to punish Israel in 722 B.C. Is it any wonder that the prophet reacted emotionally to his commission? We find the interesting word "prepared" in this book. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jon 1:17). "And the Lord God prepared a plant and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be shade for his head to deliver him from his misery" (Jon 4:6). God prepares the way for us. He knows exactly what we need and when we need it. We can trust Him.

⁴¹ Jon 1:1.

⁴² 793–753 B.C.

Jeremiah

The prophet Jeremiah stands as a champion of perseverance and his story demonstrates God's infinite grace during times of tremendous distress in the Lord's work. Jeremiah experienced the ridicule of and eventual imprisonment by the king(s) he tried to warn. His aching heart is painfully portrayed in his laments. Lamentations is a beautiful illustration of Jeremiah's grief process while maintaining his hope;⁴³ it gives every pastor the promise of God's tender care and comfort even as they often minister without receiving anything in return.

Jeremiah's life and endurance, through two decades with no results and only silence from heaven, is grounded in his love for God's word. "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer 15:16). God's word is food for our souls—wisdom to help us make each and every decision in ministry. Spurgeon had an interesting interpretation of this great verse from the weeping prophet:

It is not "I did hear them," for that he might have done and yet have perished. Herod heard John gladly, and yet became his murderer. He does not say, 'I did learn them by heart.' Hundreds have committed chapters to memory and were rather wearied than benefited thereby. The scribes fought over the jots and tittles of the law, but were blind leaders of the blind notwithstanding. It is not, 'Thy words were found, and I did repeat them,' for that he might have done as a parrot repeats language it is taught. Nor is it even, 'Thy words were found, and I remembered them,' for though it is an excellent thing to store truth in the memory, yet the blessed effect of the divine words comes rather to those who ponder them in their hearts. What is meant by *eating* God's words? The phrase signifies more than any other word could express. It implies *an eager study*—"I did eat

⁴³ Lam 3:21-26.

them.’ I could not have too much of them, could not enter too thoroughly into their consideration.”⁴⁴

Daniel

From deportee to dreamer to the lion’s den, Daniel lived to be nearly 100 years of age, and he demonstrated the power of personal purity. His life illustrates the promise of God’s presence during horrendously stressful periods as well as his promotion of us when we obey him and display courage amidst stress and testing in ministry. “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself” (Dan 1:8). Personal purity and holiness protects us from the decadence of our age. Weakness in our flesh can lead us to sin. Sin separates us from fellowship with God—the source of our spiritual power for Christian service. Daniel’s determination to aspire to purity of heart and character, even to his diet, is a challenge to men and women who serve as pastors in the local church. “Yet Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine.” His friends concurred in this decision as is evident from the following verses (cf. Dan 1:11–16). The word *Gāal* (“defile”) occurs 11 times in the Old Testament (e.g., Mal 1:7, 12; Ezra 2:62; Neh 7:64; Isa 59:3) and refers to moral or ceremonial defilement. In this case, Daniel would have been defiled on both counts.”⁴⁵ When we are cleansed of sin we are free in our spirit to

⁴⁴ C. H. Spurgeon and T. Carter, *2,200 Quotations: From the writings of Charles H. Spurgeon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995), 253.

⁴⁵ S. R. Miller, *Daniel* (New American Commentary 18. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 66.

lead God's people in worship. Purity brings spiritual power. Lethargy in our spiritual lives is due to sin.

Esther

From months of pampering and beauty treatments to one monumentally stress-filled decision, Esther is between a rock and a hard place. A woman in her position taking a life-threatening risk not only for herself, but for her people as well, Esther proves that one life, dedicated to God, can make a decided difference in people's eternal destinies and the world itself. In order to make an eternal difference in the lives of people, we must be emotionally healthy. Mordecai's challenge to Esther is reminiscent of how one Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one Billy Graham, and one Martin Luther can make a crucial difference and alter the course of history.

For if you remain completely silent at this time, relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. Yet who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this (Esth 4:14).

The stewardship of our health, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually is grounded in the recognition that God has strategically placed us in our ministries at this particular time and for His particular purpose. Wiersbe amplifies the text from Esther:

Now, if God brought her to the throne, then He had a purpose in mind, and that purpose was now evident: She was there to intercede for her people. The statement of Joseph to his brothers comes to mind: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Committed: An Old Testament Study* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 111.

Roop adds, “This passage is a key to the basic meaning of the entire book, namely, to demonstrate the unfailing providence of God in behalf of his people Israel. Mordecai’s implications were quite clear and his plea was irresistible.”⁴⁷ Our one life is worth protecting—God has plans to use us and we must be healthy and emotionally balanced so that he can do so.

Job

Job’s life of total awareness of God’s providence gives us clues to the mindset that gives health to the believer. Job confesses to God, “I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You” (Job 42:2). It is a stunning admission. Think for a moment of the mental consolation wrapped up in this one exquisite verse! As we have learned in Scripture, God is omnipotent—all-powerful. God has everything in control, even when it seems everything is out of control. Needling Job through his many trials and afflictions were three friends with their homespun philosophies and man-made interpretations of Job’s woes. The Lord teaches Job another essential element of health. Job must not retaliate or have bitterness against his detractors and adversaries. Rather, God is only pleased and ready to turn Job’s trials into blessings when he begins to pray for his friends. “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10).

Job’s vision of God’s transcendence and his ensuing repentance paved the way for his forgiveness of and intercessory praying for his three friends. Then his forgiving spirit toward them paved the way for God to bless him.

⁴⁷ C. F. Pfeiffer, *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), comment on Esth 4:9.

His painful disease was cured either at this time or immediately after his repentance (v. 6). All his brothers ... sisters, and acquaintances (probably including the forgiven three), who had forsaken him (19:13-14), heard of his restoration. They now dined with him in his house. They comforted ... him regarding his trouble (*rā'āh*, “calamity”), though this was probably less consoling than if they had done so earlier. This woe, as Job himself had acknowledged (1:21; 2:10), was brought on by the LORD (through the instrumentality of Satan).⁴⁸

Repeated studies have produced convincing evidence that people get healthier when they pray—and when people pray for their enemies. Jesus taught, “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt 5:44). Stress is reduced and health is increased when we learn to pray for those who have hurt us.

Elijah

Elijah’s ministry challenges typify what many of today’s pastors experience in their callings. God speaks and we obey, but not without a bit of doubt and angst. The mission God calls us to seems daunting and impossible. Our fears and insecurities begin to quickly manifest themselves. The stress of it all becomes unmanageable, and we wonder if we will even survive so great a call. Elijah gives today’s clergy hope, as his life exemplifies the reality that, after marvelous victories and crowning moments in our pastorates, we can still be subject to unexpected distress to the point of wanting to despair of life. Prior to this experience, Elijah knew the strength of a singular mind. In our era, we have observed the rise of psychosomatic illnesses. People complain to their doctors of multiple illnesses, and they are a demonstrable proof of the power of human thinking.

⁴⁸ Walvoord, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 775.

The illness may be emotional or mental in origin but may have physical symptoms. Psychosomatic illnesses are not imaginary. They are physical disorders in which both emotions and thought patterns are believed to play a central role, and they usually develop when a person's disease-fighting ability is weakened due to stress. Ministry introduces pastors and their families to a host of stresses. We must learn how to manage the pressure and problems that ministry presents to us. After a particularly stressful event, like the loss of a loved one, for example, an individual might develop high blood pressure shortly afterward or even have a heart attack. In another person, the same situation might lead to a peptic ulcer or a series of asthma attacks. A third individual, equally grief-stricken, might not get sick at all. For a psychosomatic illness to occur, a person must first be vulnerable in a particular bodily system. It is important for these illnesses to be recognized and treated as soon as they occur. How can we treat them? One effective strategy is having a singular mind that meditates on Scripture, experiences the stress release of prayer, and the fellowship of other believers. Elijah asked, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him" (1 Kgs 18:21). Pfeiffer writes:

‘how long halt ye between two opinions?’ (AV). Rather, *How long go ye hobbling between the two forks of the road?* Whichever translation one takes, the meaning is crystal clear. The issue was before them. A clear decision must be made. If Baal was to be god, Jehovah must be renounced. If Jehovah was to reign as God, Baal and all his worship must be forever abandoned. Many in Israel were probably tempted to compromise. Elijah, with whom no compromise was possible, saw clearly the radical character of the two issues and called for a definite decision.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Pfeiffer, *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, comment on 1 Kgs 18:21.

James warns, “A double-minded man ... [is] unstable in all his ways” (Jas 1:8). Joshua challenged, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve” (Josh 24:15). God created our minds to be far more intricate than the strongest computer—we must subject our minds to the singular control of the Holy Spirit.

New Testament Precedents

Jesus

Jesus’ life is, as John wrote, so full of learning that all the libraries of the world could not contain it (John 21:25). The Bible does note that “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Heb 5:8). Our ministry does not take on depth, meaning, or sincere compassion until we suffer. A pastor’s family is not a perfect one. God will use the suffering of every member of the family ultimately for his glory if we allow him. One of my pastor friends recently was broken-hearted when he learned that his son had been killed in an automobile accident on the way to serve at the church where he was employed and deeply appreciated for his creativity. The pastor was, in an instant, overcome with grief. Later, through months of prayerful reflection and continued obedience to God, that same pastor’s ministry took on a new depth and relevance to those who were hurting. It is amazing all the lessons we learn through suffering. Jesus was perfect, and God allowed him to suffer. The Lord of glory, the Creator of the universe, suffered and learned obedience by his anguish. Lea points to Jesus’ willingness:

One effort to deal with this issue has followed a special interpretation of Philippians 2:7, saying Jesus ‘emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant’ (NASB). These theologians, emphasizing the *kenosis* or self-

emptying of Christ, have argued that during his time on earth Jesus surrendered his attributes of omniscience, omnipotence (all powerful), and omnipresence (being everywhere at once).⁵⁰

When we become selfless, surrendered, and sacrificial in our attitude and behavior, we are obedient even when we suffer.

Stephen

Stephen suffered the stress of stoning:

And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep (Acts 7:58-60).

Lest we miss the atrocity of this form of execution, Vincent tells us:

According to the Rabbis, the scaffold to which the criminal was to be led, with his hands bound, was to be twice the size of a man. One of the witnesses was to smite him with a stone upon the breast, so as to throw him down. If he were not killed, the second witness was to throw another stone at him. Then, if he were yet alive, all the people were to stone him until he was dead. The body was then to be suspended till sunset.⁵¹

Stephen’s non-retaliatory spirit captures us. Health is letting God have vengeance on our adversaries. Every pastor inherits certain church members who simply do not like him. Critics of clergy can embitter the pastor and that bitterness can spread like a cancer throughout his ministry, marriage, and family. The critical message within the prayer

⁵⁰ T. D. Lea, *Hebrews, James* (Holman New Testament Commentary 10. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 93.

⁵¹ Vincent, M. R. (2002). *Word studies in the New Testament* (Ac 7:58). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

attributed to St. Francis of Assisi is exemplary; it is one that should guide the pastor's heart when facing criticism.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
 Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 Where there is injury, pardon;
 Where there is doubt, faith;
 Where there is despair, hope;
 Where there is darkness, light;
 And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
 to be consoled as to console;
 to be understood as to understand;
 to be loved as to love.
 For it is in giving that we receive;
 it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
 and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.⁵²

Peter

Peter's denial of Christ occupies such a prominent place in all four Gospels (see Mark 14:66–72; Matt 26:69–75; Luke 22:54–71; John 18:15–18, 25–27) and is predicted by Jesus (Mark 14:27–31; Matt 26:30–35; Luke 22:31–34). The intense stress Peter felt over his threefold failure is indicated in Luke's account: "And he went out and wept bitterly." (Luke 22:62) Peter's sin and the stress that surrounds this epic event in biblical history gives hope to God's leaders who have failed. We read that Jesus prayed for Peter's restoration and saw him resuming his place of leadership: "I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32). Peter did return and, according to Scripture, upon doing so filled the role as a pillar of the church.

⁵² www.prayerguide.org.uk/stfrancis.htm.

Peter, one of the “pillars” of the early Church,⁵³ is often typecast as one of the most rash and impulsive of the 12 disciples. This fisherman, “Rock,” and denier of Christ possessed an irrepressible inclination to act spontaneously when involved in stressful situations. Many pastors can certainly identify with Peter when experiencing stressful times. However, additional focus should be directed toward Peter in fulfilling God’s greatest commandment with his admonition for us to love, unconditionally, those to whom we minister. “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Pet 1:22). We cannot be healthy without love guiding us, motivating us, and reacting within us, regardless of the situation or confrontation. What does Peter mean when he says we are to love one another fervently? The well-known New Testament verb *agapaw* expresses God’s kind of love that we are to emulate. True love is an exercise of the will rather than the emotions, and it is not determined by the beauty or desirability of the object, but by the noble intention of the one who loves. Peter stresses, however, that we are to love one another fervently. MacArthur illuminates the word:

‘Fervently’ (*ektenōs*) is a physiological term meaning to stretch to the furthest limit of a muscle’s capacity. Metaphorically, the word means to go all out, to reach the furthest extent of something (Luke 22:44; Acts 12:5; cf. Acts 26:7). That is how Peter used it in 4:8 when he wrote, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.” God wants believers’ love to stretch way out so it graciously forgives and covers sin among believer.⁵⁴

⁵³ Gal 2:9.

⁵⁴ John MacArthur, *1 Peter* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2004), 90–91.

We have emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual health when we love. We are called by God to love his children, our fellow brothers and sisters, for all eternity. The calling card of the true Christian is love. Through love, unrestricted, we find God's peace.

Paul

Paul's life was one of utter dependence upon God. No doubt this was the secret to his effectiveness especially when confronting stressful periods during his missionary journeys. Paul confesses the key to his dependence on Christ was a result of his "thorn in the flesh," (2 Cor 12:7):

And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me (2 Cor 12:7–8).

Bible commentator Lenski reminds us that the original manuscript is a challenge to understand. "The man to whom the Lord had granted an actual visit to Paradise is the man to whom God gave a messenger of Satan to fisticuff him again and again."⁵⁵ Adding to the complication of the text is the exact meaning of this thorn. Vincent claims:

Opinions are divided between mental or spiritual and bodily trials. Under the former head are sensual desires, faint-heartedness, doubts, temptations to despair, and blasphemous suggestions from the devil. Under the latter, persecution, mean personal appearance, headache, epilepsy ... probably a bodily malady ... but its nature must remain a matter of conjecture.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 1298.

⁵⁶ Vincent, M. R. (2002). *Word Studies in the New Testament* (2 Cor 12:7). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

Whatever it was, and although Paul wanted to be freed of it, God used it to keep him pure, humble, and dependent. This triadic combination of spiritual characteristics is what clergy need for a lifetime of service for Jesus Christ. Even though at times we resist some weakness in our life that keeps us God-dependent, it could be exactly what is necessary to be fruitful. Jesus said, “Without Me, you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Paul’s message to the church at Rome was to not be complacent or apathetic, but instead to be confidently engaged in ministry, realizing it is the Kingdom’s work. “Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, and serve the Lord” (Rom 12:11). Paul was not immune to the challenges faced in leadership along with the demands of the ministry, and he cautions us against losing zeal and fervor. Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, “When we came to Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were troubled on every side. Outside *were* conflicts, inside *were* fears. Nevertheless God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us” (2 Cor 7:5–7, NKJV). Despite Paul’s struggles, emotional and physical, and even his despair of life at one point,⁵⁷ he remains an important role model of the way clergy can experience insurmountable earthly odds and yet remain focused on the eternal future:

Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I *am* more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. ²⁴ From the Jews five times I received forty *stripes* minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; ²⁶ *in* journeys often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils of *my own* countrymen, *in* perils of the Gentiles, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren; ²⁷ *in* weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness—²⁸ besides the other things, what comes

⁵⁷ 2 Cor 1:8.

upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches (2 Cor 11:23–28, NKJV).

Modern Examples

Charles Spurgeon

When Charles Spurgeon died in January 1892, London went into mourning. Nearly 60,000 people came to pay homage during the three days his body lay in state at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Some 100,000 mourners lined the streets as a funeral parade two miles long followed his hearse from the Tabernacle to the cemetery. Flags flew at half-mast, and shops and pubs were closed. I remember standing at his graveside a few years ago in London. How could a pastor make such an impact on the world? If there is any remaining tangible evidence of the influence Spurgeon had in his day it can be found in his sermons. In particular, his printed sermons have had a monumental impact for over 100 years. There are 63 volumes of Spurgeon's sermons in print to this day. Newspapers carried his sermons on a weekly and sometimes daily basis for many years. Well over 100 million copies of those weekly sermons were sold (300 million to date). If one takes into account all of his publications, they would fill 200 large books. Even by modern estimations these numbers are staggering. People from California to New Zealand had one thing in common when they could discuss, if ever they met, the writing of C.H. Spurgeon. One could hardly recommend Spurgeon's method of sermon preparation unless one also has his spiritual and intellectual gifts. He was a voracious reader and immersed himself in the writings of the Puritans. Charles first discovered Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in his grandfather's library and would read it over 100 times before

his death. He was well read in the works of Calvin, Baxter, Owens, Gill, Fuller, and many others. In his sermons, Spurgeon quoted from the likes of Justin Martyr, Augustine, John Bunyan, George Whitefield, Jonathan Edwards, John Gill, Andrew Fuller, and John Newton. By the time of his death, Spurgeon had amassed a personal library of some 12,000 volumes. The collection formerly resided at William Jewel College in Liberty, Missouri, but has recently been purchased by Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Missouri.

Spurgeon's congregation grew so large that he had to rent the Music Hall in Surrey Garden. On June 7, 1891, an overflowing crowd filled this huge building. As powerful a preacher as he was, Charles Spurgeon suffered from acute depression throughout his entire ministry. As Spurgeon prayed, someone (there is debate about whether it was a prankster, an enemy of Spurgeon or a mentally deranged man) yelled, "Fire." Someone shouted that the balcony was about to collapse. Panicking people surged toward the exits. Seven people were trampled to death. Dozens more were taken to the hospital badly injured. Spurgeon collapsed, unconscious. He had to be carried from the pulpit and fell into such deep depression that he later said he doubted anyone had ever passed as close to insanity as he and yet escaped with their mind. Some say Spurgeon never got over the horror of that event.

Spurgeon offers a special warning to ministers who have gained success and notoriety. He knew what he was talking about, and this is evidenced by his extreme popularity, as the illustration above demonstrates. In a day without microphones, thousands of people, often at least five or six thousand, came to hear his commanding voice each Sunday at the Metropolitan Tabernacle. Spurgeon himself wrote:

My witness is that those who are honored by their Lord in public have usually to endure a secret chastening or to carry a peculiar cross lest by any means they exalt themselves and fall into the snare of the Devil. This depression comes over me whenever the Lord is preparing a larger blessing for my ministry. The cloud is black before it breaks and overshadows before it yields its deluge of mercy. Depression has now become to me as a prophet in rough clothing, a John the Baptist heralding the nearer coming of my Lord's richer benison. So have far better men found it. The scouring of the vessel has fitted it for the Master's use. Immersion in suffering has preceded the filling of the Holy Ghost. Fasting gives an appetite for the banquet. The Lord is revealed in the backside of the desert, while His servant keeps the sheep and waits in solitary awe.⁵⁸

J. B. Phillips

In *Your God Is Too Small*,⁵⁹ J. B. Phillips (1906–1982) explains that the trouble facing many of us today is that we have not found a God big enough for our modern needs. In a world where our experience of life has grown in myriad directions, and our mental horizons have been expanded to the point of bewilderment by world events and scientific discoveries, our ideas of God have remained largely static. It is nearly impossible, Phillips argues, for an adult to worship the conception of God that exists in the mind of a child of Sunday-school age, the “God-in-a-box” notion, limiting God to such inadequate conceptions as “Resident Policeman,” “Grand Old Man,” “Meek-and-Mild,” and “Managing Director.” As a result of these insufficient ideas of God, many people live with an inner dissatisfaction, without any faith at all.

Phillips' faith was tested by the deep depression he experienced relentlessly during the last 20 years of his life. He was hailed as one of the most well-known Christian writers of his day and although his linguistic skills were significant, Phillips'

⁵⁸ Quoted on www.epm.org/blog/2007/Sep/17/third-and-final-on-spurgeon-ministry-and-depressio (accessed Mar 9, 2012).

⁵⁹ J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small* (New York: Macmillan, 1953).

depression was incapacitating. His honest autobiography, *The Price of Success*, was published the same year as *The Wounded Healer*, by Phillips' wife, Vera, and their close friend, Edwin Robertson. Together these books tell of the "other" life of J. B. Phillips, a man who loved the public eye even as he suffered from the fame that followed him. We are greatly helped in our study of God's word by the Greek interpretation of the New Testament text prepared by Phillips, and yet we do not perhaps realize that this resource was written by the pen of a man who felt the limitations of humanity and depended on God for relief.

Freddie Gage

Jim Cox wrote in the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* about the impact of the ministry of Evangelist Freddie Gage:

Evangelist Freddie Gage has become a legend in his own time: Saved as a teenager in a Houston slum neighborhood, Freddie was called to preach before entering college. By the age of 25 he was preaching at some of the most successful evangelistic crusades in Southern Baptist churches in history, breaking all attendance records. No other church evangelist of the Southern Baptist Convention received such extensive coverage by both the Baptist and National press during the 1950's and 1960's. Freddie attended Decatur Baptist College and Baylor University and received an Honorary Doctor's Degree in Human Letters from California Theological Seminary. Within a few years this man was being acclaimed as an authority on youth problems and had great acceptance as a speaker in public schools. He spoke to more than two million young people in over one thousand school assembly programs.

In 40 years as a Southern Baptist evangelist, Freddie Gage has conducted more than 1350 revival crusades in churches across America. Of these, 200 have been area-wide, citywide crusades with the participation of over 10,000 churches. He has preached face to face to over ten million and to untold millions by radio and television. He has spoken in more than 3,000

schools, 300 prisons and jails, to 500 civic organizations, and 400 radio and television talk shows.

More than 1,000,000 have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ as a result of his God-given ministry. Many have become full-time evangelists, pastors, and missionaries as a result of Dr. Gage's ministry, and he has modeled a soul-winner's fire for four sons all of whom are now engaged in full-time evangelism.⁶⁰

Gage later admitted to years of battling depression, and that burden for suffering ministers and their wives moved him to found Wounded Heroes in 1997. Gage entered a hospital in 1978 suffering from depression. He described his paranoia about his treatment, uncommon at the time for a minister. He was convinced "that it would be the end of my ministry." "If I had suffered a heart attack or cancer ... God's people would have rallied around me," asserted Gage,

"but in churches, we throw stones at the spiritually, emotionally, and mentally wounded. We are legalistic, judgmental and critical. We do not practice what we preach regarding restoration ... The Christian army is the only army in the world to bury its wounded."⁶¹

Gage founded Wounded Heroes to restore ministers who have been abused by churches, suffered personal failure or fallen victim to other traumas. LifeWay, the publishing distribution arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, America's largest Protestant denomination, thought so much of the avant-garde idea that they assumed the program for their more than 40,000 pastors and churches. No pastor would be turned away for financial reasons from the ministry's counseling retreats. And Wounded Heroes will not only focus on ministerial crises but also on the prevention of problems and restoration of ministers. God used Freddie Gage to reveal that fruitful ministers suffer

⁶⁰ "About Freddie Gage," www.freddiegage.org/all_my_friends_are_dead_9.htm (accessed March 7, 2012).

⁶¹ Marv Knox, "Gage passes Heroes to LifeWay" *The Baptist Standard* (June 23, 1999) www.baptiststandard.com/1999/6_23/pages/gage.html (accessed March 7, 2012).

from depression, anxiety, isolation, and a number of other maladies. Often it is caused by sheer exhaustion and over-commitment to the work of the ministry. Had Freddie Gage not become transparent about his own health condition, LeaderCare for Southern Baptist ministers would have never seen fruition. Over 1,000 counselors were available through the numerous Baptist state convention networks, and 90 clergy care organizations through which pastors can find help and support were launched. LeaderCare trained more than 400 persons to conduct church mediations, another resource to help pastors under stress. But the initiative was short-lived.

Wounded Heroes was a worthy endeavor, however, it did not last very long. Even after the statement made by Jimmy Draper that it would last over thirty years, it lasted only two years. The planned long range goals to minister to pastors were never achieved after being included at LifeWay.⁶²

Concluding Thoughts

As previously stated, we are hard-pressed to find the term stress or depression within the biblical record; however, it is understood that God's leaders, in accomplishing great feats for God, are not immune to sadness, discouragement, mourning, troubles, and despair. These feelings are no respecter of persons. They can strike any of God's servants, afflicting the poor and the very rich, young people and older people, men and women. Both stress and success often trigger emotional letdowns and human emotion cannot be separated from the call of God upon a leader's life. David exhibits this reality after encountering stress due to loss. "When David and his men reached Ziklag, they found it

⁶² Donald Q. Hicks, *A Study of the Conflicts Within Churches That Lead to the Termination of Pastors Within the Southern Baptist Convention* (D. Min. thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010), 58.

destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So, David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep” (1 Sam 30:3–4, NIV). The prophet Elijah also exhibits the let-down sometimes experienced after great success.⁶³ One might imagine the celebration after the manifestation of God’s stunning display of power in the Mount Carmel account, along with the seizing and execution of 450 prophets of Baal. However, this success is short-lived in that shortly thereafter, Elijah, as a result of overwhelming stress, indicates to God his great desire for death.⁶⁴

⁶³ 1 Kgs 18.

⁶⁴ 1 Kgs 19:4–5.

CHAPTER 2

SURVEY OF EARLY AND CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH

This chapter seeks to survey the extensive research relating to ministry stressors experienced by the pastor and his family. Some of the findings from different studies result in statistical differences; nevertheless, a clear pattern is evident. The findings are typically linked with physical and emotional issues, so in order to delineate the differences, chapter 3 will focus on the four predominant health challenges resulting from stressors, while this chapter examines the ministry stressors for pastoral families, according to recent data. A definition of the pastor's duties according to the biblical record will be outlined, and the distinctions between and among stress, burnout, and depression will be presented.

The Pastor: A Definition and Description of Duties

From the biblical record, we understand the word “pastor” traces back to New Testament times. Ephesians 4:11 is the single instance where the actual word “pastor” is utilized. However, the literal meaning of the word “pastor” is “shepherd,” as used in both the OT and NT in a figurative sense for rulers and leaders. Of the 12 times the word is used in the NT as a metaphor for “leader,” it is translated as “pastor” only in Ephesians 4:11.⁶⁵

The New Testament contains three verses utilizing the word “pastor” in various forms. Ephesians 4:11, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some

⁶⁵ Homer Kent, “Pastor,” *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 993.

evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” Acts 20:28, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” And 1 Pet 5:2, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain.”

Commentators and biblical scholars interpreting Ephesians 4:11 suggest that Paul intended “*pastors and teachers*” to be the same, a single group serving the church. This is actually one office, but with it comes the responsibility of two ministries. “Pastors and teachers together formed a group who complemented the work of apostles, prophets, and evangelists.”⁶⁶ As Homer Kent explained, “Pastors and teachers are named as one grammatical unit (by use of just one article in the Gk text).”⁶⁷

Paul, as noted in the book of Acts, mentioned pastors in Acts 20:28; however, this reference is in another form. It appears in “the related verb ‘*to shepherd*’”⁶⁸ This is the responsibility of local church leaders as also denoted in John 21:16 and 1 Peter 5:2.

Peter likewise emboldened the leaders in 1 Pet 5:2, saying, “*shepherd*” or “*tend*” the flock of God which is among you.” The verb “*to shepherd*” is used to describe the work of local church leaders.⁶⁹ W.E. Vine defined the word “*tend*” from the verb *poimaino*, which means “to act as a shepherd.”⁷⁰ Further insights reveal:

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Homer A. Kent, *Ephesians: The Glory of the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1971), 72.

⁶⁸ P. T. O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1999), 299.

⁶⁹ Kent, “Pastor,” 1993.

⁷⁰ William Edwy Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Zondervan, 1981), 427.

Common translation of the Greek noun *poimen* (Eph. 4:11) and its verb form; also the Hebrew *raah* (Jer. 3:15; 10:21; 12:10; 22:22 KJV). Literally, a shepherd or one who keeps animals (Gen 4:2; 13:7; 46:32, 34; Exod 2:17; Isa 13:20; Jer 6:3; Luke 2:8, 15, 18, 20) but used figuratively of those called by God to feed (Jer 3:15; John 21:16), care for (Acts 20:28), and lead (1 Pet 5:2) His people, who are His “flock” (Num 27:17; 1 Kgs 22:17; Jer 3:15; 10:21; 12:10; 22:22; Ezek 34:2, 5, 7–10; Zech 10:3; John 21:16; Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11; 1 Pet 5:2).⁷¹

The biblical record affirms that there were New Testament pastors leading specific churches during the early days of the church:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. James, half-brother of Christ, pastor of the church in Jerusalem, and possibly the author ⁷² of the Letter of James | Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18 |
| 2. Apollos, eloquent Alexandrian Jew who may have pastored the church in Corinth for a time ⁷³ | Acts 18:24-28; 1 Cor. 3:6; Titus 3:13 |
| 3. Timothy, Paul’s faithful companion who pastored in Ephesus | 1 Tim. 4:6-16 |
| 4. Titus, Paul’s young friend who pastored a church on Crete | Titus 1:5 |
| 5. John, the beloved apostle who authored five New Testament books ⁷⁴ and pastored the church at Ephesus ⁷⁵ | 1 John |

⁷¹ B. Spencer Haygard, “Pastor,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1250.

⁷² This point is widely disputed by scholars.

⁷³ This too is a matter of dispute.

⁷⁴ John’s authorship is a matter of some dispute among scholars.

⁷⁵ H. Willmington, *Willmington’s Book of Bible Lists* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1987), 230–31.

Today, most Protestant laity understand the term pastor to be synonymous with clergy or minister. Contemporary culture would also avow that a pastor is one who provides spiritual leadership and guidance to a particular church community or congregation. These men and women are called to apply their gifts the world over and function in many diverse capacities. In a typical church, a pastor can be a senior pastor, an executive or assistant pastor, worship, youth, children's, or counseling pastor, or a minister to seniors.

The elements of the pastor's job description are often up for debate and can be interpreted differently depending on whom one asks. About 400 AD, Augustine summarized his definition of the pastor's vocation when he proclaimed:

Disturbers are to be rebuked, the low-spirited to be encouraged, the infirm to be supported, objectors confuted, the treacherous guarded against, the unskilled taught, the lazy aroused, the contentious restrained, the haughty repressed, litigants pacified, the poor relieved, the oppressed liberated, the good approved, the evil borne with, and all are to be loved.⁷⁶

According to Augustine's account, there are 15 elements to the pastor's responsibilities, and yet, if he faithfully fulfills them all, he risks the possibility or inevitability of the last aforementioned mentioned duty, "love," not being reciprocated by the very ones he is commanded to give love.

⁷⁶ Augustine, Sermo CCIX. www.lcms.org/graphics/assets/media/CTCR/ChurchMinistrybookpercent20annivpercent20essays.pdf. Accessed 2006-08-08.

Stephen Pattison suggested that pastoring “is that activity, undertaken especially by representative Christian persons, directed towards the elimination and relief of sin and sorrow and the presentation of all people perfect in God to Christ.”⁷⁷

These descriptions are overwhelming and might discourage some pastors from accepting the call, realizing that this is an undertaking no human would engage in with even the slightest hope of absolute success. Parishioners today expect a considerable amount from their pastor and, when a specific need arises, they are often blind to the other commitments their pastor is seeking to fulfill, and that he is not omniscient nor able to be omni-present as God is. Tim Franklin reminds congregants: “Your Pastor Is Only Human!”⁷⁸ He argues that “most sheep do not understand the incredible demands or expectations that are upon ministers to perform provide and produce.” These three duties alone, if not properly balanced and managed, will constitute a perfect storm in the life of any pastor. H.B. London and Neil Wiseman, in co-authoring varied works aimed at advising and counselling pastors, contributed their expertise to *Pastors at Risk*:

Contemporary pastors are caught in frightening spiritual and social tornadoes which are now raging through home, church community, and culture. No one knows where the twister might touch down or what values the storms will destroy. Something has to be done. Ministry hazards are choking the hope out of pastors’ souls. They feel disenchanting, discouraged, and often even outraged. ... Fatigue shows in their eyes. Worry slows their stride. And vagueness dulls their preaching. ... Overwork, low pay, and desperation take a terrible toll as pastors struggle to make sense of crammed calendars, hectic homes, splintered dreams, starving intimacy, and shriveled purposes. Many hold on by their

⁷⁷ Stephen Pattison, *A Critique Of Pastoral Care*, 2nd ed. (SPCK: London, 1993), 13.

⁷⁸ Tim Franklin, “Your Pastor Is Only Human!” *Charisma* (Apr 30, 2001), www.charismamag.com/index.php/features2/310-christian-living/1041 (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

fingerprints, hoping to find a hidden spring to refresh their weary spirits and scrambled thoughts.⁷⁹

The modern pastor's job description has evolved over the past decades and is, at present, all-encompassing. He typically speaks a minimum of twice weekly and anticipates that the time he is dedicating to study and preparation will produce eternal results. In addition, he is expected to be always on call: overseeing a corporation that requires planning services, attending prayer meetings, board meetings, celebrations like graduations, various parties and fellowship meetings, dedicating babies, baptizing, officiating at funerals, weddings, and marriage reaffirmations, visiting those in hospitals and shut-in, continually casting a fresh church vision and mission, raising the resources to build new buildings, all the while maintaining the perfect marriage and demonstrating perfect parenting skills.

The demands placed upon pastors are overwhelming, and the stressors encountered by pastoral families, as a result, are vast. How can pastors and their families survive the ubiquitous pressure encroaching on every aspect of their lives? Is it possible to thrive in ministry and to do so at a healthy pace with set priorities, and to finish the race set before them with little regret? Robert Murray McCheyne, the nineteenth-century preacher and minister in Scotland, exhausted himself until his health was compromised. He died before his thirtieth birthday. Prior to his death, he penned a missive that pastors today might well heed: "God gave me a message to deliver and a horse to ride. Alas, I have killed the horse and now I cannot deliver the message."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ www.family.org/pastor/resources. See also www.parsonage.org

⁸⁰ Quoted in Elizabeth Skoglund, *Burning Out for God: How to Be Used by God Without Being Used Up* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 12.

Arguably, many pastors today recognize themselves in McCheyne's testimony. Whether consciously or unconsciously, pastors fear they are in danger of "killing the horse." The list of reasons is endless. William Willimon, in his book, *Pastor*, lends some personal insights on what causes may result in someone's exit from pastoring:

1. The work of the church is never done.
2. The church does not give us a clear picture of the expectations and tasks that we are to fulfill.
3. The church is a haven and refuge for people in great need.
4. People in ministry must function as a "persona" (term used by Carl Jung indicating a mask).
5. Pastors may be exhausted by failure.
6. The church and its ministry are not valued by the surrounding culture.
7. Pastors serve in institutions that are declining.
8. Much of the church and its ministry is a "head trip."
9. Poor time management wears down many in the church.
10. Ministry is often a mess.
11. Pastors and laity must be in general harmony⁸¹

The significance of the pastor fulfilling the pastoral duties that are outlined in the New Testament is not only crucial for the health of the clergy family, but also the health and vitality of the church. Adding to the biblically mandated list of responsibilities for the pastor will leave both vulnerable. According to the biblical record, the pastor is accountable for specific duties:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. To administer the ordinances | Matt 28:19-20 |
| 2. To be a man of prayer | 1 Tim 2:1 |
| 3. To warn his flock | 1 Tim 4:1, 6 |
| 4. To study the Word | 2 Tim 2:15 |

⁸¹ William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 316.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 5. To preach the Word | 2 Tim 4:2; Acts 6:2-4 |
| 6. To exhort and rebuke | 1 Thess 5:12; Titus 2:15 |
| 7. To watch over souls, his own
and those of others | Acts 20:28-31; Col 4:17; 1 Tim 4:6; 6:11;
Heb 13:17 |
| 8. To feed and lead his flock | Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2 |
| 9. To be an example to all | 1 Cor 11:1; 4:16; Phil 3:17; 2 Thess 3:9;
1 Tim 4:12; Heb 13:7; 1 Pet 5:3 ⁸² |

The voluminous data collected from surveying clergy confirm that if the pastor allows more and more expectations and demands to infiltrate his world, these will be the causes of stress and burnout.

“Being a pastor today is more difficult than any other time in history.”⁸³

Contemporary clergy are imperiled, and the very profession is, by some accounts, in serious trouble.

Most statistics say that 60 percent to 80 percent of those who enter the ministry will not still be in it 10 years later, and only a fraction will stay in it as a lifetime career. Many pastors—I believe over 90 percent—start off right with a true call and the enthusiasm and the endurance of faith to make it, but something happens to derail their train of passion and love for the call.⁸⁴

Leadership featured two book reviews by Greg Asimakoupoulos on the pastoral crisis. He indicated the gravity of the issue by delivering a cautionary message:

⁸² Willmington, *Bible Lists*, 230–231.

⁸³ Gary L. Pinion, *Crushed: The Perilous Side of Ministry* (Springfield, MO: 21st Century Press, 2008), 11.

⁸⁴ Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors.”

“Warning: the list of endangered species is growing. To bald eagles, koalas and spotted owls, add another: ordained pastors energized by what they do.”⁸⁵

Paul Beasley-Murray’s⁸⁶ indispensable work entitled, *A Call to Excellence: An Essential Guide to Christian Leadership*⁸⁷ should be given a special place on the bookshelf of every contemporary pastor and his wisdom heeded. Beasley-Murray personally engaged in gathering data regarding the pastoral attrition rate. His findings concur with Asimakoupoulos’ prediction.

A few years ago I went through the names of all those who had been trained for the Baptist ministry at Spurgeon's College, London, in the period 1955–1985. During those 30 years 406 students left Spurgeon's to serve in Baptist churches: but of this number only 268 stayed the course. Of the remaining 138, 38 moved into some other form of Christian ministry—whether in a para church organization or in some other denomination—but 100 left Christian ministry altogether. In other words, 25 percent of those trained at Spurgeon's and subsequently ordained left the Christian ministry altogether. Indeed, the final fall-out figure will almost certainly be higher: there is still plenty of time for a good number of those trained in the 1970s and early 1980s to leave Baptist ministry. It could well be that ultimately almost one third of those trained at Spurgeon's will not remain in Christian ministry. What is more, Spurgeon's is not exceptional—indeed, some theological colleges may have an even higher percentage of their graduates no longer in Christian ministry. Certainly there is no reason to believe that ministerial fall-out is substantially lessening.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Greg Asimakoupoulos, “The New Endangered Species,” *Leadership* (Winter 1994), 123.

⁸⁶ For further details on Paul Beasley-Murray’s excellent ministry, see www.centralbaptistchelmsford.org. As part of his wider ministry Paul is also Chairman of *Ministry Today*, an interdenominational organization, whose aim is ‘to provide a supportive resource for all in pastoral leadership, so that they may not only survive, but also grow and develop, becoming more effective’ in their ministry. He is also General Editor of its journal, *Ministry Today*, which appears three times a year, both in hard copy and also as e-journal. For further details see www.ministrytoday.org.uk

⁸⁷ Paul Beasley-Murray, *A Call To Excellence: Essential Guide to Christian Leadership* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995).

⁸⁸ Ibid. *Taking Stock* (the report of the Committee of Enquiry into the state of the Ministry among Scottish Baptists) (Baptist Union of Scotland 1986), reported that “the number of resignations annually has doubled since 1981.”

In some parts of the world, Christian ministry is in crisis, and shepherds are leaving their flocks in hopes of finding what they envision as greener pastures. Furthermore, many do not necessarily choose to remain in their ministerial calling but opt instead for secular work. David L. McKenna, former consulting editor for *Christianity Today* and national radio commentator, brings his expertise of more than 50 years in Christian education to this issue and argues that the landscape of clergy health is devastating. He suggests, however, that we consider salvaging servants of God rather than discarding them:

Sometimes the ministerial profession looks like a desert over which a cowboy has ridden and moved on, leaving the debris of burned-out pastors on the trail behind ... Broken-down, burned-out and cast-off former pastors sit on the sidelines in our churches, sell real estate for a livelihood, and serve as guidance counselors in the public schools. If they could be renewed rather than rejected, there would be no shortage of pastors.⁸⁹

McKenna's reflections are particularly telling; many pastors sit on the sidelines, watching the game from the dugout. Many are reeling in pain as a result of some injury sustained in the pastorate. David L. McKenna recommends that these pastors be recovered, brought back into ministry. The questions might be: "Is there truly any genuine concern about bringing them back to life and vitality in ministry? Is anyone even paying attention, recognizing that the ministry dugouts are filled to capacity and overflowing with wounded ministers?" Many are eager to get back in the game and others, who were once enthusiastic about the call, are now apathetic and ready for early retirement.

⁸⁹ David L. McKenna, "Recycling Pastors," *Leadership* (Fall 1980), 18–19.

Social-networking sites, websites, blogs, books, journal articles, seminars, conferences, and retreats attract millions of users, readers, and attendees to their outreach, and for varied purposes. No doubt some of these webmasters, writers, authors, and consultants mean well in targeting a special group of people they believe is critically ill. They appear to be sincere; their intention to attract interest and ultimately to influence people to change their lives before they are destroyed. The critically ill individuals who are their target audience members are not the incurable patients experiencing hospice care, nor the ones fighting for their lives in the intensive-care unit of a hospital. Instead, the intended subjects are pastors. Many of them are visiting such sites and taking the bait, hooked by alluring and virtually inescapable titles such as: “A hidden cancer among the ordained,”⁹⁰ “Bad news about your Pastor,”⁹¹ “Stress and Burnout in Ministry,”⁹² “The Pressures on Pastors,”⁹³ *Running on Empty*,⁹⁴ “I am a Wounded Minister,”⁹⁵ and *Crushed: The Perilous Side of Ministry*.⁹⁶

For the stressed out and suffering pastor attempting to hide his or her condition, stumbling upon such places might provoked the same kind of initial reaction one has when approaching a horrific automobile accident on the expressway. While inching by the awful wreckage, you determine you will not to peek at the fatalities as the police officer slowly waves you on, but you simply cannot help but look. The vehicular carnage,

⁹⁰ Urban T. Holmes, *Spirituality for Ministry* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 47.

⁹¹ Rick Murphy, “Bad News About Your Pastor,” maranathalife.com/lifeline/bad-news.htm (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

⁹² Croucher, “Stress and Burnout.”

⁹³ Mark Brooks, “The Pressure On Pastors,” thecharisgroup.org/2011/01/06/the-pressure-on-pastors/ (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

⁹⁴ Fil Anderson, *Running on Empty: Contemplative Spirituality for Overachievers* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2004), 1.

⁹⁵ Guy Greenfield, *The Wounded Minister: Healing from and Preventing Personal Attacks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 13.

⁹⁶ Pinion, *Crushed*.

no doubt, leaves vivid memories forever etched in your mind. The same is true of reading the shocking statistics regarding clergy health revealed on or in each of the aforementioned resources.

The recent rise of clergy carnage is frightening, and the increase continues at an alarming rate. Shockingly, most pastors are tempted “not to peek” and to ignore the reality of the problem in their own lives. Many shudder at first glance, while others would just as soon pass by as if they are being “waved on.” Could it be that the facts hit too close to home? Should the pastor continue keeping the burdensome secret that he is in crisis, all the while perpetually expressing the appearance of “super-pastor” strength, or is it time to come clean? To admit the truth? “I think I may be a critically ill pastor!” What, then, is “the bad news” for clergy? How critically ill is today’s pastor?

One indicator may be found in the number of resources dedicated to the matter of clergy health and renewal from one of the leading Christian endowment organizations: the Lilly Endowment Inc.⁹⁷ The Endowment is clear and unapologetic about its mission: “Recognizing the importance and necessity for busy pastors to have an opportunity to take an extended break for renewal and refreshment, Lilly Endowment in 2000 introduced a new competitive grants program.”⁹⁸ The National Clergy Renewal Program exists to promote renewal for American clergy. It “annually provides as many as 120

⁹⁷ Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis based, private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family – J.K. Lilly Sr. and sons J.K. Jr. and Eli – through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly and Company.

⁹⁸ www.lillyendowment.org/religion_ncr.html

grants of up to \$45,000 each, directly to Christian congregations for the support of a renewal program for their pastor.”⁹⁹

The financial resources being committed by just one organization to the revitalization of ministers and the congregations they serve are astonishing to say the least. “Since 2000 the Endowment has invested nearly \$29 million in this program for more than 700 congregations and their pastors.”¹⁰⁰ The organization elucidates that the renewal time is not a “vacation”¹⁰¹ for the pastor, but instead is a time “for intentional exploration and reflection, for drinking again from God’s life-giving waters, for regaining enthusiasm and creativity for ministry.”¹⁰² The National Clergy Renewal Program is already anticipating a plethora of submissions for the 2012 calendar year. They expect “awarding as many as 150 grants of up to \$50,000 each directly to Christian congregations for the support of a renewal program for their pastor. Up to \$15,000 of the grant may be used for congregational expenses associated with the renewal program.”¹⁰³

Reports on Clergy Health: The Statistical Data

Perhaps organizations like the aforementioned Lilly Endowment have come forward to assist as a result of the comprehensive data collected over several decades by experts like the author who asked, “What is going on with the Pastors in America?”¹⁰⁴ Such is the provocative title of an article by Dr. Richard J. Krejcir, founder of Into Thy Word

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ www.clergyrenewal.org

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors.”

Ministries.¹⁰⁵ He identifies staggering statistics on the health of clergy and their families, as well as clergy attrition rates. Krejcir's query is an important one and might demand a follow-up article with the intent of broadening the question to include research from pastors worldwide, as universal studies and statistical data suggest that the problem of clergy health affects pastors globally.

More than 18 years of research prompted Krejcir to report interesting "pastoral trends" and to suggest that "pastors are in a dangerous occupation."¹⁰⁶ In fact, pastors are involved in "... perhaps the single most stressful and frustrating working profession, more than medical doctors, lawyers, politicians."¹⁰⁷ Tragically, survey results reveal that "over 70 percent of pastors are so stressed out and burned out that they regularly consider leaving the ministry."¹⁰⁸ Dr. Krejcir joined Francis Schaeffer in compiling this research and, to further authenticate their findings, comparable data was extracted from other groups such as the Barna Research Group, Focus on the Family, and Fuller Seminary. The data provided by these other groups validated Schaeffer and Krejcir's results:

- Fifteen hundred pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.
- Fifty percent of pastors' marriages will end in divorce.
- Eighty percent of pastors feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastor.
- Fifty percent of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but they have no other way of making a living.
- Eighty percent of seminary and Bible school graduates who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years.
- Seventy percent of pastors constantly fight depression.

¹⁰⁵ Currently the Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development is in partnership with Into Thy Word Ministries (another Francis Schaeffer vision). Our current task is the collecting articles and essays by the late Francis Schaeffer, as well as researching his materials and making application of them to help lead the church into a better more biblical direction. www.intothyword.org.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

- Almost forty percent polled said they have had an extramarital affair since beginning their ministry.
- Seventy percent said the only time they spend studying the Word is when they are preparing their sermons.¹⁰⁹

The perils of ministry are mounting, and forecasters are predicting a massive storm developing on the horizon. The tempest is targeting pastors, and it may be that there are some who are being ordained into ministry without realizing the impending hazards. What are these dangers?

The Alban Institute's Roy Oswald suggests that there are potential risks clergy and their families will encounter that should be anticipated before someone is commissioned into ministry. Many inexperienced yet sincere clergy enter the pastorate much like someone heading to the beach for a day of sun and fun. In their earnestness to enjoy the day while heading straight for the tempting waters, they are simply naïve about the perilous underlying current in the big beautiful ocean. Oswald acts as a lifeguard who plants a caution flag in the sand and keeps watch, hoping the pastor will avoid the treacherous yet tempting current. His list of warnings should not be overlooked:

- Some will be unable to endure the stress of ministry and will experience physical and emotional breakdown.
- Approximately a quarter of these clergy will experience a failed marriage.
- Within the first ten years of parish ministry, roughly half will either be fired by their congregations or forced to move. Another 15 percent will be forced out of their parishes during the last ten years of ministry.
- Some will lose their sense of calling and begin placing money and status above the goals of the kingdom.
- Some will lose all sense of physical stewardship and allow their bodies to balloon to double their normal weight, making them far less credible healers in their members' eyes.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

- Some will get so caught up in ministry successes and workaholic behavior that they will cease being good models of grace.¹¹⁰

Survey outcomes sadly indicate the massive ministry fallout, as contemporary clergy frequently cave in to stress and burnout at appalling rates, just as Oswald's first warning indicates. In such occurrences, the pastor will usually eventually succumb to substantial health issues and will also witness his family's yielding to calamitous circumstances of epic proportions, not to mention the deteriorating health of his church.

Is this simply a passing phenomenon or is it an insoluble problem? Australian pastor Rowland Croucher comments: "Research 25 years ago showed clergy dealing with stress better than most professionals. Since 1980, studies in the U.S. describe an alarming spread of burnout in the profession. For example, Jerdon found three out of four parish ministers (sample: 11,500) reported severe stress causing "anguish, worry, bewilderment, anger, depression, fear, and alienation."¹¹¹

Croucher spoke from personal experience when citing the tremendous continual pressures pastors are under as one of the reasons that clergy are quitting the pastorate. He opened up about his own experience and candidly described the day he began feeling utterly worn-out, without any strength to carry on:

It was a gray, cloudy April morning in Canada, the children had gone to school, his wife to work. After a slow start to his morning, pastor Rowland Croucher decided to do something he'd never done before. He turned the

¹¹⁰ Roy Oswald, foreword to Gary L. Harbaugh, *Caring For the Caregiver* (Washington D.C.: Alban Institute, 1992), vi-vii.

¹¹¹ Croucher, "Stress and Burnout in Ministry."

phone down, put a note on the front door, and went back to bed. He was burned out – and within two months, he resigned [the] pastorate.¹¹²

Mass numbers of pastors are surrendering their pastorates. Similar stories are surfacing from clergy the world over. Evidence affirms that pastors everywhere are being crushed by an overwhelming weight of responsibilities placed on them and determining that the overall health risks are too much of a price to pay for themselves and their families. Curious as to what his peers were undergoing in making their decisions to resign, Croucher produced a comprehensive study of 10,000 ex-pastors in Australia alone, and his findings revealed relatively unsurprising results, i.e., only “a quarter left without the hurt, conflict, loss of health, or boredom that characterized the majority.”¹¹³ And the majority of these clergy confessed to suffering an enormous amount of pain when leaving the ministry.

In the late 1990s, Dr. Krejcir re-tested data gathered earlier¹¹⁴ by surveying and collecting information from 1,050 individual pastors¹¹⁵ at two clergy conferences in Pasadena, California. When asked whether or not the pastor “had a close associate or seminary buddy who had left the ministry because of burnout, conflict in their church, or from a moral failure,”¹¹⁶ the results were unanimous: All 1,050 pastors responded affirmatively. As the founder and director of *Into Thy Word Ministries*, a missions and discipling ministry, there is a call upon Dr. Krejcir’s heart to bring discipleship materials to pastors and everyone else who needs them, here and overseas. He is the author of

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Croucher, Rowland. “Why clergy are leaving the church,” *Ministry Today* 1 (1994), ministrytoday.org.uk/magazine/issues/1/295/.

¹¹⁴ *FASICLD* (*Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development*). This quest started in 1989 as a *Fuller Institute* project that was picked up by *FASICLD* in 1998.

¹¹⁵ 416 [pastors] in 2005, and 634 [pastors] in 2006. Krejcir, “Statistics on Pastors.”

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

numerous articles, curricula, and books, including *Into Thy Word*. He is a nephew and disciple of Francis Schaeffer and an ordained pastor, a teacher, and speaker. He is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena California (Master of Divinity) and holds a Ph.D. in Practical Theology. He has amassed over 20 years of pastoral ministry experience, mostly in youth ministry, including serving as a church growth consultant.

The survey he conducted indicated the following:

- Nine hundred and forty-eight (90 percent) of pastors responding stated they are frequently fatigued, and worn out on a weekly and even daily basis (they did not say *burned out*).
- Nine hundred and thirty-five (89 percent) of the pastors surveyed also considered leaving the ministry at one time. Five hundred ninety (57 percent) said they would leave if they had a better place to go—including secular work.
- Eight hundred and eight (77 percent) of the pastors we surveyed felt they did not have a good marriage.
- Seven hundred and ninety (75 percent) of the pastors surveyed felt they were unqualified and/or poorly trained by their seminaries to lead and manage the church or to counsel others. This left them disheartened in their ability to pastor.
- Seven hundred and fifty-six (72 percent) of the pastors surveyed stated that they only studied the Bible when they were preparing for sermons or lessons. This left only 28 percent who read the Bible for devotions and personal study.
- Eight hundred and two (71 percent) of pastors stated they were burned out, and they battle depression beyond fatigue on a weekly and even a daily basis.
- Three hundred and ninety-nine (38 percent) of pastors said they were divorced or currently in the divorce process.
- Three hundred and fifteen (30 percent) said they had either been in an ongoing affair or had had a one-time sexual encounter with a parishioner.
- Two hundred and seventy (26 percent) pastors said they regularly spent time in personal devotions and felt they were adequately fed spirituality.
- Two hundred and forty-one (23 percent) of the pastors we surveyed said they felt happy and content on a regular basis with who they are in Christ, in their church, and in their home.¹¹⁷

In “The State of the Clergy,”¹¹⁸ G. Lloyd Rediger, author of *Clergy Killers*,

stated:

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

It is likely that few other professionals are studied more than clergy. Why? Because they are an important part of America's self-image and because they have a newsworthy mystique. Because the role of clergy reflects the changes in contemporary spirituality. Because of recent scandals and breakdowns among clergy.¹¹⁹

Earlier extensive psychological research on clergy concentrated on concerns relating to impairment,¹²⁰ burnout,¹²¹ and misconduct,¹²² even as it found indications that most clergy claimed they thrived in their occupation during periods of high stress.¹²³ Could this finding become the exception rather than the rule as pastoral stressors continue to mount?

Ed Stetzer, Vice-President of Research and Ministry Development at LifeWay Christian Resources, suggests that:

Many oft-quoted statistics speak of miserable and unhappy pastors, but that's not what we see when we actually ask them. There is discouragement and loneliness, but when 98 percent agree it is a privilege to be a pastor, we also know there is a great honor to being a pastor.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ G. Lloyd Rediger, "The State of the Clergy," home.comcast.net/~glrediger/columns/survey.html

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ J. R. Meloy, "Narcissistic personality and the clergy," *Pastoral Psychology* 35 (1986), 50-55; 104. S. P. Von Stroh, R. A. Mines, and S. K. Anderson, "Impaired clergy: Applications of Ethical Principles," *Counseling and Values* 40 (1995), 6-14.

¹²¹ W. N. Grosch and D. C. Olsen, "Clergy Burnout: An integrative approach," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 56 (2000), 619-32.

¹²² W. B. Berman, "Ten Commandments for avoiding clergy malpractice in pastoral counseling," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 16 (1997), 286-272; A. B. Brewster "Clergy sexual misconduct: The affair everyone remembers," *Pastoral Psychology* 44 (1996), 353-362; M. G. Davies, "Clergy sexual malfeasance: Restoration, ethics, and process," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 26 (1998), 331-339; M. F. Ruzicka, "Predictor variables on clergy pedophiles," *Psychological Reports* 81 (1997), 589-590.

¹²³ K. R. Meek, M. R. McMinn, C. M. Brower, et al., "Maintaining personal resiliency: Lessons learned from evangelical Protestant clergy," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 31 (2003), 339-47.

¹²⁴ David Roach, "Survey: Pastors feel privileged and positive, though discouragement can come," (Oct 5, 2011), www.lifeway.com/Article/Research-Survey-Pastors-feel-privileged-and-positive-though-discouragement-can-come (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

However, Stetzer acknowledges what the data overwhelmingly shows, in this statement: “Pastors feel privileged, but clearly the reality of constant service can take its toll.”¹²⁵

Wayne Whitson Floyd, education program manager of the Alban Institute,¹²⁶ recently penned his thoughts after many media outlets suddenly suggested the emergence of a new phenomenon: “clergy burnout.” Floyd writes: “[It] seems to be news to everyone ... except clergy.”¹²⁷ Nevertheless, while clergy may indeed realize they are stressed out, taking a chance in being honest about it to anyone might suggest weakness or cause people to doubt their leader and that, for most pastors, is out of the question.

Pastors are inclined to fall victim to the syndrome of telling congregants to “do as I say, not as I do.” Periodically, preachers mount their pulpits and unconsciously preach their own problems. Admittedly, the pastor’s own personal issues become great sermon material, but he carefully includes and delivers the lesson with only the parishioner in mind, purposefully avoiding the elephant in the church, the “stressed pastor” who is in obvious need of intervention by those who truly care about his well-being.

After realizing the magnitude of clergy stress and burnout, founding pastor of Mars Hill Church in Seattle, Washington, Mark Driscoll, prepared a missive for his elders’ meeting on May 22, 2006. The crucial content was later included in an article Driscoll

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ The Alban Institute based in Herndon, VA., was founded in 1974 as a major resource for American congregations facing the challenges of a changing society. While today’s challenges are even more pressing than they were three decades ago, the opportunities have never been clearer for congregations to be vital communities of faith, health, and leadership. Alban stands at the forefront of knowledge and experience regarding congregational vitality and positive trends across denominations and faith traditions. See www.alban.org.

¹²⁷ Wayne Whitson Floyd, “Clergy Burnout,” (Aug 23, 2012), [www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9169&terms= percent22seems percent20to percent20be percent20news percent20to percent20everyone percent22](http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9169&terms=percent22seems percent20to percent20be percent20news percent20to percent20everyone percent22) (accessed Mar 4, 2012).

wrote entitled “Death by Ministry.”¹²⁸ Sparked by the candid confessions of his good friend, Pastor Darrin Patrick, after he publically admitted to burdens in pastoral ministry while speaking at a recent Reform & Resurge Conference, Driscoll divulged:

I have pushed myself to the edge and over the edge of burnout throughout my nearly ten years in vocational ministry. Subsequently, I have been doing a great deal of research that I am compiling in hopes of not only improving my own life but also the lives of the leaders at Mars Hill Church and the churches in our Acts 29 Network.¹²⁹

Driscoll’s concern, in trumpeting the message for clergy health, is being heard loud and clear, and it is capturing the attention of many. “At least twenty-two separate organizations exist in the U.S. solely to deal with pre- and post-pastoral burnout indicating this is a widespread problem that has only been identified and researched since the 1950s.”¹³⁰

What does the landscape of the overall health of clergy look like? Years of data now reveal that the scene resembles the site of a war-torn battleground. Statistics indicate that clergy are threadbare and battered:

- Ninety percent of pastors work more than 46 hours a week.
- Eighty percent believed that pastoral ministry affected their families negatively.
- Thirty-three percent said that being in ministry was an outright hazard to their family.
- Seventy-five percent reported a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- Fifty percent felt unable to meet the needs of the job.
- Ninety percent felt they were inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.

¹²⁸ Mark Driscoll, “Death by Ministry,” www.cnbcc.ca/strengthen/death-by-ministry-by-mark-driscoll (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

- Seventy percent say they have lower self-esteem now than when they started out.
- Forty percent reported a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.
- Thirty-seven percent confessed to having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.
- Seventy percent do not have someone they consider a close friend.¹³¹

Ministry stress is well researched and documented. Psychologist Richard Blackmon proposed that “pastors are the single most occupationally frustrated group in America. Incidents of mental breakdown are so high that insurance companies charge about four percent extra to cover church staff members compared to employees in other professions.”¹³² After more than 35 years counseling pastors and other religious leaders, Blackmon’s colleague Archibald Hart¹³³ admitted,

When I go home, I can shut it off. I have an answering service that will screen through my calls and make sure only the emergencies get through. But a pastor, he can’t do that. If he hired an answering service, that church would fire him. He is supposed to be available to everyone for everything all the time.¹³⁴

Clergy do sometimes complain about the workload as well as various other ministry grievances, as expressed in one pastor’s confession, “I do not know where my

¹³¹ 1991 Survey of Pastors, Fuller Institute of Church Growth. Cited in eds. H. B. London and Neil B. Wiseman, eds. *Pastors At Risk* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1993), 22.

¹³² Richard Blackmon, *Current Thoughts and Trends*, May 1999 (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress), 14.

¹³³ Dr. Archibald Hart is a licensed psychologist, certified biofeedback practitioner, and board-certified fellow in psychopharmacology. A former dean of the School of Psychology, Hart is now Senior Professor of Psychology and is best known for his research on the hazards of ministry, depression, anxiety, divorce, stress, and sexuality. Among his numerous books are recent publications *Stressed or Depressed* (2005) with daughter Dr. Catherine Weber, *Safe Haven Marriage* (2003) with daughter Dr. Sharon Morris, *Unveiling Depression in Women* (2002) also with daughter Dr. Catherine Weber, *Unmasking Male Depression* (2001), and *The Anxiety Care* (2000). His most recent book is *Thrilled to Death: How the Endless Pursuit of Pleasure is Leaving us Numb* (2007). He is an active member of the Prescribing Psychologists Register and president of the International Network of Christian Counselors.

¹³⁴ Tina Dirmann, “Pastoral Pressures Test Faith,” *Los Angeles Times* (Jan 29, 1999), articles.latimes.com/1999/jan/29/local/me-2802 (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

work starts and where it ends.”¹³⁵ Too many pastors find themselves fraught, trying to set boundaries, while struggling with the realization that there is a transition underway: decades ago, congregants were content with their own families providing emotional comfort and support. Parishioners today are more demanding of their pastor and find him to be the “go-to guy.” The pressure pastors feel to perform and produce, while remaining polite, is insane. Not only is he required to be “all that” for his family and the church, but he also feels that same constant pressure to be so for the world as well. Pastor John Huffman confessed what is truly at the heart of every pastor:

If I’m coaching Little League or basketball, I’m not just Dad out there, and I can’t just tell the referee his eyesight is needy, because I’m the pastor. But that’s OK, I guess. It’s kept me on the straight and narrow when I really wanted to wrap the referee’s whistle around his throat.¹³⁶

Dr. William Grosch, a 42-year veteran in the medical field specializing in psychiatry, and David C. Olsen, a certified marriage and family therapist, concluded that clergy burnout is a result of multiple influences:

Understanding how clergy, who begin their careers with high idealism, optimism, and compassion, burn out is difficult. One body of research suggests that clergy, among others, burn out because of the systems in which they work. From this perspective, burnout is the result of external systemic factors such as bureaucracy, poor administrative support, and difficult work conditions. The other body of research suggests that burnout is the result of intrapersonal factors such as high idealism, Type-A personality, narcissism, and perfectionism.¹³⁷

Are these findings comparable with current data and are they consistent across the various denominational groups within Christianity? The research affirms that clergy

¹³⁵ W. Evers and W. Tomic, “Burnout among Dutch Reformed Pastors,” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 31 (2003), 329-338.

¹³⁶ Dirmann, “Pastoral Pressures.”

¹³⁷ Grosch and Olsen, “Clergy burnout.”

carnage is no respecter of persons or denominations. In empirical studies, as recently as 2007, researchers in Australia, the UK, and the US concurred with previous findings, as follows:

Consistent findings across all six studies indicated a high level of work-related burnout among the samples of clergy, irrespective of religious denomination or country. In combination, this work demonstrated the wide range of matters currently being investigated by researchers as well as the variety of methodologies being employed with the social scientific study of religion and related disciplines focused on clergy work-related psychological health, stress, and burnout.¹³⁸

So substantial are the stressors affecting contemporary clergy that \$12 million are being dedicated to a seven-year research program, initiated by the Duke Clergy Health Initiative in 2007. The study involves United Methodist clergy in North Carolina, and its objective is to increase knowledge and improve the overall health of clergy. In 2008, a unique series of focus groups was held to seek clergy opinions and insights in small-group settings. Participants included several pastors as well as most district superintendents. So telling are the initiative's current findings that a plethora of media outlets are publishing the results. The continuing survey of 1,726 pastors has so far revealed that clergy suffer from stress-related illnesses more than most Americans. The results uncovered unhealthy practices by many clergy, resulting in ailments, disorders, and diseases such as obesity, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, and depression.¹³⁹ Reports by the Institute's researchers, Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell and Sarah LeGrand, suggest that the clergy obesity rate among those between 35–64 years of age is

¹³⁸ Christopher Alan Lewis, Douglas W. Turton, and Leslie J. Francis, "Clergy work-related psychological health, stress, and burnout," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 10/1 (2007), 1–8.

¹³⁹ The Clergy Health Initiative's published research paints a striking picture of the health of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina and the factors affecting it. Learn more and read the media coverage related to these findings. See divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/clergy-health-initiative.

nearly 40 percent, or over 10 percent higher than among the local population. Proeschold-Bell writes:

We had a pastor in our study group who hadn't taken a vacation in 18 years ... These people tend to be driven by a sense of a duty to God to answer every call for help from anybody, and they are virtually called upon all the time, 24/7.¹⁴⁰

Reports from within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America showed similar findings. Reports from comparable surveys revealed the ELCA clergy found that “69 percent of its pastors are overweight, 64 percent struggle with having high blood pressure, and 13 percent depend on prescription antidepressants.”¹⁴¹

Presbyterian pastors fared no better. A 2005 survey showed that, “[four] times as many ministers leaving the profession during the first five years of ministry, as compared with the 1970s,”¹⁴² citing ministry stress and burnout as the reason.

Sadly, clergy peers just over the border experience similar pressures in ministry. Statistics reveal that Canadian clergy are not exempt from ministry stressors. The Task Force on Clergy Wellness of the Anglican diocese of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island rendered its findings in 2003,

emphasizing the importance of developing self-care and support systems within the diocese and parish communities. Of particular concern was the difficulty that clergy often have in setting and maintaining boundaries concerning time off and setting realistic expectations for themselves and their parishes.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Paul Vitello, “Taking a Break from the Lord’s Work,” *The New York Times* (Aug 1, 2010), www.nytimes.com/2010/08/02/nyregion/02burnout.html (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Report submitted in November 2003 to the Right Reverend Fred Hiltz, Bishop of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. “Bishop’s Commission on Clergy Wellness - An Update - March 2005,”

International surveys revealed similar findings: “Hardly a week passes without an article about work stress in a UK national newspaper.”¹⁴⁴ Coaching specialist Katherine Everitt-Newton suggested that stress has become an epidemic. She writes: “Estimates from the latest HSE—Labor Force Survey indicate that self-reported work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounted for an estimated 11.4 million lost working days in Britain in 2008/09.”¹⁴⁵ This epidemic has infiltrated the clergy environment as well. In 2005, *Christianity Today* reported on the stress contagion among clergy in the UK as a result of a survey conducted by Evangelicals Now. The findings were enlightening. After interviewing “300 ministers”¹⁴⁶ from major Protestant Christian denominations,¹⁴⁷ the data revealed that “stress is the most pressing problem for UK pastors.”¹⁴⁸ Of the pastors responding to the survey, “[t]he statistics shows that 98 percent of pastors suffer from stress; feeling depressed 86 percent, feeling angry 83 percent, suffering from family tension 82 percent, sexual temptation 82 percent; from writer’s block 70 percent; and loneliness 63 percent.”¹⁴⁹

[www.nspeidiocese.ca/mailling/2005/03_2005/Wellness percent20Commission percent20UpdateMarch.pdf](http://www.nspeidiocese.ca/mailling/2005/03_2005/Wellness%20Commission%20UpdateMarch.pdf) (accessed Oct 10, 2011).

¹⁴⁴ Katherine Everitt-Newton, “Stress at Work – Employer Responsibilities,” cognitusuk.com/stress-at-work-employer-responsibilities (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ *Evangelicals Now* received 145 replies by post, among which 61 pastors were from the Church of England, 41 from the Independent Evangelical sector, 13 were Presbyterians and there were 30 others including Grace Baptists, Baptist Union, Methodists and Church of Scotland.

¹⁴⁷ K. Y. Eunice, “UK Evangelical Survey Reveals Stress as Biggest Problem for Pastors,” *Christianity Today* (Jul 7, 2005),

www.christiantoday.com/news/ministries/uk.evangelical.survey.reveals.stress.as.biggest.problem.for.pastors./307.htm (accessed Mar 1, 2012).

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Has the American workforce been similarly hindered by stress-related illness? And has the American economy suffered as a result? Christina Maslach,¹⁵⁰ a pioneer in the research on job burnout, informed her readers in *Banishing Burnout* that “[j]ob stress is estimated to cost the U.S. economy \$300 billion in sick time, long-term disability, and excessive job turnover.”¹⁵¹

In a 2002 journal article, Weaver and Flannelly compared Protestant ministers and Catholic priests and nuns in regard to ministerial stress and concluded that

“[e]xisting research indicates the Protestant clergy report higher levels of occupational stress than Catholic priests, brothers, or sisters. Catholic nuns reported the lowest work-related stress, whereas female rabbis reported the highest stress levels in various studies. Occupational stress appears to be a source of family stress among Protestant clergy.”¹⁵²

Perhaps the reason for this interesting finding lies within the mandates of Catholic canon law. One provision—which should be considered a non-negotiable directive within the “bylaws” of Protestant churches—is this one: “Catholic canon law requires a priest, unless there is a grace reason to the contrary, to take a spiritual retreat each year, and four weeks of vacation.”¹⁵³

The indications that most clergy stressors result from the overwhelming weekly expectations put upon them by those seeking counsel and advice in areas of mental health are in themselves revealing. Many parishioners regard ministers as spiritual gurus, able to pinpoint a surefire remedy for any medical condition or life circumstance. Weaver

¹⁵⁰ Maslach is best known as the author of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), the most widely used research measure in the burnout field.

¹⁵¹ Michael P. Leiter and Christina Maslach, *Banishing Burnout: Six Strategies for Improving Your Relationship with Work* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 2.

¹⁵² A. J. Weaver and K. J. Flannelly, et al., “Mental Health Issues among Clergy and Other Religious Professionals: A Review of Research,” *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 56/4 (2002), 393–403.

¹⁵³ Vitello, “Taking a Break.”

claimed: “Given that millions of Americans are frequently involved with religion, it is not surprising to find that clergy are front line mental-health counselors.”¹⁵⁴ Similar findings captured the attention of clergy and laity in a report on mental health submitted by the Surgeon-General of the United States. The discoveries showed “that each year one of six adults and one of five children seek mental health services from a health care provider, a clergy person, a social services agency, or a school service.”¹⁵⁵ True, parishioners find spiritual support and significant solace in their pastor’s wisdom and guidance, especially during the chaos and crisis that often interfere with family stability. However, how much responsibility can one pastor realistically be expected to shoulder before he senses the first signs of too much ministry-related stress?

The Hartford Institute released recent findings published in the *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*,¹⁵⁶ estimating that there were 600,000 clergy¹⁵⁷ serving in various denominations in the United States ... though the figure¹⁵⁸ did not include independent churches.¹⁵⁹ Considering those numbers as well as the hours pastors spend at the diversity of job-related duties, one would have to ask: “How many clergy are truly prone to this rising stress-burnout epidemic? And what are the stressors they encounter most?” Or, perhaps, one of the first questions to be asked and answered is this one: What is a pastor and what are his specific responsibilities?

¹⁵⁴ A. J. Weaver, L. A. Revilla, and H. G. Koenig, *Counseling Families across the Stages of Life: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* (Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2001).

¹⁵⁵ David Satcher, “Mental health: A report of the Surgeon General – Executive summary,” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 31/1 (2000), 5–13.

¹⁵⁶ www.electronicchurch.org/

¹⁵⁷ That figure included retired clergy, chaplains in hospitals, prisons and the military, denominational executives, and ordained faculty at divinity schools and seminaries.

¹⁵⁸ “There’s no way to know how many there are,” said Jackson Carroll, Professor Emeritus of religion and society at Duke Divinity School. In addition, the figures provided by the denominations to the *Yearbook* may not be that accurate, Carroll said. Nevertheless, at present it is the best figure to use.

¹⁵⁹ “Fast Facts,” *Hartford Institute for Religion Research*, www.hartfordinstitute.org/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html (accessed Mar 1, 2011).

Stress, Burnout, and Depression Defined and Differentiated

It is important to understand the difference between stress and burnout and how each infiltrates and impacts clergy in contemporary culture. Internationally renowned as the “Father of Stress,” Canadian Hans Selye is celebrated as the first scientist to define it. A physician, endocrinologist, and researcher, with three earned doctorates and 42 honorary doctorates to his credit, Dr. Selye is revered as a pioneer in this research. In 1926, during his second year of medical school, Selye began to pursue an interest in this field:

He began developing his now-famous theory of the influence of stress on people's ability to cope with and adapt to the pressures of injury and disease. He discovered that patients with a variety of ailments manifested many similar symptoms, which he ultimately attributed to their bodies' efforts to respond to the stresses of being ill. He called this collection of symptoms—this separate stress disease—stress syndrome, or the general adaptation syndrome (GAS).¹⁶⁰

While a student at McGill University in Montreal in 1936, Selye began to be fascinated by research into the subject of stress. In 1945, after joining forces with the University of Montreal, he and a team of 40 research assistants continued this area of study by working with 15,000 laboratory animals:

He [Selye] first observed the symptoms of GAS after injecting ovarian extracts into laboratory rats, an experiment he performed with the intent of discovering a new hormone. Instead, however, he found that the extract stimulated the outer tissue of the adrenal glands of the rats, caused deterioration of the thymus gland, and produced ulcers and finally death. He eventually determined that these effects could be produced by

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. Selye spent a lifetime in continuing research on GAS and wrote some 30 books and more than 1,500 articles on stress and related problems, including *Stress without Distress* (1974) and *The Stress of Life* (1956). So impressive have his findings and theories been that some authorities refer to him as “the Einstein of medicine.” He was the first director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine and Surgery, Université de Montréal (1945-76). After retiring from the university, he founded the International Institute of Stress in 1977, in his own home in Montreal where he would spend 50 years studying the causes and consequences of stress. More than anyone else, Selye has demonstrated the role of emotional responses in causing or combating much of the wear and tear experienced by human beings throughout their lives.

administering virtually any toxic substance, by physical injury, or by environmental stress. Selye was able to extend his theory to humans, demonstrating that a stress-induced breakdown of the hormonal system could lead to conditions, such as heart disease and high blood pressure, that he called “diseases of adaptation.”¹⁶¹

A name was finally given to this condition—stress. Selye argued it was “the state manifested by a specific syndrome which consists of all the nonspecifically induced changes within a biological system.”¹⁶² It is virtually impossible to live a life completely free of stress.

Dr. Selye’s 50-plus years of crucial research in the area of stress have contributed greatly to contemporary culture. Much is now known about how to define and understand this misunderstood human condition (once dismissed as nonexistent), confronted daily by millions of human beings. Prior to Selye’s work, when individuals who endured exorbitant amounts of pressure, burdens, and the weight of life manifested various physical and emotional reactions, no one knew what to call it. Dr. Selye articulated a theory about these forces and gave them a name. North Americans now understood this condition named “stress.” Internationally, however, people still struggled with this unnamed condition. After a paper on the issue was presented in France, it was found that there was no word in French for stress, so they coined one: *le stress*. Similarly, when asked to speak in Germany, there was no German word for stress, so it was named *der Stress*. Selye is therefore, without doubt, the founder of the concept of stress.¹⁶³ Selye’s

¹⁶¹ “Hans Selye,” *Encyclopædia Britannica Online* (2012), www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/533770/Hans-Selye (accessed Jan 30, 2010).

¹⁶² Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1956), 54.

¹⁶³ “Nobel Prize Winners & Famous Hungarians,” www.americanhungarianfederation.org/FamousHungarians/sciencemathandtech.htm (accessed Sept 30, 2011).

concept of stress transformed our understanding of physical and mental illness, allowing for innovation and fresh possibilities of medical treatment for the suffering.

Simply put, *stress* is a “strain felt by somebody: [a] mental, emotional, or physical strain caused, e.g., by anxiety or overwork. It may cause such symptoms as raised blood pressure or depression.”¹⁶⁴ The way the human body responds to the pressures or burdens of life, both emotionally and physically, is called stress. This pressure-induced stress often prompts a plethora of mental (emotional) and physical symptoms. When stress is present, people may exhibit tension, irritability, lack of concentration, feelings of fatigue, and insomnia. Physical symptoms may manifest themselves as “cotton mouth,” a racing or pounding heart, breathing trouble, irritable bowel syndrome, sweating palms, and headache. These are only a few of the numerous emotional and physical symptoms brought on by stress.

How does stress differ from burnout? People today understand and tend to collapse stress, burnout, and even depression into one condition; however, it is important to note they are three very different ailments. Thanks to Dr. Selye’s research, we now better comprehend stress and related phenomena and their impact on physical and emotional health. But how did society first come to understand burnout—where did research into it originate?

On December 5, 1999, an obituary notice in *The New York Times* lauded Herbert Freudenberger as the “coiner of burnout.” Dr. Freudenberger died at 73, after years of suffering with heart complications. For 40 years, he “maintained a private practice in

¹⁶⁴ www.gostress.com/stress-definitions/

Manhattan ... wrote books and more than 90 articles, and taught at universities in New York and elsewhere.”¹⁶⁵ Freudenberger authored *Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement* in 1974, and has since been credited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* with being the first to define *burnout* as “the extinction of motivation or incentive, especially where one's devotion to a cause or relationship fails to produce the desired results.”¹⁶⁶

Another well-respected researcher in the field of burnout is Christina Maslach, professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley. Maslach's research centers on “job burnout,” which she defines as “lost energy, enthusiasm and confidence.”¹⁶⁷ She argues that

[b]urnout is the biggest occupational hazard of the twenty-first century. It's a phenomenon that has been increasing everywhere, creeping into every corner of the modern workplace, growing like a virus, poisoning the increasingly alienated, disillusioned, even angry relationship people have with the world of work.¹⁶⁸

In her book, *Banishing Burnout*, Maslach argued

When burnout hits you then you've got trouble with a capital T. Burnout is far more than being blue or having a bad day. It is a chronic state of being out of synch with your job, and that can be a significant crisis in your life.¹⁶⁹

Maslach certainly described the mood of many clergy today who encounter enormous stress and run the risk of yielding to burnout.

¹⁶⁵ Douglas Martin, “Herbert Freudenberger, 73, Coiner of ‘Burnout,’ Is Dead,” *New York Times* (Dec 05, 1999), [www.nytimes.com/1999/12/05/nyregion/herbert-freudenberger-73-coiner-of-burnout-is-dead.html?scp=1&sq=Herbert percent20Freudenberger, percent2073, percent20Coiner percent20of percent20 percent91Burnout, percent92 percent20Is percent20Dead&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/1999/12/05/nyregion/herbert-freudenberger-73-coiner-of-burnout-is-dead.html?scp=1&sq=Herbert%20Freudenberger,%2073,%20Coiner%20of%20Burnout,%20Is%20Dead&st=cse) (accessed Nov 1, 2011).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Maslach, *Banishing Burnout*, 2-3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 2.

Archibald D. Hart is recognized for his extensive work with clergy and churches through psychological training, education, and consultation in the area of stress, depression, and anxiety. He explains that

Burnout is a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who do people work of some kind. It is a response to the chronic, emotional strain of dealing extensively with people.¹⁷⁰

Hart affirmed the obvious widespread confusion in the minds of most people in appreciating or even understanding the differences between burnout and stress:

There are some similarities between burnout and stress. There are also many differences. A few similarities are legitimate and real. Many are erroneous.

Why should we differentiate between burnout and stress? For three important reasons:

- The causes of burnout are quite different from those of stress.
- The cures for burnout are significantly different from those for stress.
- The acceptance of the essential differences between burnout and stress can help delineate more effective preventive mechanisms.¹⁷¹

Hart's discernment in differentiating between burnout and stress can help clergy greatly in comprehending their own mental and physical condition when sustaining themselves through ministry pressure. In his article entitled "Depressed, Stressed and Burned Out: What's Going on in My Life?" Hart asked the question many clergy ask. In hopes of educating the clergy, he listed the significant differences between burnout and stress:

¹⁷⁰ Archibald D. Hart, "Depressed, Stressed, and Burned Out: What's Going on in My Life?," *enrichment journal*, enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200603/200603_020_burnout.cfm (accessed Oct 15, 2011).

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

- **Burnout** is a defense characterized by disengagement.
- *Stress* is characterized by over-engagement.

- In **Burnout** the emotions become blunted.
- In *Stress* the emotions become over-reactive.

- In **Burnout** the emotional damage is primary.
- In *Stress* the physical damage is primary.

- The exhaustion of **Burnout** affects motivation and drive.
- The exhaustion of *Stress* affects physical energy.

- **Burnout** produces demoralization.
- *Stress* produces disintegration.

- **Burnout** can best be understood as a loss of ideals and hope.
- *Stress* can best be understood as a loss of fuel and energy.

- The depression of **Burnout** is caused by the grief engendered by the loss of ideals and hope.
- The depression of *Stress* is produced by the body's need to protect itself and conserve energy.

- **Burnout** produces a sense of helplessness and hopelessness.
- *Stress* produces a sense of urgency and hyperactivity.

- **Burnout** produces paranoia, depersonalization, and detachment.
- *Stress* produces panic, phobic, and anxiety-type disorders.

- **Burnout** may never kill you but your long life may not seem worth living.
- *Stress* may kill you prematurely, and you won't have enough time to finish what you started.¹⁷²

As already stated, stress, burnout, and depression are commonly linked and sometimes confused with one another.

Another significant factor is depression, which is so widespread in society today that it is often called the “common cold” of mental illness.¹⁷³ Estimates are that it disrupts

¹⁷² Hart, “Depressed.”

the lives of thirty to forty million Americans.¹⁷⁴ Dr. William C. Shiel, Jr. first compared depression's prevalence among the sick with the commonality of a cold. Steven Paul, chief of clinical neuroscience at the National Institute of Mental Health, explained that "[d]epression is like a fever. It's a nonspecific response to an internal or external insult. Like fever, it has a number of origins and treatments."¹⁷⁵ This "fever" (depression), responding to an insult, commonly infects and plagues the clergy family and is more rampant within ministry than one might realize. The adage "starve a cold, feed a fever" might be a good prescription for healing, but people are often confused about the correct remedial plan. Which one is helpful for the suffering pastoral family?

"Starve a cold, feed a fever" apparently has nothing to do with nourishment; it refers to temperatures. The one suffering with a cold should remove himself or herself from the obvious causes of the cold and stay warm while healing. To "feed a fever" suggests the same thing as to "starve a cold." The goal is to get warmer so as to sweat and then break the fever. Prescribing this as a remedy to the "fever" of depression in the infected pastoral family is nearly impossible. To do so would mean the healing process is dependent on removing themselves from the "causes" of the fever, which is almost impossible, as the culprits causing unhealthy challenges lie within the very environment of the pastorate.

¹⁷³ Neil T. Anderson, *Christ Centered Therapy: The Practical Integration of Theology and Psychology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan 2000), 275.

¹⁷⁴ *Newsweek* (May 4, 1987), 48-57.

¹⁷⁵ Nancy Chapman, "Depression: The Common Cold of Mental Illness," www.hooah4health.com/mind/suicideprev/depressionCold.htm (accessed Feb 10, 2012).

“According to the National Institute of Mental Health, more than 19 million people in America will suffer from depression in any given year.”¹⁷⁶ Depression carries with it a variety of symptoms and is not something one just snaps out of. There are also a number of forms of depression affecting the body and the soul:

In the 1950s and '60s, depression was divided into two types, endogenous and neurotic. Endogenous means that the depression comes from within the body, perhaps of genetic origin, or comes out of nowhere. Neurotic or reactive depression has a clear environmental precipitating factor, such as the death of a spouse, or other significant loss, such as the loss of a job. In the 1970s and '80s, the focus of attention shifted from the cause of depression to its effects on the afflicted people. That is to say, whatever the cause in a particular case, what are the symptoms and impaired functions that experts can agree make up a depressive disorder?¹⁷⁷

Neil Anderson, author and president of Freedom in Christ Ministries, explains: “Depression is both an agony of the body and of the soul.”¹⁷⁸ Pastors are not exempt from this feeling of despair. “According to 2002 statistics from the U.S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 70 percent of pastors reported that they constantly fought depression.”¹⁷⁹ The causes of depression are numerous, and Christian counselors suggest that the Christian community has been fed a pack of lies about this matter, and that it is high time they arm themselves with the truth:

The Christian counselor’s task is made more difficult by a number of myths about depression that are widely accepted and sometimes preached. It is not true that depression always results from a sin or a lack of faith in God, that all depression is caused by self-pity, that it is wrong for a

¹⁷⁶ Brenda C. Coleman, “Doctors Prescribing More Antidepressant Medicines,” *Denver Post* (Feb 18, 1998), sect. A, 3.

¹⁷⁷ “Depression,” www.medicinenet.com (accessed Jul 10, 2011).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Colleen Capes Jackson, “Local pastor an expert on ‘clergy killers’,” *COV News* (Apr 25, 2008), www.covnews.com/archives/2675/ (accessed Feb 1, 2012).

Christian to ever be depressed, that depressed feelings can be removed permanently by spiritual exercises, that happiness is a choice or that a depressed Christian is a “contradiction in terms.” Christians, like everyone else, get depressed, and the causes can be grouped into two major categories.¹⁸⁰

Author and clinical psychologist, Gary Collins urged his readers to educate themselves about the causes for depression along with the approaches to treating it.¹⁸¹ It is unfortunate that some pastors who may be experiencing what Hart calls “a simple (though quite painful) depression ... could be inappropriately seeing it as burnout.”¹⁸² If the pastor is diagnosed with depression, the remedy is different than that for burnout. With depression, “particularly of the endogenous [neurological] type, effective relief may be only weeks away through appropriate medication.”¹⁸³ Finding the cure for burnout, however, “may require much more complex and significant life changes. Burnout may require many months or even years of adjustment for effective recovery.”¹⁸⁴ Hart concluded:

A body system exhausted by overwork, pushed beyond reasonable endurance, and depleted of resources could become burned out. But burnout can also be reached by roads quite different from those of stress and depression.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ Collins, *Christian Counseling*, 106–11.

¹⁸¹ (1) Biological factors, (2) Learned helplessness (sense of being trapped and unable to remedy an intolerable situation), (3) Parental rejection, (4) Abuse, (5) Negative thinking, (6) Life stress, (7) Anger, (8) Guilt.

¹⁸² Hart, “Depressed.”

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Stressors in Ministry Reported by Clergy Families

The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines a *stressor* as “an agent, condition, or other stimulus that causes stress to an organism.”¹⁸⁶ The stressors in ministry for the pastor and his family are endless, and the challenges people encounter as a result can be horrifying to say the least, if not life-threatening. In his book, *The Stress of Life*, Dr. Selye cautioned his readers regarding the implications of continual stress on the body:

Among all my autopsies (and I have performed well over a thousand), I have never seen a person who died of old age. In fact, I do not think anyone has died of old age yet. To permit this would be the ideal accomplishment of medical research ... To die of old age would mean that all the organs of the body had worn out proportionately, merely by having been used too long. This is never the case. We invariably die because one vital part has worn out too early in proportion to the rest of the body. The lesson seems to be that, as far as man can regulate his life by voluntary actions, he should seek to equalize stress throughout his being! The human body—like the tires on a car, or the rug on a floor—wears longest when it wears evenly.¹⁸⁷

In 2005, Volume 53/6 of *Pastoral Psychology* presented findings from five studies, conducted over a period of years, in which researchers evaluated coping mechanisms among clergy and clergy spouses when encountering ministry stress.¹⁸⁸ The stressors that pastors and their spouses acknowledged were intriguing, but not surprising. Findings obtained from the male clergy taking part in the study detailed a variety of stressors:

Stressors facing clergy include role conflicts, proliferation of activities, discrepancy between amount of time in administrative duties versus pastoral duties, spiritual dryness, perfectionism, no time for study or to be alone, failure of dreams, unwelcome surprise, frustration, feelings of

¹⁸⁶ “Stress,” *American Heritage Dictionary*, www.answers.com/topic/stressor#ixzz1mJMB5OfZ (accessed Mar 1, 2012).

¹⁸⁷ Hans Selye, *The Stress of Life* (McGraw-Hill, 1984), 431.

¹⁸⁸ Various “coping mechanisms” will be introduced in chapter 6, below.

inadequacy, fear of failure, loneliness/isolation, and unrealistic expectations of oneself, the senior pastor, one's congregation, and of one's denomination.¹⁸⁹

The clergy wives admitted to various other stressors, different from those affecting their husbands. Many of these women are fraught with substantial concerns unique to the natural innate tendencies of the female nesting syndrome. These pastors' wives and mothers often struggled to maintain any sense of normalcy in regard to their family and personal life and acknowledged they were sometimes at their wits' end:

Stressors reported by wives of male clergy include lack of defined boundaries between family and work, a "fishbowl" existence, inadequate finances, pressure/expectations from congregation and community to fulfill idealized roles, loss of personal identity, loss of control over personal living environment, adjustment to frequent moves, anger, perception of being second class, lack of tangible results of work, loneliness, lack of social support, work related time demands, unwelcome surprises, routine absence of spouse/father, lack of parallel growth, lack of spiritual care, and psychological disturbances.¹⁹⁰

At first reading, the numerous stressors appear insurmountable and, admittedly, the healthiest family might be in danger of caving in when loaded down with such incessant stressors. However, it is interesting that the studies revealed that many of the pastoral families surveyed were amazingly successful at managing the stress, for

¹⁸⁹ Richard Blackmon, *The Hazards of Ministry* (Ph. D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary. Pasadena, CA: 1984); C. Ellison and W. Mattila, "The needs of evangelical Christian leaders in the United States" *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 11 (1983), 28-35; Evers and Tomic, "Burnout among Dutch Reformed Pastors;" J. Gleason, "Perception of stress among clergy and their spouses," *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 31 (1977), 248-251; T. Hall, "The personal functioning of pastors: A review of empirical research with implications for pastors," *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 25 (1997), 240-253; M. Morris and P. Blanton, "The influence of work-related stressors on clergy husbands and their wives," *Family Relations* 43 (1994), 189-195; D. Ostrander, C. Henry, and D. Fournier, "Stress, family resources, coping, and adaption in minister's families," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 13 (1994), 50-67.

¹⁹⁰ D. Baker, "Peer support: An intervention program for ministers' wives," *Journal of Pastoral Care* 43 (1989), 16-24; D. Baker and J. Scott, "Predictors of well-being among pastor's wives: A comparison with non-clergy wives" *Journal of Pastoral Care* (1992).; W. Douglas, "Minister's wives: A tentative typology," *Pastoral Psychology* 12 (1961), 11-16; Gleason, "Perception of stress", 248-251; P. Valeriano, "A survey of minister's wives," *Leadership* 2 (1981), 64-77.

“[h]ealthy adjustment is not so much the absence of stress—which is, of course, impossible—as the learning and utilization of effective coping resources and skills.”¹⁹¹ Still, other surveys revealed that pastoral “fall-out” remains significant due to certain stressors, and pastors expressed common conclusions as to why that is true. These findings were telling, and it is important to briefly investigate some of the more common stressors as well as to add some which may appear shockingly uncommon and yet are just as burdensome. In developing a more comprehensive awareness, and in order to more fully understand the complexity of what the clergy family confront, varied stressors will be reviewed, although not in any particular order of importance, occurrence, or commonality among clergy.

Conflict

Surveys indicated that conflict was universally experienced by congregations within all denominations. As the shepherd in charge of leading the sheep, the pastor is inevitably involved in some way, and his ability to bring a sense of calm and reason to the conflict will determine how much, if any, negative impact this will have on the church.

Findings indicated that persistent conflict with congregants is the number one reason why clergy decide to un-saddle their horse, hang up their stirrups, and bid the ministry “good riddance”:

- More than 19,000 congregations experience major conflict every year.

¹⁹¹ D. Ostrander, C. Henry, and D. Fournier. “Stress, family resources, coping, and adaption in minister’s families,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 13 (1994), 50-67.

- Twenty-five percent of the churches in one survey reported conflict in the previous five years that was serious enough to have a lasting impact on congregational life.
- Only two percent of church conflicts involve doctrinal issues.
- Ninety-eight percent of church conflict involves interpersonal issues. Control issues ranked as the most common cause of conflict (85 percent).
- About 40 percent of church members who leave their churches do so because of conflict.
- Very small numbers (16 percent) of churches report positive outcomes from conflict.¹⁹²

Pastors surveyed in 2004 by *Christianity Today* were asked to pinpoint the sources of conflict they had experienced in their pastorates. Control issues topped the list at 85 percent: vision or direction—64 percent: leadership changes—43 percent: the pastor's style—39 percent: financial—33 percent: theological or doctrinal—23 percent: cultural or social differences—22 percent: and "other" came in last at 16 percent.¹⁹³

Antagonists

Antagonists in the church may include a group of people who basically have it in for their pastor. G. Lloyd Rediger, an ordained minister, called these culprits "Clergy Killers." He argued that they utilize tactics similar to schoolyard bullies who intentionally intimidate their peers. In a more extensive description, Rediger's website explains that a "Clergy Killer [is] a person in a congregation or church hierarchy who emotionally abuses (persistent bullying) a pastor often resulting in the pastor's

(1) being forced out of the church,

(2) leaving the ministry,

¹⁹² David & Diane Noble, *Winning The Real Battle At Church* (BHC Publishing, 2009), 171.

¹⁹³ Erin Reed, "Leadership Surveys Church Conflict," *Leadership Journal* (Fall 2004), www.christianitytoday.com/le/2004/fall/6.25.html (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

(3) suffering severe emotional distress and, in some instances,

(4) committing suicide.¹⁹⁴

Rediger is viewed by many as an authority on the rising phenomenon of pastors being bullied. He lectures and leads workshops, and his passion in helping clergy spiritually, mentally, and physically in these horrific situations resulted in a groundbreaking work entitled *Clergy Killers and The Toxic Congregation*, in whose pages Rediger shows himself to be

... a strong advocate and defender of those he perceives to be unfairly and inappropriately challenged by people so out of control they become vindictive and unwilling to negotiate disagreements and problems.¹⁹⁵

From every indication, antagonists are not going anywhere, and they continue to settle in at churches and then quickly leap into attack. They have been around, taunting clergy, for a very long time, and it is nearly impossible for the pastor to carry out the mission of the church while antagonists lurk around every corner.

Lack of adequate training in pastoral care

The pastorate is a unique calling in that parishioners often expect their pastor to have all the answers to their questions and concerns. Some clergy admit to being inadequately trained when it comes to counseling their congregants, but also confess they are to blame for not taking part in additional pastoral care training during their seminary period. A 1992 study by the Alban Institute revealed that “[t]here are few professions where there is

¹⁹⁴ www.clergykiller.org

¹⁹⁵ G. Lloyd Rediger, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations under Attack* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 49.

such an instant jump from student to head of the institution as when a seminarian moves straight into his or her own parish.”¹⁹⁶

Having to perform

Pastor Rick Warren of Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California, is also founder of Pastors.com, a place for leaders within the Christian community to connect with one another. The avowed mission of Pastors.com is stated this way:

Our passion is *healthy pastors leading healthy churches*, so we’ve put together a flowing stream of content to nourish and enrich the lives and leadership of Pastors everywhere as well as a dynamic community where church leaders can draw encouragement and wisdom from one another.¹⁹⁷

Pastor Warren has been encouraged by many mentors during his years in ministry, but one in particular was John Bisagno, pastor emeritus of the 25,000-member Houston (Texas) First Baptist Church. At 17, Warren first picked up Bisagno’s classic work, *How to Build an Evangelistic Church*. The impact of reading his book was undeniable. Warren affectionately referred to Bisagno as his “long-distance mentor.”¹⁹⁸ So impressed was Warren with Bisagno’s influence on young pastors that he agreed to write the foreword to Bisagno’s new book, *Pastor’s Handbook*. In it, Warren stated, “My prayer is that an entire new generation of pastors and church planters will use this book to develop the necessary perspective, convictions, character, and skills needed for ministry in the 21st century from this giant of the 20th century.”¹⁹⁹ Bisagno has penned a brilliant work that

¹⁹⁶ Gilbert, B. G. *Who Ministers to Ministers? A Study of Support Systems for Clergy and Spouses* (New York: Alban Institute, 1992).

¹⁹⁷ www.pastors.com

¹⁹⁸ John Bisagno, *Pastor’s Handbook* (Nashville, B&H Publishing Group, 2011), ix.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

Warren says “represents a virtual seminary education in a single volume.”²⁰⁰ Bisagno offered insights into every aspect of the pastorate, including “preaching, leading, evangelism, discipleship, planting churches, transitioning churches, raising money, doing world missions, resolving conflict, motivating members and loving everyone.”²⁰¹ One of the first elements Bisagno focused on was “the pastor as God’s man.” In this section, he offered a crucial insight for maintaining the health of the pastor and his family. He advised the pastor to take care of his own family in regard to the stressor of performance.

Perhaps no other factor has the negative influence on a pastor’s family as does the feeling of “having to perform.” The daily pressure of life in the spotlight brings added stress to family life in addition to those already existing in the culture. Dear Pastor, be exceedingly clear with your family and your congregation that neither your spouse nor your children must ever feel any pressure to do or to be anything for any other reason than their love for the Lord Jesus.²⁰²

Intrusion

Living in the environment of a pastor’s home can bring incredible rewards to all parties involved. The Pastor’s children are unique in that they are able to have access to their “pastor” parent(s) and can view the pastorate from a distinct perspective. Other parents are not as easily accessible at times. These children understand with more clarity what their parent does, in contrast to children whose parents leave every morning and “go to work” or work in an office. Nevertheless, as awesome as it may be to have their pastor “father and mother” around and at their beck-and-call, they eventually realize that the recipients of dad or mom’s undivided attention is often the parishioner instead of them. The children often feel a sense of intrusion from parishioners. Their natural reaction is to

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid., 61.

begin building walls of defense, which eventually lead to attitudes that reflect their pain and their anger.

When children are too young to understand all the dynamics associated with the hectic life of the pastorate, it is easy to forgive any disappointment and quickly move on. However, when the children mature in age, the feelings of frustration and displeasure more readily manifest themselves and are difficult for even the most spiritually mature to conceal. Findings reveal that pastor's kids experience intrusion when the pastor breaks promises of clearly defined boundaries, and they are not the only ones inclined to experience this intrusion. Their pastor parents do so as well.

Pedestals

Research confirms that it is rather common for parishioners to put their pastor on a pedestal. Their intention in so doing is generally well-meaning as typically they hold their pastor in high esteem. It is biblical to respect the pastor, as Scripture attests:

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you (Heb 13:17, ESV).

We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves (1 Thess 5:12-13, ESV).

Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching (1 Tim 5:17, ESV).

However, a pedestal for one's pastor can also create an unhealthy view of the pastor, suggesting he is above humans and has achieved a state of perfection. Pastors, like parishioners, are not perfect—just pardoned. And yet people enter churches every week evading the reality that their pastor is unquestionably flawed even though he is striving to be faithful to his God, his calling, his family, and the church.

“To many church members, the pastor does not have the luxury of being a mere mortal. He should be in [such] control of his life at all times that a spiritual disaster would not even be a possibility for him.”²⁰³

The pastor's mandate, according to Scripture, is to be blameless, and that, in and of itself, is a huge undertaking without people adding the extra pressure of the pedestal syndrome:

Sometimes we expect far too much of the people around us, and because no one can ever live up to those expectations, we are almost always disappointed. But wouldn't it be better if we just let go, and let people be who they are? Then we'd be able to see them as they are – with all their beauty and goodness in which we take joy, and with all their faults, which we can also see in ourselves. When we have put someone up on a pedestal, sculpturing them to fit our needs and desires by smoothing out the rough edges and creating new curves here and there, we cannot see the real person underneath our work. All we see is the illusion we have created. That is denying the person's real identity and is disrespectful. It's much better for our friends and for ourselves if we drop our expectations and illusions, and accept them all just the way they are.²⁰⁴

The pedestal syndrome or, as some call it, the “walking-on-water” syndrome is an impossible platform to live up to by any human standards. To speak of a “perfect pastor” is oxymoronic—the pastor is never perfect and, therefore, should never be viewed in that light.

²⁰³ S. Bailey, *Saving Your Pastor from Spiritual Burnout* (Life Worth Living Ministries and Christian Services Publishing, 1994), 25.

²⁰⁴ A meditation from the recovery book by Emotions Anonymous, *Today* (Hazelden Publishing, 1989). Cited in Mark Brouwer, “The Danger of Pedestals,” www.covenanteyes.com/pastorhelp/chapter-3-the-danger-of-pedestals/ (accessed Mar 7, 2012).

The dictionary defines the walking-on-water syndrome as “impossible for an unaided person, it is used as an example of an impossible task or, if apparently achieved, a miracle or an illusion.”²⁰⁵ Law professor F. LaGard Smith summarized the “walking-on-water” syndrome in a very deliberate way as it relates to Christian leaders:

Why do spiritual leaders crack before we know what is happening? Because, like us, they are only human, and because sometimes both we and they forget that fact. Isn't it odd that the conscientious spiritual leader goes around feeling like a hypocrite when he ministers to others knowing that he himself is not perfect, while spiritual leaders who never think about it that way are the real hypocrites? Even if we think of the preacher as one of the most righteous men we have ever known, in the back of our minds we are never fooled. We know that, regardless of whatever sterling character he may have, ultimately he cannot help but say to us: “Do as I say, not as I do.” Only Jesus Christ could have said, “Do as I say, and as I do.”²⁰⁶

Suing Pastors

As difficult as it might be to comprehend this scenario, the stressor of pastors being sued, while not among the most common pressures experienced by pastors, is not uncommon. In the August, 1993 issue of the *Clergy Journal*, Rediger referred to the increasing phenomenon of “... parishioners who target their pastors for destruction.” Rediger then introduced his reader to another form of this “personalized abuse.” He suggested it was the ultimate terror for a pastor.

It is the “scandalizing lawsuits ... brought against clergy, charging a variety of ... misconduct ... be[ing] hauled into court and accused of a felony. Whether guilty or innocent, this threat is so traumatizing that clergy can become depressed or angry just reading about such litigation against other clergy.”²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ www.macmillandictionary.com/dictionary/british/walk (accessed Nov 18, 2011).

²⁰⁶ F. LaGard Smith, *Fallen Shepherds, Scattered Sheep* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1988), 152.

²⁰⁷ G. Lloyd Rediger, “The Abuse of Clergy – Metaphor or Scandal,” 1994, jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/8593.htm (accessed Feb 1, 2010).

Concluding Thoughts

The contemporary clergy landscape reveals the extensive carnage of clergy loss due to enormous ministry pressure and burdens. The pastoral fallout in pulpits globally is epidemic, and data suggest it continues to rise. The stakes are incredibly high for clergy serving in the pastorate today. The stressors are monumental and seem to be ever-increasing. As genuinely sincere as he may be in attempting to please God, his family, and his parishioners, the pastor runs the risk of losing it all if he does not keep his priorities straight and maintain a balanced life. The effect from the data analyzed is telling—clergy “quitting” is a contagion crossing denominational lines. Decades of research indicate that we are not much further along in rectifying this tremendous problem than we were, as pastors continue surrendering their pulpits due to overwhelming stress as well as to health and moral issues. Recognition should be given to the organizations mentioned above, which are designating millions of dollars to restoring and advancing clergy health. One finding in particular riveted me: the revelation that Catholic priests fare far better than do Protestant pastors in regards to overall health and stress. Their commitment to mandated clergy sabbaticals is surely an indicator that the roman catholic church is on the right track in relation to clergy maintaining a balanced lifestyle.

CHAPTER 3

SPECIFIC HEALTH CHALLENGES THREATENING PASTORAL FAMILIES

This chapter will endeavor to analyze the four most common health challenges threatening pastoral families. Data presented will offer support for the notion that these health issues are directly related to the ministry stressors analyzed in chapter 2. Statistical findings related to the health of the public-at-large as well as clergy in North America will be presented before the depth of disturbing data regarding physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual health concerns is examined.

Landscape of Overall Health: The General Public and the Pastor

An overview of the health of both the general public and pastors will be presented in an attempt to identify certain commonalities related to unhealthy lifestyles.

The General Public: A Brief Synopsis

A change of culture began to surface in the United States in the early 1980s in regard to physical health and, from that point until present day, Americans continue making their health a part of their New Year's resolutions. Many determine to diet by choosing "... from ten of the most popular diets on the market: Atkins, Jenny Craig, Ornish, NutriSystem, Slim Fast, South Beach, Subway, Sugar Busters, Weight Watchers and the Zone."²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Leah Hoffmann and Lacey Rose, "Costly calories: How much do we spend on diets?" www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7432448/ns/health-fitness/t/costly-calories (accessed May 20, 2011).

Surveys reveal that most of these well-intentioned Americans will fail at keeping their diet resolutions, and that the money spent on these programs will be wasted. Forbes Health and Fitness claimed these are “costly calories”²⁰⁹ and suggest:

It's no secret that Americans are fat—and getting fatter by the burger. Nearly one-third of U.S. adults are overweight, and another third are technically obese, as defined by a body-mass index of more than 30. And Americans aren't happy about it. Last year [2004], we spent an estimated \$46 billion on diet products and self-help books.²¹⁰

What is the rate of return when we are spending so much money on self-help?

The government argues that

two-thirds of American dieters regained all the weight they had lost within a year, and 97 percent had gained it all back within five years. And following these regimes is significantly more expensive than the tried and true technique of eating less and exercising more.²¹¹

Steven Salerno is an author and journalist who, for more than 20 years, has written for many popular publications. He recently authored a book entitled *Sham: How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless*, in which he declares the obvious about most Americans, suggesting that they have a “love affair with self-help.”²¹² That “upward of \$8 billion every year”²¹³ is spent on the various self-help programs and products proves his point. Salerno investigated the monetary revenues generated by this movement and uncovered some fascinating, but perhaps not shocking, results.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Steve Salerno, *Sham: How the Self-Help Movement Made America Helpless* (Random House, 2005), 7.

²¹³ Ibid.

“Today self-improvement in all its forms constitutes an \$8.56 Billion business, up from \$5.7 Billion in 2000. Market data now expects the industry to be perched at the \$12 Billion threshold by 2008.”²¹⁴

Emotional health statistics are as troubling as the physical health statistics.

Currently depression (clinical) affects

about 15 million adult Americans ... that is 8 percent of the American population of age 18 and over. About 3 percent or 6 million Americans suffer from manic depression or bipolar depression each year. The population affected by depression is increasing each year. And specialists predict that by 2020, depression would become the second most common health problem throughout the world.²¹⁵

People who encounter various forms of emotional issues struggle with “prolonged sadness, frustration and anxiety.”²¹⁶ Estimates are that “9.5 percent of adult Americans” suffer from depressive disorders,²¹⁷ and this data does not include the anxiety, behavioral, and personality disorders which are recognized as emotional disorders.

The landscape of relationships is peculiar, and statistics are difficult to determine, as that would necessitate factoring in the various ranges and aspects of relationships from casual, friendship, marriage, extramarital, adulterous, abusive, to online and dating. Self-fulfillment, companionship, adventure, security, and love round out the list of reasons for relationships; clearly people love connecting with one another.

A 2010 national profile estimated the population of the United States to be 310,232,683, of whom 81.2 percent claimed to be Christians. Various aspects would need

²¹⁴ Ibid., 8.

²¹⁵ “Depression Statistics,” depressiontreatmenthelp.org/depression-statistics.php (accessed Jun 1, 2011).

²¹⁶ “Statistics about Emotional disorders,” www.rightdiagnosis.com/e/emotional_disorders/stats.htm (accessed Jul 1, 2011).

²¹⁷ Ibid.

to be factored in when assessing the true spiritual commitment and health of these “Christians”; however, the focus of this chapter will consider data gathered from Christian clergy affirming some denominational affiliation.

The Pastor

In an attempt to better appreciate and gain a more realistic understanding of the gravity of specific health challenges encountered by pastoral families, this portion of the thesis will speak to the importance of life itself, alert us to current statistics regarding clergy health, address the workaholic mentality of the clergy, study the attitudes, actions, and abuses of self-care by the clergy, examine the overall landscape in the clergy environment where pastors adopt a people-pleasing presence, and peek into the minds of unstable pastors who commit suicide.

In many of the recent studies involving clergy health, it appears that data is not being collected regarding how much money, if any, being spent by clergy from their own personal budgets is for any of the aforementioned self-help books or programs. Considering the number of self-help books and fitness videos being produced by Christian leaders, flying off local bookstore shelves, being purchased online in record numbers, data about clergy as consumers of this material might prove interesting to researches and could provide the Christian community with important insights about ways to contribute to clergy health.

Salerno points out that some of the currently most-recognized leaders who have authored self-help material in an obvious attempt to spark an interest within the Christian community.

Self-Help was well represented on the best-seller lists in 2004, anchored by a spate of musings from the Family McGraw (Dr. Phil and his son Jay); Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life*; Joel Osteen's spiritually tinged *Your Best Life Now: Seven Steps to Living At Your Full Potential*;...Steven Covey's *The Eighth Habit: From Effectiveness to Greatness* ... to Tony Robbins' various tomes about the giant that slumbers within you and the six dozen separate *Chicken Soup* books now in print.²¹⁸

Perchance, the aforesaid authors have taken to heart the alarming health statistics of most Americans when deciding to write self-help books that would in turn encourage the clergy community to take care of their health, to relax, and to enjoy life.

In the New Testament record, Jesus declares one very important reason for his coming which at times is overlooked by many people: "I have come that [you] may have life, and that [you] may have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10, NKJV). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines "life" as "the quality that distinguishes a vital and functional being from a dead body."²¹⁹ In regard to the alarming statistics regarding clergy health which will be examined in greater detail in this chapter, consideration should be given to the specific words, "vital and functional," being utilized in this definition. Today's clergy might ask themselves if they are truly living with vitality and functionality. Many pastors are so consumed with the daily rigors and realities of their pastorates that they often forget what the meaning of life is and what life is all about. They feel pressure to perform,

²¹⁸ Salerno, *Sham*, 7.

²¹⁹ "Life," www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/life (accessed Aug 12, 2012).

feel guilty for taking time off, and often find it difficult even to engage in that abundant life Jesus talks about.

USA TODAY recently published an article suggesting that scientists are struggling to define life, “pushing the bounds of biology, astronomy and robotics.”²²⁰ Professor Mark Bedau gave his overall conclusions: “We are doing things which were thought to be the province, in some quarters, of God—like making new forms of life. Life is very powerful, and if we can get it to do what we want ... there are all kinds of good things that can be done.”²²¹

While one may or may not agree with the apparent tampering with life, Bedau’s statement, “if we can get [life] to do what we want ... all kinds of good ... can be done,” should be considered especially in light of clergy health and the purposes of this thesis. If a contribution of knowledge can be made toward educating clergy and also developing plans and programs, suggesting support systems, and giving guidance through pertinent resources and counseling, then perhaps we can embrace Bedau’s goal of getting life to do what we want with all kinds of good being done, but specifically with the interest of the pastoral family in mind. Author Charles Stone argues that

Clergy health is the issue at the beginning of the 21st century. If we in leadership can model healthy physical, emotional, and spiritual formation – Jesus wins, his church wins, his followers win, and we live abundantly in his joy.²²²

Hoping to “win” for Jesus, I myself admittedly launched into ministry a novice at 19, both anticipating and hoping to experience extraordinary moves of God in whatever

²²⁰ Seth Borenstein, “Scientists Struggle to Define Life,” *USA TODAY* (Aug 19, 2007), www.usatoday.com/tech/science/2007-08-19-life_N.htm (accessed Mar 1, 2012).

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Charles Stone, *Ministry Killers and How to Defeat Them* (Bethany House, 2010), 36.

way the Lord permitted. In the foundational years, ministry tutelage came from various sages who were saturated with God's wisdom. With earnest delight, I allowed myself to be drenched, like a dry sponge being soaked with water, with teaching; I took to heart every last drop of the savants' discerning words. On one very sobering occasion, a seasoned and rather sedate pastor failed to shield me from the foreseeable future, which was certain to include trials and tribulation, and in attempting to mature me rather quickly in regard to ministry and life, he offered his suggestion for success by pronouncing, "Be ready to preach, pray, sing, or die in a moment's notice."

Such straightforward advice was also tempered with other instruction gleaned from various church conferences I attended, especially during my early years in ministry. With great expectations, sessions were educational and incredible coaching was received. Experiencing ministry overload upon departure from the various conferences, I hoped to retain everything and, indeed, some sessions, statements, and sermons are forever remembered.

Nancy Beach, with 20 years of experience as the programming director for Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, reminded attendees during one such conference, that "Sunday comes around with amazing regularity." No mantra resonates with pastors more than this one. Regardless of what occurs during the week, whether it is babies birthed, weddings, funerals, hospital visits, counseling congregants, raising money, and finally squeezing in some family time, there is always a sermon, or two, that must be prepared and be ready to be preached. The dedication and self-sacrifice of most pastors is unceasing and, in the end, many clergy are faithfully serving the Lord while often neglecting themselves and their families. The ministry environment with all its

eccentricities often drains and exhausts the pastor of all physical, emotional, and spiritual reserves.

Like a tourist accidentally fallen overboard during a rafting excursion down the untamed waters of a wild and erratic river, the pastor finds himself caught in a swirling current, desperately struggling to survive while incessantly gulping in air and water concurrently. Dale Wolery²²³ and Dale Ryan²²⁴ have an interesting assessment of the pastor caught in such a crisis:

He is drowning, arms flailing. Throw him a rope. If he grabs the rope. Pull him out. Simple. Rescue complete. But in real life it seldom works that simply. There are complications. Lots of them. This is especially true if the person flailing about in the waters of crisis and failure is your pastor. What then? What is he doing there? How did this happen? This is not supposed to happen. Isn't he supposed to be a model to follow? Doesn't the office of pastor have some higher standards?²²⁵

Perhaps Richard Swanson's assumptions are correct:

“We have more questions [today] than answers, more problems than solutions. Few know where we are headed, but universally acknowledge that we are careening along at breakneck speed.”²²⁶

Possibly, this is how the pastor found himself “flailing about in the waters of crisis and failure.” He became overwhelmed with too many questions that needed answering and more parishioners' problems than he could find solutions. If only the pastor could grab onto the rope offered him he might survive. But then again, if he did, he might become a “ropeaholic.”

²²³ Dale O. Wolery is the executive director of the Clergy Recovery Network.

²²⁴ Dale S. Ryan is the CEO of Christian Recovery International.

²²⁵ Dale O. Wolery and Dale S. Ryan, “Hope in Times of Crisis: When Pastors and Churches Need Recovery,” (Jan 17, 2009), www.clergyrecovery.com/?p=18 (accessed Dec 1, 2010).

²²⁶ Richard A. Swanson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2004), 22.

This term was adapted when one pastor immediately identified with the man on a journey in the story after listening to Edwin Friedman's tale *The Bridge*. He decided he and his friends, who are also pastors and were present during the reading, were a "bunch of *ropeaholics*." Sheri S. Ferguson, executive director of North Alabama United Methodist Pastoral Care and Counseling, paraphrases Friedman's fable, adding her insights as well as those of another colleague.

A man on a journey who meets another man with a rope tied around his waist politely asks him to hold the rope for a minute. The man on the journey takes the rope, probably before he thinks about it, and the other man jumps off a bridge. When the one holding the rope protests, the man at the other end of the rope says he is his responsibility and he needs to hold on to him. The man with the rope attached to him takes no responsibility for his situation. The man holding the rope tries to decide how to shift the responsibility from himself to the other man who actually did the jumping (Friedman, 1990). This group of clergy identified with the dilemma of the man holding the rope. As they discussed how much responsibility the man holding the rope should have for the man at the other end of the rope, they looked at why it seems so difficult to let go once we are experiencing "rope burn." Although some research indicates that 80 percent of the mental health profession struggle with codependency from time to time, clergy may struggle more and codependence can play a major role in compassion fatigue for them. Codependence is an unhealthy pattern of behaviors that are "self-defeating and result in diminished capacity" (Lehr, 2006). Unlike alcoholism or substance abuse, codependence is often culturally accepted and common. This makes it easier to deny its harmful effects. There are also more subtle addictions like approval, being good, being helpful, work, high idealism and perfectionism that can lead to fatigue. Clergy who want to please and don't make a priority of self-care can be more easily controlled by others' behaviors and attitudes. Depending on the denominational call/appointment structure, many pastors talk about job insecurity, and they relate it to the approval of their parishioners to their ministry.²²⁷

Accepting the call to ministry is not something about which most pastors are flippant. Pastoring is a privilege and reaps incredible rewards; however, the seasoned

²²⁷ Sheri S. Ferguson, "Clergy: Compassion Fatigue," *Family Therapy Magazine* (Mar–Apr 2007), 16–19.

pastor also understands that this honor is met with daily responsibilities that can take an incredible toll on the pastor and his family. Balancing ministry, marriage, parenting, and self-care is a constant battle and, if not careful, the pastor risks becoming one of those “ropeaholics” helplessly suffering from scorching-, albeit sacred-, rope burn. These painful abrasions are incurred for various reasons and as a result of stressors already presented in chapter 2 of this thesis; excessive workload, poor priorities and time management, compassion fatigue, conflict, congregational needs and, for some, it is simply guilt. Pastors take to heart biblical passages such as “for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48, NKJV), and “let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment,” (Jas 3:1, NKJV) often adopting them as a sort of legalistic onus on their ministry. They then find themselves adding to their already strenuous workload in order to prove they are fulfilling the duties of their unrealistic job description.

The most recent statistical data is troubling and indicates that pastors realize the detrimental impact the pastorate can have on both them and their families. Clergy are beginning to step forward and decry revered reformer Martin Luther’s well-meaning refrain, “If I rest, I rust!” Harvey Herman admits that while Luther’s dedication to ministry is to be admired, “even dedication taken to an extreme turns into bondage.”²²⁸ Dedication to the pastorate does not mean the pastor is exempt from taking some time to promote his own self-care.

²²⁸ Harvey A. Herman, “Anorexia of the Soul: A Burnout Checklist for Pastors,” *enrichment journal*, enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200902/200902_000_Anorexia_of_soul.cfm (accessed Dec 1, 2011).

Taking a break from the Lord's work by all accounts sounds like a great idea, especially for the worn-out pastor struggling to keep pace with his perpetually chaotic schedule, in which he is faced every day with increasing demands that are accumulating faster than they can be addressed. Contemporary culture, with its ever-advancing technology, has affected not only secular society, but the sacred as well. Clergy now sense more pressure than at any other time in history to utilize every means available in getting their job done. Forgotten are the days of delayed responses due to rotary dial telephone, answering machine, and pager. Today's pastor is virtually suspect by parishioners, in regard to fulfilling his job description, if not instantly available or savvy to the latest texting, tweeting, blogging, Facebook, email, Skype, and other such social media. Clergy needs are mounting, and many are in need of a break to recharge physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

New York Times religion reporter Paul Vitello, in an article he titled "Taking a Break From the Lord's Work,"²²⁹ delivers sobering findings about clergy health to his readers. Vitello writes: "The findings have surfaced with ominous regularity over the last few years, and with little notice."²³⁰ Vitello reports on the results obtained from several surveys conducted by various denominations and organizations in which clergy health is suffering:

Members of the clergy now suffer from obesity, hypertension and depression at rates higher than most Americans. In the last decade, their use of antidepressants has risen, while their life expectancy has fallen. Many would change jobs if they could. Public health experts who have led the studies caution that there is no simple explanation of why so many members of a profession once associated with rosy-cheeked longevity

²²⁹ Vitello, "Taking a Break," *New York Times*, August 1, 2010.

²³⁰ Ibid.

have become so unhealthy and unhappy. But while research continues, a growing number of health care experts and religious leaders have settled on one simple remedy that has long been a touchy subject with many clerics: taking more time off.²³¹

The remedy is duly noted by most pastors, and they welcome the idea of time off, however some are choosing to take a permanent break from the Lord's work. So writes Greg Warner in a *USA TODAY* article titled "Suicide: When pastors' silent suffering turns tragic."²³² The lead paragraph was shocking and reveals a disturbing trend among clergy. Warner asks a thought-provoking question:

What kind of personal pain would cause a 42-year-old pastor to abandon his family, his calling and even life itself? Members of a Baptist church here are asking that question after their pastor committed suicide in his parked car in September.²³³

As random as this might seem, reports suggest it to be an increasingly common phenomenon among pastors within a localized southeastern area of the United States. This young pastor chose to end his life like "two others in North Carolina...and three in South Carolina ... all in the last four years."²³⁴

The pain that pastors experience in ministry today can be overwhelming to many. Coping with the constant expectations of being "spot-on" in regards to his relationship with God, his own person, the health of his marriage and parenting skills, as well as taking care of the needs of his parishioners, is almost impossible. Some pastors suffer from extreme depression as a result and determine to permanently put an end to the pain.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Greg Warner, "Suicide: When pastors' silent suffering turns tragic," *USA TODAY* (Oct 29, 2009), www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2009-10-28-pastor_suicides_N.htm?csp=34 (accessed Jan 30, 2010).

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

David Treadway, the 42-year-old pastor who is the subject of Warner's article, was discovered Sunday morning September 27, 2009, by his wife. She was leaving for church and found him dead in the car. Treadway pastored a growing church of 900 members for five years and informed his congregation several months prior to his suicide that he was being treated for depression. *The Biblical Recorder*²³⁵ reported that a note recovered by police indicated that the pastor committed suicide. The decision among clergy to end it all is a growing concern. I have personally experienced the calamitous tragedy of suicide on a personal level on more than one occasion and the events, especially surrounding a pastor's suicide, are incessantly haunting.

Truman Dollar was a friend first, with whom my spouse and I share treasured memories both personally and in ministry. Second, Truman was a pastor whose untimely death by a self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head in 1996 shocked his dearest friends and family.

How is it that the pastor of one of the largest Baptist churches in the USA would end up taking his own life? Truman Dollar did just that. As one of the most respected and revered Baptist pastors of the twentieth century, he put a gun to his head and committed suicide.²³⁶

Answering the phone around dinnertime on March 26, 1996, I will never forget hearing the whimpering voice of Truman's adult son confessing, "... my dad is dead." Shocked by the news and yet I was able to slowly respond, "Tim, I am so very sorry. Was it a heart attack?" His reply was instant. "No. (This was followed by momentary silence

²³⁵ Norman Jameson, "Bulletin: Sandy Ridge pastor found dead," www.biblicalrecorder.org/post/2009/09/27/bulletin-sandy-ridge-pastor-found-dead.aspx (accessed Nov 20, 2011).

²³⁶ "Truman Dollar," allaboutbaptists.com/history_Truman_Dollar.html (accessed Jun 20, 2010).

and more crying.) He did it. He killed himself.” Paralyzed, I struggled to find words that might comfort him.

Truman, the son of a pastor, began his own preaching ministry at 15 years of age. During his lifetime, he pastored four steadily growing congregations and faithfully followed his calling. While serving in his final pastorate at Temple Baptist Church in Detroit, Michigan, Truman was instrumental in influencing enormous change in regard to racism within the church. However, like many great Christian leaders, he had an Achilles heel, and he succumbed to the temptations of this world and lost not only his pastorate, but tragically his life as well.

In 1983, Truman left Kansas City to become pastor of the Temple Baptist Church in Detroit. The church has a large congregation with 5,000 members and a whites-only membership policy. Dollar challenged both the narrow legalistic Christianity and the racism that was preached by the church's previous pastor. Although he met with resistance, the deacons of the church voted to allow non-white people to join the church in September of 1985. However, it came to light that Dollar had had inappropriate conversations with a woman while he was pastor at the Kansas City Baptist Temple. In 1992, Dollar was asked to resign his position as pastor and he moved with his family to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he worked for an advertising agency. He committed suicide in 1996.²³⁷

The pastor officiating at Truman’s funeral reminded friends and family that pastors are people too, and they struggle with many of the same issues laity do. As he finished, he sent the grieving crowd away with one final, very comforting thought. The unthinkable act carried out by Truman in the last seconds of his life that cold winter day while propped up against a tombstone in a Michigan cemetery should not for any reason eclipse the entirety of his life.

²³⁷ openlibrary.org/authors/OL1759584A/Truman_Dollar

Despite his own moral dilemma, attention should be focused on the fact that Truman was a pastor who suffered from years of depression, a common problem among many clergy today. Mental health professionals admit that clergy suicide is a very rare ending to this very common problem; however, it is an option some pastors are choosing and neglecting the root of this concern is unconscionable. H. B. London claims that “we set the bar so high that most pastors can't achieve that ... and because most pastors are people-pleasers, they get frustrated and feel they can't live up to that.”²³⁸

According to recent surveys, the church is losing many a “people-pleaser”; servants who are called by God to be generals leading in warfare so intense the bloodshed and loss are unfathomable. Clergy suicides number in the hundreds every year and is an outright tragedy. Sobering and undeniable is the fact that once an army loses its general, defeat is right around the corner.

Even a madman like Adolph Hitler understood this. Just before he launched his attack against the Soviet Union in 1941, he arranged for Stalin to see forged documents that indicated his own officers were conspiring against him. Gripped by paranoia, Stalin executed or imprisoned 35,000 top officers—over half of the Russian officer corps,²³⁹

and the implications of this masterminded move by Hitler proved to be detrimental for the Russian army. They experienced staggering casualties and imminent defeat.

A comparable truth in biblical terms might be best understood in the prophecy of Zechariah. “Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered” (Zech 13:7, NKJV). Shepherds struggle to maintain green pastures on which their sheep can feed. They encounter thieves from every angle attempting to take them and their flock out.

²³⁸ Warner, “Suicide.”

²³⁹ William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), 36.

Shepherds are limping away from their pastures, incapable of caring for themselves, let alone their sheep. Scripture reveals that “the thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). The enemy uses an inexhaustible supply of tactics in his attempts to bring God’s shepherds and the church down. Sadly, statistics reveal that many surrender to his fiery incoming attacks being launched from every possible direction. The adversary need not confront clergy with the expected. Instead, he bullies them with countless stressors, resulting in incredible health challenges for both the pastor and his family. The cumulative experiences of years of ministry, though often unavoidable, are lessons either learned or evaded. “Experience is a cruel teacher; first the exam and then the lesson.”²⁴⁰ Kenneth Boa suggests this: “In the University of Life, stress and affliction are not elective courses; they’re a required part of the curriculum.”²⁴¹

Research indicates that pastors and members of their family confront a variety of these afflictions; ministry stressors that attack clergy families and result in challenges of epic proportions. These families confess to a reoccurring struggle in maintaining physical, emotional, intellectual, relational, spiritual, and financial health, just to acknowledge a few areas of concern.

The pastorate is a very public ministry and will inevitably produce pressure on the pastor and his family. In view of the nature of the stressors continually experienced by the pastoral family within the clergy environment, as described in chapter 2, it is equally essential to examine the most common health challenges these clergy families encounter as well as and how these threats impact their overall, long-term well-being.

²⁴⁰ *Red Tails*, released 2012.

²⁴¹ “Leadership Qualities: Stress Management,” www.kenboa.org/text_resources/free_articles/5390 (accessed Mar 25, 2011).

For the purpose of this chapter of the thesis, consideration will be given to presenting four specific areas of health challenge, areas acknowledged to be some of the more observable by both pastors and family members who participated in surveys, studies, and research. The areas of challenge relate to physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual well-being. They are listed and analyzed individually, however, not in order of occurrence or relevance in regard to the findings. The author understands the significance of exploring these areas of challenge in relation to survey results. Their interplay will be considered in chapter 5, in the discussion of developing a strategic overall health plan for the pastoral family.

Health Challenges Encountered by Pastoral Families

Physical

Pastors and their families often live from trial to tragedy—this is not surprising given the nature of the pastorate.

Given the high levels of stress for ministry leaders and their families and the rarity of outside support and mentorship, families that stay in the ministry are at risk for missing the signs of serious problems that might destroy their ministries.²⁴²

The frequency of high levels of continual stress for the pastoral family is not always a precursor to major health issues; however it does indicate the risk is imminent.

If you operate in a world driven by chaos it may have the potential for disastrous personal results. You might think of yourself as a hero and hard

²⁴² Philip G. Monroe, “The Needs of Ministry Leaders and Their Families: A Review,” (2007), wisecounsel.files.wordpress.com/2008/10/needs-of-ministry-leaders.pdf (accessed May 30, 2011).

worker, but if you do not take [precautionary] steps ... you may find yourself sitting in the pew instead of standing in the pulpit.²⁴³

Recent findings about the health of pastors in the United States are sobering and visibly indicate some ministers may indeed be forfeiting their pulpits, albeit reluctantly, and finding a place on the pew.

- 71 percent of all ministers admitted to being overweight by an average of 32.1 pounds [14.59 kg]. One-third of all ministers were overweight by at least 25 pounds [11.36 kg], including 15 percent who were overweight by 50 pounds [22.73 kg] or more.
- Two-thirds of all pastors skip a meal at least one day a week, and 39 percent skip meals three or more days a week.
- 83 percent eat food once a week that they know they know they shouldn't because it is unhealthy, including 41 percent who do this three or more days a week.
- 88 percent eat fast food at least one day a week, and 33 percent eat fast food three or more days a week.
- 50 percent get the recommended minimum amount of exercise (30 minutes per day, three times a week); 28 percent don't exercise at all.
- Four out of ten ministers (approximately 39 percent) reported digestive problems once a week, with 14 percent having chronic digestive problems (three days per week).
- 87 percent don't get enough sleep at least once a week, with almost half (47 percent) getting less sleep than they need at least three nights a week. Only 16 percent regularly get the recommended eight hours or more per night.
- 52 percent experience physical symptoms of stress at least once a week, and nearly one out of four experiences physical symptoms three or more times a week.²⁴⁴

²⁴³ Dale Roach, "How can a pastor survive the Stress of Crisis," www.likeateam.com/2012/02/18/how-a-pastor-can-survive-the-stress-of-a-crisis/ (accessed Jul 2, 2012).

²⁴⁴ Anne Jackson, *Mad Church Disease: Overcoming the Burnout Epidemic* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 48–9.

The Pulpit & Pew organization conducted a national telephone survey, funded by a Lilly Endowment-funded research project, with approximately 900 pastors participating. All pastors were asked specific questions regarding their personal health and the findings were revealing.

Clergy tend to say they are in good shape. Of the nearly 900 pastors who participated in a national telephone survey, 76 percent said they enjoyed excellent or very good physical health. However, a follow up question found that 78 percent of clergy are either overweight (48 percent) or obese (30 percent). Though these figures are comparable to the U.S. population as a whole, they are nevertheless worrisome. As for handling stress, the Pulpit & Pew study found that pastors are doing a better job setting boundaries between work and personal time. Still, the average mainline pastor spent 50.8 hours a week at work, which was high in comparison with other managers and professionals.²⁴⁵

The Duke Clergy Health Initiative launched a multi-year, \$12 million program in 2007 with the objective of gathering and analyzing data about the health of clergy in an attempt to help improve the overall health of United Methodist clergy in North Carolina.

The Clergy Health Initiative's research is the first to examine how to tailor health interventions to clergy. Our findings make clear that programs to improve clergy health will succeed only if they address the multiple conditions that contribute to health, especially conditions created by congregations and denominational polities.²⁴⁶

Two distinct clergy health studies were conducted, one in the summer of 2008 and the other in 2010, surveying every active United Methodist pastor in the state of North Carolina. The participation rate was unparalleled, "95 percent and 87 percent, respectively—we gathered a wealth of information about pastors' physical, emotional,

²⁴⁵ "Fast Facts," *Hartford Institute*.

See also Jackson Carroll, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

²⁴⁶ *The Clergy Health Initiative*, divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/clergy-health-initiative/learning (accessed Nov 20, 2011).

and spiritual health.”²⁴⁷ The survey will be administered again in 2012 for a third time as the Clergy Health Initiative continues to evaluate any variations in clergy health over a given time period. Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data from the survey results provided gripping insights into clergy health as well as the dynamics influencing it.

One way of understanding the data pastors shared with us is to compare it with that of the overall North Carolina population. To make this comparison, we asked the pastors many of the same questions posed annually to a representative sample of North Carolinians by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. On the survey, they provided insights into their health history by answering questions such as, “Have you ever been diagnosed with diabetes (when not pregnant)?” They also supplied their height and weight. Because 95 percent took the survey, we are able to compare disease rates between United Methodist clergy and other North Carolinians with confidence. Unfortunately, the news is not good. Even taking into account differences in age, income, employment status, insurance status, and gender, the rates of disease for clergy were much higher for diagnoses of diabetes, arthritis, asthma, and high blood pressure. North Carolina as a state ranks 12th worst in the nation in terms of the percentage of obese citizens, yet the proportion of clergy in North Carolina who are obese is significantly higher.²⁴⁸

Equally important in this vital information is an accurate assessment of exactly what these specific clergy health findings mean. The Clergy Health Initiative is focusing its efforts on why there is a higher percentage “of chronic disease and obesity” among North Carolina United Methodist pastors “than those of their non-pastor peers.” Their conclusions include some telling factors:

- The challenging aspects of the pastors’ vocation.
- The way pastors view physical health. Despite the number of diagnoses these pastors reported having, overall, they also reported having better physical health than their peers across the United States. Overall, they felt that their physical health was not getting in the way of their work and social activities. It could be that these pastors are so

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

attuned to their spiritual life and to seeking to fulfill their strong calling that they neglect warning signs of their physical health.²⁴⁹

When comparing the data from the overall population with that of North Carolina pastors, the study found that

the rates of disease for clergy were much higher for diagnoses of diabetes, arthritis, asthma, and high blood pressure. North Carolina as a state ranks 12th worst in the nation in terms of percentage of obese citizens, yet the proportion of clergy in North Carolina who are obese is significantly higher.²⁵⁰

Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, Ph.D., Research Director of the Clergy Health Initiative, recently reported these along with various other clergy health survey findings in an article entitled “A Holistic Approach to Wellness.”²⁵¹ Proeschold-Bell’s introductory comments are encouraging and yet telling:

Concern for the health and wellness of Christian pastors, especially in mainline denominations, has been rising for a number of years. The problem has not been obvious to lay members in the pews, but it has not escaped notice of denominational leaders and researchers. Several church bodies began pastoral wellness programs in the 1980s and 1990s, but later studies showed these programs had not solved the problem.²⁵²

“A survey of Lutheran clergy report that 68 percent were overweight and 16 percent of male clergy and 24 percent of women clergy report depression.”²⁵³ However other studies reveal these clergy health challenges are no respecter of persons.

Lutheran pastors noted that 40 percent of them experienced mild to severe burnout. Statistics vary between 76–90 percent of pastors reporting they

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Rae Jean Proeschold-Bell, “A holistic approach to wellness,” www.faithandleadership.com/features/articles/holistic-approach-wellness (accessed Jan 20, 2011).

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ferguson, “Clergy,” 16.

work over 55 hours a week. More and more clergy report they feel there are too many demands on their time.²⁵⁴

Dr. Gwen Halaas's 2002 study of ministerial wellness in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America described significant levels of stress, depression, and lifestyle-related physical ailments in ELCA pastors who, in her words, faced greater demands and less support than their predecessors. The Church Benefits Association's 2006 study of clergy in 10 Protestant denominations showed that clergy report more job demands, criticism and stress from criticism than do laity. All of these factors contribute to rising health care costs, challenges retaining clergy, and decreased passion and effectiveness among the clergy who remain. This picture of clergy health counters a popular belief that because clergy are disciplined in their spiritual practices they must also be disciplined in their personal practices. To the contrary, people working closely with clergy have been concerned about clergy physical and mental health practices. This research helps elucidate the pressures and beliefs of clergy, thereby paving the way for clergy, congregations and institutions to work together to create a healthy future for clergy.²⁵⁵

The Lutheran clergy members who honestly confessed to suffering from either mild or severe burnout are evidently not alone. They share concerns comparable with countless other pastoral families.

Harvey Herman suggests that "pastoral burnout resembles the physical malady, anorexia nervosa, where teenage girls become obsessed with being thin. They believe they are fat even though they are becoming very thin."²⁵⁶ Specialists in the field of eating disorders admit that anorexia can be a challenge to treat, invariably because the patient is oblivious to the fact that she has a problem. Experts also acknowledge that "[a]norexia

²⁵⁴ M. Jenkins, "Reflections of the study of clergy burnout" *The Alban Institute* (2002), www.alban.org/ShowArticle.asp?ID=42 (accessed January 15, 2007).

²⁵⁵ Proeschold-Bell, "Holistic Approach."

²⁵⁶ Herman, "Anorexia of the Soul."

isn't just a problem with food or weight. It's an attempt to use food and weight to deal with emotional problems.”²⁵⁷ Herman suggests:

Like a diminishing teenage girl, pastors are encountering a thinning of their souls. High stress levels often produce feelings of bleakness, powerlessness, cynicism, resentment, stagnation, and disappointment. Ministry activities they once enjoyed now produce boredom and drudgery.²⁵⁸

Pastors rarely tackle such hectic schedules and exorbitant expectation levels without succumbing to a number of health ailments. “Physical symptoms may include headaches, digestive problems, high blood pressure, teeth grinding, and fatigue.”²⁵⁹ Any one of these maladies can prove paralyzing; however, Christina Maslach writes in *Reversing Burnout* that “[w]hen burnout is counteracted with engagement, exhaustion is replaced with enthusiasm, bitterness with compassion, and anxiety with efficacy.”²⁶⁰

Caring for our own bodies is a biblical directive. If a pastor and his family neglect their bodies physically, they will eventually suffer emotionally and spiritually. There is much to do for the Kingdom agenda, but clergy families may need to take a step back and unlearn some rather potentially hazardous modern-day patterns. According to LynNell Hancock, in 1850, “the average person slept nine-and-a-half hours per night. Now, thanks to electricity, the figure is seven hours per night and declining. There are 70 million

²⁵⁷ “Eating Disorders,” (Nov 2010), www.familydoctor.org/familydoctor/en/diseases-conditions/eating-disorders.html (accessed Jan 2011).

²⁵⁸ Herman, “Anorexia of the Soul.”

²⁵⁹ “Are You Burned Out? How To Tell and What to Do About It,” *Partner’s Report* 6/5 (May 2006), 13.

²⁶⁰ Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter, “Reversing Burnout: How to Rekindle Your Passion for Your Work,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 3/4 (2005), 44.

people with sleep disorders; we live in a society that is ‘fried’ by work, frazzled by the lack of time.”²⁶¹

“It’s time to be preventative, as well as curative.”²⁶² This is the recommendation of Reverend Dionne Hammond who admits this:

We (United Methodist ministers) are a terribly unhealthy pool of people physically; insurance rates reflect this. Self-care must be physical, emotional and spiritual. Simply put, we need a workout plan.²⁶³

Hammond is the associate pastor at East Lake United Methodist Church. One of her passions lay in her participation with Shade and Fresh Water, a ministry of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. Hammond is co-chairperson of the ministry at Shade and Fresh Water. During the ministry’s launch in 2001, Hammond began her involvement with the organization. At the time she was the spouse of a clergyman and was attending Asbury Theological Seminary. The vision of Shade and Fresh Water’s ministry is clear. It exists

to provide a transformative sanctuary for individuals and their families who are professionally associated with the Florida Conference of The United Methodist Church for the restoration of body, mind and spirit toward more abundant living.²⁶⁴

Hammond however possesses her own personal vision in relation to the ministry’s overall objective. “My personal vision is, ‘How can we facilitate a culture change?’ ”

²⁶¹ LynNell Hancock, “Breaking Point” in *Newsweek* (Mar 6, 1995) 56-61.

²⁶² Derek Maul, “Ministry makes health of clergy and their families top priority” *e-Review Florida United Methodist News Service* (Dec 7, 2010), www.flumc.info/cgi-script/csArticles/articles/000069/006946-p.htm (accessed Feb 2, 2011).

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Emotional

Lucy Wray, board member of Shade and Fresh Water, argues that

[c]lergy need to model what a healthy lifestyle is. When a pastor sets healthy boundaries and seeks a balance in life between the time for personal prayer, study and reflection to time with family, church responsibilities and play, it sends a message to all: practice what I do.²⁶⁵

It is difficult for pastors to invite their congregations to “practice what I do” in matters of health when crises are continually erupting and the unhealthy signs of ministry stress are visible in the pastor’s own life. “One survey found that 74 percent of clergy admit to a significant crisis due to the stress of ministry at least once in the ministry.”²⁶⁶

Such a high percentage is certainly disturbing in regard to the pastor, but consider also the exponential impact such calamity could have on the pastor’s family members. Rarely does a pastor experience pain in ministry without it doubling back on those closest to him. Ongoing ministry stressors facing the pastor cannot be concealed forever. These demands and pressures can cause hurt and heartache of epic proportions, with a massive trickle-down effect on the pastor’s family that often impales them emotionally. This emotional pain runs deep, and if it is not dealt with, if it is left unattended or suppressed, it can eventually result in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a disorder more commonly manifested in war veterans. This may be new information to many in the ministry; however, Thomas Fischer sheds light on it and on its increasing prominence because of its effects on pastoral families. “Pastors, no less than others, experience the pain of living in a broken, conflicted, and sinful world. The experience of this pain can affect pastors in remarkably dramatic ways.” Fischer continues: “Not all wounds are

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Jenkins, “Reflections.”

visible ... [and] though emotional and spiritual wounds outlast the physical pain, healing can happen.”²⁶⁷ This is good news; however, just as is the case with other maladies, one must recognize that there is a problem before healing can begin.

PTSD is a disorder which recounts and describes the nature of these [family violence, violence, crime, disasters, war, or any other overwhelming experience] acute and/or chronic traumatizations.²⁶⁸

According to the Sidran Institute:

There is a growing awareness among healthcare providers that traumatic experiences are widespread and that it is common for people who have been traumatized to develop medical and psychological symptoms associated with the experience.²⁶⁹

Is it fair therefore to suggest that the pastoral family might encounter overwhelming stressors in ministry, stressors so traumatizing and relentless that the outcome could result in such a disorder? Pastoral families are not immune from vulnerability to such an ailment. Consider the three specific categories of manifestations seen in those suffering from PTSD.

Intrusive Re-experiencing—People with PTSD frequently feel as if the trauma is happening again. This is sometimes called a flashback, reliving experience, or abreaction. The person may have intrusive pictures in his/her head about the trauma, have recurrent nightmares, or may even experience hallucinations about the trauma. Intrusive symptoms sometimes cause people to lose touch with the “here and now” and react in ways that they did when the trauma originally occurred. For example, many years later a victim of child abuse may hide trembling in a closet when feeling threatened, even if the perceived threat is not abuse-related.

Avoidance—People with PTSD work hard to avoid anything that might

²⁶⁷ Fischer, Thomas F., Post-Traumatic Stress: The Pastoral Experience, ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/328_ptsd_pastoral_experience.html. Accessed Mar 14, 2012.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ What Is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? <http://www.sidran.org/sub.cfm?contentID=76§ionid=4>. Accessed Mar 14, 2012.

remind them of the traumatic experience. They may try to avoid people, places, or things that are reminders, as well as numbing out emotions to avoid painful, overwhelming feelings. Numbing of thoughts and feelings in response to trauma is known as “dissociation” and is a hallmark of PTSD. Frequently, people with PTSD use drugs or alcohol to avoid trauma-related feelings and memories.

Arousal—Symptoms of psychological and physiological arousal are very distinctive in people with PTSD. They may be very jumpy, easily startled, irritable, and may have sleep disturbances like insomnia or nightmares. They may seem constantly on guard and may find it difficult to concentrate. Sometimes persons with PTSD will have panic attacks accompanied by shortness of breath and chest pain.²⁷⁰

When the pastor experiences ministry hurt of any magnitude, his family may feel the aftershocks. Thomas Fischer argues that “[p]astors can experience PTSD in response to severe crisis or crises such as severe conflict, congregational split, removal of office ... everyone has a different level of resilience and responds to traumatic stimuli in unique ways, there is no specific ‘trigger’ ... for PTSD.”²⁷¹

Other studies reveal that many clergy suffer depression as a result of confronting this continual ministry crisis. In an article entitled “The State of the Clergy,” G. Lloyd Rediger indicates that clergy depression is on the rise and the impact of it can be emotionally draining if people do not deal with it.

Another focus of clergy stress is the growing level of depression I’ve seen in pastors over the years. A clinically trained person knows that depression is debilitating and dangerous in either its biochemical form or its affective form. Medication and talk therapy can help. But unless the life-conditions perceived by the sufferer change in some way, or the hope of change is substantiated, depression often becomes chronic. Depression in its affective form is typically a function of internalized anger. Anger is usually internalized because of the fear of expressing it, because it is denied, and because no remedy is perceived. It is this relative lack of hope which is fueling much clergy depression. In its milder forms, it makes clergy more vulnerable to opportunities for malfeasance. In its more

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

severe forms it depletes personal energy beyond the normal drain from work. This is a leading reason why denominational programs flounder and congregational life is often drab. Such depression can become dangerous to health and to life as well.²⁷²

Sandra Moll and Kristine O'Brien, writing for the *Presbyterian Record* indicate that it is time to break the silence regarding emotionally unhealthy patterns plaguing clergy today. In reflecting on a sign posted outside a church in Ontario, Canada, that read "We're too blessed to be depressed," Moll and O'Brien claim that the sad reality is rather that

the truth is the message betrayed a sad fact about many of our congregations: we do not understand mental illness and we do not appreciate how deeply it is affecting the life of the church. Not only are people in the pew suffering, but our clergy show alarming statistics of depression and anxiety disorders.²⁷³

Their article, "Breaking the Silence," reveals findings of the World Health Organization that "estimate that by the year 2020, depression will be second only to heart disease as the leading global cause of disability and mortality."²⁷⁴

The gravity of mental illness is increasingly recognized as the number of individuals suffering from various forms of emotional issues continues to grow. Canadian findings alone indicate that

[m]ental illness in Canada is on the rise, and according to the Canadian Mental Health Association, one in five Canadians will develop a mental

²⁷² G. Lloyd Rediger, "The State of the Clergy," home.comcast.net/~glrediger/columns/survey.html (accessed Dec 1, 2011).

²⁷³ Sandra Moll and Kristine O'Brien, "Breaking the Silence: The mental health of our clergy," *Presbyterian Record*, www.presbyterianrecord.ca/2009/02/01/breaking-the-silence (accessed Aug 1, 2011).

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

illness in their lifetime. Among the most common are depression and anxiety disorders.²⁷⁵

In dealing with emotional concerns, many congregants find security and comfort in receiving counseling from their pastor, all the while ignorant of the fact that their pastor might be suffering with similar issues.

The Canadian landscape regarding clergy battling with emotional demons is as frightening as the American scene. A recent survey conducted by the Centre for Clergy Care on Clergy Well-Being revealed some disturbing trends. In its survey of more than 300 ministers from six Canadian denominations, they found that the number of those who had been diagnosed with clinical depression was double the national average. Almost 40 percent sought the care of a clinical counselor, and 45 percent sought advice from their family doctor regarding stress and anxiety issues. What is worse, these statistics likely underestimate the extent of clergy suffering, since studies show that only about half of those with major depression seek help. Clearly, the mental health of our clergy is in need of attention.²⁷⁶

Moll and O'Brien express their concerns regarding these findings and suggest that it is time to wake up and be attentive to just how serious this problem of clergy emotional health is.

The economic, personal and social costs of mental health problems are immense. It has been estimated that the cost of lost productivity due to workplace mental illness in Canada is in excess of \$30 billion per year.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

Mental health issues can also lead to strained relationships at work and at home, erosion of self-esteem, and for some, even suicide.²⁷⁷

As already described in chapter 2, stressors and health challenges are no respecter of persons or denominations in considering clergy. Authors Will J. G. Evers and Welko Tomic report findings from a survey of Dutch Reformed pastors claiming that they struggle with higher amounts of emotional exhaustion and experience lower levels of feelings of accomplishment.²⁷⁸

In 2001, the Pulpit & Pew research project based at Duke Divinity School announced its findings after surveying 2,500 pastors on pastoral leadership. They found that 10 percent reported being depressed. While this is similar to the general population, 40 percent reported being depressed or “worn out” at times. The Clergy Health Initiative reports findings from surveying the United Methodist Clergy in North Carolina and concludes that “[b]y and large, pastors reported that their rate of depression is roughly double that of all people in the United States, and that is only a measure of their symptoms in the two weeks prior to survey completion.” By extension, many more clergy will have been depressed at some point during their careers. The Initiative points out the significance of what was learned during clergy focus groups in regard to “the interplay between their vocation and their health”²⁷⁹ and how important it is to realize what these findings mean. “They said that good health depends upon being able to cope with stress and enact healthy behaviors such as exercising, wholesome eating, and maintaining personal or family time. They indicated that their ability to cope with stress and enact

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ Evers and Tomic, “Burnout among Dutch Reformed Pastors.”

²⁷⁹ divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/clergy-health-initiative/learning

healthy behaviors”²⁸⁰ is an important area to understand, and that there are many relevant factors involved in it, including the following:

- Their beliefs and skills, such as having the ability to set boundaries around personal time.
- The support of their close friends and family members.
- Their congregation’s ability to function well and afford the pastor personal time.
- The institution of the United Methodist Church. The extent to which the staff-parish relations committee understands and respects the pastor’s role, vacation, and personal time; whether their district superintendent supports healthy behaviors; and the challenges of itinerancy all impact a pastor’s level of stress and ability to maintain health behaviors.²⁸¹

The data reveal solid conclusions; if clergy choose not to practice good emotional care, other significant negative behaviors may surface. The pastor and/or his family members may develop negativity, cynicism, cantankerousness, confusion, and an indifference toward the ministry—all rather unfitting behaviors for a pastoral family.

Relational

Chris Jackson, writing for *Ministry Today* magazine, identifies a paralyzing pronouncement often made by parishioners, one which pastors often see coming and yet dislike hearing: “Pastor, we’ve decided to move on.”²⁸² For the pastor who has physically, emotionally, and spiritually been there for some of the most significant and life-changing events in the parishioner’s life to now hear him or her utter a seemingly casual “we’ll be

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Chris Jackson, “When the High Road Hurts,” *Ministry Today*, www.ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-leadership/pastoral-care/18487-when-the-high-road-hurts (accessed Jul 29, 2011).

seeing you, thanks”—almost nothing compares to the intense gut-wrenching ache these words invite. Jackson affirms:

It’s painful when we hear that people no longer want to be a part of our ministries. It’s additionally painful when they leave and don’t take the time to tell us *why* they’re leaving, *where* they’re going, or *what* we could possibly do to repair any damage in the relationship.²⁸³

Arguably, there is no more accurate avowal regarding clergy life than that “relationships both make and break a ministry.” This statement could be compared to the familiar saying, “you can’t live with them and you can’t live without them.” This declaration is often made about spouses in a marital relationship who are having difficulty relating; however, here it will be viewed in light of the pastorate. Ironical as it might appear, the pastor may be miserable if one of his parishioners is absent from church and yet, on the other hand, the parishioner’s very presence there might also make the pastor feel miserable. Relationships with congregants can be both pleasant and concurrently overwhelming. The shepherd is called to be in a relationship with his flock and generally finds great fulfillment in feeding them; however, there are times when he might be inclined to purposely turn his head away while tending the sheep, allowing them to wander a little too close to the edge of the cliff, ending up taking a good plunge. Determining whether or not a sheep is still a friend and happily grazing in your pasture, or a foe who is mischievously pursuing what seem to be greener pastures, is a daily reality.

In their book, *Ministerial Ethics*, authors Joe Trull and James Carter ask whether a minister’s congregation is “friend or foe?” They write of an interesting personal story

²⁸³ Ibid.

about a time when one of them visited a theological seminary and unexpectedly encountered a friend who just happened to be a tenured professor of theology at that institution.

After an exchange of greetings and inquiries about family, the professor brought up the problem of forced terminations. “Is the basic problem theology?” he asked. “No” was the reply to the scholar who had spent most of his adult life teaching theology. “Churches have an amazing tolerance for bad theology. The basic problem is relational.”²⁸⁴

Chris Jackson writes from the heart about pastors who have experienced lost relationships within the church. He argues that pastors should always “take the high road.”²⁸⁵ When parishioners leave the church, not only does the pastor have to deal with the break-up of a relationship, he also must tend to other hurts and disappointments as well.

People do leave, and when they do, their departure can lead us to an unexpected crossroads laced with pain, self-doubt and the bitter feelings that accompany injustice. God’s intention at these intersections is that we would take the high road. To do this we have to remember that we are sowers, and, according to Jesus, sowers don’t receive a 100 percent return from their sowing. In fact, from Jesus’ parable of the sower in Mark 4 we know that of all the seed we sow, 25 percent will be rejected outright, 75 percent will be appreciated and received, and only about 18 percent will actually bear fruit that remains.²⁸⁶

Many pastors and their families have experienced the utter joy and delight in witnessing parishioners come to salvation in Christ and then grow in their faith. At no other time does the pastoral family reflect the clear-cut dynamics of what relationship is all about than during these involvements. And at no other time do they operate as a

²⁸⁴ Joe E. Trull and James E. Carter, *Ministerial Ethics: Moral Formation for Church Leaders* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 89.

²⁸⁵ Jackson, “When the High Road Hurts.”

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

ministry team than when each participates in tending to the flock. These times are typically stress-free, but can also be rather short-lived. When the parishioner begins to act up and act out—for instance, questioning the integrity and character of the pastoral family—the relationship is compromised and may never be salvaged. Some of these antagonists, these “clergy killers,” will never be content until they succeed at running the pastor out of town.

Pastors and their families experience no greater anguish than when the battle seems lost and relationships are forever ruined. In his book, *Wounded Ministers*, pastor Eric Rogers pens, with vulnerable honesty, the gut-wrenching experiences of lost relationships in the months leading up to his leaving his pastorate. “Regardless of how long and how strong the pastor stands... [a] deep and desperate emotional damage is the fallout. The pastor, his spouse and family feel torched by a diabolical sense and strategy of rejection and disbelief from the enemies of God.”²⁸⁷ Rogers’s story suggests that the pastorate is essentially one big relationship, and the pastor and his family had better have their guard up, because it will only be a matter of time before “Sister Snake” and “Demon Dumb”²⁸⁸—who were once your great friends—become your worst nightmare, leaving broken hearts and a multitude of questions in their wake.

The pastor and his spouse are faced with more questions than answers. What just happened? How could this happen? Who are our friends? Who are our enemies? Who can we trust? They feel alone and are facing problems never anticipated. This crisis eventually affects every aspect of their lives. In many instances, neither the pastor nor the spouse nor the children can talk about the church without heated conversations and bitterness marred in pain. Ultimately, the pastor and his family’s spiritual and emotional state, their financial condition and their health are severely

²⁸⁷ Eric O. Rogers, *Wounded Minister: Reflections of a Former Pastor* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2006), 11.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 6-9.

impacted, similar to a grief cycle and emotional rollercoaster of (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance).²⁸⁹

Trull and Carter recognize the significance of relationships in ministry:

Relationships are more important in ministry than in any other profession. The morals of the carpenter who framed your house probably did not concern you greatly. You probably do not worry much about whether you like your dentist personally as long as he or she is competent in dentistry. When you look for a surgeon, your primary concern is more than likely the person's professional qualifications and competence [rather than] the surgeon's personality. In all these areas, professional competence is of more importance than personal relationships.²⁹⁰

The authors convincingly argue this is not the case in ministry. Typically, it does not matter how biblically literate the pastor is, or what an incredible Bible expositor he might be, or that he has tremendous skill in running the church as an organization; pastors cannot lead churches without being in good relationships with their people. Yet this is undoubtedly the greatest issue facing clergy today; not having enough time in his or her schedule to be in a reasonable yet enjoyable relationship with his parishioners, let alone his own family.

Bill Tammeus is an award-winning faith columnist. He currently writes a monthly piece for *The Presbyterian Outlook*. Tammeus recently wrote an article for the *National Catholic Reporter* entitled "To Avoid Clergy Burnout, Parishioners Have to Lend a Hand." In the article, Tammeus encourages parishioners to help their pastors out a little by relieving some of the pastoral burdens. In addition, he sums up for the reader what he imagines a sort of day-in-the-life-of-a-pastor to be, offering his readers some insight into why many of the pastor's relationships are barely existent.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁹⁰ Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 89-90

When I think about the work of the clergy these days, I imagine someone sitting in front of three active computer screens while holding and using two smart phones—all the while carrying on an eyeball-to-eyeball conversation with a parishioner and motioning directions to a church staff member at the next desk. And while all this is going on the pastor is also praying and meditating. That may be hyperbole but it doesn't sound unrealistic to lots of clergy I know.²⁹¹

In October 2008, a telephone survey was led by LifeWay Research, in which 1,002 Protestant pastors were randomly selected in an attempt to gather findings about how they spend their time.²⁹² The results were predictable: “Protestant pastors in America are working long hours, sometimes at the expense of relationships with church members, prospects, family and even the Lord.”²⁹³ Pastors confessed to working long and exhausting hours, and declare that “meetings and electronic correspondence consume large amounts of time ... while counseling, visitation, family time, prayer and personal devotions suffer in too many cases.”²⁹⁴ Other findings in the survey were telling as well.

Time with family rates as a priority for many pastors, but some find alarmingly little opportunity to be with their spouses and children. While 30 percent of the pastors report spending 20–29 hours with their families each week—and 16 percent indicate spending 40 or more hours with them weekly—almost 10 percent say they spend nine hours a week or less with family members. At the same time, 24 percent say they watch 10–14 hours of television each week, and 13 percent put their TV time at 15 hours or more.²⁹⁵

Clergywoman Sheri S. Ferguson suggests:

²⁹¹ Bill Tammeus, “To avoid clergy burnout, parishioners have to lend a hand,” *National Catholic Reporter* (Sept 22, 2010), ncronline.org/.../avoid-clergy-burnout-parishioners-have-lend-hand (accessed Dec 10, 2011).

²⁹² Responses were weighted to reflect the geographic distribution of the churches, and the sample size provides 95 percent confidence that sampling error does not exceed ± 3.2 percent.

²⁹³ Mark Kelly, “LifeWay Research finds pastors long work hours can come at the expense of people, ministry,” (Jan 05, 2010), www.lifeway.com/Article/LifeWay-Research-finds-pastors-long-work-hours-can-come-at-the-expense-of-people-ministry (accessed Feb 2, 2012).

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

Today's clergy seem to have greater demands and less support, and the radical changes in our society over the past 50 years have fundamentally redefined the very nature of what it means to be in ministry. The very acts that get clergy rewarded in their ministry can also be the very things that wreak havoc on their family, personal, physical and spiritual lives.²⁹⁶

Christian leaders and clergy enter into ministry with an understanding that there will be demands placed upon them, and it is often the dreams with which they are pregnant that cause them to hang in there through trials and tribulations. Most will affirm that their families pay an enormous price and experience great loss in giving him/her to the Lord's work. Daniel Langford confesses that his wife Diana lost the

time and attention of her husband to other lovers. These paramours were educational achievements, success, and personal growth. The goals in themselves are not wrong. However, when you as the husband/father are the only one benefiting, these dreams become whores.²⁹⁷

Most clergy make an attempt at eking out time to begin and nurture relationships both at home and within the congregation. First and foremost, they understand from the biblical mandate how important it is to maintain a healthy family life. Pastor and author, Wayne Cordeiro, reminds clergy how significant a stable home life is.

Someone once said that the darkest place of any lighthouse is always at its base. The same can be said of our families. A pastor can shine a radiant beam out to the horizons, warning passing ships of dangerous waters ... while their own unmaintained plumbing floods the home.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Ferguson, "Clergy."

²⁹⁷ Daniel L. Langford, *The Pastor's Family: The Challenges of Family Life and Pastoral Responsibilities* (Binghamton: The Haworth Pastoral Press, 1998), 17.

²⁹⁸ Wayne Cordeiro, "Fighting for Your Family," www.ministrytodaymag.com/index.php/ministry-leadership/pastoral-care/18392-fighting-for-your-family (accessed Dec 10, 2011).

The base of the foundation is shaky in countless pastoral homes, and the floodwater is rising. The pastor fights an uphill battle to be all and do all in meeting not only the needs of his family members, but the needs of his parishioners as well.

The pastor's wife and children confront their own set of relationship issues and are many times the unsung heroes waiting in the background, hoping to catch even a glimpse of their husband/dad and encourage him to come and enjoy some personal family time. The PWs and PKs admit to frequently fighting feelings of anger, abandonment, and disappointment as they struggle to get his much-needed attention. Daniel L. Langford, author of *The Pastor's Family*, admits:

I did not understand what I had done, but ... I deserted my family, and I am not alone. Preachers' kids and pastors' wives from innumerable churches and denominations have experienced a culturally accepted wholesale neglect that has been woven into a deficient model of ministry. The most common perpetrators of this neglect are male pastors.²⁹⁹

The PW and PK often find it problematic in complaining about the neglect they feel as a result of the ministry demands placed on their husband/father. Not only do they battle with neglect, they also feel loneliness, anger, bitterness, abandonment, and heartbreaking disappointment. Because the pastorate requires loving and caring for people, the idea of grumbling too much adds guilt to their already growing list of issues. Pastors who are already overly stressed can many times interpret these longings for his time as nagging selfishness, and so the relationship with his wife and kids is hindered and struggles to survive.

²⁹⁹ Langford, *The Pastor's Family*, 3.

Psychologist Archibald Hart, speaking at a seminar in California, was vulnerably honest with his audience and presented some interesting advice. “Bitching gives valuable information.”³⁰⁰ Langford reinforces Hart’s counsel by sharing from his own personal experience about learning a valuable lesson from his wife in regard to grumbling.

A distressing argument with my wife ... opened my eyes to my neglectful behavior. Nonetheless, I found it hard to accept this confrontation as necessary to bring about needed changes. The argument with Diana gave me valuable information, and I was forced to pay attention to problems that had put our family off balance.³⁰¹

It is well documented that most Christian leaders and pastors are “off balance” in their relationships. Many suffer from loneliness and very rarely have a close personal same-gender person they call “friend.” They choose by default to live their pastoral/personal life in seclusion instead of forming meaningful relationships. Why? the issue is primarily one of trust. “One pastor put it this way:

There are times when I feel alone in the church, with no apparent encouragement or support from the congregation. I’m the pastor and I’m supposed to keep everything going. The attitude seems to be *You feed me; it’s your job, and I do not have to help you.* I’m supposed to give, give, and give until finally there is nothing left.³⁰²

According to Peter Drucker, “great leaders have to walk alone from time to time; therefore the leader must somehow create a capacity for loneliness.”³⁰³ The pastor often purposefully chooses his spouse and children as his close friend(s); however, in an

³⁰⁰ Archibald Hart, *The Emotional Hazards of Ministry*, A Doctor of Ministry Seminar, Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, May, 1988.

³⁰¹ Langford, *The Pastor’s Family*, 4.

³⁰² J. Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human: Dealing with the Expectations of Ministry* (The Leadership Library 13. Waco, TX: CTI; Word Books, 1988), 31.

³⁰³ Peter F. Drucker, *The Leader of the Future*, (San Francisco CA, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996), 9.

attempt to protect them, he seldom confides in them about the depth of his burdens and the pressures under which he continually ministers.

A Barna study recently revealed that “sixty-one percent of pastors say they have no close personal friends.”³⁰⁴ Having to forfeit precious relationships is perhaps one of the necessary evils for the pastor; however, Neil Anderson, author and President of Freedom in Christ Ministries, cautions pastors that

[a] major symptom of depression is withdrawal from meaningful relationships, which would be number two on the list of destructive behaviors. Isolating yourself to the point where you are alone with your negative thoughts will certainly contribute to the downward spiral.³⁰⁵

If isolating oneself is truly injurious to the pastor’s health, then, indeed, countless clergy appear to be sinking.

The pastor is not precisely like any other leader; not CEO, not physician, not attorney, not social worker. The pastor rightly marches to a different drumbeat. And that’s the challenge for pastors who lead. They cannot march lockstep with the methods of corporations and secular nonprofit organizations. No one outside the pastorate fully understands its own unique cadence.”³⁰⁶

Spiritual

The Clergy Health Initiative study reveals: “Pastors define health broadly as mind, body, and spirit, and they do not feel healthy unless they feel spiritually vital.”³⁰⁷ The Institute’s

³⁰⁴ Matthew Green, “What We Lost,” *Ministry Today*, www.ministrytodaymag.com/~ministry/index.php/features/14355-what-we-lost (accessed Feb 20, 2012).

³⁰⁵ Anderson, *Christ Centered Therapy*, 279.

³⁰⁶ Harold L. Myra, “Leaders: Learning Leadership From Some of Christianity’s Best,” (Leadership Library 12. *Christianity Today*, 1987).

³⁰⁷ *Clergy Health Initiative*.

research team presented questions pertaining to various aspects of the pastor's own spirituality.

We asked questions such as this: "During the past 6 months, how often have you ... experienced the presence and power of God in the ordinary?" Their responses indicate that their spiritual vitality is very strong; on a scale from "never" to "always," most responses fell between "often" and "frequently."³⁰⁸

This data, however, contradicts other findings and may not really present a true picture of pastors' spiritual health. They may feel a connection with God as well as his presence, but most pastors confess to failing and some miserably so, when keeping their commitment to maintaining their spiritual health. Most pastors today seem to struggle with high levels of spiritual anemia. Ministry sucks the spiritual life right out of them, and many are in need of a spiritual blood transfusion. Pastors realize the importance of spending time with God: It is how God speaks to pastors and instills them with wisdom so that they may fully please Him in all they do.³⁰⁹ How would anyone persuade a pastor, who is supposed to be in constant close communion with God, to honestly answer questions about his spiritual disciplines? Most pastors will admit they never feel as close as they need to be to God or spend as much time sharing spiritual intimacy with him as they desire.

Trull and Carter argue that

[t]he cleric is a ministering person as well as a pilgrim of faith. Continual spiritual growth is as important for the minister as it is for a parishioner ... 'familiarity breeds contempt,' states the proverb. Few ministers treat the Bible or spiritual disciplines with contempt, but some ministers may treat

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Col 1:9-12

both ... with such familiarity that they lose some of their mystery and wonder.³¹⁰

A LifeWay survey of pastors indicates that some pastors are not making their spiritual disciplines a priority:

The amount of time spent in prayer and personal devotions raises questions about the vitality of many pastors' spiritual lives. While 52 percent report spending one to six hours in prayer each week, 5 percent say they spend no time at all in prayer. Furthermore, while 52 percent say they spend two to five hours a week in personal devotions unrelated to teaching preparation, 14 percent indicate they spend an hour or less in personal devotions each week.³¹¹

The late W. A. Criswell, described as one of the great expositional preachers of the twentieth century,³¹² mentored up-and-coming pastors looking to him for words of wisdom at succeeding in life and ministry. Whenever asked, Criswell overtly admonished them: "Keep your mornings for God."³¹³

Doug Morell and his wife, Suzie, have, since 1994, faithfully provided many hundreds of thousands of free discipleship resources online to various Christian organizations through their ministry, CoreDiscipleship. Doug has some rather keen insight in relation to how one's spiritual discipline is affected by our current culture.

We are a generation of "PopTart" people in regard to our stillness before the Lord. The pace of this present darkness has infiltrated our church; we are running a marathon at an unsustainable 100-meter pace—a pace that does not afford opportunity to be still and know that God is God (Ps. 46:10). We are so busy that we cannot worship God. We do not know how to get quiet and be quiet. What we call our devotional time or study is the spiritual equivalent of devouring a PopTart for breakfast. We are

³¹⁰ Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 68.

³¹¹ Kelly, "LifeWay Research."

³¹² Todd Starnes and Tammi Ledbetter, "Texas Baptists prepare to memorialize Criswell," *Baptist Press* (Jan 10, 2002), www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?id=12520 (accessed Feb 15, 2011).

³¹³ W.A. Criswell, *Criswell's Guidebook for Pastors* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), 59.

overworked and overwhelmed. We are fragmented, frenetic, and disenfranchised—ever scurrying about, but achieving little to nothing of eternal value. And instead of modeling a lifestyle of quiet contemplation, the church has joined the marketplace roar.³¹⁴

Have contemporary clergy demoted themselves into “Pastor Pop Tarts” waiting in line only to be popped in the toaster and spiritually heated, to give out fuzzy warm spiritual feelings that last only a few passing moments?

Concluding Thoughts

Current data and various resources analyzed certainly assist our understanding of the serious nature of the pastor’s health challenges and the trickle-down effect it has on his family as well as his congregation. While certain data argues that some pastors are learning via hard knocks that ministry stressors must be controlled for the sake of good health habits, other findings suggest that contemporary clergy are succumbing to a workhorse mentality just as easily today as previous generations of pastors did, and at the expense of their good health. It appears from survey findings that we really have not yet learned the hard lessons regarding balance in ministry and family. From all indications pastors must continue to be educated in declaring that their health and family life is as much of an obligation as is the Lord’s work. When the pastor and his family experience serious relationship issues internally or with peers or congregants, their healthy lifestyle is compromised and so is their productivity and effectiveness in ministry. Findings show that the United Methodists seems to be the frontrunners in concentrating on clergy health issues, by educating their pastors and congregants to work toward better health habits.

³¹⁴ Doug Morrell, “Too Busy for God,” coregroups.org/toobusy.html (accessed Feb 1, 2012).

However, in studying data crossing denominational lines, there appears to be a distinct lack of attention to seeking more detailed data about the health and well-being of pastors' kids. Since there is inadequate information we can only draw tentative conclusions.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES

Considering the unhealthy state of pastoral families which the research presented in this thesis describes, a qualitative case study was undertaken to examine further the concern of various unhealthy practices resulting from stressors in ministry. The researcher formulated a series of questions to be answered during personal interviews. The subjects were selected randomly from a list of colleagues of the researcher; they included seven pastors (P), five pastor's wives (PW), and five pastor's kids (PK) of various ages, tenures in the pastoral ministry, and from three different denominational affiliations. Not all subjects were selected from the same family and the Ps, PWs and PKs were asked different questions although they related to the same general theme. To further clarify: The pastors were asked one set of questions, the pastors' wives another and the pastors' kids yet another. The intention was to gather evidence from real-life situations in order to better understand the primary concern of this thesis. That enhanced understanding assisted the researcher in developing a multiple-step strategic health plan through which pastors might survive and thrive in the pastorate.

Interview Questions for the Pastor (P)

1. State your name.
 - P1 GW
 - P2 MS
 - P3 GP
 - P4 RC
 - P5 GT
 - P6 SB
 - P7 JJ

2. What is your age?
 - P1 48
 - P2 52
 - P3 62
 - P4 55
 - P5 62
 - P6 56
 - P7 52

3. How many years have you been actively serving in ministry?
 - P1 25 years
 - P2 26 years; worked for John Maxwell organization to help local pastors
 - P3 32 years
 - P4 34 years
 - P5 42 years
 - P6 38 years
 - P7 38 years

4. What is your tenure in the pastor role?
 - P1 10 years
 - P2 26 years
 - P3 3 churches, first a youth and associate, second and third church 7 years a senior
 - P4 19 years in a lead role
 - P5 32 years as lead pastor
 - P6 29 years
 - P7 16 years pastor; 17 years full-time evangelism

5. What denomination are you affiliated with?
 - P1 Non-denominational
 - P2 24 years Independent Baptist; 2 years Non-denominational
 - P3 Independent Baptist
 - P4 Southern Baptist
 - P5 Southern Baptist
 - P6 Independent Baptist
 - P7 Southern Baptist

6. What country and/or state do you pastor in?
 - P1 Tennessee
 - P2 Florida, South Carolina, Texas
 - P3 Kansas, Texas, New Mexico, Washington
 - P4 W. Virginia- 7 ½ , Florida-10 ½
 - P5 For the past 28 years in Georgia
 - P6 Arkansas
 - P7 Kansas

7. How old were you when you first entered the pastorate?
 - P1 38
 - P2 23 years old; senior pastor at 30 years old
 - P3 25
 - P4 24
 - P5 28
 - P6 18 as youth pastor, 26 as senior pastor
 - P7 36

8. At that point, did you have any formal training either undergraduate or seminary training?
 - P1 Yes
 - P2 Yes, Undergraduate in Theology
 - P3 No, I was in Bible College
 - P4 Undergraduate
 - P5 Yes, both undergraduate and seminary
 - P6 Yes, completed BA and 2/3rd of Masters
 - P7 No

9. How many years had you been married at this point?

- P1 25 years
- P2 12 years
- P3 Yes
- P4 3
- P5 8 years
- P6 9 years
- P7 17 years

10. Did your spouse support your decision to accept the pastorate?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes
- P3 Yes
- P4 Yes
- P5 Yes
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

11. Were you a parent upon accepting the pastorate?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, second child just born when transitioned to South Carolina
- P3 Yes
- P4 No
- P5 Yes
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

12. If so, how many children did you have at that point?

- P1 1
- P2 2
- P3 2
- P4 N/A
- P5 2
- P6 3
- P7 3

13. What were the sexes and ages of your children at that point?

- P1 10
- P2 Son-4 years old, Daughter 2 months old
- P3 2 girls, 5 and 6 years old
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son-6 years old, Daughter-2 years old
- P6 3 boys, 6, 4, and 1 ½
- P7 Daughter-17, Son-15, Daughter-11

14. What misconceptions if any did you have going into the pastorate?

- P1 My gifts alone could get me there
- P2 People would follow leadership easily
- P3 Much more difficult being a senior pastor than I thought
- P4 Christians were of the same mindset in building God's Kingdom and not their own. Didn't understand there were sacred cows.
- P5 I was fairly well prepared having served as an associate for 2 pastors listed in Elmer Town's book, *America's Fastest Growing Churches*. However, I did not realize how control hungry some people can be.
- P6 People would be in harmony
- P7 The nature of people. And this is quite a thing to do to your kids. The night before we launched our church plant I knew our lives would never be the same again.

15. What were/are the greatest challenges you face in ministry?

- P1 Stress, Finances
- P2 Last 5 years, taking the church to where I wanted to in context of their DNA. The church was 45-50 years old and history played a huge role in the fiber of the DNA.
- P3 People, balancing time with family and ministry; trying to live on a pastor's income
- P4 Unrealistic expectations of which some were self-imposed
- P5 Conflict resolution. I did not receive training for this, and was not well prepared to handle crucial conflict situations.
- P6 Organization and Administration
- P7 Loneliness

16. What were/are the greatest challenges you face in maintaining a balance between ministry and family?

- P1 People
- P2 Scheduling-prioritizing family along with the tension of the pastorate
- P3 Not enough hours in the day to accomplish all
- P4 Putting family first
- P5 I really don't think I had a challenge here. My family knew they came before the ministry, and the churches where I served knew my family was a high priority in my life. The birthdays, sporting/creative arts events of my children were of first order on my daily calendar.
- P6 Flawed sense of responsibilities resulting in poor time management. I believed I had to counsel, preach every service, and missed critical junctures of kids' events.
- P7 The work in never done.

17. Did you or do you ever feel and/or live as if the church must take precedence over your family?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Family always first, but certain church crisis sent a message to my family that they were not first, but deep in my heart they always were and are. I was so consumed with the church crisis my daughter said during years of crisis at last church, "I just want my old dad back!"
- P3 Absolutely
- P4 Yes
- P5 I do not think I ever felt this as a pressure, and I do not think my wife or children ever sensed they were "second fiddle" to the church
- P6 I did but I fought hard not for it to happen
- P7 Yes

18. Do you feel like you ever served the people more than you served your family?

- P1 Yes
- P2 At times, Yes, it was inevitable.
- P3 Absolutely
- P4 Yes
- P5 I do not feel this way at all.
- P6 Early on, the first five years.
- P7 Hesitated then responded yes; Knucklehead board members.

19. Did or do you ever feel overwhelmed by all the expectations of your congregants?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Not overwhelmed, but pressured. At the last church two things stand out. (1) Is that the older folks were upset I chose not to wear a tie. (2) My sister was delivered from a lesbian lifestyle so I brought her to the church to share her testimony and against me for having her come speak.
- P3 Absolutely
- P4 Yes
- P5 I think I handle a full calendar and stress reasonably well. Although the expectations from my congregants were often high, I rarely felt them to be overwhelming.
- P6 Many times, I still do.
- P7 Yes

20. How have you and your family adjusted to “living in the spotlight” or “under a microscope” or “in a fishbowl”?

- P1 Not well
- P2 Easy for me, but for my two kids I was adamant that they both lived without being labeled as PK’s. They were just ordinary kids.
- P3 Very difficult and I didn’t do an adequate job
- P4 We didn’t. We just survived.
- P5 Ah, now here is a tough one, and I hated it ... the expectation that “because my children were the pastor’s kids” that they were held to a higher standard. I taught them to live a high standard, but it should be because of our audience of ONE and not because of the expectations of the “church ladies”.
- P6 Not well. Our sons resent the inability to eat in a restaurant without people talking and interrupting our meal. They are not bitter, but hurt at times. My wife and I find ourselves tired of the demands of people and are growing more weary of the past two years.
- P7 Very difficult

21. Did anything take you by surprise?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Our family has a standing joke. The years at the last church were “the years from hell.” This church also had a Christian school and my kids felt pressure having to attend there with all the expectations.
- P3 Yes, the harshness that people could be on you
- P4 How quickly so called friends and leaders can turn against you when you’re not going the direction they think you should.
- P5 Many things took me by surprise: (1) That the congregants each felt “they paid my salary” (2) The people who wanted to have a say-so in where we lived, what we drove, how we dressed (3) How much time people wanted just to have you hear them out ... not wanting counsel or advice Just a listening ear. (4) The “church bosses” ! (5) People who attempted to buy the pastor (6) People who did not know their spiritual giftedness or talents and tried to push their way into an area of service in which they were not qualified. SHALL I GO ON ?
- P6 Demands of some people who try to control your family life.
- P7 Deception of the people.

22. How do you handle any criticism from congregants?

- P1 Not Good (underscored). I do not handle this well.
- P2 I tried to respond in the spirit, knowing there is usually a shred of truth in any criticism. I was taught to “respond” and not “react.” Our kids were very young during my first two pastorates. However, during the last pastorate my daughter’s spiritual life suffered greatly within 6 months of the pastorate.
- P3 Stuffed it away and went on. I let it go.
- P4 I internalized mine. My wife talked about it.
- P5 In my early years ... Internally, at first. Then, responded poorly. Now, I am older, and I would want to use more wisdom by: Considering the source; Give attention to legitimate criticism. Thank them for pointing out my short-sightedness. Fix the needed area. Move on.
- P6 First few years took it personally, but second half of my pastorate I considered the source.
- P7 I tried to confront, but most people won’t agree to any reason or confrontation.

23. Is your family dealing well with it?

- P1 No
- P2 Wife took it tough, but it drove her to God. There were discouragement and dark days.
- P3 Very hurtful and they became very protective of the family
- P4 She talked about it.
- P5 Family probably rarely deals well with the criticism of other family members. We tend to support one another and fight those who oppose them.
- P6 No
- P7 They are simply worn down and tired of it.

24. Have you set up boundaries to separate your professional life from your personal life? If so, please discuss these.

- P1 No
- P2 Yes, we tried to create normality.
- P3 No, I was taught to take care of the church and God will take care of your family-there was no such thing as boundaries back then
- P4 Yes
- P5 I really have not done this. Honestly, for me, the two blend together to the point that I would struggle to determine how to do it well. Even when our children lived at home, “church was life, and life was church”.
- P6 Definitely, We moved to a rural location, quit answering our home phone, quit officiating at the church, refused to let people make demands of our kids, don’t shake hands at back doors after service ends, discontinued Sunday night services and don’t give our cell phones out.
- P7 No, not originally, but after 15 years yes

25. Did you involve your spouse and family on the above?

- P1 No
- P2 Yes
- P3 None at all
- P4 Yes
- P5 See above
- P6 Yes
- P7 No, not for the first 15 years ...to my shame.

26. Would you admit to ever emotionally abandoning your spouse for the sake of the ministry?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Unfortunately yes, but not intentionally
- P3 Yes
- P4 Yes
- P5 I hope not. I hope she would not have felt this way. Though she has never expressed it “just that way”, she has felt (at times) that choosing another vocation could ease the pain that ministry sometimes causes.
- P6 No
- P7 Yes

27. How would your spouse rate your marriage on a scale of 1-10, 1 low and 10 high?

- P1 Great
- P2 Today a 9, however during the church crisis years a 6 or 6 1/2
- P3 8 or 9 back then; divorced now
- P4 While in the pastorate a 7 and now in the pastor encouragement ministry a 9.
- P5 On a scale of 1-10 (10 is best), she might say I’m given her an 8 marriage. When I write this, I regret that it could not be 10 ... she certainly deserves for me to be more for her.
- P6 10
- P7 10

28. What things do you need to work on in your marriage?

- P1 Time
- P2 Making my wife feel protected. I do, but she doesn’t see it. Two weeks ago we were jogging. I run 5k and she does 2 1/2K. We have a rule that at night I back track to watch her and make sure she is safe. During the day I run ahead of her. That day, my neighbor was walking his pit-bull dog. I ran ahead of my wife and she stayed behind my neighbor purposefully because of the dog. I thought she was fine. When I returned to her we had heated words because she felt unprotected.
- P3 Trying to spend adequate time together and not feeling guilt for not serving the church
- P4 Communication
- P5 Conflict resolution (this seems to have been my greatest short-coming in every area of relationship).
- P6 Continually rethinking our responsibilities and how we use our time.
- P7 Patience and play time. Graciousness-although she knows I do love her very much.

29. Have you and your spouse attended any marriage retreats?

- P1 No
- P2 Yes and they were effective, like a shot in the arm.
- P3 Yes, annually but I don't think they are effective
- P4 No, but we hosted and spoke at them
- P5 Yes, we have been blessed to attend several. I wish EVERY married couple could attend one each year. We have also hosted many marriage retreats. For 25-yrs, we hosted a 4-day, 3-night marriage retreat to Gatlinburg.
- P6 No, Maybe 1 and we hosted one in Indiana.
- P7 Yes and we conduct them as well. I would love to take my wife to more retreats. Sadly, our church never gave us an envelope and said, "Here pastor, take your wife and go be renewed."

30. Have you ever asked your spouse what his/her greatest need is in marriage?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, (1) providing financially for her which our first church did not. While in our church in Texas we were in a building program all 9 years. Only 4 of those years did the church provide for us financially. (2) Protection.
- P3 Yes
- P4 No
- P5 Yes. It is to give lots of affirmation and listen without feeling a need to resolve all her pain.
- P6 Yes
- P7 Probably, but not enough.

31. Have you at any time during your pastorate taken either short-term or long-term sabbaticals for the sake of your own health or the health of your family?

- P1 Yes, need to.
- P2 No, they were never offered. We do take vacations
- P3 No, never heard that word when I was pastoring
- P4 No, I was never given the opportunity
- P5 No ... but have needed to on several occasions.
- P6 Yes, three months, but came home on three of those Sundays.
- P7 No, no one supported it. People put me on a guilt trip if I was gone for more than one consecutive Sunday.

32. Do you take time individually with each of your children to discuss life and ministry?

- P1 Yes, sometimes too much
- P2 Not set times, but there are opportunities and moments
- P3 Yes, but not qualitative or quantitative, very shallow amounts.
- P4 N/A
- P5 For over 20-yrs. I spent several hours each Saturday morning one-on-one with one child at a time. This provided great opportunity to teach spontaneously about life and ministry (when appropriate). Subsequently, 3 of our 4 children have served in vocational ministry, and two continue to do so today.
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes, especially within the last year after sustaining a horrendous 5 year church crisis.

33. Are you aware of what “issues” either your spouse or any of your children have with the pastorate?

- P1 Yes
- P2 A fairly good feel for their role but situations caused all of them to be wounded. My daughter has moved beyond her issues with a vengeance, but my older son is still in pain.
- P3 Yes, but I ignored it back then
- P4 Yes, for my wife.
- P5 I am not. As mentioned previously, 3 of our 4 children have served in vocational Ministry. Two remain in vocational ministry, and one is now a homemaker and mother.
- P6 No
- P7 Not enough as there never seems to be time to get into this.

34. Have you set aside specific time away to discuss these issues?

- P1 No
- P2 Yes, during the church crisis I wounded my son in the process. I have apologized however; he has gone through a crisis of faith because of it.
- P3 No
- P4 Yes
- P5 I don't think any issues exist. My two sons currently in vocational ministry have sought counsel and advice re: their ministry positions.
- P6 At this age it now a joke like being interrupted in the restaurants.
- P7 No, not nearly enough

35. Have you discussed your greatest hurt in ministry with your family members?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, we are very open about it
- P3 No
- P4 Yes
- P5 Yes. They have each, in some way, been involved in seeing it firsthand.
- P6 Yes
- P7 No, not the “greatest” hurt, but I have discussed other hurts.

36. When was the last time you laughed with members of your family? Summarize the event

- P1 Last week-we laugh a lot
- P2 We do laugh. We understand the value in a good laugh. In fact we try to keep things light. We laughed at dinner one week ago.
- P3 N/A
- P4 This past weekend as we celebrated my wife’s birthday.
- P5 This past Christmas was a wonderful “family time” with 3 of our 4 children and 4 of our 5 grandchildren. The house was filled with fun and laughter for the two days we were all together. My wife did creative things with the children. We wrestled, told stories, played “I remember when.” It was wonderful.
- P6 Yes, the last time I saw them.
- P7 Seven months ago at my youngest daughter’s second wedding. Six months ago with my little granddaughter and every weekend when I spend time with her.

37. Have you ever neglected your responsibilities to your family?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes.
- P3 Absolutely
- P4 Yes
- P5 Honestly, without sounding prideful, this may be an area of success
- P6 Yes.
- P7 Oh, Yes many times to my regret.

38. Would you admit that your marriage is a healthy one? If so please admit why and if not do you feel comfortable discussing why not?

- P1 Yes, because of recent tests
- P2 Yes. Yes.
- P3 As healthy as could be back then
- P4 Yes
- P5 I think our marriage is VERY healthy. My wife & I are “best friends” and “ministry partners”. She is the most amazing and incredible combination in a wife that every man dreams of. She is a cheerful and faithful Christ-follower, loyal wife, dedicated mother, consecrated mentor of ladies, impeccable homemaker, entertainer, ever-learning student, lover of The Word, and very capable ministry partner. We are still infectious in love with eyes that twinkle only for one another.
- P6 Yes.
- P7 Yes, of course. I realize it more now than every before.

39. Is your relationship with all of your children in tact? Are they healthy relationships?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes. Yes.
- P3 Pretty much so. There is always some regret on my part
- P4 N/A
- P5 I currently struggle with the relationship with one of our married children. It is a situation of my child needing to “cleave to the spouse”, and the spouse does not want to have a close relationship with our family.
- P6 Yes, Yes.
- P7 Yes, with the two youngest, however, my eldest daughter and I are not where we once were (tears). I am closer now to my youngest daughter who has recently experienced severe trials and heartaches. I don’t know how to fix my relationship with my eldest daughter. I have tried and she is not responding. My son and I are very close.

40. Do you know the following about each of your children?

What are their birthdates; year included?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Son-yes: daughter-yes
- P3 Yes, but not the years they were born
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son (10/13/71), Daughter (03/20/75), Son (04/02/84), Daughter (05/31/86)
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

What is their greatest insecurity?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 Probably not, No
- P4 N/A
- P5 I'm not sure I could answer this one.
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

What is their favorite subject in school?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son (Bible), Daughter (Speech & Drama), Son (Music), Daughter (Psychology)
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

Where do they struggle?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 No
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son (Relationships), Daughter (Having to be the spiritual leader in her home) Son (Leadership), Daughter (Not being married at age 25)
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

What is their favorite sport?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son (College Basketball), Daughter (Cheerleader – Not a sportsperson) Son (Baseball), Daughter (Tennis)
- P6 Yes
- P7 Yes

Do you remember when each child made a commitment to Christ? Can you discuss a few details?

- P1 Yes, both boys with their mother
- P2 Yes, Son-at 7 years old: daughter at 4 but recommitted at 6
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son (5-yrs. old in our home in Indiana. Later, the assurance in a youth service) Daughter (4-yrs. old with her Mother) Son (6-yrs. old at home) Daughter (6-yrs. old at home. Later, the assurance while in Bible College)
- P6 Yes, all around 7 years of age.
- P7 Absolutely, Yes. Daughter 7 in Chattanooga Tennessee, Son Euless Texas at 7, Daughter 7 in Wichita Kansas before a horrific snow storm.

What is your child's favorite color?

- P1 Yes, Texas Orange and Ut Orange
- P2 No, No
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son (Tennessee Orange) Daughter (Not sure) Son (Blue) Daughter (This child just loves colors)
- P6 Yes, but one is color blind
- P7 Yes

What is your child's life Scripture verse?

- P1 Neither has one
- P2 Son-yes, Daughter-no
- P3 No
- P4 N/A
- P5 Not sure
- P6 No
- P7 Yes, Ps. 84:11

What is your child's passion in life?

- P1 To be rich; To be famous
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son – Serve in ministry, change lives of students. Daughter – Be an incredible wife and mother. Son – Serve in ministry through music. Ultimately be an Executive pastor Daughter - Make a difference in the lives of autistic adults
- P6 Yes
- P7 Daughter-Worship Leader, Son –Apologist, Preacher, Evangelist, TV Personality, Author, Daughter-International Ministry

Do you know their spiritual gifts?

- P1 No, and neither do they
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 Son – Teaching, Preaching, Administration. Daughter – Administration, Teaching. Son – Shepherding, Helps. Daughter – Exhortation, Discernment
- P6 Yes
- P7 Daughter-Faith, Administration, Mercy; Son-Teaching, Preaching, Evangelism, Leadership, Giving; Daughter-Leadership, Preaching

Have you asked children what he or she wants to be when they grow up?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, Yes
- P3 Yes
- P4 N/A
- P5 They are all grown, and either doing, or completing school to do what they feel God has equipped them to do.
- P6 Yes, they don't want to be involved in ministry
- P7 Yes, I helped them all fulfill that. They are all three in ministry.

How would each of your children rate you as a father/mother? A pastor? A husband/wife? A man/woman of God?

- P1 A+, A+, A+, A+
- P2 Father-7 1/2: Pastor-7: Husband-9: Man of God-8
- P3 10/10/10/10
- P4 N/A
- P5 Wow ! That's really tough. I'm going to be "general" rather than "specific" and say:
 - (1) As a father ... tuned into their life and hands on.
 - (2) As a pastor ... dedicated and caring
 - (3) As a husband ... loving to their Mother
 - (4) As a man of God ... faithful
- P6 10/10/12/10
- P7 5 or 6 (tears)/4/8/7

41. Have you ever asked your children, "Is there any way I am failing you as a dad/mom?"

- P1 Yes
- P2 My son Yes, in previous years of pastorate
- P3 No
- P4 N/A
- P5 My boys have told me (without asking). My oldest son once said he wanted me to be more involved in the lives of his children.
- P6 Yes
- P7 No to my shame.

42. Have you ever sought family counseling?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, after our years at the last pastorate. Absolutely yes! Go to counseling! Previously, I underestimated the value of counseling in processing of emotions and moving beyond hurts.
- P3 Yes
- P4 No not family, but personal.
- P5 No. I'm sure it would have been a wonderful discovery.
- P6 No
- P7 No to my great regret and shame on my elders for not mandating it.

43. What prompted the decision to do so?

- P1 Recommendations by other pastors
- P2 Crisis years at last pastorate
- P3 A crisis
- P4 Planted a church and 7 years in there was a hostile takeover. I went 5 times.
- P5 N/A
- P6 N/A
- P7 Recently because of our daughter's marriage crash

44. Are you currently enthusiastic about your pastorate? Your calling to the ministry?
Do you look forward to daily ministry?

- P1 Yes, Yes, Yes
- P2 Yes, I have never been more enthusiastic. Leadership is my strongest gift, but I am not currently the senior pastor, but I love being the campus pastor. It is a gift fit and a passion fit for me.
- P3 I am currently not pastoring, but my role in encouraging pastor I am not fulfilled. I am burned out from just rehearsing pastoral issues over and over again. I am not enthusiastic about my calling. I look forward to daily ministry and then I don't. It's a mixed bag of emotions for me.
- P4 N/A, Absolutely because we now get to serve the servants, Yes, because I don't want to waste all painful experiences.
- P5 I have stepped away from the pastorate for the past 2-yrs. and formed "Family Place Ministries, Inc." to minister to hurting pastors. The resources have been limited and I have not been able to do all I have wished to do. I would love to host FREE multi-day retreats for weary ministers where I could offer them hope and encouragement and send them back with new determination. Admittedly, I greatly miss the daily ministry of the local church (not so much being lead pastor), and will be seeking a role where I can come alongside another pastor and help him through some the hurdles he faces ... easing his load.
- P6 Yes/Yes/No
- P7 No/Yes-everyday/Now, as of yesterday

45. Do you have a mentor?

- P1 Yes, Jerry Johnston
- P2 Yes, but now I have a different one than when I pastored previously.
- P3 Yes, I did, but looking back I don't think they were qualified.
- P4 Currently no. Toward the end of my pastorate I did.
- P5 No. I have had a close relationship with Dr. Jack Hudson (now deceased), and Russ Shimpoo (local pastor who has moved). Both were men I felt I could trust and seek counsel from. Neither is really available at this time.
- P6 No, not now
- P7 It was Dr. Falwell. We were very close, but now I don't have one

46. Would you admit that you take time incorporating the necessary elements for spiritual growth in your personal life and the lives of your family members?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes, I was raised Catholic and didn't understand the value of consistent daily devotions. I felt guilty if I ever missed, but now realize each time I am with God and we are together it is great and there is no guilt or duty only love.
- P3 Yes
- P4 Yes
- P5 My preference is to rise early each morning before anyone else in my house and spend time in the Word, prayer, and blogging. Through the years, I have been an avid reader of books to encourage me and prepare me to help others.
- P6 It's a constant challenge, but I try to
- P7 During my 17 years in full time evangelism yes, but not now. The pastorate changed all that.

47. What is the one thing that gives you the greatest joy other than family or ministry?

- P1 Coon hunting
- P2 Reading books on leadership
- P3 Positive outlook on life, golfing, motorcycle riding and working out.
- P4 Sitting on a beach with a good book
- P5 Honestly, I have no other joy. I have lived for my wife, my children, and my church.
- P6 Reading
- P7 Reading books

48. Do you take time for the above?

- P1 Yes
- P2 Yes
- P3 No
- P4 Yes
- P5 I have been consistent in taking time for my wife, my children, and my church.
- P6 Yes
- P7 No

49. If you are a grandparent, do you take time with your grandchildren?

- P1 N/A yet
- P2 Yes, I try to spend every moment possible with him.
- P3 As much as possible
- P4 N/A but I have nieces and nephews I spent much time with.
- P5 I am a grandparent. None live in the same town with me, so this is difficult to do.
- P6 We do. Yes we enjoy it.
- P7 Not enough but I love it very much

50. What is the greatest desire you have for each of your family members?

- P1 To walk in the perfect will of God, not the permissive will of God.
- P2 I want each of them to know Christ and to love Him and best express Him.
- P3 To be together more
- P4 That my wife would be pain free. She has chronic physical pain from multiple back surgeries.
- P5 That they walk in obedience with God and His Word.
- P6 For them to all love God with a pure heart fervently.
- P7 To love God with all their heart, soul, and mind and to love people.

51. What would you each of your family members say about you at your funeral?

- P1 He loved his family and he loved God.
- P2 "My dad loved us to the best of his ability and wanted us to feel that love."
- P3 Good man that love the Lord.
- P4 He was faithful to his call. I asked my wife to put this on my tombstone, "Some people build buildings. He built people."
- P5 I hope they would say: "*Dad loved his family more than anything else.*"
- P6 Loved me intensely, loved them intensely, we had a good life. My eldest son who I am in a bi-vocational position with and we have undertaken many ventures together, once told me he would stand over my grave and say, "Thank God it's over" (chuckle).
- P7 We wish dad had had less stress and more time to relax with mom and wish I could have spent more time with him. Dad loved the Lord and us with all his heart.

Interview Questions for the Pastor's Wife (PW)

1. State your name.

- PW-1 KRW
- PW-2 RS
- PW-3 MT
- PW-4 ALB
- PW-5 RC

2. What is your age?

- PW-1 47
- PW-2 52
- PW-3 61
- PW-4 55
- PW-5 53

3. Explain your spouse's ministry.

- PW-1 Founding Senior Pastor Non-Denominational Bible Church-11 years
- PW-2 Senior Pastor for 27 years, but for last 5 years in the senior pastor role with 1,000 in weekly attendance. He was also required to be the President of the churches' Christian school.
- PW-3 My husband has been a staff member at two churches and the senior pastor at three churches.
- PW-4 Founding Senior Pastor for 29 years of a church in the Midwest. 12,000 population, we began with a core of 7 people. We had 13 the first Sunday and now have 2,000 on the role. Not all of them show up every Sunday obviously.
- PW-5 Has been a Pastor for 33 years and now serving in a ministry for Pastors called Care for Pastors

4. Are you actively involved?

- PW-1 Yes, Currently Leader of Small Group Ministry
- PW-2 Yes, being supportive to my husband, prep new couples, hospital visits, women's ministries part time, but I am an all or nothing gal so I put more hours in than I should have.
- PW-3 I was actively involved in his ministry. I was in charge of the nurseries at all the churches, several music groups, have led choirs, planned banquets and retreats and any special event. I was over the women's ministry. My strengths are not in teaching but in music, organization and serving.
- PW-4 Yes, we co-pastor together. I am worship leader and produce weekly services.
- PW-5 Yes

5. Discuss a couple of things that surprised you or took you off guard in ministry?

- PW-1 Amount of daily operations of church man power and man hours to run and sustain the church.
- PW-2 People with hidden personal agendas. How vindictive people are who call themselves believers. I am not looking for perfection, but humility and instead I saw lots of pride.
- PW-3 I was very naive and was surprised that people "played church", lied and played politics
- PW-4 Trust issues with people because they all say they love Jesus, but then they turn on you in a heartbeat.
- PW-5 The unrealistic expectations people put on the ministry family. The way people think they can say whatever they want to a Pastor or Pastor's wife because they feel like they own you.

6. What about living in a fishbowl?

- PW-1 I don't feel like I live in one. Give my husband credit for that
- PW-2 I lived there, but tried to establish boundaries for my family and marriage. I know it is a fishbowl, however when necessary I would pull the blinds and ask God for discernment and wisdom for our fishbowl lifestyle.
- PW-3 Living in a fishbowl is good to an extent. If you truly are being a "doer of the Word and not just a hearer" then it's really not a problem. Normally everything was fine and even got raves about our family when our children were young and using fantastic manners that they were taught. As they got older the "gossipy church ladies" were harder to please and I will forever be looking over my shoulder for that certain look they gave.
- PW-4 I guard myself closely. I am a PW and I really don't care. I am who I am in Christ and I hope they see Jesus. I can't pretend to be someone else...it's just too hard. Our adult kids are our best friends now and we do everything together. We trust them.
- PW-5 Can be a very lonely life and very frustrating at times

7. What are the greatest challenges you face in that ministry?
 - PW-1 Currently financial pressure, it trickles to every other areas of life. I feel it the last three years relationally with my husband. It has altered him with relationships. I help hold him up.
 - PW-2 Balancing calendar with family and ministry life. I am an open book, and very careful to protect my family.
 - PW-3 I learned too late that as Christians we should have an audience of one, which is God. Trying to please everyone, which I learned later is impossible, was one of my greatest challenges
 - PW-4 Working with staff.
 - PW-5 Time demands on your personal life as a family.

8. Do you and your spouse openly discuss these and work on solutions?
 - PW-1 Yes, but the discussions lead to unhealthy discussions—we take it all home with us.
 - PW-2 Yes, weekly. Together we block off blocks of time
 - PW-3 Yes, we've always talked openly about everything. But the older we get, we have learned what better solutions there would have been.
 - PW-4 Yes.
 - PW-5 Yes.

9. How do you deal with the criticism in ministry toward your spouse?
 - PW-1 If it is valid, I pray then if God directs me I will open it up for discussion with my husband. I offer support for him to grow. If the criticism is invalid, then I don't give credence.
 - PW-2 A tough question. I defend him, but at times privately agree with some of the criticism. I always show him support and defend him
 - PW-3 I didn't deal wonderfully with criticism. Now, I would weigh each criticism to see who it was coming from and could it be true?
 - PW-4 If it is truth I can handle it. If it is a lie then I really go after it. I don't want people to lie about my man and my children.
 - PW-5 Pray a lot and bite my tongue

10. Do you feel the need to continually defend him/her?
 - PW-1 No, I challenge God to look and see if there is a message in it. My husband does need affirmation from me but, not for me to defend him.
 - PW-2 Yes, see above
 - PW-3 Yes, my temperament would be to defend my husband
 - PW-4 No
 - PW-5 Early in our ministry I did but as I have grown spiritually and learned to allow God to defend him

11. Do you possess any anger or frustration, sadness or loneliness as a result of ministry conflict or challenges?

- PW-1 No, only loneliness. I feel no unkindness from congregants only some unrealistic expectations on the pedestal syndrome and we are not living there so...
- PW-2 Absolutely. Last pastorate I pinched myself. Between church and Bible study I walked out and said, "Is my husband really the pastor of 'this' church?" People would be arguing during Bible study about doctrine etc. and I had just had enough of the pettiness.
- PW-3 Yes, absolutely! I have learned so much about myself and others the last few years. Now, I would not take everything personally and would even be able to spot when a person is just crying out for attention and would be challenged to meet that need and help turn them around. I needed this knowledge so much when I was young. There is definitely loneliness in the ministry as far as close friends. Circumstances cause you not to trust and not become close.
- PW-4 No. The Cross will close the mouth of the critics.
- PW-5 If I allowed my human nature to take charge I would but I constantly ask God to not allow any of those seeds to take root

12. Have you ever experienced depression as a result of the stress of ministry?

- PW-1 No, not from the ministry, but I did when I had to move away from my family.
- PW-2 No. Any I did have was unrelated to ministry. I had a thyroid issue.
- PW-3 Yes, I'm sure I've experienced depression because of the fishbowl and everything that goes with it. I didn't know it at the time because we just had to keep going to keep our ministry going that I didn't stop and realize this and get help which affected me physically, I'm sure.
- PW-4 Yes
- PW-5 Sadness but not depression

13. How do you deal with the disappointments you experience in marriage and ministry?

- PW-1 I keep quiet and stuff it until I get to a breaking point then I dump it on my husband.
- PW-2 I go straight to the Word. I was a "coaster" for a long time. I was 32 years old when my husband took his first senior pastor role and God said to me, "You can't coast now, no more." So, I now have the most intimate relationship with God now as a result. God said, "I am right here now you come to me." I can't go to anyone else.
- PW-3 Now, I talk it out and I'm not ashamed to say what I need as a person to fill me up and be healthy emotionally. When I was young there's no telling what I did. I guess I just over ate!

- PW-4 I work through it and all we have is each other. We talk and go places. Our struggles are with staff.
- PW-5 Open communication between my husband and myself and I also have close confidants I can confide. But I try to deal with them through prayer and my walk with the Lord.

14. Is your spouse willing to work on those where he/she is involved?

- PW-1 Always
- PW-2 Yes, he is very open to communication. During the first half of our pastorate my husband did not take on my feelings very well because of his own “stuff.” He didn’t try to fix my disappointments but didn’t go to bat for me.
- PW-3 He is willing to change now more than ever. We have studied the four basic temperaments by Tim Lahaye and Florence Littauer and our lives have been changed. He is a type A personality or another word is choleric. Cholerics rule the world and are normally right. This is true about George. Doggone, he is normally right but it was hard for him to admit if he ever was wrong. God has changed him so much and I know it's because of our understanding of our basic temperaments.
- PW-4 Yes. The staff ride on his coattails and we want them to own their own responsibilities.
- PW-5 Yes

15. Do you have a network of pastor’s spouses that you regularly connect with?

- PW-1 No, but I wish I could I do not reach out but would like to.
- PW-2 Yes
- PW-3 No, we never have. Now, I wish we had taken time to do this.
- PW-4 No
- PW-5 Yes I do now but haven’t always had that earlier in ministry

16. Have you and your spouse taken time to attend marriage/ministry retreats?

- PW-1 No marriage retreats
- PW-2 Yes we taught a Home Builders
- PW-3 Yes
- PW-4 Yes but not many. We’ve attended 2 in 28 years. We do teach/host them.
- PW-5 Yes

17. If so, does your spouse realize this and is he/she willing to prioritize this going forward?

- PW-1 We've considered it, but do not want to go
- PW-2 Yes, our issues were never marital, but always ministry
- PW-3 Absolutely
- PW-4 Yes, all leaders are learners.
- PW-5 Yes

18. How would you rate your marriage?

- PW-1 8 or 9
- PW-2 9 ½
- PW-3 9 out of 10. He is my best friend and I would rather be with him than anyone else in the world! He treats me like gold! I would never have made it in the ministry if this wasn't true
- PW-4 10. There are truly seasons of life but it is a 10
- PW-5 Good

19. Does your spouse feel the same?

- PW-1 Yes
- PW-2 Yes
- PW-3 Yes
- PW-4 I am Jewish so I hope so. We are both such triple A deaders.
- PW-5 Yes
-

20. Are you the main contributor to your family's physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being?

- PW-1 No, my husband does, but I do the majority of the physical.
- PW-2 No. My husband and I do equally.
- PW-3 My husband has always been the provider and our strong tower. I have always taken care of our home, meals and tending to the children. When our children lived at home I always had a full meal prepared and served when George got home from work. Meal time was a special sharing time. I absolutely loved being a wife, mother and homemaker. He was the provider and our strength emotionally and spiritually.
- PW-4 Now, my husband and I are together
- PW-5 No

21. How would you rate your spouse's individual relationship with each one of your children?

- PW-1 Strong. We have 2 boys. We are having some teenage issues with our oldest currently so we have hit a bump in the road, but the relationships are still strong.
- PW-2 Extremely great.
- PW-3 He has no personal hobbies. He gave to me and his children first and then to our church all he had, which was a lot
- PW-4 We have 3 grown boys and I rate it a 10
- PW-5 We do not have children

22. Is he/she sort of an absentee parent for the sake of the ministry?

- PW-1 If I allowed it then my husband would be but I won't allow it. For short periods of time my husband has been absentee. TO our greatest regret in the last three years during our financial struggles our oldest son was the easiest one to parent and we just let him be and to our everlasting regret he has turned away from home and God for know. He has moved out of state and is currently living with another family.
- PW-2 Yes at times, but I always knew my husband would
- PW-3 Absolutely not. We knew we came first and he told our church members that. He read early in our ministry about Billy Sunday and that made him always put us first. Billy Sunday told his wife Maw that they had won the world but their children went to hell.....(I may not have this totally accurate but mostly, if not all.)
- PW-4 Never
- PW-5 N/A

23. Do you and your kids ever feel neglected?

- PW-1 No, but our youngest son has a little at times.
- PW-2 No. My husband never took off Saturdays but now he does
- PW-3 I believe I could speak for them that we never felt neglected.
- PW-4 Never
- PW-5 N/A

24. Do you wish your spouse had another occupation?

- PW-1 Sometimes I have kind of thought that might be nice, but I have not truly wanted him to have another vocation.
- PW-2 Yes- I did dream of it but not really
- PW-3 I have at times, yes. But I know that the ministry is what fulfills him
- PW-4 No although he is currently bi-vocational
- PW-5 No because I love ministry

25. Does your spouse make you a priority? In what ways?

- PW-1 Yes, he is open to my needs.
- PW-2 Yes, Friday's are date days. The kids wanted to take off school sometimes just to be with us on Fridays but my husband said, "No. This day is reserved for your mother and me."
- PW-3 Absolutely. He is a gentleman, sacrifices for me in all ways.
- PW-4 Yes, he's never wavered
- PW-5 He does now, earlier in ministry that was a struggle. We try to have date night on Fridays.

26. What is your spouse's greatest challenge in ministry?

- PW-1 He would say it is his current financial troubles, but truthfully it is his pride. It is pride for both of us. Through our recent struggles with our finances and our precious son God has revealed to us that we have pride in our lives and He has broken us. It took the situation with my son to break me.
- PW-2 Being the pastor of the Christian school exercising his God given gift to be used for His glory. He loves to lead people to Christ and disciple them into a relationship. He dislikes his position at the school and wants to lead people to Christ, but instead has to put out fires with parents at the school. It's man's verses God's role for my husband.
- PW-3 He wasn't taught to resolve conflict so we did not handle that well. Also, he had a hard time with lazy people and incompetent people because he is so competent.
- PW-4 working with a co-pastor first time and challenges of being a CEO of a company
- PW-5 Saying "No"

27. What is your spouse's greatest need?

- PW-1 Words of affirmation
- PW-2 To feel like he is making a spiritual difference.
- PW-3 To have a purpose to fulfill for God. He is not a "hang out" kind of guy but let's get the job done in an excellent way!
- PW-4 Encouragement, respect and honor
- PW-5 Time management

28. Do you openly discuss it and are you actively engaged in meeting that need?

- PW-1 No, I fall short of it. 50 percent of the time I meet this need but I must do better.
- PW-2 Yes. We prayed over it and openly discussed it. It drained us for weeks

- PW-3 We openly talk about it. I was sad to realize he can't retire because I could. But he will dry up without work and a purpose. I'm good with that now that I know it fulfills him. I want him to be happy and fulfilled.
- PW-4 Yes, but he is so strong and good about this. I need to do more to encourage him
- PW-5 Yes

29. Does your spouse take time off for personal and family time?

- PW-1 Very little
- PW-2 Yes. We take an annual vacation, but not sabbaticals. They were never offered.
- PW-3 Yes, he always has.
- PW-4 Yes, but it is not scheduled
- PW-5 Yes

30. What things would you say about your spouse at his/her funeral?

- PW-1 One of the most powerful and driven men, Self-motivated and self-taught. He chased God since he turned 19. He is a wonderful father and a much better husband than I am a wife. He is a wonderful person. The most wonderful I have ever known.
- PW-2 He loves life and is very positive. What he is at home is what he lives everywhere else. He is not a fake. He is real. He was excited to face another day.
- PW-3 He was the hardest working preacher/pastor many have ever known. He was the most selfless person I know
- PW-4 A servant, faithful at serving the Lord, faithful, great Christian man
- PW-5 He was a Godly husband and a wonderful caring person

31. If you had the chance, would you do it all over again in ministry?

- PW-1 Yes I would.
- PW-2 Yes. The experiences have molded me as to not repeat the same mistakes. That last year of our final pastorate my husband lost 20 pounds. The struggles aged him terribly. One day he leaned against the wall and slid down it to sit and just started weeping that he had failed me. He always wanted to get out of bed and take on the day.
- PW-3 Yes, so I could do many things differently.
- PW-4 Absolutely
- PW-5 Yes

Interview Questions for the Adult Children of the Pastor (PK)

1. State your name.
 - PK1 DMJ-girl
 - PK2 JNM-girl
 - PK3 JDS-girl
 - PK4 CE-boy
 - PK5 JS-boy

2. What is your age?
 - PK1 32
 - PK2 26
 - PK3 22
 - PK4 20
 - PK5 26

3. Are you okay with being a PK (Pastor's Kid)?
 - PK1 Yes, but I was a junior in HS so I didn't really realize what it was all about because I went to college shortly after. It was harder later once I was married feeling like my family was not normal balanced wise. Family stuff was always centered around church.
 - PK2 Yes
 - PK3 Yes, it's hard but a blessing
 - PK4 Yes
 - PK5 Yeah

4. Do you enjoy your part in your father/mother's ministry?
 - PK1 Yes, I loved it especially at first. Friends were coming and Dad was spiritually impacting them.
 - PK2 Yes
 - PK3 Yes to an extent. Not the people's expectations.
 - PK4 Yes I was young then but I taught little ones and I loved it.
 - PK5 Yes

5. How do you handle living in the public eye?
 - PK1 Hard. But my mom was an example to me. During a first church split I remember Mom had a pastor's heart more than anyone else and Mom "I have to love people like Jesus does or I will never make it." It's been terrible lately because we have been attacked and it hurts. People judge me for public attacks we have endured and believe the lies.
 - PK2 People expect you to be superhuman and know

- PK3 Not good. I typically went against others and offended them
- PK4 I was home schooled and pretty sheltered. I was known as a PK and people would actually fluctuate sports schedules during commitments to church because of it so it was good.
- PK5 It didn't bother me, but I did kind of hate always being watched

6. What are the greatest challenges you face in your father/mother's ministry

- PK1 Dad! I worked for my dad for several years so 6 months before we left the church I was kind of sad and depressed. I realized I was mourning what I thought would be the loss of my relationship with my dad because everything revolved around church.
- PK2 Your stuff gets pushed aside. Relational and emotional issues were tough. Emotionally the church is always more important. It still bothers me. Dad was always at a meeting or something. In evangelism, Dad would turn off TV and we would eat dinner together, but in pastorate his church schedule took priority. I don't have frustrating feelings toward my mother. My relationship with my Dad is important. Dad took me to the zoo and he took me on a couple trips alone and that was so important to me. I feel like I always had to do something in the ministry in order for Dad to accept me. Dad never asked me about my grades or school. I'm not mad at him, but just hurt. I have no bitterness toward him. He apologized. Dad is doing damage control for church with people leaving instead of running a 5-K with me. My stuff gets pushed aside. The Taylors took that 5-K from me and my Dad and I don't know how to get it back.
- PK3 Not comparing God to the church, judging them, church includes messed up broken people
- PK4 The devil attacks PK's to disqualify them. My sisters struggled
- PK5 Our family struggles with communication

7. Is it difficult to converse with your parents about those challenges?

- PK1 No we had good communication.
- PK2 Yes, In high school it I could throw it aside but when you are older you struggle with it. I could always talk to my parents though. I wish Dad would have sat with me and asked how I was doing.
- PK3 No. we are very aware and supportive. They have always encouraged me to be my own person.
- PK4 I have always been able to talk to my mom. Dad is not always so approachable, but we do have a good relationship.
- PK5 Yes. My dad is overweight thought and I need to confront him but can't find it in me to do so.

8. Is it difficult for them to set aside adequate time to talk to you about issues you face in their ministry
 - PK1 Mom was my greatest example. Dad struggled to be all present. I don't want to define 15 years at the church by the last few years.
 - PK2 Sometimes
 - PK3 No we are very communicative, family before ministry
 - PK4 No, mom is a stay at home mom. Dad took Monday's off so we had lunch breaks together.
 - PK5 My issues were not with church. We just can't communicate

9. How do you handle the criticism your pastor parent receives?
 - PK1 Not well, I didn't know how to. I want my kids to see a counselor when the time is right because we are in the ministry. My brother would have been helped by it.
 - PK2 I was very angry. I became very about my friends in High School...anything to get me to not think about church. I go in defense mode. It's a vicious cycle. I want to punch them sometimes and I am a girl! People forget my dad is human and it's frustrating. I hate the lies and gossip.
 - PK3 I ignored it. I started drinking as a senior. I got sick to my stomach when I had thoughts of my dad's pain in the pastorate.
 - PK4 Dad is strong and he handled it. It never trickled down to us.
 - PK5 I felt low. First church split when I was 9. It broke all our hearts. Dad wants to be progressive and institute change and the congregants fought against him. I hold a grudge but still act kind. I kill them with kindness.

10. Has any of it resulted in an anger or bitterness issue for you?
 - PK1 Yes,
 - PK2 Yes, I still get angry or bitter because of people who hurt my dad. I still want to punch them when they are fake to me. I want to hit them. When they hurt your parents you want no relationship with them.
 - PK3 In the beginning, but I am delivered of it now. When I see people who caused us pain, I immediately go to Jesus. He keeps me in check.
 - PK4 No
 - PK5 No, but just hurt for me Dad.

11. How did or do you come to terms with the consistent absenteeism of your pastor parent?

- PK1 When he was in evangelism it was tough, but when he came home he was totally all ours. When I was six I once told my mom through crocodile tears while she tucked me in for bed, “Mommy, when are all the people going to get saved so daddy can come home?” Now, as a pastor he is there, but not really there. My senior day of Basketball Dad and Mom did not show up. I was embarrassed.
- PK2 I got use to it. I placed my sister and brother-in-law in that Dad role instead. Learning how to drive etc. Feeling like you are not very important. It wasn’t constant, but I will forever have memories of certain people who took special times away from me with my dad and I will never be able to get that back. I quit focusing on what Dad was not giving me and focused on his good points.
- PK3 My senior year of high school my dad was with the people and I didn’t resent him, I resented the people.
- PK4 My dad pastored a small church so I didn’t really confront that.
- PK5 Didn’t ever like it or come to grips with it. Dad was tri-vocational and that hurt us.

12. Did you or do you ever feel like the church is mainly something that took your parent pastor away from you at crucial moments?

- PK1 No, because I understood the essential value of it.
- PK2 Yes. My dad cancelled being with me for my spring break week as a senior because of church crisis’s. I still struggle with that. When I got married during pictures Dad scheduled a board meeting because his board was in town for the wedding and it was convenient for him. I got use to it and expected it. No bitterness just hurt. It hurts when other people notice because my Dad is a great man.
- PK3 No
- PK4 No
- PK5 No not so much. But during the church split yes.

13. Do you ever feel like church always comes first with your pastor parent?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes always. It’s not a bad thing. I wish he called me more. I wish he called me more in college and asked if I liked my dorm etc., but he didn’t
- PK3 No
- PK4 No
- PK5 No

14. Do you feel like church never ends in church, it comes home?

- PK1 Yes, there is no “turn off” switch
- PK2 Yes, always. It’s 24/7
- PK3 Sometimes
- PK4 No (but hesitated) studying God’s Word for him never ends.
- PK5 Not church, but other jobs yes.

15. Do you feel like you father/mother is actively involved in the things that matter most to you?

- PK1 Only if it is related to the ministry.
- PK2 If I tell him then yes. The past few years it is getting better.
- PK3 Yes, Dad is a lover of people and that’s all he wants.
- PK4 Yes (bust hesitated)
- PK5 Dad was always there

16. Do you feel like your father/mother makes you a priority over the ministry?

- PK1 No
- PK2 Now yes, back in HS no. I can’t blame him for it alone.
- PK3 Yes
- PK4 Hesitated, sports yes.
- PK5 Yes

17. Can you talk honestly with him/her about that?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes
- PK3 Yes
- PK4 we have a good relationship and he is always there. Dad got saved later in life so he is learning.
- PK5 Yes

18. What is the one thing he/she does to make you feel special?

- PK1 When he pays attention to my children. When he seeks out special days for us.
- PK2 Reaching out to me and asking me to lunch or something. Making time for me alone.
- PK3 He calls me once a day to tell me he is proud of me and how beautiful I am.
- PK4 Over his entire life he poured himself into our lives.
- PK5 I can call him anytime and talk to him forever but only on surficial things.
- PK6

19. Do you ever feel like you are forgotten or pushed aside because of the ministry?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes
- PK3 No
- PK4 No
- PK5 No

20. Do you ever feel like your pastor parent is under pressure to meet expectations of congregants and not blow it publically?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes
- PK3 Yes
- PK4 No
- PK5 Yes

21. Are you forced to participate in almost every church event?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes, but I always enjoyed it.
- PK3 Yes
- PK4 No forced to. I enjoyed it.
- PK5 Yes and I accepted it. I did play sick though.

22. Do you feel like you and your pastor parent have a lack of family time together?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes
- PK3 No
- PK4 No
- PK5 It was priority

23. When you do have time together do you feel like your pastor parent is distracted because of the next church emergency or challenge?

- PK1 Yes
- PK2 Yes or he is always on his phone. It's frustrating. I feel ignored.
- PK3 Mostly no
- PK4 No
- PK5 Yes when he took on a third job.

24. Do you ever feel like you have your pastor parent all to yourself during family time?

- PK1 No
- PK2 No especially if my brother is there. He always overshadows me. I love him, but I want Dad.
- PK3 Yes
- PK4 Yes
- PK5 I needed more time with my dad but his third job as a corrections officer at the local prison hindered that.

25. Does your pastor parent make you a priority?

- PK1 Sometimes. When I had my second child, Dad came to the hospital for only seconds and then left with a board member and I am still mad about it.
- PK2 Sometimes
- PK3 Yes
- PK4 Yes
- PK5 Yes, but I wish he would call me first once. I always have to call him.

26. How would you rate your relationship with your pastor parent?

- PK1 Before he entered the pastorate a 9 or 10 and right now a 6
- PK2 In high school (during the pastorate) a 5, but now during the pastorate an 8
- PK3 A total 10
- PK4 7
- PK5 7

27. Where do you turn for help with any challenges you face?

- PK1 My mom
- PK2 In high school I turned to my brother-in-law, but now my parents and husband
- PK3 Sometimes my parents, but I used to turn to non-Christian friends who I could trust. Alcohol was my escape because I was so angry at the church.
- PK4 My parents and good friends. My sisters and brother in law
- PK5 Not my parents but I want to correct that.

28. If you could change one thing about your relationship with your pastor parent what would it be?

- PK1 My dad would have a mentor to teach boundaries
- PK2 More uninterrupted time together
- PK3 I wish I would have supported, prayed, and encouraged my dad more. I was frustrated he stuck around during painful times.
- PK4 Communication. It's okay, but too quick to give advice and I wish he would listen more.
- PK5 More communication

29. Do you feel like your experience as a PK has been a healthy one?

- PK1 Overall, yes.
- PK2 Yes, I have a deep passion for ministry
- PK3 Yes, absolutely.
- PK4 Yes
- PK5 Yes, I learned a lot

30. What if anything would you change about the experience?

- PK1 Finding more time with Dad
- PK2 I wish we would have gotten family counseling. I wish promises my dad made would have meant something and been fulfilled because the little things mean a lot to me.
- PK3 That I really believed my expectations are who I am in God and not because I am a PK.
- PK4 having a bi-vocational parent
- PK5 I wish my dad could have excelled more at his ministry unencumbered.

31. Do you ever wish your pastor parent had a different vocation?

- PK1 Sometimes I wish he was back in full time evangelism
- PK2 Yes, when he got hurt and stressed out. I always wish he could change ministry vocations, but never forsake being a pastor.
- PK3 Yes. At a church where his DNA was not the same as the congregants I was frustrated.
- PK4 Yes, (chuckle) we had an opportunity to acquire oil fields. However, the Christian influence is more important.
- PK5 No, because he did a lot of other things too.

32. What would you say about your pastor/parent at his/her funeral?

- PK1 He had a heart for the Lord-He has us as one should and he had an incredible heart for the lost.
- PK2 He was the greatest man I ever knew and loved. I love blogging about my Dad and who he really is. Dad never shoved the Bible on me, but exemplified the role. It was not forced. He allowed God to shape our hearts.
- PK3 I am going to cry now. He was the closest representation to the way Jesus loves me and others to the way Jesus serves his enemies. Jesus is the first person my Dad saw daily in the mirror. Paul told us to finish the race well and my Dad did that. He never lost motivation or momentum.
- PK4 He was a strong man of convictions and principles he believed in. He taught us them and he was a hard worker and loved his family and God most of all.
- PK5 He taught me about love, family and everyone. He loved us all so much.

Concluding Thoughts

Examining the raw data revealed some findings that were fully expected and yet some answers that were surprising. To summarize All the pastors shared similar tenures in ministry though their time in the lead pastor role varied. Most confirmed having some biblical training such as undergraduate or Seminary education. They acknowledged all their wives were fully supportive in their accepting the pastor's position. There were varying misconceptions going into the pastorate as well as differing challenges while in the role. All struggle to find the balance between family and ministry. Each pastor admitted to at one time feeling like the church should take precedence over his family. The pastors all admitted to being overwhelmed and pressured by their parishioners' expectations, and that neither they nor their families are doing well in adjusting to the "fishbowl" lifestyle. Their families are not adjusting well to the criticism the pastors confront, and they express deep hurt over it. Some of the pastors set boundaries and some do not. It was surprising that all rated their marriages as great except during a ministry crisis. In addition, the pastors' wives rated their marriages great and pastors' kids rated

their parents' marriages as great as well. Only two of the seven pastors were offered sabbaticals and took them. All the pastors expressed regret about neglecting their families; however, amazingly, the pastors' wives and pastors' kids said their husbands and fathers never neglected them. In fact, all of the adult children had high praise for their fathers. The pastors affirmed that they enjoyed intact relationships with their kids, and their wives and children answered this question affirmatively as well. Most of the pastors did not previously nor do they currently consult professional counselors, although a few were prompted to do so after a ministry or family crisis. The majority are enthusiastic about their pastorates, regardless of the overwhelming stress they have encountered.

All the pastor's wives were or are actively involved in their husband's ministry. They all confessed to similar and yet different surprises in ministry. The PW struggles more with trust issues than does her husband, it appears. All PW admitted to anger, frustration, sadness, or loneliness as a result of the conflict and challenges faced in ministry. Feelings of depression were split right down the middle and yet all admitted to experiencing disappointments. Most of the PWs do not have a network of other PWs they connect with for support and encouragement. Every one affirmed that their husbands had a strong relationship with their children regardless of the challenges. None of the PWs express a desire for their husbands to seek alternate employment; they are committed to the pastorate. Surprisingly, each of them affirmed that if they had the chance they would do "the pastorate" all over again.

Of the PKs interviewed, three were young women and two young men. All of them expressed they were "ok" with being a PK and enjoyed their father's role as pastor; however none likes living in the public eye. Each of the PKs admitted to experiencing

different challenges as PKs. Not all of them feel comfortable conversing with their parents about issues they face regarding the ministry, and they all struggle to contend with the criticism their fathers face. Most of the PKs currently struggle with various anger and bitterness issues, and most are communicating with their parents about it. Although some wished at various times that their fathers had a different vocation, each of them declared that they enjoyed a good relationship with their father.

In conclusion, it is apparent that regardless of the amount of stress and challenges these pastoral families face, they remain very close-knit families. Overall, their relationships seem impenetrable and their outlook on ministry, minus the conflict, is good. It is surprising that all of them said they would do it again if given the chance. Satan attempts to destroy these families; however, they remain faithful to their calling. Perhaps the best way to illustrate my conclusions is by citing the familiar story of “winning one for The Gipper.”

This originated in American football. Knute Rockne was the coach of the US Notre Dame team in the 1920s and George Gipp was his star player. The story goes that Gipp fell ill and when dying he asked Rockne to promise that, when things were going badly for the team, he should inspire them by asking them to ‘win one for The Gipper.’ Ronald Reagan played the part of Gipp in the 1940 film *Knute Rockne: All American*. The screenplay has the line: And the last thing he said to me, “Rock,” he said, “sometime when the team is up against it and the breaks are beating the boys, tell them to go out there with all they've got and win just one for the Gipper.” Reagan was given the nickname Gipper, which lasted throughout his life. Reagan later used the quotation when seeking election as US president.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/win-one-for-the-gipper.html

CHAPTER 5

STRATEGIC HEALTH PLAN FOR PASTORAL FAMILIES

The overriding impetus for this study was my own personal experience in the ministry. Admittedly, I have much to learn, and there is absolutely no pretense involved in disclosing that the past five years of overwhelming ministry stress resulting in various health challenges have hastened the need for me to acquire some degree of excellence and precision in the area of balancing ministry and health. Therefore, I am committed, after 33 years of ministry life experience, to influencing clergy and congregants alike in making a contribution toward a regimen of pastoral family health. After assessing the needs my own family now acknowledges to having as a result of major stressors, I have devised strategic steps that I believe should be implemented and regarded as necessary to overall health in order that people may succeed in the pastorate. The combination of steps will address the four health challenges presented in chapter 3: physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual. The remainder of this chapter outlines these steps to survive and thrive in the pastorate.

1. Sense of Destiny

Every pastor and his family must continually focus on their sense of destiny. The dictionary defines *destiny* as “a predetermined course of events often held to be an

irresistible power or agency”³¹⁶ or “somebody’s preordained future; the apparently predetermined and inevitable series of events that happen to somebody or something.”³¹⁷

The Apostle Peter addresses the believer’s destiny and affirms that believers in Christ are “chosen” for destiny. He explains that there is one who is responsible for providing that “irresistible power” drawing us toward accomplishing great things in life.

But you are a chosen people, royal priests, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession ... chosen to tell about the wonderful acts of God, who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. At one time you were not a people, but now you are God's people. In the past you had never received mercy, but now you have received God's mercy” (1 Pet 2:9–10).

History proves that all the “Greats” of this world had a sense of destiny and kept it ever before them. Call it a dream, vision, mission, passion or drive; they understood that it was part of an express purpose moving toward accomplishing a special task. Pastors are born with destiny in their DNA, and it’s a divine bloodline. It is a calling that drives them to surrender and sacrifice without the promise of any earthly accolades. “A preacher is sent on a heavenly mission. He is to declare the message of God to the world, ‘whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear’” (Ezek. 2:5, 7; 3:11).³¹⁸

A familiar biblical precedent for destiny is reflected in the Lord’s revelation to Jeremiah the prophet. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jer 1:5, ESV). This revelation of destiny already created in the womb so affected us that we named our only son Jeremiah.

³¹⁶ www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/destiny

³¹⁷ www.bing.com/Dictionary/search?q=define+destiny&qpv=define+destiny&FORM=DTPDIA

³¹⁸ Criswell, *Guidebook for Pastors*, 23.

The top grossing film of 1994 in North America, *Forest Gump*, touched hearts with a combination of comedy, drama, and romance. The movie included memorable quotes and several touching scenes. One such was a tender interaction between Forest, played by Tom Hanks, and his mother, played by Sally Field, just moments prior to her death. Upon the doctor's exit, Forest enters his mother's bedroom and takes a seat next to her bed.

His mother smiles and says, "I'm dyin' Forest." Puzzled and unsure of what is happening, Forest responds, "Why are you dyin'?" Mama gently replies, "It's my time. Death is a part of life; something we are all destined to do. I didn't know, but I was destined to be your Mamma. I believe you make your own destiny. You do the best with what God gave you." With a searching expression, Forest quietly inquires, "What's my destiny Mamma?" To which Mamma replies, "You're gonna have to find that out for yourself. Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're going to get."

Perhaps, no other vocation could identify more with Mamma's words of wisdom than that of the pastorate. We truly never know what we are going to get. It is a life of unknowns and uncertainties; however, the Creator of all has sovereignly and intentionally crafted in us all that we need to faithfully preserve us for his divine purposes. Pastor, remember your sense of destiny and keep talking about it with your family!

2: Spiritual Sanctuary

“We cannot make up for failure in our devotional life by redoubling energy in service. We shall never take people beyond our own spiritual attainment.”³¹⁹ The demands of the pastorate necessitate that pastors have a “spiritual sanctuary.” These are special times reserved for solitude and supplication; weekly, daily, or hourly times set aside to be alone with God. The specific intent is spiritual seclusion and intimacy allowing for the development of a closer relationship with God.

Solitude

Jesus set a powerful example of separating himself from the crowds at strategic times to “crowd” himself to the Father. This message of the need for seclusion with God is one that should be emulated in the life of not only every believer, but most especially every pastor. Jesus models the importance of private time with God before the hectic day begins. “In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed ...” (Mark 1:35). As a spiritual leader, Jesus shows the necessity of sometimes sending the flock away so the leader has time to experience privacy with God. He always came away from those experiences more ready for service to his Father.

And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away. And after bidding them farewell, he departed to the mountain to pray (Mark 6:45-46).

³¹⁹ thegracetabernacle.org/quotes/Pastoral_Ministry-Character.htm

Jesus celebrates his most miraculous acts and agonizes in his most painful hurts by going away so that he could be alone with God (Luke 4:42; 5:16; 6:12). Throughout his entire earthly life, including the hours just prior to his death on the Cross, Jesus isolates himself from others to be alone with his Father.

And they came to a place called Gethsemane ... He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began praying (Mark 14:32-34).

For the pastor, the spiritual benefits of being alone with God can never be underestimated. There are many times in the pastorate when, only after sessions or seasons of solitude with God, can the man of God hear a word from God. Some of the greatest sermons, creativity, revelations, prophecies, and breakthroughs come when God's man isolates himself from the crowds to hear specifically from God and God alone.

One rare but powerful item of discipline is the requirement that the recruit of the company undertake a personal experience of solitude at least once a month. This is patterned consciously on the experience of Christ who periodically went alone, even at the price of temporary separation from the needs of His fellows. The justification of aloneness is not that of refined self-indulgence, but rather a consequent enrichment of one's subsequent contribution. A person who is always available is not worth enough when he *is* available. Everyone engaged in public life will realize the extreme difficult [of] getting away each month for a period of five or six hours, but the difficulty is not a good reason for rejecting the discipline. It is the men and women who find it hardest to get away who need the redemptive solitude most sorely. They need to be where they are free from the compulsion of chit-chat, from the slavery of the telephone, and even from the newspaper. A Christianity which understands itself will make ample provision for retreat houses in which such solitude is expected and protected.³²⁰

³²⁰ Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1961), 43-44.

Supplication

In his epistles, Paul, the New Testament's church-planting pastor, requests prayer from his churches on seven separate occasions. Paul understood how important the parishioner's prayers are for the pastor. Modern culture, with its endless and ever-evolving technology, competes with God for the pastor's attention. Many pastors surveyed admitted to spending endless hours on email, Facebook, Twitter, or blogging. However crucial these media are in responding to and engaging with congregants, they must never usurp the place of the pastor's private prayer times. We may be fooled into thinking that these forms of communication will result in the prosperity of our ministries, but the Bible affirms how shepherds succeed. "The shepherds are senseless and do not inquire of the LORD; so they do not prosper and all their flock is scattered." The words of Jeremiah 10:21 should convict and prompt pastors to desire a deeper, more intimate relationship with God through supplication with God. In Jeremiah 23:16–18, God contends with the false prophets of Jeremiah's day who were speaking "visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD." He poses a question that should be asked of contemporary pastors as well. "But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word?" (23:18) The pastor prepares himself for the work of the pastorate by participating with God in daily supplication. How can we hear a word from God and bring a word to the people when we have not tarried in his presence?

We must heed the memorable words written by Robert Murray McCheyne to the Rev. Dan Edwards on 2 October 1840 after his ordination as a missionary to the Jews: "I trust you will have a pleasant and profitable time in Germany. I know you will apply hard to German; but do not forget the culture of the inner man—I mean of the heart. How diligently the

cavalry officer keeps his sabre clean and sharp; every stain he rubs off with the greatest care. Remember you are God's sword—His instrument—I trust a chosen vessel unto Him to bear His name. In great measure, according to the purity and perfections of the instrument, will be the success. It is not great talents God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus. A holy minister is an awful weapon in the hand of God.³²¹

Study and Stir the Gift in Bible Study

The main purpose of the pastor's personal life is to be transformed into the image of Christ,³²² and one way this is accomplished is by engaging in the study of God's Word. To better know and understand that special relationship which God desires of each one of his children, we must spend time in the Scriptures allowing the truth to transform us. This happens only when the pastor commits to the consistent study of God's Word. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). The primary purpose of the pastor serving in the pastorate role is to teach people the Word of God. In order to realize any success, the pastor must make the personal study of God's Word his top priority.

Robert L. Thomas argues that

[w]hat happens in the study determines what happens in the lives of people as they attend the Sunday services, particularly the Sunday morning service, which is so strategic. A fruitful study will eventually become a fruitful body of believers as the Spirit uses the Word transmitted to mold people into the image of Christ.³²³

The results of the pastor taking time for the personal study of the Scriptures are the rewards of healthy and spiritually thriving lives of the parishioners who reap from the

³²¹ John R. W. Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait: Some New Testament Word Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 120.

³²² Rom 8:29.

³²³ John MacArthur, *Pastoral Ministry: How to Shepherd Biblically* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 174.

messages being preached. “If the message is of little cost to the preacher, it will be of little value to the congregation.”³²⁴

Study and Stir the Gift in Continuing Education

Pastoral effectiveness relies heavily on keeping our pastors informed and growing in their particular field of knowledge. With the ever-increasing demands and expectations placed on pastors in our ever-evolving society, continuing education for the pastor is essential. Pastors are expected to perform and produce at peak levels, and rare is the pastor who professes to have learned all he needs to know during his undergraduate or seminary schooling. In 1821, Connecticut was the first state to pass a statute criminalizing abortion, and yet today women who want to terminate their pregnancies are able to do so legally. “In 2008, approximately 1.21 million abortions took place in the U.S.”³²⁵ This is only one example of how times have changed. A century ago, who would have ever imagined a pastor would spend time counseling women suffering from post-abortion depression? Yet today this is a common occurrence. Congregants not only look to their pastors for guidance in spiritual matters, but ethical matters as well. It is imperative for contemporary clergy to be up-to-date on matters concerning all areas of life he will confront while leading flock. Continuing education should be a part of every pastor’s job contract. Financial resources should be allocated for him to pursue annual courses and these should not be confused with money and time put aside for the pastor’s sabbatical.

³²⁴ Criswell, *Guidebook For Pastors*, 65.

³²⁵ “U. S. Abortion Statistics,” www.abort73.com/abortion_facts/us_abortion_statistics/ (accessed Sept 2011).

3: Sage

The significant impact of a sage or two in the life of every pastor is undeniable. When people surround themselves with strong and set-apart men and women of God, the results are beneficial to everyone involved. Pastors, being the primary target of Satan, should seek out a mentoring or accountability sage who will speak words of love, encouragement, rebuke, and wisdom into their lives. Every pastor has his own unique struggles. Paul instructs us through Romans 7 that we are perpetually dying to what once bound us (v. 6). Pastors are not immune to fighting indwelling sins and shortcomings. We, like Paul, are continually confronting our old nature. “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do (Rom 7: 15). For this reason, pastors should seek out a sage whom they trust to realize that they are pastors who are not perfect, but simply forgiven. Admittedly, I used to be against the idea of a mentor; however of late, I have personally experienced the incalculable value of a sage/mentor in my own personal pastoral ministry. My precious friend and mentor, Judy Smith,³²⁶ will never realize this side of eternity what her hours of commitment toward shaping Christ in me have meant for me.

4: Standards

Simply put, *standards* encompass everything associated with the pastors’ character. They include his values, morals, and the principles that together serve as a guiding light in this

³²⁶ Leslie Smith, “Timeline of Injustice,” *Concerned Women for America*, www.cwfa.org/printerfriendly.asp?id=15492&department=field&categoryid=life (accessed March 16, 2012).

culturally depraved society. A pastor must be devoted to his God and conduct himself in a righteous manner reflecting integrity. He must exude professionalism and maintain absolute confidentiality with the secrets of his parishioners. His pastoral position is one of great power and influence with the church and the community. For this reason, the code of ethics according to which he lives is to be much stricter than that of laypeople.

Today's ministers walk an ethical tightrope. At one moment they may serve as prophets, priests, or educators; in the next, they may be administrators, counselors, or worship leaders. Each of these roles raises ethical dilemmas and exposes moral vulnerability not faced by doctors, lawyers, or other professionals.³²⁷

The standards of the pastorate are strict, and those who are called to it must not only have a heart for reaching and teaching people, but must also model an ethical lifestyle to match.

5: Self-Care

The focus of this thesis has been to identify and analyze the most problematic health challenges pastoral families encounter as a result of overwhelming ministry stressors. The top four areas affected are the physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual. This section highlights the physical and emotional aspects of clergy self-care.

“We live in a physical world. God uses our bodies to effect his purpose, our mouths to deliver the Good News, and our hands to help those in need.”³²⁸ However, today's pastors are so busy taking care of the needs of others that they often sacrifice taking care of their own needs. “If you're healthy and if you're productive, there's a

³²⁷ Trull and Carter, *Ministerial Ethics*, 15.

³²⁸ *Holy Health UMC*, www.holyhealthyumc.com/call.htm (accessed March 13, 2012).

pleasure in it that's visible from the pews.”³²⁹ The pastoral family should model lives of stability in all areas of health. In contemporary culture, there is ample teasing and jesting for some in regard to the pounds packed on as they age and become physically undisciplined. “Beer belly” or “pot belly” are terms given to protruding abdomens and “love handles” is a more affectionate term for flabby sides. However flippant or tongue-in-cheek these terms seem, they should be taken seriously and viewed as a caution that someone's physical health is out of control. Whenever a pastor mounts his pulpit, he should remember it is an honored trust from God to be given time to minister the Word to his congregations. The people in the pews can become easily preoccupied when hearing and receiving the message God has for them if they are distracted for 30 minutes by an unfit or unkempt pastor.

Pastors must remember that the enemy will use whatever he can to divert the attention of the hearer when the message of the Bible is being proclaimed. Whether it is a crying baby in the crowd, a technical issue with either the audio or video screen, or someone on the platform for whatever reason consciously or unconsciously drawing attention to himself or herself, communication of the message is often thwarted. When a pastor loses his health, he may lose his pastorate. A fit pastor is respected by others, and he reflects confidence and a healthy lifestyle. Dr. Kenneth Cooper,³³⁰ the physician who pioneered aerobics, suggests that a person can improve his or her overall well-being by

³²⁹ Samuel G. Freedman, “When Serving the Lord, Ministers Are Often Found to Neglect Themselves,” *New York Times* (Jan 9, 2009), www.nytimes.com/2009/01/10/us/10religion.html (accessed Mar 1, 2012).

³³⁰ When Kenneth H. Cooper, MD, MPH, published his first bestseller, *Aerobics*, in 1968, he introduced a new word and a new concept—launching a worldwide fitness revolution. Dr. Cooper continues to be recognized as the leader of the international physical fitness movement and credited with motivating more people to exercise in pursuit of good health than any other person. In 1968, only 100,000 people were jogging in America. That number is now more than 30 million strong, thanks to the work and influence of Dr. Cooper. www.cooperaerobics.com/About-Cooper/Dr--Kenneth-Cooper.aspx (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

incorporating aerobic exercise, healthy eating, a positive lifestyle, and seeking emotional stability. He writes:

Total well-being can provide the physical and emotional base for finding and savoring ... goals. For example, it will undoubtedly enrich a career or a deep spiritual commitment, especially as you get more involved in these endeavors and as the time and energy demands they place on you grow greater.³³¹

At the time of writing of this thesis, Cooper was 80 years old and has logged “more than 38,000 miles running... [He] sets an example for maintaining a healthy lifestyle by exercising at Cooper Aerobics Center on a regular basis.”³³² Cooper’s healthy lifestyle is the antithesis of many pastors’ attitudes toward health. They surrender a healthy lifestyle for grueling hours spent in ministry.

Being prepared to burnout for God is often considered an unspoken yet necessary prerequisite for accepting the call to the pastorate. “Many people have burned out in ministries of service ... precisely because they have been worshipping their own activity instead of God. In such instances, burnout can be a blessed time that perhaps should not be forestalled.”³³³ Gerald May has certainly hit on an important phenomenon in the contemporary church. Pastors are perpetually attempting to keep pace with the current trends and “like the rock bottom for the substance addict, burnout for the action addict is sometimes the only way he or she can come to know the difference between the means and the end, between good deeds and God.”³³⁴

³³¹ Kenneth Cooper, *The Aerobics Program for Total Well-Being* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 19.

³³² www.cooperaerobics.com/About-Cooper/Dr--Kenneth-Cooper.aspx, (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

³³³ Gerald May, *The Awakened Heart* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991), 189.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 189.

Cooper also talks about the importance of balance in regard to our emotions. Emotions are given to us by the Creator as a gift, so that every emotion Jesus expressed can also be communicated by us in our time of need.³³⁵ Jesus, being God in the form of man, expressed his emotions at various times as reported in the biblical record; they were similar to the ones pastors and laity convey. Jesus celebrated and showed joy at the wedding in Cana (John 2:2–10). He showed anger at deceitful money lenders but did not sin in doing so (Matt 21:12). He wept upon hearing about the death of his close friend Lazarus (John 11:35). Upon nearing Jerusalem, Jesus wept over the city, recognizing the ignorance of the people (Luke 19:41). When Jesus saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. (Matt 9:36). God the Father/Jesus the Son had love for “the world” as expressed in arguably the most recognized single verse of Scripture (John 3:16). And at the end, Jesus expressed various emotions on the day of his death. After being tortured, he displayed the pain and agony he endured on the cross on the behalf of mankind because of his unconditional love for us and uttered forgiveness and pardon for the very ones who were responsible for his death.³³⁶ Emotions are not a sign of weakness and fault. For the pastoral family, when various emotions surface as a result of continual stressors, it is critical not to mask them, but to allow them to speak so those who love and care for us will listen and help. Paul instructs the Corinthian believers to “imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). We should model our emotions after Jesus and pattern our lives after his example. “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as

³³⁵ Hebrews 4:15 states: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.”

³³⁶ John 15:6-41; Matt 27:32-54.

He walked” (1 John 2:6), “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5).

6: Safeguards

Safeguards are non-negotiable and should be established in order to protect the pastoral family from otherwise-unavoidable ministry battle fatigue. The pastor will never realize success in his ministry if his family is falling apart. It is crucial for the pastor to preserve a healthy balance between ministry and family. A pastor needs to remember the simple things like telling family members daily how much he loves them, spending time with them, praying for and with them, protecting them from negative and hurtful congregants, and refraining from including them as part of sermons unless they give their permission in advance. Keeping in mind that clergy spouses often become the victims of relentless verbal abuse and gossip, pastors need to take extra measures to safeguard them. Pastors’ kids can be imperiled and hurt by the unrealistic expectations put on them, and many of them are in need of psychological counseling while being prescribed medications to help them deal with the crises brought on by church-related issues. Many pastoral families are struggling with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and are attempting to deal with the unpleasant ministry backlash with ongoing treatment. At the end of the day, your family is what matters most, so safeguard yourself and them.

Spend quality time with significant people in your life

Make up your mind that your family is more important than church affairs. Family time should take priority. When people seem unforgiving, even to the point of threatening, remember that after God calls you to another pastorate or when your ministry vocation changes, that inflexible antagonist will be but a fleeting memory and you will be blessed by having chosen to prioritize your family.

Set Boundaries

There is simply no way around it, ministry is a public service, and so often the pastor feels frustration in that he is never off-duty. During times of high stress, some clergy might rather trade jobs with a taxi cab driver so that he could then at least flick the sign atop his cab to “off-duty” and catch a much-needed and well-deserved break. Not only is it difficult to set up boundaries for the family, it is also tough to deal with congregants who view pastoral boundaries as barriers. “What I want,” one pastor remarked, “is not a wall; I simply want a fence, so folks have to slow down a bit before coming into my family’s space!”³³⁷ One of the pastors in my case study for this thesis told me a story of how someone crossed his boundary and went too far. It was late evening, and the pastor retired to his bedroom to prepare for bed while his wife continued counseling a young woman in their living room. After he was fast asleep, the pastor was jolted out of bed by one of his parishioners who happened to be a local “good ole boy” policeman. He grabbed the pastor and insisted he get out of bed to listen to his issue, which was by no

³³⁷ F. Belton Joyner Jr., *Life in the Fish Bowl: Everyday Challenges of Pastors and Their Families* (Nashville: Abindgon Press, 2006), 20.

means an emergency. The pastor and his wife decided that night they would move further out of town and never allow a congregant to cross that line again. It is imperative that the pastor set up not only personal boundaries for himself but also for his family in order to maintain any sense of sanity while serving. “Jesus had boundaries, but they were more of the picket-fence variety. He allowed structured access and was careful to reserve time for himself.”³³⁸ In *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No*, Henry Cloud and John Townsend offer guidance about this issue.

Boundaries are a “property line.” Their purpose is to help us know what we are responsible for and what we are not responsible for. The function of a boundary is to keep good in and bad out, to act as an alarm system, to help us to withdraw, and to protect our freedom.³³⁹

Sound Bites

Julie Workman³⁴⁰ suggests that a pastor’s family can employ a measure of safety and protection in memorizing “five phrases that might help others better understand their challenges.”³⁴¹ These phrases can be interpreted as sound bites, useful not only for relating with congregants, but also as safeguards promoting pastoral family boundaries. The five sound bites are: “I’m having a difficult time,” “I need to pray,” “I don’t know,” “I’m not comfortable with that” and “I have a history too.”³⁴²

³³⁸ Anderson, *Christ Centered Therapy*, 283. Mark 1:35 and John 5:13 are examples of this.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 284.

³⁴⁰ Julie Workman, “Five phrases every pastor’s family should know,” (Mar 1, 2007), www.lifeway.com/ArticleView?storeId=10054&catalogId=10001&langId=-1&article=five-phrases-every-pastor-should-know (accessed Mar 13, 2012).

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*

Bubble List

After years in hectic and unpredictable full time ministry and riding the perpetual roller coaster of *guilt* regarding balancing ministry and family, pastors often readily confess regret and wish they had have made more time for fun and family. I have created a new way for pastoral families to engage in family and fun. I highly recommend that the pastoral family make a “bubble list.” This could be part of their New Year’s resolutions; however, this list can be created at any time. People experiencing long periods of happiness sometimes fret that someone or something might somehow “burst their bubble.” This negative expression simply suggests that someone fears that life’s beautiful moments might be taken away from them. Most people are familiar with a “bucket list,” which is a list of activities or excursions that someone desires to engage in prior to “kicking the bucket.” A “bubble list” is basically the same idea, but with a more positive spin on it. Instead of having a “bucket list” as a continual reminder of what should be accomplished before you die, the “bubble list” is a reminder of the things we can do that bring happiness through life’s special moments. Most people never achieve a fraction of what is included on their “bucket list.” Pastoral families admittedly struggle to find time for special premeditated moments, and the “bubble list” is one way of achieving this goal together.

Celebrate Victories

Spiritual leaders are notorious for seldom making time to celebrate their ministry accomplishments. Because of the very nature of the work, there is an unending to-do list

that typically thwarts any attempt to savor the successes. Ministry victories are no doubt the high point in every pastor's ministry. Whether those triumphs include a consistently growing attendance, a record number of baptisms, a plethora of salvations and commitments to Christ, or an influx of funds from tithes, these events are never truly celebrated as they should be. Times are uncertain, and we should allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the goodness and blessing of God in our lives and ministries. Instead, we tend to lean in the direction currently seen in society—i.e., toward an attitude of entitlement instead of humble anticipation. The Psalmist says: "Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD" (Ps 150:6). The Israelites celebrated with "trumpeters and singers ... to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals...and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth forever" (2 Chron 5:13).

7: Support

"Some clergy families see themselves as a team ministry."³⁴³ In many cases this works well, and it can be a tremendous blessing in that the pastor has that additional trusted support and encouragement so often needed in ministry. In such situations, the family experiences the rewards of serving people and witnessing eternal life changes. However, at times family team ministry can be a necessary evil in some pastorates; it may be undesirable, but it might be required in order to achieve a better result. There is enormous pressure on family members to take on a supportive or partnership role while attempting to assist the pastor. Realizing the pastorate is fraught with overwhelming stressors that

³⁴³ Joyner, *Life in the Fish Bowl*, 27.

inevitably lead to various health challenges, where does the pastoral family find support, healing, and renewal when injured or struggling physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually, or financially?

Injuries are mutually experienced; healing also has to be mutually experienced ... constructive and well-founded guidelines for the clergy family will be a source of relief of stress, confusion, conflict, and injury.³⁴⁴

A strategic pastoral family support system should encompass five key areas; family, peers, congregation, denomination, and counseling.

Family

Studies show that if a pastor is going to seek out support of any kind he will most likely go to his family first. In fact, findings reveal that pastors feel most comfortable sharing and receiving support from their spouses. “It is no surprise that spouses are expected to provide much of the moral support for clergy. For this is a traditional expectation of marriage.”³⁴⁵ However, there is a hidden risk in this, as most wives are already overwhelmed with things like not having their own emotional outlet, suppressing their own individuality, being neglected by their husbands, lack of privacy, finances, double standards, disparaging congregational criticism, conflicts, and sexual issues stemming from the pastoral lifestyle. “But the percent of support expected is changing. In the landmark study of clergy from the 1960s ... active clergy were found to be receiving 85

³⁴⁴ Paul A. Mickey and Ginny W. Ashmore, *Clergy Families: Is Normal Life Possible?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 110.

³⁴⁵ Rediger, “State of the Clergy.”

percent of their support from spouses (nearly all were female then).”³⁴⁶ G. Lloyd Rediger acknowledges: “Our study shows clergy find 70 percent of their support coming from spouses (now including males). This trend is reflected in other recent studies as well.”³⁴⁷

Peers

In his blog, “A Pastor’s Friend,” Dr. Glenn Taylor wrote a post entitled “The Fall of Christian Leaders—A Redemptive View.”³⁴⁸ Taylor enlightens his reader as to the “precursors of moral failure” and suggests this:

In many ways pastors live lives of isolation, loneliness, and silence. Yes, they may have male friends to hunt, fish, or play golf with, yet there is a protective bubble around them. They still have to be guarded about their feelings, thoughts, and struggles.³⁴⁹

Taylor goes on to write: “I am aware of the high standards of conduct that Paul laid down in his letters to Timothy, and yet Paul struggled with issues of his own (Romans 7). Silence then, produces isolation, loneliness and a deep gnawing pain.”³⁵⁰ Bishop T. D. Jakes argues that the pastor’s “position prevents them from talking about their condition.”³⁵¹ As straightforward as these arguments are, it must be noted that peer support for pastors is certainly on the rise and is being awarded high marks for its ongoing value. David L. Odom writes: “A study finds that pastors are more effective

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Glenn Taylor, “The Fall of Christian Leaders – A Redemptive View,” coach1glenn.wordpress.com/2011/10/07/the-fall-of-christian-leaders-a-redemptive-view-part-1/ (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ Ibid.

leaders when they spend time in Christian community with their peers.”³⁵² Odom argues that “congregations are more robust, growing communities of faith if the pastor is part of a robust community of faith.”³⁵³ He also reports findings about the benefits to not only the pastor but the congregations as well.

In the last year, sociologist Penny Marler from Samford University conducted research on the impact of pastor peer groups. By comparing data from a survey of peer groups with a respected survey of congregations, Marler and her team demonstrated that a pastor’s participation in a peer group was a strong predictor of church growth. A second, related predictor was that the peer group had a trained facilitator and/or a curriculum. Pastors develop when they are in community with one another, focusing on the classic disciplines of Christian community: reading Scripture, praying for each other, fellowshiping.³⁵⁴

Warren Bird, Ph.D., is research director of the Leadership Network and co-author of 24 books on various aspects of church health and innovation. Bird affirms that “peer group involvement makes a difference among pastoral leaders.”³⁵⁵ Bird confirms this from data gathered in a 2008 study³⁵⁶ that drew responses from “several thousand pastors.”³⁵⁷ Pastors who participated in various peer groups “were significantly more likely to promote a culture of involvement in their churches, support an active youth

³⁵² David L. Odom, “What is required to help congregations grow?” www.faithandleadership.com/content/what-required-help-congregations-grow (accessed Mar 1, 2012).

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Warren Bird, “Overwhelming Evidence that Pastors in Peer Groups Are FAR More Effective, Healthy and Balanced,” www.leadnet.org/blog/post/overwhelming_evidence_that_pastors_in_peer_groups_are_far_more_effective_he/ (accessed Mar 14, 2012).

³⁵⁶ The full 61-page report, released April 2010, is titled “Is the Treatment the Cure? A Study of the Effects of Participation in Pastoral Leader Peer Groups” and is available for free download at www.austinseminary.edu/cpl.

³⁵⁷ Bird, “Overwhelming evidence.”

ministry that also integrated into the life of the church, and tend to devote time and effort to community service and positive community change.”³⁵⁸

“In his “State of the Clergy” Rediger notes:

It is also notable that the pattern of support from peers has changed. [One study] found that clergy peers (same and different denominations) ranked low in the support list. Our study shows that clergy peers are almost tied for second ranking in the categories of supporters. It is apparent that the clergy networking movement is having a unifying effect.³⁵⁹

Recognition should be given to the Lilly Endowment Fund for forming the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence (SPE) program,³⁶⁰ enabling

a broad spectrum of institutions from a wide variety of denominations in many geographical regions to honor and support pastoral leaders. Most projects place resources in the hands of pastors themselves to engage in peer learning groups.³⁶¹

Congregation

Ministering to the minister is something that been neglected for far too long. The massive burdens and well-being of the spiritual lives of all those in his flock are heavy enough

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Rediger, “State of the Clergy.”

³⁶⁰ The Endowment is convinced that many congregations in the nation, in a variety of settings and within a multiplicity of faith traditions, are being served by excellent pastoral leaders. These leaders and the work they do are of inestimable value. The quality of pastoral leadership is key to vital congregational life. When churches and parishes are led by spiritually strong, thoughtful, able and imaginative pastors, congregations tend to thrive... peer learning groups. These groups provide opportunities for intellectual, vocational, spiritual, physical and emotional support, education and encouragement. Pastoral leaders study the Bible and theology, practice spiritual disciplines, build pastoral skills and participate in retreats, much-deserved relaxation and/or renewing travel. In these projects, they are encouraged and enabled to design and implement programs that will help them sustain pastoral excellence over the long haul.

www.lillyendowment.org/religion_spe.html

³⁶¹ www.lillyendowment.org/religion_spe.html

loads; adding to that his own self-care as well as that of his family, the pastor needs ministry too. “The thought that the pastor has temptations and struggles common to man is not something Christians generally feel comfortable with.”³⁶² Daniel Weiss claims that congregants “picture their pastor as the white knight who is not tempted with earthly things. The sooner we dispel that notion, the safer, healthier, and more authentic our churches will be.”³⁶³ Weiss suggests that it is time for the church to involve itself in the care for its pastor. In an article entitled “Ministering to the Minister: Offering Effective Pastoral Support,” Weiss suggests various ways the church and the pastor “can work together to safeguard and support the shepherd of the flock.”³⁶⁴ Creatively implemented, these initiatives and activities can produce a healthy atmosphere within the church: “spiritual support, prayer teams, prayer partner, close friendships, safeguards in the church, filtering/accountability software, counseling boundaries, accountability relationship, counseling, family support, ample vacation time, involved lay people, ample elder or deacon/deaconess help, continuing education.”³⁶⁵

The board and church congregants are parties with responsibility for assisting the pastor in successfully attaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle. Scripture affirms that recognition, respect, and honor towards God’s anointed is due them: the Psalmist declares, “Do not touch My anointed ones, and do My prophets no harm” (Ps 105:15). Paul instructs Timothy that “[t]he elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching” (1 Tim 5:17). Honoring the pastor means respecting his rights as a human being, praying faithfully for

³⁶² Daniel Weiss, “Ministering to the Minister: Offering Effective Pastoral Support,” www.pureintimacy.org/piArticles/A000000622.cfm (accessed Mar 14, 2012).

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

him and his family, and encouraging all of them in unique and creative ways. The church should appoint a group of people whose sole ministry purpose is to edify and encourage the pastoral family. The church budget should provide funding for the pastor to attend annual conferences and marriage retreats for continued education and renewal, and this time away should not be deducted from his vacation time. Provision should also be made for a periodic sabbatical.

Denomination

Rediger writes that “[i]t is discouraging to note that denominational officials and seminary professors rank very low on the list of supporters in [a specific] study.”³⁶⁶ Pastors surveyed indicate their openness to receiving denominational support, especially when experiencing attacks of various natures. Pastors have also suggested the development of strategies within denominations for the training and equipping of lay leaders to take the lead in responding to the needs of the church in order that it might function in a healthy manner. Pastors also recommended that denominational leaders form support systems for clergy peer networks. Rediger’s study reveals disturbing findings with respect to denominational support for clergy.

Denominational officials rank near the bottom while seminary professors rank last. This is sad because both these categories of persons are very close to clergy during their training years and transitions. Both types of supporters are typically ordained themselves and would be expected to understand clergy needs. But pastors often regard them as privileged defectors from the ranks of everyday pastors. And they consistently report

³⁶⁶ Rediger, “State of the Clergy.”

that they do not trust the motives of such persons, nor find them helpful in times of crisis or transition.³⁶⁷

Counseling

Clergy case studies reveal unfortunate findings in that most pastors confess that they never feel comfortable seeking out counseling for their own personal needs while pastoring. It is perhaps a self-imposed apprehension; nevertheless, as spiritual leaders they suggest that if they were to seek counseling they might be viewed as flawed or weak. A recent study found that “only 7 percent of pastors ... expressed an interest” in seeking professional counseling.³⁶⁸ Another study revealed that 76 percent of senior pastors surveyed acknowledged they sought out their own private coping mechanisms, while 16 percent found family support helpful, and only eight percent leaned on outside care through various relationship support mechanisms.³⁶⁹ Ministers carry inordinate burdens and at times should consent to receiving professional help during burnout as a means of support if they are to be able to reason their way through the buildup of conflicts and cynicism. A personal family crisis with our youngest daughter recently found our entire family sitting before a Christian counselor for the first time ever. Her marriage had collapsed because of her husband’s moral indiscretions (as a youth pastor). Unbeknownst to our daughter and our entire family, he was spiraling downward quickly. It all happened within a two-week period, and without the guidance of a wonderful counselor our family

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ R. A. Lish, “Clergy interest in innovative collaboration with psychologists,” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 22 (2003), 294-298.

³⁶⁹ M. R. McMinn, R. A. Lish, P. D. Trice, et al, “Care for Pastors: Learning from clergy and their spouses,” *Pastoral Psychology* 53 (2005), 563-581.

might still be struggling today. With the vast number of issues pastoral families confront, it is important for them to give themselves permission to be vulnerable.

Being in therapy is like having someone in your corner to confer with after each round in the ring. When you try to say ‘No’ and get beaten severely by either anger or a guilt trip, you have somewhere to go to lick your wounds and develop a strategy for how you will handle that person or situation in the next round.³⁷⁰

Roy Oswald of the Alban Institute recommends “[s]taying in therapy for a minimum of six months before concluding that you have dealt with the roots of your burnout.”³⁷¹

8: Spousal Sexual Intimacy

Child psychologist and child and family psychiatrist, Dr. Philip G. Ney, argues: “The basic purpose of the human sexual relationship is union and communion, not pleasure or procreation.”³⁷² We live in a society that has this all backwards. More and more people are looking out for their own pleasure, sexual and otherwise, and there is a tremendous lack of intimacy and genuineness in relationships. Sexual innuendoes are communicated via innumerable forms of communication, limiting the pastor and his spouse’s ability to stem its overall influence on their lives as well as in the lives of their children. Popular books are now being authored by pastors on the subject of sex and sexual intimacy in marriage. And for any who contend this area is not a struggle for them, well, he or she is

³⁷⁰ Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding A Balance for Effective Ministry* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 1991), 159.

³⁷¹ Ibid.

³⁷² Philip G. Ney, “The Christian Doctor and Sex,” www.messengers2.com/articles/discoveries_and_ethics/christian_doctor_and_sex.htm (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

simply being disingenuous. Paul cautions the Corinthian believers thus: “Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor 10:12, ESV).

My husband and I recently celebrated our thirty-third wedding anniversary, and we have spent every one of those years together in the ministry. As I reflect on the years, I must honestly admit that all but two or three were super great, and that today we enjoy one another’s company very much. Those few painful times were concurrent with our church building program where, as the pastor, my husband became inundated with burdens that, looking back, I realize were far too great for him to shoulder alone. Our marriage took the brunt of the impact, and I would be dishonest if I failed to admit there were times I contemplated packing my bags to go away for a while until the storm passed. I loved my husband, but I confess I did not really like him then. I witnessed my husband morphing into a person I didn’t marry. He has always been passionate for God, prayer, and people, congenial, and great fun to be with. He exudes all the qualities that make up a great husband and father. However, at one point, the pressure and stress of pastoring a successful and growing mega-church almost cost us our marriage. This thesis provides me with the first opportunity in which I have elected to express my thoughts and feelings about this to anyone other than my mate. Through God’s providence, my husband and I came together and got things back on track and have committed going forward that we will not allow the ministry encumbrances to interfere with our marriage.

With that short introduction as my framework, I must, as an evangelist/pastor’s wife, express my candid reflections on intimacy in the pastoral marriage. In 33 years of traveling the globe and considering the life experience I have gained, I confess I am only now realizing at 52 years of age how important it is to communicate fairly and

objectively with my mate about sexual intimacy. We have always enjoyed a wonderful marital relationship; however, when the pressures of life and ministry become overwhelming it is easy to lose that connection and to disengage from your spouse. And, truthfully, pastors and their spouses are the first to dismiss the guilt in doing so as they feel a certain God-given right to do so “for the sake of the ministry.” Should this not be our first hint that Satan is on the warpath and hell-bent to destroy us? “Trouble is ahead for a pastor’s marriage when the marital relationship becomes polite with no genuine emotional intimacy.”³⁷³ Larry Russell³⁷⁴ says: “When two single people live in a relationship centering around hectic activity, that marriage is in trouble ... it’s leaving the door open for infidelity.”³⁷⁵ Our issues were never infidelity or even the hint of it. Communication and time for each other were the big issues separating us. Concurrent with our own personal marital struggles, my husband and I were required to attend a denominational conference while in seminary a few years back. Frankly, I was still reeling from the lack of communication and intimacy in our marriage and incredibly fatigued as well. During the conference and in God’s providence, I was corralled along with 1,500 other pastor’s wives to attend a luncheon where the speaker, Gary Chapman,³⁷⁶ invited us to learn “How to Love Your Leader.” I took a seat at the very back table with five other pastor’s wives I did not know, hoping to easily escape as

³⁷³ Rebekah Montgomery, “Pastors and Wives at the Breaking Point,” www.adventistreview.org/article/680/archives/issue-2006-1522/pastors-and-wives-at-the-breaking-point (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

³⁷⁴ Through Shepherd’s Heart Ministry, a crisis intervention and prevention outreach for ministry leaders, the Russells hear the secrets pastors and their wives can’t tell anyone else. Both Russells, who have ministry experience and hold master’s degrees in counseling, say pastors and their families clearly need help. Ibid.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

³⁷⁶ Chapman is the senior associate pastor responsible for adult discipleship, marriage counseling and pastoral care at Calvary Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, N.C. Shannon Baker, “Loving a leader is ministers’ wives’ topic,” (Jul 13, 2008), www.sbcannualmeeting.org/sbc08/newsroom/newspage.asp?ID=65 (accessed Mar 14, 2012).

quickly as possible. Honestly, I donned the proverbial pastor's wife's mask during the initial pleasantries, and when I heard the president of the luncheon announce Chapman's topic, I sat and rebelled in utter disgust. I fiercely attempted to hold back the tears and everything in me was shouting, "Get the heck out of here Cristie Jo. I'm so angry with my husband for ignoring us and I am about done. The pressure of ministry has about destroyed us and this sermon doesn't even deserve my attention."

Thankfully, God saw my tears and patiently redirected my rebellion. He softened my heart and kept working on me as I sat weeping through Chapman's six critical suggestions for "loving your leader." They are: (1) Praise is always better than criticism, (2) Requests are more productive than demands, (2) Unconditional love is the only true love, (3) Learn from his defensiveness, (4) Understanding male sexuality is essential, (5) Learn to apologize, and (6) Don't expect perfection. Chapman went straight for the jugular and then penetrated my heart.

The area I most needed to work on was the essential understanding of male sexuality. The mandatory sex-education class in fifth grade did not prepare us for sexual intimacy in marriage. Where do we learn the skills in succeeding at such an important God-given gift? Typically, parents never taught us, the school system was lacking, and God forbid we educate ourselves about marriage sexual intimacy in seminary. This is exactly where it should be taught and re-taught. There is so much misunderstanding between the male and female sexes. We truly don't have a clue how each other's bodies operate. Sadly, we learn by trial and error and statistics reveal we are not doing well at all at this. Ministry is demanding, and the one of the first signs of marital crises is the lack of communication, congeniality, and sexual intimacy. "Noting that men have a physical

need for sex, Chapman encouraged wives to be understanding when their husbands seek intimacy with them.”³⁷⁷ Chapman concluded by stating that "I believe that God did not ordain marriage to be miserable," he said, adding that when Christian couples do marriage God's way, other couples will be drawn to learn from them.”³⁷⁸ I appreciate and concur with Chapman's conclusions; however, vast numbers of pastors and their spouses are miserable. They no longer enjoy sexual intimacy either quantitatively or qualitatively. For various reasons, their interest and attraction to one another is waning and it did not happen overnight. Perhaps one or the other or both have neglected their physical health and appearance. Pastors' wives are content to meander through their days without showering or applying make-up, and many don the famous “comfy” sweat suits instead of “prepping” themselves like they did previous to marriage. Pastors are undisciplined in allowing themselves to pack on extra pounds, presenting an unappealing appearance which hinders a desire for their mates to engage in any type of intimacy. We are simply not conversant with one another and fearful about offending our lover when it comes to discussing unhealthy habits that turn us off sexually. Ministry has a way of justifying the “pause button” we push regarding all our most intimate needs. The surveys discussed here, among others, reveal that it is time to redirect our thinking and begin communicating about how to better love and enjoy one another sexually. We are intimidated about being completely honest with one another about what pleases us, and we no longer designate time for educating ourselves on how to make our marriages and the intimacy required better. Dr. Ney writes:

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

One destructive misunderstanding between men and women that often occurs is a woman's failure to understand that the testes and the prostate are both endocrine and exocrine glands. Once production has begun, only under unusual circumstances will it stop and those secretions need to be released. That intense male drive to ejaculate in a vagina is often both misunderstood and resented by women. Generally speaking, in Western culture men are more ready to give than women are to receive. Among the Chinese, the women are more ready to receive than men are to give. Women can best understand male urgency by picturing the effect of a child intermittently stopping and starting breast feeding. As the breast becomes engorged the mother feels very uncomfortable and inadvertently begins looking around for some other child who will appreciate her milk production. So it is with sexually frustrated males. This is why Paul advises that couples should not withhold sex except for mutually agreed upon periods of prayer and fasting (1 Corinthians 7:5). Obviously, if they are fasting their sexual drive is lessened.³⁷⁹

Dr. Taylor wraps it up nicely in his concluding thoughts in regard to “Sex-The Drug of Choice.”

When we hurt, either physically or emotionally we will seek relief, or a way to cope with the pain. There is a powerful drug available that resides in the brain that even the use of strong sexual thoughts can spring into action. Fanaticizing about illicit sex, the use of porn, or any other kind of sexual stimuli releases the chemicals that God has given for the use of married couples. However, if there is already a disconnect in marriage, the need for this medication may feel overwhelming. Endorphins and Enkefalins bind with opiate receptors to release a strong analgesic to the brain, bringing a measure of relief. Sometimes just the presence of a female emits triggers to this pain reliever. Of course the pinnacle of euphoria is reached with total sexual release. When this occurs with someone who is not our spouse, we understand it to be full blown adultery.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁹ Ney, “The Christian Doctor.”

³⁸⁰ Taylor, “The Fall of Christian Leaders.”

9: Sabbaticals

“For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift” (Isa 30:15-16, KJV).

A sabbatical is intended to provide an extended period for ... reinvigoration of the mind and heart through research, purposeful travel, writing ... the goal is to enable the preacher to rejuvenate in body, soul, and spirit. The role of a pastor ... is one of the most taxing professions ... not only emotionally taxing, but also physically and spiritually taxing.³⁸¹

Survey findings reveal a disturbing apathy toward pastoral sabbaticals. When asked if they had ever taken a sabbatical, every pastor interviewed for the author’s case studies replied, “No! They were never offered.” How is the pastor to fully engage in weekly ministry when he is faithfully and gruelingly ministering 24/7? The pastorate requires times of stillness and quiet. Charles Swindoll argues: “Noise and words and frenzied, hectic schedules dull our senses, closing our ears to His still, small voice and making us numb to His touch.”³⁸² Sabbaticals are not vacations; they are periods of rest and renewal necessary to replenishment of the mind, body, and spirit. “The relentless pace of contemporary society overwhelms our sense of time as a gift from God.”³⁸³ Steve W. Raimo writes: “As such, pastors allow their sense of obligation to the ministry to blind the need to observe a portion of this gift as Sabbath rest. Not only do pastors fail to

³⁸¹ Matt Schmucker, “Caring for the Pastor: The Sabbatical,” www.9marks.org/journal/caring-pastor-sabbatical (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

³⁸² Charles Swindoll, *Intimacy with the Almighty*, 40.

³⁸³ R. Sherman, “Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest,” *Interpretation* (Jan 2005), 38-50.

allow themselves adequate rest, they increase their work-related hours in an attempt to get it all done.”³⁸⁴ Rowland Croucher argues that the necessity for managing stress is to

make sure your life has a sabbatical rhythm of work-and-withdrawal (retreat from work). A Sabbath is the day on which, from when you wake until you go to sleep at night, nothing reminds you of your vocation. (Wednesday or Thursday may be best for preaching pastors). And: all the great leaders in Scripture spent a disproportionate amount of their lives in deserts!³⁸⁵

10: See the Signals

Seasoned shepherds realize the need to read signals indicating the danger ahead in their ministries. Sadly, many pastors become so entrenched in the daily duties of the pastorate that they remain unaware of the warning signals until it is too late. Satanic warfare is a reality when serving God, and the pastor must be aware of his cunning strategy which seeks to take him out.

Strike the Shepherd

As already discussed in previous chapters in this thesis, Satan tenaciously targets God’s leaders with intent to ultimately destroy the church. “Strike the Shepherd and the Sheep scatter” (Zech 13:7). Our shepherds are being stricken with various temptations and tribulations, and some are being taken out to Satan’s great glee. On November 10, 1952, *Time* magazine featured a story in the religion section entitled, “Strike the Shepherd.”

³⁸⁴ Steve W. Raimo, “The Role of Rest and Renewal in Leadership Success,” www.christianleadershipalliance.org/?page=roleofrestandrenewal (accessed Mar 13, 2012).

³⁸⁵ Rowland Croucher, “A Pastoral Survival Guide [6]: Stress Management,” pastordummies.blogspot.com/2011/08/pastoral-survival-guide-6-stress.html (accessed Mar 13, 2012).

These were choice words and no doubt intentionally written. The article featured the story of Father Patrick J. Byrne who was the first Maryknoll³⁸⁶ priest. Byrne was assigned to Korea in 1923 and later opened a new mission in Kyoto, Japan. In 1935, he was placed under house arrest during World War II. His work was invaluable. Father Byrne assisted General Douglas McArthur in reassuring the people at the beginning of the American occupation. “On July 2, 1950 Bishop Byrne was seized by the Communists and put on trial. Refusing to give in, he was forced to march the Yalu River along with the remnants of the US Army 24th Infantry Division. He died on November 25, 1950 and was buried in an unmarked grave in Hanjangni, North Korea.”³⁸⁷ Think of the ministry that was lost or hindered as a result of Bishop Byrne’s death. One would imagine Byrne’s followers were shocked and terrified at the Communists threats and tactics and were no doubt frightened to carry on the work.

Suffer and Sacrifice

C. S. Lewis once wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures ... but shouts in our pains: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”³⁸⁸ Admittedly, most pastors today feel they have been the repeated recipients of those blaring shouts from God while suffering often unimaginable pain. Are pastors the “deaf world” to which Lewis is referring? We revel in the victories of our service to God, and yet we loathe the times we fall victim to the viciousness of the very people we are called to serve. Christ has called all His children to

³⁸⁶ a US-based Catholic mission movement.

³⁸⁷ maryknollvocations.org/news-and-events/201-bishop-patrick-j-byrne-mm.html (accessed March 6, 2012).

³⁸⁸ www.tentmaker.org/Quotes/sufferingquotes.htm, (accessed March 12, 2012).

suffer and sacrifice in dying to themselves. If there is no suffering and no sacrifice there is no learning. If the pastor is to live by a higher ethical and spiritual standard, then he is promised suffering. So why are we so often taken off-guard when we are tried and tested? The great Indian Christian Missionary, Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889–1929), knew the pain of suffering and the reward it brings. He likened the cries of God’s children to a newborn’s cry.

A newborn child has to cry, for only in this will his lungs expand. In order to make a child breathe the doctor gives it a slight blow. The mother must have thought the doctor cruel. But he was really doing the kindest thing possible. As with newborn children the lungs are contracted, so are our spiritual lungs. But through suffering God strikes us in love. The lungs expand and we can breathe and pray.³⁸⁹

Peter reminds us as well: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Pet 4:12–13).

Dr. Larry Cornine, Associate Professor of Pastoral Care and Counselling at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was instrumental in counselling our 26-year old-daughter during the unexpected and heart-breaking divorce from her husband. Dr. Cornine also counsels members of our family who, at times, struggle with the demands and idiosyncrasies of parishioners in the congregation. One of the most arresting suggestions Cornine offers pastoral families who feel like calling it quits because of the suffering, sacrifices, and thankless nature of the ministry is advising them to think about “ministering without expecting anything in return.” These words of wisdom were

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

presented during a critical time in our pastorate. They were sincerely welcomed, and with great determination the entire family committed to minister from that point forward with those intentions in mind. It seemed to work for a time; however, after several unanticipated and utterly gut-wrenching events within the church it became more and more difficult to stay true to that commitment. I added what I believe to be a necessary postscript to Cornine's advice; "Minister without expecting anything in return and be willing to lose it all." Afflictions, trials and tribulations are par for the course where the believer in Christ is concerned. Matthew Henry gives a contemplative rendering of James 1:12–18.

It is not every man who suffers that is blessed; but he who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of duty. Afflictions cannot make us miserable, if it be not our own fault. The tried Christian shall be a crowned one. The crown of life is promised to all who have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every soul that truly loves God shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above, where love is made perfect. The commands of God, and the dealings of his providence, try men's hearts, and show the dispositions which prevail in them. But nothing sinful in the heart or conduct can be ascribed to God. He is not the author of the dross, though his fiery trial exposes it. Those who lay the blame of sin, either upon their constitution, or upon their condition in the world, or pretend they cannot keep from sinning, wrong God as if he were the author of sin. Afflictions, as sent by God, are designed to draw out our graces, but not our corruptions. The origin of evil and temptation is in our own hearts. Stop the beginnings of sin, or all the evils that follow must be wholly charged upon us. God has no pleasure in the death of men, as he has no hand in their sin; but both sin and misery are owing to themselves. As the sun is the same in nature and influences, though the earth and clouds, often coming between, make it seem to us to vary, so God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any changes or alterations in him. What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, and glory; and infinitely more. As every good gift is from God, so particularly our being born again, and all its holy, happy consequences come from him. A true Christian becomes as different a person from what he was before the renewing influences of Divine grace,

as if he were formed over again. We should devote all our faculties to God's service, that we may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.³⁹⁰

Strongholds and Satanic Warfare

Satan's intent in the life of the pastor is clear. His agenda is to prevent the power of God from being established in the pastor's life and ministry.

We cannot ignore Satan and spiritual warfare, nor can we turn a blind eye to his characteristic and schemes. Yes, he cannot get those who are in Christ, but he surely can hassle us. He cannot possess those who are in Christ, but he can trick and mislead us and try to distract our eyes and faith from Christ.³⁹¹

Clergy families are Satan's target. If he continually derails the pastor with either a family or church crisis, then he has succeeded in hindering the Kingdom agenda. Satan will stop at nothing in an attempt to set up and secure strongholds in the path of the pastor's spiritual journey and ministry. It is imperative for a pastor to continually pull down satanic strongholds surrounding him and his family (2 Cor 10:3–6; Eph 6:10–18; Col 2:15; 1 John 4:4).

11: Stick-to-itiveness

The dictionary defines stick-to-itiveness as a “firmness of purpose; resolution.”³⁹²

Ministry often challenges our “firmness of purpose” and our ability to hang in there not

³⁹⁰ *Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, www.christnotes.org/commentary.php?b=59&c=1&com=mhc, (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

³⁹¹ Richard Krejcir, “Spiritual Warfare Part II”

www.intothyword.org/apps/articles/default.asp?articleid=39408&columnid=3803 (accessed Mar 10, 2012).

³⁹² www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=stick-to-it-iveness

only when times are tough but also when anticipated results of our work are not immediately realized. Admittedly, pastors grow weary in the battle, but not weary of it. Paul encourages the believers at Galatia: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart” (Gal 6:9 NKJV). John Walvoord argues that we

may become discouraged with spiritual sowing because the harvest is often long in coming. In the face of this reality the apostle charged the Galatians not to become weary or give up because the harvest is sure ... the reaping will come at God’s proper time, which may be only in part in this life and in full in the life to come.³⁹³

Regardless how tenuous the circumstances may appear, pastors must remain focused, and ministry should be done with excellence and effectiveness. Stay focused and stick to God’s plan. There is no room for slacking off or for slackers in God’s service. Pastors should swing for the fences when committing to the pastoral call. This sports metaphor which most people recognize as “going for broke” suggests the baseball player’s grit or determination in hitting the ball as hard as he can rather than simply safely connecting with the ball. Some pastors are content to “safely connect” and to live in the “comfort zone” of serving, never taking risks or shaking things up in an attempt to make a dramatic spiritual difference in their world. We need to remember we are dealing with matters of eternal significance; the “lost-ness” of man, heaven and hell, and the wrath and forgiveness of God. John Piper claims that “[t]he preacher’s mantle is soaked with the blood of Jesus and singed with the fire of hell.”³⁹⁴ The pastor’s role is substantial,

³⁹³ Walvoord, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, 610.

³⁹⁴ Caleb Kolstad, “10 Marks of a Faithful Pastor (Pt. 1),” expositorythoughts.wordpress.com/2006/11/09/227 (accessed Mar 12, 2012).

and all seriousness should be exhibited in that the author of Hebrews affirms we “are keeping watch over ... souls, as those who will have to give an account” (Heb 13:17).

12: Shake the Dust

Most pastors are faithful to their call and often to a fault. They possess incredible tenacity in seizing every opportunity, no matter how intense the storms in ministry become. Such pastors can equal any great captain of a ship who never abandons his battered or sinking vessel until everyone onboard is out of harm’s way. However, Scripture does affirm that there are times when the messenger is no longer welcome and must abort. “Whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet” (Matt 10:14, NKJV). Pastors are often guilty of remaining in a pastorate or in a city too long, when every indication seems to affirm that God called him to leave long ago. His insistence on staying can certainly be appreciated; however, he may be resisting the very will of God for his life. Harry Gardner, President of Acadia Divinity College, suggests that pastors facing unbearable and innumerable obstacles making it difficult to make key inroads for an eternal purpose, leave and “protect their investment.”³⁹⁵

Of course, pastors are not alone in finding it difficult to part ways. On June 9, 1999, New York Mets manager Bobby Valentine was ejected from the game during the twelfth inning of a 14-inning marathon with the Toronto Blue Jays, for arguing a call. Valentine submitted and stepped away; however, his stubbornness in being a part of the

³⁹⁵ Dr. Harry Gardner, Acadia Divinity College, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada. Dr. Harry Gardner’s advice to a war-torn pastor in a private meeting.

game prompted him to find a disguise and then return to the dugout. Regardless of his commitment to the game, Major League Baseball did not see the humor in it. They fined Valentine and suspended him for three games. By resisting the authority over him Valentine only brought more hurt to himself. Jesus affirms Paul in similar situation prior to his conversion: “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads” (Acts 26:14). John MacArthur argues that “[t]o fight God, as Saul was doing, was to fight a losing battle. It was as stupid as an ox kicking against the goads (sharpened rods used to herd cattle).³⁹⁶ When pastors resist the Lord as he attempts to move them on to another location or ministry vocation they are only injuring themselves. A glimpse at Paul’s various struggles during his missionary journeys displays God’s leadership. When being forced to leave town, when imprisoned or shipwrecked, Paul saw it as an opportunity to shake the dust and move on to the next ministry assignment. Staring over or starting afresh can be a good thing.

13: Scriptural Theo-logic and Scriptural Journaling

How important is right thinking for those engaged in ministry? How often is Satan messing with the minds and thoughts of God’s leaders as they attempt to fulfill God’s plan for their lives? As previously presented in this thesis, pastors’ families can experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after periods of overwhelming ministry stress and crises. Christian counselor H. Norman Wright suggests that “[t]raumatized people have alterations in their brains... [and] trauma can create PTSD.” Wright contends, “Trauma is a wounding. It overwhelms the ordinary adaptations to

³⁹⁶ John MacArthur, *Acts* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994).

life.”³⁹⁷ According to Scripture, Paul endured many traumatic events during his ministry that certainly opened a door for the adversary to attempt to mentally massacre him. Undoubtedly, this prompted Paul to frequently write about our minds and thoughts being taken captive.

Is it possible then to establish a biblical plan that will help the pastoral family overcome PTSD and begin again on a path of right thinking? Since the pastoral family is a prime target for Satan’s fiery darts, a Pauline approach might be in order as a daily remedy for renewing the wounded mind. Paul teaches us about transforming the mind through employing a “Scriptural theo-logic,”³⁹⁸ which is simply right thinking.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom 12:1–2, NKJV).

Wright encourages those who have been traumatized by reminding them their story is not finished: “[Y]ou can write the last chapter of your trauma. It hasn’t been written yet.”³⁹⁹

Those in ministry who have been afflicted with any range of traumatic events might also resort to spiritual journaling. During the writing process, ask yourself three important questions: (1) What is God developing in me because of my suffering?; (2)

³⁹⁷ H. Norman Wright, “Trauma and the Brain,” www.hnormanwright.com/index.php?main_page=page&id=22 (accessed Mar 13, 2012).

³⁹⁸ Kenneth R. Jones, “Biblical Counseling and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD),” (Dec 22, 2010), reformedbiblicalcoaching.wordpress.com/2010/12/22/biblical-counseling-and-post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/ (accessed Mar 13, 2012).

³⁹⁹ Ibid.

Where is God deploying me to minister to others because of my suffering?; (3) What is God delivering me from due to my suffering?⁴⁰⁰

14: Seek Out and Offer Forgiveness

This is possibly the most important step after enduring ministry hardships. Paul writes to the believers at Colossae instructing them in “bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*” (Col 3:13, NKJV). Forgiveness is something that must be both “given” and “gotten.” It is an essential component to the healing of pastoral families. Forgiveness frees the heart so the mind and body can recover. Our pastoral experiences can make us either better or bitter. The choice is ours, and if we choose to be bitter then we jeopardize the gift with which God has privileged us. However, if we hasten to the throne of God in asking for His forgiveness and granting forgiveness to those who have offended us, we then ultimately choose to be better, allowing God to use us for his greater glory. Neil Anderson argues: “Unforgiveness is an open invitation to Satan’s bondage in our lives.”⁴⁰¹ The burden of bondage grows rapidly when we refuse to forgive our transgressors. “Forgiveness is necessary to avoid entrapment by Satan. I have discovered in my counseling that forgiveness is the number one avenue Satan uses to gain entrance to believers’ lives. Paul encouraged mutual forgiveness “in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes” (2 Cor 2:11).⁴⁰²

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ Neil Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Ventura: Regal, 1990), 129.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

Concluding Thoughts

John sums up the intent of my thoughts and commitment to pastoral family health. “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 1:2). So it is for you I pray—that you may be compelled to start afresh by implementing each of the steps outlined here and learning, perhaps for the first time, how to live and enjoy the abundant and healthy life Christ offers.

CONCLUSION

A plethora of works has been published over the past four decades, contributing in invaluable ways to previous research in the area of pastoral well being. Works written by pastors and psychologists/psychiatrists also offered substantive research from which to draw with respect to considering challenges that pastoral families encounter as a result of overwhelming ministry stressors and in relation to integrating the development of a strategic health regimen. Currently, there is a surplus of research and resources about and for the pastor. Conversely, what is conspicuous by its absence from these incredibly helpful works is the consideration or comprehensive research directed toward the challenges and health of other members of the pastor's family, i.e. spouse and children.

In my thesis, I have analyzed the most identifiable ministry stressors relating to the pastorate as well as the four predominant challenges pastoral families encounter: physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual. I have observed the emergence of what I refer to as the trickle-down effect of overwhelming ministry stress on the minister's family. Through both research and qualitative case studies, my research concern, therefore, not only enlarges on this debilitating and sometimes dangerous vocation, but also sheds light on the magnitude of the problem and leads to the natural development of a strategic health plan for the pastor that, if implemented, will no doubt result in an encouraging exponential positive effect on his/her, marriage, family and the universal church.

So, why is this thesis important and needed? Jesus addressed these same issues. Jesus said to his disciples, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’” The quotation is from the book of the prophet Zechariah (13:7). The language in this passage is reminiscent of the warning language about the siege of Jerusalem (and the destruction of the temple) and the times of the end of the age. Today’s spiritual shepherds are assaulted with various temptations, trials, and tribulations, and some are being taken out, to Satan’s great glee.

My thesis contends that the carnage of clergy loss is increasing, and that the collateral damage now reaches far beyond the pastor. The impact is being felt by the pastor’s family as well as by the greater (universal) church. My hope has been to elucidate the undeniable problem in today’s pulpits. Our pastors are unhealthy and they, along with their families, are suffering from arduous ministry demands creating almost unavoidable health challenges.

The work of continuing current and updated research as well as confronting this problem is indeed an ongoing task, and my thesis seeks to educate not only the clergy community, but also all those affected by their very crucial calling.

It is my fervent hope and prayer that in this work I have made an original contribution to this field and that it might produce much fruit in the form of healthier pastors and healthier pastors’ families.

First, I hope that my research levels the playing field for clergy in arguing that all pastors have a fighting chance when confronting conflict and crisis in ministry, a chance

glimpsed through my focus on and with the inclusion of several key biblical precedents of God's leaders who confronted stressful situations. When confronting the reality of daily stressors, struggles and challenges in ministry life, it is not uncommon for the pastor to feel alone in the fight and abandoned by God, as though he or she were the exception to the rule of God's impartiality. Admittedly, our ministry does not take on depth, meaning, or sincere compassion until we suffer. In that I concur with Kenneth Boa in his assertion: "In the University of Life, stress and affliction are not elective courses; they're a required part of the curriculum."⁴⁰³ It's been said that "experience is a cruel teacher; first the exam then the lesson."⁴⁰⁴ I hope that my own endurance of years of unique ministerial stressors, crisis, and challenges will offer significant tutoring, guidance, and wisdom for up-and-coming ministry leaders.

Second, I hope that my thesis has filled a significant gap in scholarship. Specifically, after analyzing data, I have tried to shed light on the omission of critical research in regard to the exponential impact that ministry stressors have on the pastor's family members. In examining the current works, essential contributions to this very issue are considerably lacking.

Third, chapter 3 of my thesis has introduced untapped research in regard to a disorder gaining prominence within the lives of pastoral families who are suffering from traumatic experiences in ministry: i.e., Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD). In regard to PTSD being a disorder afflicting clergy, this may be new information or even ignored data to some in scholarship and ministry; however, Thomas Fischer sheds light

⁴⁰³ http://www.kenboa.org/text_resources/free_articles/5390. Accessed Mar 15, 2012.

⁴⁰⁴ <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/movies/12mv006.htm>. Accessed Mar 15, 2012.

on this disorder within the pastoral experience. He contends that “[n]ot all wounds are visible ... and for the pastoral family many are emotional and spiritual wounds which many times outlast the physical pain.”⁴⁰⁵ Fischer continues: “Pastors, no less than others, experience the pain of living in a broken, conflicted, and sinful world. The experience of this pain can affect pastors in remarkably dramatic ways.”⁴⁰⁶

Fourth, through qualitative case studies I have considered the overall results in the responses of my subjects and, with great delight, report that for each of them regardless how arduous the ministry is at times, the Pastors, Pastors’ Wives, and Pastors’ Kids stood by their callings, would do it all over again if offered the chance, and thankfully still maintain close-knit family ties with one another and are not holding God hostage as a result of these challenges. The case studies provided anticipated as well as surprising findings. The information gained in the interview process also validated most of the research cited in this study.

Fifth, my thesis not only singles out the major ministry stressors contributing to the four predominant health challenges the pastoral family faces, it also integrates the development of a strategic overall health plan for the pastor. I would like to point out that I believe that this section of my thesis is significant, in fact, indispensable. In speaking from 34 years in full time-ministry as both an evangelist and pastor, I can certainly identify with the hurt and heartache associated with serving in this particular calling. Therefore, I would gain considerably by hearkening to my own strategy for long-term health as outlined in chapter 5.

⁴⁰⁵ http://ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/328_ptsd_pastoral_experience.html. Accessed Mar 15, 2012.

⁴⁰⁶ http://ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/328_ptsd_pastoral_experience.html. Accessed Mar 15, 2012.

As a minister, I have endured a barrage of challenges over especially the past five years. Experientially, I recognize the value in confronting this problem head on. Clergy carnage continues to soar. Richard Krejcir's recent findings that "doctors, lawyers, and clergy have the most problems with drug abuse, alcoholism, and suicide"⁴⁰⁷ are revealing and proves how essential this work is.

Finally, I have achieved my twofold thesis goal. My research question, which examines the challenges pastors and their families' encounter emerging from periods of overwhelming ministry stress, has produced substantive information that integrates a health plan for the pastor so that he may not only survive, but also thrive in ministry.

I have investigated older and new information in an effort to confirm the enormity and seriousness of the problem while also looking out for new areas of concern that will allow for the advancement of knowledge and make a considerable contribution in this field.

Admittedly, this is depressing stuff. Often, pastors and their families are islands unto themselves, and they resort to suffering in isolation because the stakes are too high in revealing the truth about how desperate and discouraging things are. Dr. Neil Doggie's assessment of an ethics conference on health care he recently attended is revealing. When considering the recurring as well as the underlying themes of suffering, pain, hopelessness, frustration, and despair, Soggie was struck by what he interpreted as "the deep 'unfixableness' of humanity."⁴⁰⁸ Dr. Soggie clearly points out that "although the conversation at this particular conference did not touch on the 'spiritual,' the spiritual was

⁴⁰⁷ http://www.intothyword.org/articles_view.asp?articleid=36562&columnid=. Accessed Mar 15, 2012.

⁴⁰⁸ <http://www.chac.ca/alliance/review/docs/suffering.pdf>. Accessed Mar 15, 2012.

in fact the topic that begged to be discussed.”⁴⁰⁹ The pastor and spirituality are not oxymoronic. They belong together. Ongoing research and helpful resources must continue to be developed. May it never be concluded of the clergy community that we are simply “unfixable.”

This thesis began by stating a disturbing issue in contemporary culture. There is a problem in our pulpits, as pastors, due to overwhelming ministry stressors and health challenges, are abandoning them. The research analyzed the magnitude of this problem and its trickle-down effect on every member of the pastoral family as well as the universal church. Surprisingly, certain data reveals that regardless of the adverse aspects of ministry, most pastoral families maintain a strong love for and commitment to God, their family, and the church. Nevertheless, the stressors continue to mount and the challenge to maintain a healthy lifestyle is difficult for most.

The biblical leaders who persisted with audacious courage through tremendous trials set the bar for the modern-day pastor and his family to continue persevering through triumph and tragedy. Most of these servants of God struggled through physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual challenges that frankly make those facing most pastors pale in comparison. And yet, according to Scripture, they are the pattern the pastor is to follow.

“The point of research is to discover truth. What is done with this truth can lead to health and growth. Many of us are praying that organized religion will pay attention to the emerging data about clergy needs.”⁴¹⁰ The truth is that we must hasten in sending out

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Rediger, “The State of the Clergy.”

the clarion call by providing education and resources to address and solve this problem. Recognition and appreciation is given to the organizations that are addressing the problem of clergy health. Thankfully, the truth about clergy needs and clergy health is no longer being ignored. Over the past 40 years, recognition of the desperate straits of the health of the pastor and his/her spouse has been growing, and the data is revealing. Perhaps sixteenth-century German Protestant Reformer Martin Luther had a divine vision when he gave ten qualifications for the preacher.

1. He should be able to preach plainly and in order.
2. He should have a good head.
3. He should have good power of speech.
4. He should have a good voice.
5. He should have good memory.
6. He should be sure of what he means to say.
7. He should be ready to stake body and life, goods and glory on its truth.
8. He should know when to stop.
9. He should study diligently.
10. He should allow himself to be vexed and criticized by everyone.⁴¹¹

Joan Borysenko suggests that “[e]very day brings a choice to practice stress or practice peace.”⁴¹² Undoubtedly, peace is the desire of every pastor; however it is often difficult for pastors to enjoy moments of peace in an environment that lends itself to stress, heavy demands and perpetual crisis. The pastorate involves being in relationship or community with people. People have a propensity to need counsel and to be in crisis, and it is during those cataclysmic times that they need their pastor most. The pastor cannot just say, “I’m busy right now!”

⁴¹¹ www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=15956

⁴¹² Joan Borysenko, *Inner Peace for Busy People* (ReadHowYouWant.com, 2009), xix.

David Fisher, author of *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul*, reminded his readers that these dynamics in ministry are not a new issue for pastors:

For fifty years church leaders have spoken about a "crisis in the ministry" and "ferment in the ministry." Back in 1954, H. R. Niebuhr wrote about the church and ministry and called pastorate the "perplexed profession." Niebuhr correctly suggested that the crisis in ministry is primarily a crisis of identity. The communities in which we work no longer value our product or our role the way society once honored the church and its ministry. We are providing a service to a world that no longer wants it. Professional religious leaders are an anachronism in a secular culture. Even our congregations wonder about us. Contemporary Christians are affected by the secular nature of our world more than they may realize.⁴¹³

Discouragement, disappointment, loneliness, rejection, and exhaustion are all familiar to any clergy person attempting to fulfill his call to ministry. Regardless of how correct Fisher may be in his assessment, and lest all clergy simply quit and abandon their callings, pastors must read Fisher's evaluation in view of what the apostle Paul affirmed to the Roman believers: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom 10:15, NKJV) Pastors follow a call of God in serving people, and Christ affirmed that those people would not always be on their best behavior nor appreciate the message or messenger. Although it is a gospel of peace, it is not always preached during peaceful times. Nonetheless, the rewards of pastoring and proclaiming the message of Christ are unequalled. The great "prince of preachers," Charles Spurgeon has penned a masterpiece for the minister in his reflection on a divine passage from the Proverbs. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself"

⁴¹³ David Fisher, *The 21st Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 8.

(Prov 11:25). I shall lay my argument to rest with his inspiration and let it be a testimony to every pastor and his beloved family.

We are here taught the great lesson, that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that in order to become spiritually vigorous, we must seek the spiritual good of others. In watering others, we are ourselves watered. How? Our efforts to be useful bring out our powers for usefulness. We have latent talents and dormant faculties, which are brought to light by exercise. Our strength for labour is hidden even from ourselves, until we venture forth to fight the Lord's battles, or to climb the mountains of difficulty. We do not know what tender sympathies we possess until we try to dry the widow's tears, and soothe the orphan's grief. We often find in attempting to teach others, that we gain instruction for ourselves. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures, we came away blushing that we knew so little of them. In our converse with poor saints, we are taught the way of God more perfectly for ourselves and get a deeper insight into divine truth. So that watering others makes us humble. We discover how much grace there is where we had not looked for it; and how much the poor saint may outstrip us in knowledge. Our own comfort is also increased by our working for others. We endeavour to cheer them, and the consolation gladdens our own heart. Like the two men in the snow; one chafed the other's limbs to keep him from dying, and in so doing kept his own blood in circulation, and saved his own life. The poor widow of Sarepta gave from her scanty store a supply for the prophet's wants, and from that day she never again knew what want was. Give then, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and running over.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹⁴ www.biblegateway.com/devotionals/morning-and-evening/2011/08/21

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APPENDIX A

RESOURCES FOR PASTORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

PASTOR RETREATS:

<http://pastorsretreatnetwork.org/>

http://www.clergyretreats.com/retreat_listings

<http://www.my-pastor.com/pastor-retreat-centers.html>

http://www.pastorswives.org/resource_directory/pastors_wives_family_retreats

<http://pastorforlife.org/pastor-retreat-centers/>

<http://www.ccpastors.org/retreats.html>

WEBSITES FOR HELPFUL PASTOR RESOURCES:

<http://www.topsite.com/best/pastors>

<http://pastors.com/>

<http://www.churchwebsiteideas.com/inspiration/top-12-pastor-blogs-to-help-deepen-your-faith/>

<http://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/>

<http://www.pastorswives.org/home>

ARTICLES and CURRICULA:

www.churchleadership.org/pages.asp?pageid=66923

www.parsonage.org/articles/married/index.cfm

www.findthedivine.com/articles11.html

www.pastorswives.org/resource_directory/forced_terminations

leadingandlovingit.com/hurting-marriages/

www.baptiststart.com/pastor_help.html

bachdevelopment.com/bach2d.html

www.pastorswife.com/resources/

www.marriagemissions.com/pastors-and-spouses-links-and-resource-descriptions/

www.reviveourhearts.com/articles/31-days-of-praying-for-your-husband/