

LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FORCED TERMINATIONS AMONG CLERGY: CAUSES AND RECOVERY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Betty, my dear wife of forty years who has stood by me through thick and thin. She is truly a gift from the Lord. Her love is unconditional; her strength is as mighty as the wind; her encouragement lights a fire in my soul; her love for God is an example for me to follow; her quiet righteous presence in my life reminds me that God is the Creator and giver of good things.

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ABSTRACT

FORCED TERMINATIONS AMONG CLERGY, CAUSES AND RECOVERY

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2008

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The purpose of this project is to bring attention to the issues that surround forced terminations among clergy. We will look at the available statistics, investigate the causes, read testimonies of those who have been forced out and look at plans for recovery. The author will incorporate his own testimony relating to his voluntary forced termination and describe how it affected his whole family and the recovery that followed.

Abstract length: 93 words.

INTRODUCTION

The year 2003 is one year that I shall never forget. It was a year beginning with outward celebrations but the inward turmoil of my life was reaching a breaking point. There were highs and lows during the course of that year. In February we celebrated our Twenty-Fifth anniversary of being at the church where I was pastor. In May I finished my Masters Degree at Liberty University and graduated with honors. Many would say we were living a happy fulfilled life. I had a loving, dedicated, faithful wife, three wonderful grown children all married to spouses who served the Lord in our church, precious grandchildren and for the first time in our lives we were enjoying financial freedom.

Still on the inside there was a raging battle of temptation and discouragement. I was dealing with a very divisive staff member in the church who was sowing seeds of discord. By his own admission he hated me with a passion. Clever as he was he never displayed that attitude publicly. I tried frantically to bring some conclusion to our relationship, over and over I tried to bring some kind of civil appropriateness, but he refused. Finally somehow I mustered up the courage to fire him and it was extremely hostile. Because those whom he had influenced disagreed with me, he took a number of families with him.

Being careful not to show my hurt I looked happy on the outside but I was extremely distraught on the inside. My feelings were that I had given my life surely 25 years to this ministry and it seemed as though God kept saying no to me and would not allow it to prosper beyond what I felt it should have. Those "I don't care anymore" feelings gripped my soul and it was at this time I became even more vulnerable: I let my guard down and Satan blind-sided me. During that time it was the care, concern and sympathy of a secretary that created in me a

spiritual vacuum, a compartment, a permission to sin and I did. That which I had feared all of my life and ministry swallowed me. I made the most destructive decision of my entire life. The sinkhole occurred and Satan had obtained the victory. I reached the bottom of the slippery slope and fell morally. It seemed like it was all over. For seven months it gnawed at my soul, I was heavy with conviction and I knew that I would reap what I had sown and I was scared to death. I had betrayed my God, my family, my church and my friends and I knew that it was only a matter of time before the end would come.

My daughters had become very suspicious of some of my actions during that seven month period and knew that something was wrong. My wife never had a clue until I admitted it to her on Saturday morning January 3, 2003. Needless to say, she broke down in disbelief and shock. My actions literally tore out her heart, but beyond her broken heart she loved me unconditionally. That Saturday night I called a special Deacon's meeting and admitted to them my sin and told them that I was going before the church the next morning and confess to them. They too were broken-hearted, many of whom wept openly. They asked me to wait and go before the church on Sunday night rather than Sunday morning. I consented but did not preach on that morning or attend church. That Saturday night my grown children stayed with me all night long. Of course we did not sleep very much. It was a long, heavy occasion but they constantly assured me of their devotion and love. The Sunday night I went to the church, confessed my wrong doing and openly repented of my sin. In the beginning the church embraced us in love and forgiveness. Later it turned to anger and revenge. It was the worst situation of my whole life. I feel the pain even as I reflect back on it now. It is not easy to write about it. I felt that it would have been better if I were dead. I had caused extreme heartache. I

was the man who had previously said, “That will never happen to me.” But it did.

The next day, Sunday afternoon, my friend Dr. Johnny Hunt who pastors the First Baptist Church of Woodstock Georgia called me and encouraged me to come to Woodstock and rest and in the process to enter the City of Refuge, a ministry of their church which ministers in a professional way, to pastors and full time Christian servants when they have been involved in forced terminations, burnout, immorality and other family issues. I consented and within a week we were in Woodstock. My life, my dreams, my plans were no more. I was a broken world person. I didn't think that I would ever laugh again. The personal pain and the pain that I had caused to those whom I loved the most was almost unbearable. I had become a forced out statistic through my own choices.

Section One

Causes

Chapter One-Forced Out

While the experience of what is commonly referred to as a forced exit, resignation, or termination is rarely on the mental radar screen of the average seminary student, the newly ordained or even a seasoned pastor, it happens to ministers more than one would like to believe.

¹ A pastor might believe that it could never happen to me but it can and often from the blind side. It not only affects him, but also his family and even his future ministry. Forced terminations are so traumatic that they are often referred to as the likes of a divorce, death in the immediate family or grief experienced by the terminally ill. Such language cannot be easily brushed aside as merely the sour grapes of a few bitter pastors; for even those observing and reporting on the crises speak of “preachers in purgatory.”² David Gustafson states, “Others wonder aloud whether the Church, instead of being a community of the crucified, has become in far too many places, the community that crucifies.”³ And still others not only warn that today’s pastors, in ever increasing numbers are at great risk,⁴ and that unless something is done to change the current situation, pastors could soon become an endangered species.⁵

Having studied and researched the problem intensively it is obvious that forced resignations are a staggering problem. In fact the author believes that the official statistics below

¹ David Goetz, “Forced Out. (How Likely are you to be Fired or Pressured to Resign?),” *Leadership* 17 (Winter 1996): 42.

² Mondale, *Preachers in Purgatory*, 117.

³ David Gustafson, “The Church: Community of the Crucified or Community that Crucifies?” *Lutheran Forum* 31 (Winter 1997): 56-58.

⁴ H.B. London and Neil Wiseman, *Pastors at Risk* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993), 11-13.

⁵ H.B. London and Neil Wiseman, *Your Pastor is an Endangered Species* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 11-12.

are very conservative. Many forced resignations are never reported.

The author desires that this study will emphasize the seriousness of forced terminations and how it can affect not only the pastor, his future ministry but his family as well.

Chapter Two- Statistics of Concern

The author began his research on forced terminations by looking for valid statistics. Contact was made with all the major denominations, Para-church organizations, Christian magazines, ministry web sites and any other source that would be related to the above. Hours were spent searching through the Internet following every lead that might give additional and updated statistics. The results were astounding. Pastors shared sad stories of loss, hurt, shattered dreams and broken families

Concerning forced terminations in the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in America, the Baptist Press reports the following:

Posted on Jan 16, 2008 | by Ken Walker

ATLANTA (BP)--Forced terminations in the Southern Baptist Convention were down during 2006, but those who issued the latest report say work remains to be done to reconcile conflicts between pastors and congregations.

The Southern Baptist Church-Minister Relations Association found that 680 fulltime and bi-vocational pastors were forced out of their positions in 2006, plus 265 staff members.

While the total of **945** is 27 percent lower than the **1,302** reported for 2005, a former LifeWay Christian Resources staff member who conducted the survey pointed out that the report lacked input from four state conventions.

Barney Self, a former pastoral counselor with LifeWay, said the omissions mean the actual number of terminations may have been closer to **1,100**.⁶

"How many pastors left because the chairman of deacons sidled up and said, 'If you resign, we'll take care of you; if you don't, we'll fire you?'" Self asked. "How much of that goes on?"

During his eight years with LifeWay, Self said he handled 4,300 phone calls and heard so many horror stories that after awhile he could finish the typical details upon hearing a brief summary of

⁶ Baptist Press.Com News with a Christian Perspective, January 16, 2008

an incident. That figures out to be about 2 horror stories daily for eight years if he worked seven days a week.

Self states, "I've known pastors to be fired for instituting an evangelism program because it's going to bring people into the church and they won't look like existing members, "It's a country club church where people are trying to surround themselves with people like themselves."⁷

Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ and the Global Pastors Network, printed these statistics gleaned from various sources from across denominational lines, such as *Pastor to Pastor*, *Focus on the Family*, *Ministries Today*, *Charisma Magazine*, and *TNT Ministries*. He states:

- 1500 pastors leave the ministry each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout, or contention in their churches.
- 4000 new churches begin each year, but over 7000 churches will close
- 50% of pastors are so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could, but have no other way of making a living
- 80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors
- 70% of pastors constantly fight depression
- 80% of seminary and Bible students who enter the ministry will leave the ministry within the first five years
- 80% of pastors' spouses feel their spouse is overworked
- 80% of adult children of pastors surveyed have had to seek professional help for depression
- 85% of pastors said their greatest problem is they are sick and tired of dealing with problem people, such as disgruntled elders, deacons, worship leaders, worship teams, board members, and associate pastors
- Almost 40% polled said they have had an extramarital affair since beginning their ministry
- 50% of pastors' marriages will end in divorce
- 80% of pastors' wives feel left out and unappreciated by the church members.⁸

In an online article entitled, *Clergy in Crises: Who Ministers to the Ministers*, the Ministering to Ministers Foundation Inc, Inc. reported the following statistics:

- Nearly a fourth, 22.8% of pastors have either been terminated or forced to resign.
- Nearly two-thirds, 62%, of the forced-out pastors said the church that dumped them had also forced out other pastors - and 41% said the church had done it more than twice.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Sword of the Spirit Ministries Online. 2001-2006. All Rights Reserved. P.O. Box 12147. 00400 Tom Boyar, Nairobi. Kenya.

- Nearly half, 43%, of the forced-out pastors said a 'faction' in the church forced them to leave, and 71 % of those indicated that the 'faction' numbered 10 or fewer congregates.
- Only 20% of the forced-out pastors said the real reason for their leaving was made known to the congregation.⁹

H.B. London, Jr. of Focus on the Family states that 19% of pastors indicated they had been forced out of ministry at least once during their ministry; another 6% said they had been fired from a ministry position. He also says that pastors who work fewer than 50 hours a week are 35% more likely to be terminated.¹⁰ They conclude other “Risk Factors” to be:

- 33% of pastors confess “inappropriate” sexual behavior with someone in the church.
- 90% of pastors work more than 46 hours per week.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 33% say that being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 75% report they’ve had a significant stress related crises at least once in their ministry.
- 50% feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 90% feel they’re inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.
- 40% report a serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.¹¹

⁹ Ministering to Ministers Foundation, Inc. 2008 www.ministeringtoministers.com

¹⁰ H.B. London, Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, *Pastors at Greater Risk* (Ventura, CA. Regal Books), pgs.34, 62.

¹¹ Ibid, page 20

In the research of Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffman in *Presenting Ministry Failure*, a survey concludes that 25% of clergy have been forced out of or fired from their ministry at least once. Additionally the survey concludes the following:

- 90% feel inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.
- 80% believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 45% say they've experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence.
- 40% admit to having serious conflict with a church member at least once a month.
- 20% admit to having an affair while in the ministry.
- 37% admit that Internet pornography is a current struggle.
- 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend.¹²

According to *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry* by Dean Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger it is reported that from the involuntary or partly involuntary standpoint clergy leave churches because of the following reasons:

- 17% because of conflict in the congregation (with staff or laity).
- 10% because of conflict with denominational officials or disillusionment with the denomination.
- 14% because of burnout; frustration; feeling of constraint or sense of inadequacy.
- 6% because of allegations of sexual misconduct.

¹² Michael Todd Wilson and Brad Hoffmann, *Preventing Ministry Failure* Downers Grove, Ill. InterVarsity, 2007, page 31.

- 5% because of family problems; divorce.¹³

The report by Hoge and Wenger came from a survey of five denominations: the Assemblies of God, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the United Methodist Church.¹⁴

“One of the most famous American ministers, Jonathan Edwards, was sacked by his Northampton Church in 1750 after 23 years at the helm. He was given the boot because he insisted that his parishioners be ‘visible saints’. In other words, they should practice what they heard preached. Now that is what I call a worthy fight. There he was the beleaguered pastor fighting a bruising battle over doctrine and religious practice. He was a faithful minister standing firm on the side of right, opposing those who would pollute the church’s most holy teachings.”¹⁵ It is estimated that over 19,000 forced terminations of ministers occur per year in the U.S.¹⁶

The author’s research included dozens of other resources that involved statistics of forced terminations but were mostly duplicates of the above. After examining the research one may conclude that some of the percentages would be higher but due to the sensitivity of most situations churches have failed to report them. Also, there are non-denominational churches

¹³ Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger *Pastors in Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005, page 38.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php?site/article/4073/>

¹⁶ http://www.consultmin.com/under_fire.htm- Consultation Ministries, Inc. Richlands, N.C.

such as Independent churches have no hierarchy or ways to report such statistics. Archibald Hart, a Christian counselor from the Hart Institute located in Sierra Madre, California said that, “I don’t know of any other vocation that is more hazardous than that of a pastor.”¹⁷

One very important thing to think about in all of the above statistics is that these statistics have names, faces and families. They are real lives, real people. It would be very interesting to follow up on the families who have been involved in forced terminations. That would be another very challenging and revealing statistic. What are those children experiencing now in their relationship to God after seeing their father hurt so badly because of church conflicts?

¹⁷ Archibald Hart, quote from a Doctor of Ministry Course at Fuller Theological Seminary entitled “Personal Growth for Ministers.”

Chapter Three- Forced Out Testimony

The author has made many personal contacts with pastors and their families who has been involved in forced terminations, not only asking them to reveal the situation but also to be as descriptive as possible including their feelings of pain, disillusionment, rejection, loneliness etc. What were they feeling on the inside? The names have not been revealed only the stories in their own words.

“My wife and I graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary the summer of 2000. We are both conservatives and love the Southern Baptist Convention. We went in view of a call to a church in Jackson KY. We met with the pulpit committee a few times and the people were very friendly. After meeting with the committee and much prayer we both felt like God calling us to this church to pastor.

“Like most honeymoons everything was great at the beginning, but by month four we really started to see some changes and began to find out a lot about the church we did not know before and things that were not shared with us. The church was a split off the main FBC of the community and their last pastor was the one who started the church and then just left.

“A few things we found out about the church:

- “The last pastor and his wife were co-pastors.
- “The church had an internal split one side was conservative and one side liberal.
- “The church was not part of the local association due to the fact the last pastor and his wife was co-pastors.
- “The church was a part of both the CBF and SBC I knew this, but didn’t know enough about the CBF to think it mattered. I learned my lesson on that one.
- “The CBF side was the side in control.

“As things began to reveal themselves and we began to understand the situation we knew we were in trouble. We had developed many good friends in the church, but as we found out the ones who loved us and supported us only did so in private. God was leading me to lead the church back to the SBC and our local association, which caused many problems in the church. The majority of the deacons in the church did not support my leadership, which caused a lot of strife.

“During this process things started to change, the stress levels shot through the roof and our marriage was being affected.

“I have been in ministry since 1993, but have always been on staff as a Student Minister. I have been around ministry a long time and have seen a lot, but it is different seeing it and living through it. I always dreamed of being God’s man and leading a church to grow and touch a community. I would say I wasn’t naïve, but I found out real quick that I wasn’t prepared to handle what came my way.

“I learned quickly that this church didn’t want a pastor they wanted somebody to fill the pulpit and do the visitation. They didn’t want leadership they wanted ownership and I was just a puppet. God wanted me to lead this church and gave me the direction he wanted me to go. As things progressed and tensions grew our marriage began to suffer more.

“We had been married for around three years and things were going great. My wife was working at a local school in the community and enjoyed it. The biggest hurt was how people were treating us in the church. Don’t get me wrong there were some wonderful people in our church who loved us, but they did not stand up and support the decisions that were made until it was too late.

“I don’t recall a lot of fighting between us but there was a lot of stress, tension and crying. I was crying out for direction and she wanted to leave the church. I knew God called us there for a reason but I just didn’t know why at the time. After nine months and most of the situations worsened I decided we needed to leave to save our sanity and our marriage.

“My wife had continued to lose weight and emotionally she was spent. We found out later that the stress had brought on some medical problems that had to be treated with medication.

“It finally came to a head while we were on vacation. One side of the church wanted to vote us out, the other side said no. When we got back we met with the leadership and conveyed to them we were leaving. In the end the church moved back to the SBC and their local association. The liberal side left to start a new CBF church.

“We were finished with ministry. I was getting out and we were moving back to Texas. But God was already at work. My wife had been hurting for months and decided to email several pastors and their wives from mega churches asking them for advice and help. We received a phone call from Pastor Johnny Hunt the next day expressing his love and concern and the rest is history.

“We came into the City of Refuge under level one fatigue and discouragement. We spent six months in the COR and I worked in the custodial department here until we were released and I was asked to come on staff in the Pastoral Care Department.”¹⁸

When churches fail to deal with conflict pressures mount, people become angry, defensive and divisive. The above example illustrates how conflict can result in forced terminations and shattered lives. The pastor and his family were caught in the middle of a conflict that existed long before they ever arrived at the church. The results were evident through a strained, stressed marriage, medical problems along with fatigue, discouragement and finally a termination.

¹⁸ Anonymous Testimony of a forced out pastor, interviewed by the author in Spring 2008

Chapter Four- Pressured Out

The second testimony comes from a friend of mine who was involved in a voluntary termination in a church located in the Richmond, Virginia area. The church that he was called to was a one cell church with a weekly attendance of around 65 per Sunday. My friend, a mature man of faith in his mid-forties had been a successful associate for 11 years at a mega church. He was very excited about becoming a senior pastor and in two years had built the church's average attendance up to around one-hundred sixty five. The issue of the inspiration of the Bible arose and he found that many leaders in the church did not believe the Bible as the inspired Word of God. The issue ultimately resulted in his voluntary termination. The emotional stress was so intent on him and his family that they did not even want to talk about it. There were many divisive business meetings and much rejection related to this story.¹⁹

Recently a pastor in Illinois was forced out by termination after having been at the church for 32 months. The church was a First Baptist in a small town, a church with an approximate attendance of 200. The Pastor shared with me that the Deacon Board told him that they could not pay him any longer. The church at that time had \$300,000 in a special account. The Deacons had portrayed to the church that he was planning to resign, and more or less threatened him with no severance pay if he told the real story. In addition, a congregational vote was mandated in order to activate the severance. The church voted to give the severance but had no concern about how it would affect the pastor and his family emotionally, and were terminated for no apparent reason. The pastor approached each deacon separately and not one of them could give a reason for his termination.²⁰

¹⁹ Anonymous testimony of a forced out pastor interviewed by the author in Spring 2008

²⁰ Anonymous testimony of a forced out pastor interviewed by the author in Spring 2008

“One in four ministers will be fired at some time during ministry. One of every three ministers is serving a congregation that forced the previous minister to pack his books, empty his desk and turn in his office keys. The average length of service for American ministers is between four and six years.”²¹

The author’s research reveals the need for training within the church on how to deal with conflict as well as educating pastors concerning the hazards of ministry and how it affects his family.

²¹Focus on the Family www.parsonage.org

Chapter Five- Heart-Breaking Testimony

Below is a heart breaking testimony from a forced out pastoral termination. Heaviness bore on my heart as I interviewed him and read his words. His entire family and their future are affected. The name of the pastor as well as the church is not mentioned in order to protect the privacy and sensitivity of the situation.

“This was my first pastorate. The church at the time I was voted in was 138 years old and I was the 38th pastor and the 15th in 50 years. The average attendance was around 40-50. I was voted in on December 3, 2006. I was asked to resign on November 11 and I resigned from the pulpit November 18, 2008.

“I knew this was a troubled church before I went. The church has a wall with a plaque and/or picture of all their past pastors. Almost all of the pastorates were three years or shorter. I believe there were two factors that led to such short pastorates. First the church sees the pastor as an employee rather than a man that is called of God. Secondly there appears to have always been a family that controlled the church. I am still not sure why I was asked to resign. There are several factors I believe led to my termination. First I had a confrontation with the controlling family within five to six weeks of being there. I tried to reconcile with them to no avail. I followed scripture and to them that did not matter. The moment I had a confrontation with that family they started a movement to get me out! I prayed about it and I believe the Lord told me to take it to the people. The whole church and community knew what was going on in the church. One Sunday Morning I explained from the pulpit there was family that did not want me as pastor anymore. I explained that I felt I had not done anything wrong and I had even tried to reconcile with that family. After much prayer I called for my own vote. I explained we would not be voting on whether I stayed or left. The church would decide if they wanted a "preacher" who was to answer to the controlling family or a pastor who led the church according to scripture. When I called for my own vote I had been at the church about 3 months. The controlling family left and never returned after I called for my own vote. They could not get the church to follow them because the church felt I had not done anything wrong, I had tried to reconcile, and for the most part the church was tired of the family controlling the church. The vote occurred about six weeks later. All but 5 people voted they wanted a pastor. These 5 left the church before the business meeting was over. At this point the church started to look to a different set of people to control the church rather than to follow the pastor.

“There was also friction because tradition superseded everything including scripture. I challenged some of their traditions and ignored others.

“I also preached through 1 John and some were not happy. My prayer is their unhappiness was due to conviction of the Holy Spirit and not from poor preaching or preaching from a wrong heart.

“I also tried to reach out to many members. I tried to get in their homes for a visit and I was told no or we'll let you know when the time is right. I was never contacted and was told the same answer if I asked again to visit them.

“I tried to get people involved in ministry and that caused friction. Most members didn't want to do anything but sit on the pew. When I nominated people or asked them to get involved it always caused friction.

“The Holy Spirit revealed to me in September that I would soon be asked to resign or be voted out. This helped because I was able to prepare for the inevitable. I started sending out my resume to churches and to save as much money as possible.

“When I was asked to resign I was angry. I knew it was coming but I felt I had done nothing wrong. I wanted to fight it because I am not sure there were enough votes to get me out. The Holy Spirit revealed if I stayed no work could be done that would glorify the Lord. Staying would only give Satan a victory due to all the fighting that would occur and all the people that would leave.

“It was also hard because members who had supported my family dropped us like hot potatoes. In the beginning it was a lonely time for my family. One thing that helped was there was a local pastor's prayer meeting every Wednesday. My family and I got involved in one of the churches in the prayer group. They loved on us, helped us heal, encouraged us, and fellowshiped with us. There are no words to explain all that church and their pastor did for my family.

“Another hard part of being terminated is fellow pastors and Christians turning their backs on my family. Many of these people we had known for a few years and we considered them part of our church family! The church that had just ordained me in February 2007 had nothing to do with us after we resigned in November 2007. Overall from most of the Body of Christ that we knew before going in the pastorate there was no encouragement, no prayer, no phone calls, no e-mails, basically we felt deserted. Nobody asked how we were doing spiritually, emotionally, or financially. This was the toughest part to deal to accept.

“We lived with my wife's parents for a month until we purchased a house. The Lord has called us to start a new work. We have just started having Bible study with some children every Sunday. I am also part of a group of Christians from several different churches that in the process of starting a teen outreach ministry. As far as employment I am working open to close 5 days a week at an Italian restaurant. We are praying the Lord gives me a better job that requires fewer hours and has health insurance. My wife is a stay-at-home mom that home schools our 2 sons.”²²

In reading the above testimony the author observed that the forced out family was lonely, discouraged, defeated, forsaken and in financial need. The emotional strain on this family may very well be evident for years to come.

²² Anonymous testimony of a forced out pastor, Summer, 2008

Chapter Six- Southern Baptist Convention Forced Terminations

For over a decade, the Southern Baptist Convention has monitored the issue of forced terminations. The categories in the research have remained about the same each year. The following issues are reported in rank order:

- 1- Control Issues- who is going to run the church.
- 2- Church's resistance to change.
- 3- Poor people skills on the part of the pastor.
- 4- Pastor's leadership style is too strong.
- 5- Church was already conflicted when the pastor arrived.
- 6- Decline in attendance and/or conditions of decline.
- 7- Pastor's leadership style is too weak.
- 8- Administrative incompetence on the part of the pastor.
- 9- Sexual misconduct.
- 10- Conflict with other staff.
- 11- Disagreement over doctrine
- 12- Ethical misconduct-mismanaged monies, dishonesty.
- 13- Tenure- Pastor has been at the church too long.
- 14- Rapid growth.²³

Kenneth Keene who is a consultant in church-minister relations for Georgia Baptist Convention described terminations as “one of the most serious difficulties in Southern Baptist

²³ Ibid

life.” If a church is in conflict, it’s not going to grow. He also states that “it sends a negative message to the community. It’s hard for a church to be in conflict and for the community not to know about it.”²⁴

Dale Huff, who is the Director of the Office of Leader Care and Church Administration for the Alabama State Convention preached a message called *Shepherding the Shepherd* to the Kentucky State Convention in February 2008. In the message Huff described the seriousness of church conflict within the Southern Baptist Convention. He stated that at least one third of the 44,000 churches within the Convention were suffering from severe inner conflict. Keene said others projected an even greater percentage.²⁵ The natural conclusion in serious conflict is more forced pastoral terminations.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Dale Huff, *Shepherding the Shepherd*, message preached to the Kentucky State Convention, February, 2008.

Chapter Seven- The Top Vote Getter

Across denominational lines the main problem that causes forced terminations is control issues. Dr. Elmer Towns, author and Co-Founder of Liberty University tells me that 80% of the churches in America are considered “one cell churches,” the average attendance is 87 per Sunday. In his graduate class called *21st Century Tools and Techniques* Towns states that the characteristics of a single cell church are as follows:

The single-cell church is a family church.

- a. Everyone knows everyone.
- b. Everyone is involved in decision making process.
- c. Lay owned and operated.
- d. Pastor is not the catalyst after first generation.
- e. Resembles an overgrown class or overgrown family.
- f. Not Great Commission oriented.
- g. One third related by blood.²⁶

When a young pastor comes out of seminary, excited, and wanting to change the world and preach God’s Word in power and obedience he is met by opposition. They respond, “Pastor, we’ve never done it that way before.” The pastor is at the mercy of the family leader or the family who has influenced the church for years. The pastor is certainly not in control and eventually the inevitable happens. He is either fired or forced out. A Virginia pastor who had been involved in a forced termination recently said to me, “I am still not sure why I was asked to

²⁶ Dr Elmer Towns, Notes in class, *21st Century Tools and Techniques*, Spring, 2008

resign. There are several factors I believe led to my termination. First I had a confrontation with the controlling family within five to six weeks of being there. I tried to reconcile with them to no avail. I followed scripture and to them that did not matter. The moment I had a confrontation with the family they started a movement to get me out!” The author learned that the church averaged 40 to 50 per week and it was his first pastorate.²⁷ The author knew exactly what the young pastor was saying because he too had experienced those same conditions, the feelings of betrayal in his first pastorate. The problems may result from either the young pastor or from an immature congregation. The conclusion is that there was severe unresolved conflict and that ultimately will affect the future of the pastor and his family as well as the church.

²⁷ Anonymous Testimony of a Virginia pastor interviewed by the author, Summer, 2008.

Chapter Eight- Top Five and Preventive Strategies

Bob Sheffield, former pastor and pastoral ministry specialist for Life Way until 2007 wrote five articles dealing with the top five reasons for terminations in the Southern Baptist Convention along with prevention strategies. Because of their importance, I am including some excerpts and a summation of those articles below.

“The number one issue in forced terminations is ‘who runs the church’.”

Does this sound familiar, "Pastor, this is our church and not yours and it is about time you realized this." As a pastor, you probably have had something like this said to you over the course of your pastoral ministry. As pastors we can get caught up in a tug of war over power and control issues with specific individuals or groups in the church. Sometimes this happens before we realize it is happening. At other times we may try to deliberately challenge the exercise of power by these individuals and groups.

Depending on the circumstances and the people involved, you can find yourself facing forced termination. Satan always tries to use power and control issues as a temptation to cause the church to lose focus and/or effectiveness on its real mission. God is supposed to “run” the church and not man. God established the church and sent Christ to establish the church through His blood and serve as the head of His church. No individual, not even the pastor, nor groups of individuals should seek to run the church. Individuals and groups within the church are granted great leadership authority and trust by the church because of their faithful service over the years. You will do well, if possible, to find ways to work with them instead of competing with them.

In most Southern Baptist churches, the pastor is granted the privilege of temporary leadership because of his position. This does not mean the church as a whole will either completely trust or follow him. During his tenure he has to earn the right of leadership. Even if he earns the right of leadership, it does not mean that the congregation will cease to seek the guidance of other trusted leaders in the congregation. The author has learned that decisions within the church are best made through prayerful consideration as the church seeks God's leadership. Some suggestions to neutralize power and control issues would include, serve as a servant leader because practicing servant leadership will help you to resist the satanic temptation to let your ego rule you when power and control issues occur. Sheffield states that we should learn to share ministry with volunteer leaders in the church. Sheffield continues by saying we are to focus on what God can do through the church and not on building your own reputation or resume. Resistance to leadership is very normal and unconditional love must be exercised to the entire congregation. Sheffield advises the pastor to pray unceasingly for God's guidance and power.

Cause #2 of Forced Terminations is a Resistance to Change of the Church.

Most churches are resistant to change. Unfortunately the pastor often becomes the target of the opposition to a change because he is the leader. At other times, however, the pastor himself causes undue difficulty because of his type of leadership during the change process. Understanding the following things will not necessarily insure against forced termination in a change resistant church but will diminish the possibilities of it happening. Reasons for forced terminations include congregational issues such as high value on tradition, fellowship, and maintenance, ongoing church conflict, no official mission/vision statement,

congregational distrust of both volunteer and/or staff leadership and power and control conflicts within the leadership team. Additional reasons are personal issues regarding a lack of understanding and a focus on personal preferences, opinions, and comfort and of course, the control issue, itself.

The change problem involves so many complex areas such as changes from traditional to contemporary. Sheffield states that culture itself demands change and he challenges the pastor to educate his congregation through effective teaching, preaching, seminars, conferences and person counseling.

Cause # 3 for forced terminations is the Pastor's Poor People skills.

Good people skills are foundational for effective pastoral ministry. Since these skills are open to a wide range of interpretations, Sheffield defined people skills as “the ability of a pastor to minister effectively to and through people.” Pastors struggle in relating to their church family. Some pastors struggle with the role of a shepherd of the flock who ministers to and through people. In the book, *O Shepherd, Where Art Thou?* Calvin Miller indicates that this struggle is, “rooted in the notion that a pastor’s main responsibility is the sermon.” Miller says, “The importance of the sermon cannot be dismissed, but it still is second to the pastor’s commitment to live in the world and represent at every moment of the week the will of the Savior.”

The second reason is that some pastors don’t like people. In one of Charles Schultz’ Peanuts cartoon, Lucy accuses her brother Linus of not loving his fellow man. “I love mankind,”

Linus' indignant response. "Its people I can't stand."²⁸ Forced termination studies have shown that there are some pastors who struggle in their relationships with people. Pastors finding themselves in this category probably find their fulfillment in their study rather than in the interaction with their people. Some pastors have been hurt and seek to insulate themselves from this happening again. They may now find it difficult to have a trust relationship with the members of their church family. This leads them to limit their interaction with people. Other pastors seek to please people all the time not wanting to be offensive to anyone. The author has learned that it is an impossibility not to be offensive to someone.

Good People Skills include studying the life of Jesus to learn how He related to people. The Gospel accounts of Jesus displays very clearly how he related to both followers as well as adversaries.

One may consider the following truths from Sheffield about pastoral leadership:

- No one will be able to get along with everybody all the time.
- Everybody has one or more difficult persons in their lives.
- Only God can change people. You will have to learn how to relate to people as they are.
- People are not perfect and therefore will disappoint and even hurt you from time to time.
- Have a proper understanding of what it means for God to call you to pastor His church.

²⁸ www.firstchristianchurchonline.com

- Get feedback from trusted advisors.
- Seek help in those areas of your life where you know you have a weakness in people skills.

- Thank God for the people of your church and pray individually for them.

The fourth cause of forced terminations is that the pastor's leadership style is too strong.

Church leaders and members can have the perception that the pastor has a leadership style that seeks to have everything his way. In some instances, this is a reality more than a perception. A pastor continually walks a fine line between exercising too little and too much leadership authority. This particular cause speaks to a situation where the pastor steps over this line and exercises more of a dictator style of leadership. As a person, the pastor may have difficulty allowing others to share in decision making. They feel it slows the process down too much. Further, he may not trust other people to make the right decisions. They have a perfectionist approach to accomplishing projects. There is not much advance planning and most have to do too much in too short a period of time. Since the church is growing, the pastor assumes that the church leaders and members approve of his leadership style. The pastor usually measures his pastoral success through accomplishing a series of tasks rather than enabling people. Sheffield states that the pastor sometimes forgets that the church is not a task to accomplish but people to lead.

In order for a pastor to guard against having too strong a leadership style, he should have a healthy understanding of the difference between a manager and a leader. A manager exercises

a sphere of control to insure the accomplishment of tasks. The successful accomplishment of tasks rather than enabling the people involved constitutes the priority concern of a manager. A leader influences people to follow him in accomplishing together what they could not accomplish alone. A good leader helps those who follow him to manage the processes necessary to task accomplishment but does not try to control them.

A pastor must also learn to delegate properly. This does not mean he will leave everything to someone else but he will not feel he has to do everything himself, even in a single staff church. Pastors should identify and train volunteer leaders within the church, trust these leaders, and be sure the church knows they do, and learn to begin any project early enough to have time to delegate.

Pastors should resist the temptation of having to do it all. Sheffield states that the focus of a pastor's leadership should be to accomplish God's purposes for the church in order to honor God. God calls pastors to lead as servant leaders. Servant leaders seek to be servants first and then his leadership grows out of this. Jesus serves as our model servant leader.

The fifth cause of forced terminations is that the church was already in conflict when the pastor arrived.

Many pastors arrive at a new church to find a lot of unresolved and deeply emotional conflicts beneath the surface. Here are three important but often overlooked facts about this type of destructive church conflict:

- These conflicts do not end when a pastor, leader, or group declares that the conflict is over.
- Church conflicts, which have resulted in strong emotional differences of opinions, are not resolved in a majority church vote.
- In a majority vote situation, the majority voters may leave the meeting declaring, “We won!” The minority voters may leave with a feeling of, “We lost ... but we will get them next time.” The next time may be a month, a year, or longer. As a result of this type of “win-lose” vote, I have observed church families with long standing distrust, bitterness and resentment. When this happens, every vote, no matter how insignificant, becomes a “win-lose” vote. A pastor who is unaware of this underlying and unresolved conflict may be unknowingly caught in the middle. Conflicts end when overwhelming majority of the people involved in the conflict permit them to end.

What does a pastor or staff member do to help prevent this type of forced termination from happening. He needs to take time to investigate and evaluate the church before he accepts that pastorate. Research the church and ask probing questions of the search committee, other pastors in the community, as well as denominational leaders. Depending on your affiliation, these may include directors of missions, state convention leaders, or other denomination leaders. Ask about prior forced terminations and the reasons for them. Read the church’s constitution and note when the church made changes to the by-laws.

Sheffield states that in facing church conflict every pastor needs to evaluate to see if he is prepared to help a church in conflict. Sheffield asks the hard questions such as, are they

prepared spiritually, emotionally, and physically to come to the aid of a church which has unresolved conflict? Do they have training, spiritual gifts, skills, or experience in conflict management? Will they have access to someone who can mediate the conflict? Is he willing to commit to the length of time it will take to see this through to resolution? Does he have a strong base of support (family, mentors, and colleagues) to pray with them and to listen to them? All pastors need times to express his real feelings and seek wisdom and counsel.

Sheffield concludes by encouraging the pastor to seek and depend on the power of God's Holy Spirit to give them wisdom and power beyond them.²⁹

²⁹ Pastors Today, a LifeWay Newsletter, July 28, 2008 issue

Chapter Nine-Satan's Bid

As a Bible Believer the author must bring attention to Satan and his involvement in forced terminations among pastors. The Bible teaches that Satan is alive and well and is a liar, deceiver and a destroyer. Recently, in a graduate course at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary entitled *Strategic Prayer and Spiritual Warfare* taught by Dr. David Earley, the spiritual warfare part of the class was quite eye opening and challenging. The course revealed how Satan can be a huge stumbling block to the church of Jesus Christ

Dr. Rick Warren of Saddleback Church said, "If you don't take the Christian life seriously, if you don't take the ministry seriously, the devil's going to. You may not mean business but he does."³⁰ The Bible teaches that Satan is against God's purposes and plans and will use everything in his power to destroy the work of Jesus Christ and His Church.

Scriptures teach that the Devil is a fallen angel who lives to exalt himself by opposing God. He opposes God by doing everything in his power to defeat and destroy God's people. *Devil means "accuser"* (Rev. 12:10). Satan accuses the brethren to God (Job 1, 2), he accuses God to the brethren (Gen. 3; 1), he accuses the brethren to others, he accuses the brethren to you, and he accuses brethren to themselves.

The Devil also uses temptation as a device to destroy. (I Thess. 3:5, Matthew 4:1-11 and Gen. 3:1-6). Temptation is not sin but rather *the enticement* to sin.

John 8:44 says, "*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is*

³⁰ Rick Warren in pastors.com

no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”(NAS) He is against everything that God represents and deceives you into thinking such lies as, God should fix my problems or I’m not worth anything, I have my rights, I can sin and get away with it, my sin is not really that bad, I can’t control my emotions, I’m just made that way or I don’t have time to read the Word of God.

God is greater than the enemy and can always turn it into something for greater good. He turned Paul’s inability to get to Thessalonica into a reason for writing the letter of 1 Thessalonians. (1 Thess. 2:18). In 1 Peter 5:8 we read, *be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*

The following are seven distorted thoughts that Satan could use to discourage a pastor or any Believer:

- “*What is the use?*”
- “*It will never get any better.*”
 - “*All is hopeless.*”
- “*It’s just not worth it anymore.*”
- “*I cannot take it anymore.*”
 - “*I should just quit.*”
- “*I’d be better off dead.*”

Satan creates division (2 Cor. 2:5-11; James 4:1-3; 4:4-5). He wants to divide Believers from God, from church, from family, from Christian friends, from spiritual authorities.

Strongholds of Satan result in voluntary and involuntary terminations. The author lists some satanic strongholds below that divide God's work and His people. This is certainly not an exhaustive list but just a sample of issues that should concern us greatly.

- Pride – 1 Chronicles 21:1-7, Isaiah 14:12-13, 1 Timothy 3:6
- Dishonesty, lies, deceit – John 8:44
- Resentment, bitterness, failing to forgive the wrongs of others – 2 Corinthians 2:8-11; Matthew 18:21-35
- Explosive outbursts of anger- Ephesians 4:26-27
- Immorality - 1 Tim. 5:11-15
- Uncast cares, worry – 1 Peter 5:7-8
- Demon worship, idolatry, murder, sorcery/drugs, sexual immorality/
pornography, thefts-Rev. 9:20-21; 22:15

“Immorality” in Greek is *pornia* which is where we get our word *pornography*.³¹ This speaks of sex outside of marriage in act *and/or* in mind. Pornography is so addictive because the enemy uses it as a base of operation.³²

Dr. Earley suggested the scriptures below to fight the schemes, devices, distractions and lies of Satan.³³

2 Corinthians 10:4-5:

⁴for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

³¹ Campus Life January/February 2002, christianitytoday.com

³² David Earley Class notes from *Strategic Prayer and Spiritual Warfare*, Summer 2008.

³³ Ibid

⁵We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, (NAS)

Ephesians 6:10-20:

The Armor of God

¹⁰Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

¹¹Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.

¹²For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

¹³Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.

¹⁴Stand firm therefore, **HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS,**

¹⁵and having shod **YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE;**

¹⁶in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷And take **THE HELMET OF SALVATION,** and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,

¹⁹and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,

²⁰for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. (NAS)

Chapter Ten- Moral Failure

According to various surveys and polls among most denominations “sexual indiscretion” is not one of the top contributors to forced terminations. When those types of terminations occur, it is usually voluntary. It falls in category nine among Southern Baptists and no higher than seven in others. However, the author believes that most of those polls are misleading. Sexual indiscretion can be hidden and unrevealed for years. Even when sexual indiscretion is revealed it may not be reported because of its sensitivity.

First, it begins as a problem of the heart and this is usually an issue long before anyone finds out about it. Sexual indiscretion is a secret sin in the fact that pornography and lust contributes to the process and are even hidden from family members before it is ever revealed. The author has heard Pat Morley from the *Man in the Mirror* ministry say often that at least 70% of Christian men struggle with some kind of sexual sin, whether it’s Internet pornography, magazines, lust, adult videos or other immoral enticements. Morley’s percentages do not exempt clergy because the moral failures of well known clergy are no secret. H.B. London, Jr. of *Focus on the Family* in an article entitled, *Pornography: A Very Real and Troublesome Problem*, says that sexual addiction is a major problem in the ministry. At Focus on the Family, we surmise that more than one in five pastors has a problem in the area of pornography. Research in *The Sexual Man* shows that 15.5% of married men who are not clergy and 6.8% of married clergy continue to masturbate to pornography.³⁴ Those things just didn’t happen overnight. Years of nurturing and involvement finally resulted in public humiliation.

Moral failures can be the results of many different situations in pastoral life. Some

³⁴ Ibid.

of the contributing seeds are found in areas relating to emotional burnout, discouragement, performance-based ministries, affirmation, legalism, denial and even success.

Dr. Howard Hendricks, professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, did a study of 246 men in full-time ministry who experienced moral failure within a two-year period of time. From every observation, these fulltime clergy professed to be men who born again Christians and followers of Jesus Christ. Yet the thing they had in common was within 24 months of each other they each involved themselves in sexual immorality. Therefore nearly 250 Christian men were enticed to have an extra marital affair according to Hendricks' study.

After interviewing each man, Dr. Hendricks discovered four correlations running through the experiences of the entire 246 surveyed:

- None were involved in any kind of personal accountability group.
- Each had ceased to invest in a daily personal time of prayer, Scripture reading, and worship.
- Over 80% of them became sexually involved with another woman as the result of counseling the woman. In other words, they were spending significant portions of their schedules with women other than their wives.
- Without exception, each of the 246 had been convinced that moral failure “will never happen to me.”³⁵

These men had placed themselves in situations of “high risk” based upon the four correlations of Dr. Hendricks survey.

³⁵ Steve Farrar, *Finishing Strong* Sisters Oregon: Multnomah, 1995, 39-40.

Chapter Eleven- A Friend's Testimony on the "Why" of Moral Failure

The author has a pastor friend who lives in Atlanta Georgia who was on the mission field in Africa doing a great work for God through the Southern Baptist Convention. His ministry came to a sudden halt nine years ago because of a moral failure. His moral adversity caused the most traumatic circumstance of his life. During an interview with the author he shared the whole story, a very painful, humiliating story of loss for his entire family. His recovery became a beautiful story of restoration. Today, he is being greatly used in the recovery process among other hurting pastors. The author asked him to give reasons for his moral failure and he responded by giving the following reasons:

"I would point to a few key issues as causes for me.

- Secrecy - there was much from my past that I kept hidden. My abuse and some of the things that I did in acting out, I never shared.
- False Assumptions – I assumed that all these past issues were resolved at salvation. The fact that they needed to be brought into the light and dealt with never occurred to me.
- Lack of authentic community – I had friends and colleagues in the ministry but no place I could be real or bring my real feelings and struggles.
- Identity - I was uncertain as to who I was in Christ and depended upon many externals and how others saw me to build my identity."³⁶

³⁶ Anonymous Testimony of moral failure from a former SBC missionary

Unresolved heart or emotional issues, lack of accountability and a lack of understanding of who we are in Jesus Christ confirms the research of the author as to reasons for moral failure and sexual indiscretion.

Chapter Twelve- Testimony of Moral Failure

The author interviewed a close pastor friend from Georgia who attended Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and upon completing his degree accepted a call to a church in Mississippi. He was middle-aged, had a wonderful family and was successfully building this church into a monument of faith and evangelism until the unexpected happened. In his own words, his story is below.

“While pastoring a growing church with all of the issues that come as a result of building new facilities, adding staff, training leadership for new ministries and fighting the battles that come along with making changes in a traditional church setting, needless to say I was beat up and burned out. I had always been careful to guard myself from various forms of temptation by setting and maintaining proper boundaries. In the midst of the busy atmosphere of an exciting time of fruitful ministry, I began to allow a woman in our church to come and use resources I had available in my office at the church. For quite some time I would simply allow her to come when I was not present or if she needed to come while I was there I would simply excuse myself and go visiting or find some other pastoral duties away from the church. After a while this became sort of an inconvenience, and since this was a person that I had a high level of trust for and she was young enough to be my daughter, I allowed myself to be deceived in thinking it was alright and began allowing her to breach those boundaries that I had kept in place for so long.

“During this time I would spend anywhere from three to four hours a day studying God’s Word in preparation for preaching and teaching. I was active in every type of ministry endeavor one could wrap himself into and if at that time someone would have asked me how my relationship was with God I would have very confidently convinced them that it was great. This is largely because I was convinced of that myself. However, there is a world of difference between studying God’s Word in order to feed everyone else, and studying God’s Word to feed oneself. The truth is I hadn’t had an authentic devotional life for quite some time and as a result of that and the fact that I was beat up and burned out I was walking on a very slippery slope. In addition to these issues in my life I had become very isolated and did not have anyone in my life providing any kind of accountability.

“The struggle with sexual temptation had not been a major issue in my life for about fifteen or more years. It was a temptation that would come along and I would rid myself of it and move on, but I never struggled with pornography or had any addictive behaviors in that area of my life. As a matter of fact, at that point in my life I would have suspected anyone else to be struggling with that particular sin but myself and in fact would have considered that an area of strength.

“Like I said earlier, I had allowed those boundaries to become compromised. At first there was absolutely no temptation or thoughts concerning this person. I eventually began to be bombarded with thoughts throughout each day and vivid dreams at night about this one person specifically. She never did or said

anything inappropriately to cause these thoughts. This went on for several weeks and during this time I tried to avoid this lady as much as possible because it bothered me.

“One day I was working in the church copying room in the midst of one of these moments of intense struggle and suddenly she walked in. I guess I must have had a startled and concerned look on my face because she asked me if I was ok. I said, “Yes I’m fine. Just pray for me I’m having a bit of a struggle,” and I walked out and went to my office. Just a few minutes later she came in and sat down and began showing concern and asking me what was troubling me. I turned to her, and going against every “red flag” that was flying in my face I told her that I was struggling with lust. And more specifically, that I was lusting after her. (Please allow me say that I believe it was at that point when I crossed a line of an extremely inappropriate nature) In my mind I had deceived myself into thinking that if I just went ahead and told her this, she would tenderly reject me and I could move on with only my ego bruised. Little did I know she had been in the same struggle with thoughts concerning me. Needless to say, this greatly inflated my ego and set us on a crash course which led to an affair.

“This affair was off and on for about a year and a half. Though it was off much more than on, still it happened and it was absolutely the most miserable period of time in my life. My experience during this time was very much like that of David in Psalm 32:3-4. My Lord was chastening me and lovingly bringing me to repentance. But this raises some questions. When a pastor falls, what does true repentance look like? How thorough and to whom does he confess his sin? The primary scripture the Lord used at this time was Proverbs 28:13; *“He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”* Mercy, what a pleasant thought. And that’s what I wanted. I had tried to *“forsake”* my sin for a year and a half, but without *“confessing.”* So I concluded that I must tell my wife, and so I did. That was a very heart wrenching time to say the least. Over the next couple of weeks we sought the Lord together about what to do next and had decided that the next church that requested my resume, we would send it hoping to move away and put this all behind us.

“That next week a church called and asked for my resume. They were looking for a pastor and said that the committee, since they all knew me, had all agreed that they wanted to pursue me. At first I was excited and began to update my resume. While working on my resume the Spirit of God kept reminding me that *“he who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses . . . whoever confesses . . . whoever confesses.”* I suddenly and finally got it, and knew exactly what I had to do. God lead me to the decision that since I held the office of pastor, my sin was not only against Him and my wife, but the church body as well. I came to the place where simply being at peace with God once again meant more than any position, pay check, home, friends, reputation, or even family. And in order to *“have mercy”* I had to *“confess”* to the ones I had sinned against . . . my church family. So that following Sunday morning after the music, when it came time for me to preach I stood and confessed my sin publicly and resigned my position as pastor of that church.

“We had no idea what we were going to do, or where we were going to go. But God in His *“mercy”* and grace opened a door for us to go through two years of intense and thorough restoration through the City of Refuge ministry of First Baptist

Church Woodstock. Now my family and I are experiencing God's grace in a fresh and richly new way. I am now living the blessedness of Psalm 32:1-2 and am experiencing the reality of the truth Paul wrote about in Romans 5:20b, "*Where sin abounded, grace abounded much more.*"³⁷

The author along with his wife knows this couple very well. We have observed a great work of grace in their lives. It's a story of brokenness, repentance and restoration. In his brokenness he has become authentic and real, a true faced man. His moral failure occurred approximately six years ago.

A few months ago he was invited to become an interim pastor at a church in a western suburb of Atlanta Georgia. He has been very honest in sharing his story of sin, brokenness and restoration. The church recently invited him to become their senior pastor.

³⁷ Anonymous Testimony of a pastor from Georgia

Chapter Thirteen- Kentucky Church Confronts Dangers

Moral failure among the clergy is at an epidemic level. Word came to the author recently that two churches in the Tidewater area of Virginia had to terminate staff because of moral failure. One of those churches had two pastoral staff terminations. One church, the First Baptist Church of Paducah, Kentucky, has realized the need and has done preventative maintenance to try and stop moral failure within their staff. The following is a portion of the article that was written in the *Baptist Press* on July 10, 2008.

Ky. church confronts danger of moral failure

Posted on Jul 10, 2008 | by Mark Kelly

PADUCAH, Ky. (BP)--When Todd Brady heard about a minister at a prominent Texas Baptist church being caught in a sex sting, his first thought was, "Oh, Lord, I pray we never see something like that happen here in our church."

His second thought was, "What do we need to do to prevent it?"

With that question, the new pastor at First Baptist Church in Paducah, Ky., called the staff together to determine what steps they could take to be sure none of them made a bad decision that would bring disgrace to the Gospel and the church.

The result was a strongly worded resolution, replete with Scripture references, that was mailed to every family in the congregation. The letter sparked a wave of discussion about the dangers of sexual temptation and even pushed the church into a spotlight on the evening news.

"News of moral failure among ministers of the Gospel is sad and alarming," the statement said. "But we know ourselves well enough to know that moral failure could happen to any one of us if we were not careful and diligent in our pursuit of purity.

"For the sake of the Gospel and for the sake of our own souls, we desire to maintain the highest levels of sexual accountability," the statement continued. "We will be proactive in our efforts and dogged in our determination to uphold the integrity called for by our sacred office."

The resolution also noted preventive measures the church staff had put in place, from windows in all office doors and a rule about not counseling women and children without another person present, to having accountability partners track Internet usage and regularly praying with one another about sexual purity.³⁸

The above article refers to the document called *A Joint Statement on Sexual Accountability Put forward by the Pastoral Leadership and Staff of First Baptist Church, Paducah, Kentucky*. It was dated and signed on June 24, 2008 by the pastor and staff. I have included a copy of it in Appendix A.

³⁸ Ibid

Chapter Fourteen- Emotional Burnout

There are additional reasons for forced terminations. Emotional burnout is one of the great causes. Stress in the ministry is out of control. When a pastor centers his ministry on performance, affirmation, and rules, he is on dangerous ground. If a pastor creates no limits and boundaries or margin in his life and makes himself co-dependent on the needs of his congregation he is also headed for emotional burnout. Most pastors have very loyal, committed wives and families who have to take second best in available time and resources. That will take its toll in the process of time. In most cases a pastor's wife and his family are the greatest encouragers he has in life. Pastors need a time of weekly Sabbath, rest, where he can get refueled from God to do the work that God has called him to do. Also, being a good husband and Dad should be a high priority in the pastor's life.

If a pastor cannot admit his weaknesses, has no accountability to someone, has no friends, lives a rigid life with not enough time, then I believe that he will eventually grow very dissatisfied with himself, become weary, fatigued and it will not be long before emotional burnout comes knocking at his door. He then will become very vulnerable to fleshly weaknesses and sin.

Also, a pastor may be performing in an area where he is not gifted. This can certainly cause emotional burnout. The congregation will definitely realize in a period of time whether you are gifted or not. That too has been the cause of forced terminations.

Chapter Fifteen- Pressured Out Because of our Nature and Nurture

The causes of forced terminations are many and varied. Some are very evident and others are heart issues that have developed over the years as a result of habituation. The Bible teaches us that we were born with the Adamic nature and therefore we are sinners, we fall short of the mark. Scriptures are very clear concerning our sinful nature and the behavior that results from that nature. In Romans 3:23 it states, *for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.* Follow closely the words from Romans 3:10-18 that describe our Adamic nature:

10 *“As it is written ,there is none righteous, not even one;*
11 *There is none who understands,*
There is none who seeks for god;
12 *All have turned aside, together they have become useless;*
There is none who does good,
There is not even one.
13 *Their throat is an open grave,*
With their tongues they keep deceiving,
The poison of asps is under their lips;
14 *Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness;*
15 *Their feet are swift to shed blood,*
16 *Destruction and misery are in their paths,*
17 *And the path of peace they have not known.”*
18 *There is no fear of god before their eyes.”(NAS)*

The issues of the heart cannot be ignored as we deal with forced terminations. It was the author’s heart condition that resulted in bad choices. Heart issues can be hidden for a while and it could take years before the heart condition is revealed outwardly. The following scriptures tell us about the heart.

Mark 7:20-23:

²⁰*And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man.*

²¹*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,*

²²*Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:*

²³*All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

Proverbs 23:7:

⁷*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee.*

Proverbs 4:23:

²³*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

The condition of our heart determines who we really are. Our instant salvation does not guarantee instant removal of heart issues. A constant battle with the old nature will be normal and in addition to that we are also a product of how we were raised (nurtured). Experts state that 85% of the influence in our lives comes from the family of origin, the way one is nurtured growing up.³⁹ That means if a pastor grows up in a dysfunctional home where anger, bitterness, sensuality, competition, abuse and other character traits exist then he will be affected by it. A great deal of the habituation of our lives is from our father's relationship. The fact that a ministry involves lots of relationships cannot be ignored. The formation of habits either helps or damages a pastor's fulfillment in calling.

At the very best, a pastor offers himself as a saved, sanctified servant to the church that calls him as pastor. However, he daily deals with the inherited loss of harmony and peace (shalom) that was lost in the Garden of Eden. He pastors a people who have the same struggles. Man's loss of peace causes him to look for

³⁹ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan, 2003), 101.

artificial peace that might come through pain killers, anti-depressants and other artificial means of security that often ends up in addictions. Added to that is the lack of proper nurture in the pastor's life as well as the people of the church. The result is stress in human relationships that ends in pressurized situations that often produces forced terminations. We are living in a great septic system says Dr. Ron Hawkins, Vice Provost at Liberty University.⁴⁰ The answer is found in Luke 21:19 *in your patience possess ye your souls.*

Bad behavior resides within the framework of ministry because of nature and nurture. Inappropriate behavior does not cease on its own. It needs to be replaced with something better. Change must occur if one expects to receive different results. Change causes friction however one must discipline himself to the fact that he can "do what you don't want to do and you will become what you want to be. Sometimes we need to substitute discipline for a lack of natural interest."⁴¹

Professor Dr. Dwight Rice recently in a class at Liberty University discussed *sludge*. He wanted his class to define the meaning of *sludge*? The class immediately thought of changing oil in automobiles to prevent the impurities, byproducts and residue from preventing the automobile to operate properly. Rice then followed up with another question. What would sludge look like in the life and ministry of a contemporary minister? Rice asked his class how many times a contemporary minister might click on a pornographic website? Dr. Rice stated that

⁴⁰ Dr. Ron Hawkins, Class Notes, *Development of the Contemporary Minister*, Spring, 2008

⁴¹ Equipping the Man in the Mirror, daily devotions for July 14, 2008 (July/August 2008, 21).

there is a high percentage -one of seven- who when he hits it one time will return for a second, third, on and on. In fact four of 10 pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention are addicted to internet pornography. On the internet itself, it is projected that five out of seven SBC pastors are hooked or addicted to Internet pornography.⁴² Socrates says that “an unexamined life is not worth living.”⁴³

As a pastor one might take an inventory of his spiritual life, thought life and emotional life. There is wisdom in the scripture below:

Proverbs 10:17:

¹⁷He is on the path of life who heeds instruction,
but he who ignores reproof goes astray.

⁴² Dr. Dwight Rice, Notes in Class, *Development of the Contemporary Minister*, Spring 2008

⁴³ Socrates in *Plato, Dialogues, Apology*, Greek Philosopher in Athens 469 B.C.-399 B.C.

Chapter Sixteen- Conclusive Thoughts about the Causes

Based on the research of forced terminations the author was overwhelmed with the vastness of the problem at hand. The research, testimonies, and circumstances of forced terminations produced some horrendous situations. Causes centered on a number of conclusions that include the nature and nurture of man, pride, heart issues, lack of giftedness and immaturity.

Conflict in the church should never end with forced terminations, church splits and unforgiving relationships. The author is reminded of the words in Revelation 2:1-5 as Jesus addresses the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. He says to the church at Ephesus:

¹ Write this to Ephesus, to the Angel of the church. The One with Seven Stars in his right-fist grip, striding through the golden seven-lights' circle, speaks: ²⁻³"I see what you've done, your hard, hard work, your refusal to quit. I know you can't stomach evil, that you weed out apostolic pretenders. I know your persistence, your courage in my cause, that you never wear out.

⁴⁻⁵"But you walked away from your first love—why? What's going on with you, anyway? Do you have any idea how far you've fallen? A Lucifer fall!

"Turn back! Recover your dear early love. No time to waste, for I'm well on my way to removing your light from the golden circle (MSG).

Observation of the above passage helps us recognize that a Believer can lose his first love for the Savior and therefore his desire to glorify Him through our lives. Also in a careful examination of Matthew 22:37-39 the two greatest commandments are, first of all to Love the Lord God with all our hearts, mind and soul but the second, is to love our neighbors as ourselves. The author concludes that forced terminations occur when pastors as well as churches ignore or disobey the above exaltations.

Research reveals that unresolved conflict is affecting pastors and churches alike. As a result, forced terminations among the clergy are at an all time high. The twenty-first

century must bring resolutions to the problem of forced terminations and therefore preserve the spiritual integrity of the church of Jesus Christ.

Section Two

Recovery

Chapter Seventeen-Recovery is a Must

Recovery is necessary in all forced terminations whether they are voluntary or involuntary regardless of the reasons. If the battles faced in the ministry are kept secret without sharing, counseling or, at the very least, help from a friend or support group, it will have a devastating effect on the life of the pastor and his family. After a forced termination, the pastor may move on to the next church or ministry without any hesitation and it will appear that the problems of the past situation will take care of itself. However, pastors do not automatically get over serious unsolved conflict and emotional instability overnight. If a pastor or fulltime Christian worker fails to get some kind of help, then he will not be as effective for the Lord as he could. Issues such as un-forgiveness, anger, hurt, loneliness, rejection, a critical spirit, addictions, will follow the pastor who has not dealt with the real heart issues. Many pastors are emotionally injured, hurting, trying hard to be stable but are losing the battle and churches are suffering as a result. Additionally, consider what may be happening within the home of that pastor.

The author has a pastor friend in Tidewater area of Virginia who planted an aggressive soul winning church, built it up to an average attendance of over a thousand. The church was very strong evangelistically leading many people to Christ weekly. The church owned a Christian school with an approximate enrollment of 300. That church was being blessed of the Lord. As in the case of all churches conflict came and a power struggle ensued with the fall out resulting in a church split. Hostility existed, neither side wanting to reconcile and make things right. After the split the other group started a new church, the principal of the school left and started another school. A forced termination had occurred not that the pastor was terminated, but a great amount of people left him there with a struggling church; a skeleton to what it used to be. Twenty-five years later, the church is running quite a bit under 100 in attendance. The conflict went unresolved. It emotionally

destroyed the pastor and consumes him to this day. From all indications he received or sought no help during this very difficult time in his life and as a result, it took his powerful ministry away. It is sad to say that he will probably take this unresolved conflict to his grave.

Chapter Eighteen- City of Refuge

There is a lack of resources, personnel and recovery organizations which could help pastors in distressed, emotional situations. However, there are some who have recognized the need. In Woodstock, Georgia at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Dr. Johnny Hunt, the senior pastor has long been passionate about helping those in the ministry who have faced crises. The City of Refuge was established to help hurting pastors; their web site gives the following description:

“Ministers in crisis often find they have no place to turn when they are hurting and discouraged, fallen, or even wounded by the very people they seek to serve. They need a safe place - a place to be healed and restored - a place of refuge.

“Several years ago Dr. Hunt was burdened by a strong desire to help, encourage and restore wounded and fallen men of God and their families. Dr. Hunt observed that, Christians are sometimes the worst about shooting their own wounded and then leaving them in the field to bleed to death.” He wanted the church at First Woodstock to be different. Hunt envisioned a ministry that would enable hurting ministers and their families to find hope and healing and hence the City of Refuge Ministry was born.

“The goal of the City of Refuge is to provide critical care for wounded and fallen ministers, giving them a safe and loving environment in which to grow and heal. The City of Refuge is a long-term residential program that attempts to meet the needs of the minister and his family by providing housing, childcare, counseling and small group support at no cost to the family. We offer assistance in helping the men find secular work while they are involved in the City of Refuge so that they can help support their families financially while they are healing and dealing with personal issues. Members of the church support the

families in the City of Refuge by praying for them, encouraging them with gifts and times of fellowship, and loving them just as they are. Our goal for each City of Refuge participant is that they will experience the incredible healing power of intimate relationships with God and other believers. Since we believe relationships are so vital, our ministry's main focus is the restoring of key relationships in the life of the minister - a right relationship with God, self, family and the Body of Christ.⁴⁴

The author became a part of this life transforming ministry of grace in January 2004. Since that time the author has conducted a number of interviews with those who have been impacted by the City of Refuge. It has become a recovery station for many pastors.

⁴⁴ www.fbcw.org, First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Georgia.

Chapter Nineteen- “Pastors at Risk” by James Eubanks

Rev. James Eubanks, Director of the Pastoral Counseling Ministry in the City of Refuge Ministry at First Baptist Church Woodstock, wrote an article, *Pastors At Risk*, explaining some of the complex problems surrounding pastors and full time staff who have experienced forced terminations. Below is the article in its entirety.

“Jack sat in his office wringing his hands, the worship service just fifteen minutes away. His recycled sermon was just empty words. His heart ached with a sense of emptiness, anxiety and tension. His mind was in a swirl of conflicting thoughts. “I can’t go on like this, how much longer until people notice,” he thought. “I feel so lonely, but I can’t share this with anyone, after all, I’m the pastor. Who would understand?”

“Jack is an all too often example of a pastor who calls the City of Refuge (COR) program, sponsored by our church; a ministry dedicated to struggling, wounded, or fallen pastors. These pastors and their families move to Woodstock, and receive extensive individual, marriage and family counseling, for twelve months or more. We also assist with temporary housing, job assistance, school placement, and childcare needs, crisis intervention, stabilization, extensive individual and marital counseling, support groups, and restoration teams. Our senior pastor, Dr. Johnny Hunt, has the reputation of being “a pastor’s pastor.” The COR program is a reflection of his desire to help hurting pastors.

“In working with pastors in the COR program, we commonly see seven themes. Each theme represents a type of relational fracture with God, spouse, and friends or within the “self.” Many of these themes apply to believers in general, not just to pastors, but pastors in particular, need to be on guard with these common themes. A pastor who genuinely loves the Lord can unwittingly allow one of these snares to subtly work its way into his life. Often times it is only after a crisis that the snare is clearly recognized. In counseling, we see the fruit of these spiritual roots as they create misery in the family, marriage and individual lives of the pastors.

“Confusing loving God, with loving the ministry. C.S. Lewis coined a phrase, “first and second things.” Our love, worship and devotion are to be to God Himself, the “first thing.” As we walk with Him and experience Him, we find that He has given us many blessings, or “second things.” The list is endless of His blessings, but for this article the list would include happy marriages, children who turn out right, health, talent and the blessing of vocational ministry. It’s been said that we worship His face and receive from His hand. Any one of the blessings that God bestows can become the main thing, the “first thing,” or in biblical language, an idol, and this includes ministry. It’s so easy for one to begin to worship the blessing instead of the blessing, the call instead of the one who calls. As this subtle but disastrous shift begins to take place, by definition one is no longer worshiping and praying to the sovereign Lord. In one’s heart, God has been moved to a lower position. In this condition one is praying to the “useful god,” a god who can help perpetuate one’s agenda, plan or vision for ministry. *Food for thought: When was*

the last time you bowed before the sovereign Lord open handed and place your family, future and ministry on the altar?

“Confusing intimacy with God, with sermon preparation and Bible study. Intimacy in any relationship involves vulnerability, trust, confiding and listening. Intimacy with God involves the same elements. One’s private devotional life is the primary context for these elements of intimacy to occur and include the following: laying one’s heart bare before the Lord, inviting the searching and probing of the Holy Spirit, allowing the mirror of God’s Word to reveal one’s heart, pouring out one’s deepest hurts, doubts, fears as well as one’s hopes and dreams to the Lord, and listening silently as He speaks in a still small voice. All of these are part of an intentional, unhurried devotional life and are certainly more significant than dutifully “getting in” one’s quiet time. All too often the business of a pastor’s schedule crowd out this precious time. While a diligent study of God’s Word is vital, it’s not the same as personal devotion. With sermons to prepare, it’s all too easy to rationalize, or maybe honestly believe, that the time studying for the next sermon is a substitute for intimate time alone with the Lord. *Food for thought: When was the last time you bowed before the Lord with an open Bible and asked for the Holy Spirit to search your heart, and meditating on all He shows you about yourself?*

“Confusing setting a godly example with projecting a pastoral image. Paul said to “imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1Cor 11:1). Pastors are looked upon as examples and rightly so. They are called to live lives worthy of imitating and serving as an example. Too often being a godly example gets confused with needing to manage an image. Paul displayed the opposite of this in his ministry as he regularly showed his pain, confusion, discouragement and even taught us that God’s “power is made perfect in weakness” (2Cor 12:9). Paul used Jesus as an example of a life of authenticity. The pastoral image, on the other hand, is a mask of perfection and piety that many project; an appearance of being “above it all.” Masks like these set up an “I’m full, you’re empty” ministry mindset that creates an illusion of leadership, and an unhealthy dependency upon a leader who in reality is insecure. The purpose of the mask is to cover the insecurity, but this way of relating is much worse than occasional “impression management.” When one lives behind a mask, one begins to lose touch with who they really are; the person God created them to be. God doesn’t empower an image, and so the power of God is hindered working through that person. Paul prayed that the Ephesians believers would be “strengthened with power through His Spirit *in the inner man*” (Eph 3:16). Because intimate relationships require honesty and vulnerability, every significant relationship suffers. As the gulf between who one truly is and the projected image widens, the defense mechanism of “compartmentalization” keeps one’s inner and outer worlds separate. One’s sense of disconnection from God becomes greater and greater and a sense of disconnection and loneliness in one’s marital relationship becomes inevitable. Authentic leadership uses Paul’s example by allowing the followers to learn as the leader honestly walks through pain, confusion, doubt, temptation and finding the Lord faithful through it all. *Food for thought: When was the last time you allowed your weakness to be an object lesson of God’s power?*

“Confusing marital oneness, with having a wife willing to perpetuate the pastoral image. Just as there is great pressure and expectations on a pastor to live up to and project a certain image, there is also great pressure and expectations on a pastor’s wife. Expounding on the pressures placed on a pastor’s wife is beyond the

scope of this article, yet it's enough to say that just as some pastors project a pastoral image, many wives have a pull in the same direction. Many times there is an unhealthy collusion between an insecure pastor who wears his mask and an insecure pastor's wife who has come to find her identity in her husband's image and position. While a couple may be able maintain their images in public over a period of time, this mutual image keeping is disaster in a marital relationship. Mutual mask wearing is contrary to all that is necessary for intimacy. Sadly, I usually deal with these type issues in counseling after the crisis and the image is shattered. *Food for thought: When was the last time that you asked your wife to share with you her feelings about your marriage?*

“Confusing authentic, vulnerable relationships with other men with knowing lots of people.” Mask wearing and image keeping not only damages one's relationship with God and one's wife, it also damages one's relationships with other men. Men in general seem to have a difficult time moving beyond the posturing or mere information sharing that characterizes so much of male conversation. This tendency can be exacerbated in a pastor's relationships. If one believes that they cannot share a weakness with another man, one has set himself up for loneliness and isolation. Scripture tells us to “bear one another's burden” (Gal 6:2). The fact that we all occasionally need help is implicit in the command. I have heard so many pastors who have fallen morally tell me they believed, “there was no one I could confide in.” Confiding relationships are essential. It may be that one initially forms a confiding relationship with a mentor, a counselor or another pastor who longs for a real relationship. *Food for thought: If you died tomorrow, your wife would ask six men to be your pallbearers. Who would these six men be? Do any of them really know you?*

“Confusing being a strong leader with needing to be in control.” Much of this article has revolved around the idea of wearing a mask. The final two themes are simply flavors or varieties of masks. Godly leaders are secure in who they are in Christ. They set the course for the church and empower the people around them to fulfill their potentials as everyone works toward the goal. The leader and everyone around these leaders are growing and reaching their God given potential. When problems occur strong leaders can overview the situation, receive input and make course corrections because they are driven by vision. On the other hand, leaders who need to be in control are driven by fear of failure. They find security from this fear by exercising their authority and pointing toward their accomplishments. In conflict they tend to overpower or withdraw in fear of being exposed as inadequate. This harmful way of relating affects everyone around them. Their need for control is often true within the family as well. Controllers not only desire picture perfect families, they need picture perfect families. *Food for thought: Would those who know you best say you're the type leader who admits and personally learns from his mistakes and can allow others to learn from their mistakes?*

“Confusing being a biblical peacemaker with fear of conflict.” Certain types of people are drawn to ministry because of their perception that the ministry will be all about helping struggling people who in the end will be so grateful for their aid. While this may describe an element of ministry, it certainly does not describe the overall picture of ministry, especially the pastorate. Being a pastor always involves the elements of facing conflict, making difficult decisions in the face of opposition, and often being misunderstood. Just as some people are driven by a fear of failure, others are driven by a fear of rejection. Those who are driven by this fear will avoid

conflict at all cost. They find security from this fear by attempting to win the approval of everyone around them or by avoiding relationships in general, thus avoiding the possibilities of rejection. Pleasers seldom say “no,” and if they do, they tend to put excessive energy into making sure everyone still approves of them afterwards. Pleasers often have frustrated wives because while they pour their energy into making sure everyone approves of them, there is little energy left over for their family. *Food for thought: Would those who know you best say that you are capable of making a difficult and unpopular decision and still be at peace with yourself?*

“In conclusion, this article may have been a helpful reminder for you of all the ways that you are already guarding your spiritual life. Others of you may have found yourself in some of the snares listed. If so, I pray that you’ll reach out first to the Lord and then confide in a trusted fellow-pastor, mentor or counselor. Our greatest enemy to change is denial, minimization or helplessness. Our greatest motivators for change are pain and hope: feeling enough pain so that I don’t want to live like this anymore and hope that in Christ, I can change. Reach out, call a friend, contact the City of Refuge, enter into counseling, but don’t buy into the lie that there is no one you can share with. Don’t leave yourself as a pastor at risk.”⁴⁵

Reverend Eubanks counseled the author and his wife for many months leading them to strength in their marriage as well as spiritual strength for life.

⁴⁵ James Eubanks, *Leaderlife, Pastors At Risk*, Spring 2006, pg. 38-41

Chapter Twenty- The Author's Testimony of the Recovery Process

In the beginning of this thesis the author had indicated that in January 2003 I confessed to my family and then publicly to my church that I had experienced a moral failure. I repented of this awful crisis in my life. My recovery began after Dr. Johnny Hunt invited me to Atlanta, Georgia. Allow me to stop here and explain why the need to include “my story” in this thesis describing forced terminations. Most of the testimonies or examples used in this paper are not in depth but descriptions of the individual only, whereas, “my story” is described with the pain, heartache, loss and recovery that was experienced by my whole family. First it is a warning to all married men to stay faithful. Nothing is worth losing the trust of your family. Secondly, God is faithful in His grace and restoration. I pray you will see and feel both as the testimonies unfold.

Within a week of my public confession and repentance we were in Atlanta and committed our lives in trust to the City of Refuge. The church provided us a little two bedroom condo located in a rural area of Northwest Atlanta called Waleska. It was situated in a gated community up in the mountains on a golf course forty minutes from the church in Woodstock. My heart was so empty as Tom our son and Sharon our youngest daughter who traveled with us helped us unload the car. We arrived there early on Saturday evening. I remember how responsible and sad I felt for ripping our family apart. Previously, we were living in our dream home with our son Tom and his family next door, Beth, our daughter with her family living behind us and Sharon living just a few miles away. We now were six hundred miles away from kids, grandkids and our familiar, comfortable world. I was broken, lonely, and fearful of what to expect next. I never will forget the tears that flowed down Tom's face as he and Sharon left us there heading back home.

Betty and I were there alone, no family, no familiar friends, just us. I could hardly look at her because of the guilt I felt. I had been responsible for literally ripping her heart

out and now in desperation we had to pick up all the broken pieces or either call it quits. Everything was so hard to deal with. Trust in me wasn't worth two cents. No credibility, no integrity. I felt like the little child who closes his eyes and says, "You can't see me now." I just wanted to hide. It was so painful that a heart attack and death would have been a welcomed event.

We lived in that little condo for one and a half years recovering daily from the greatest adversity of our lives. Each day I would walk up and down the mountainous golf cart paths crying out to God for His mercy and help. Most of the time I put a DVD head set on and played the song with the words, *"So breathe in me, I need you now. I never felt so dead within. So breathe in me maybe somehow you could breathe new life in me again. I used to be so sensitive to the light that leads to where you are. Now I've acquired these callouses with the darkness of a cold and jaded heart. So breathe in me I need you now."*

Some days as I walked up and down those paths I needed to get my mind temporarily off the situation so I would stray into the woods and pick up lost golf balls. During that year and a half I picked up over 2000 golf balls. Many of them were stamped with corporate images of some of the largest corporations in America. I have them to this day in a golf ball rack in our den. I never gaze at them without thinking of those painful days. At that time I didn't think that I would ever laugh again.

A few days after arriving we found ourselves sitting in an office waiting to be introduced to professional Christian counselors who would be responsible for our recovery. I held Betty's hand but felt she was very suspicious of my affection toward her. I felt as though I was a real loser.

During this time I was thinking that the Lord must be really grieved with me. How could I have transgressed in such an awful way? I knew better. However, the Lord showed us His marvelous grace. He loved us. The congregation at First Woodstock loved on us as

did Dr. Johnny Hunt, Troy Haas, James Eubanks, Virginia Stephens and Janet Heeter. I would also include Sarah and Bonnie who were personal secretaries at the City of Refuge. We had never experienced such grace and love that was administered to us at First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia. We shall forever be grateful.

During those ensuing months Betty and I were counseled individually to begin with and later on together. On many occasions we were so exhausted after the counseling sessions we had to go home and take a nap. We were assigned many books to read in addition to the counseling. I did not work during that time. Betty and I were together pretty much 24/7. The church services were so powerful and inspiring at First Woodstock. They allowed me no ministry involvement during that time because among other things I was physically, emotionally and spiritually exhausted. Betty would weep during most of the services which made me very uncomfortable. I later found out that she was weeping for me. She had set her own heartache aside and was feeling so bad that I now had been stripped of what I so loved to do and that was to be a pastor and preach every Sunday. For over thirty years on every Sunday, other than when I was on vacation, I would go to the pulpit and preach God's Word. Now, I would sit while someone else preached.

My life and marriage was transformed during those months at Woodstock. Deep down in my life existed habits, fears, problems, attitudes, baggage, and sins that had never been dealt with. I was a time bomb ready to explode and it did. I had carried hurts, injustices, loneliness, secrets and fears for years. I had no personal accountability to anyone to discuss my hurts and other issues that were in my heart. As a senior pastor of over thirty years I had no mentor to explain and discuss my feelings of failure and defeats as well as the dangers of success. As a pastor I was caught up in a performance based, man pleasing co-dependent, legalistic ministry. I possessed no margin or boundaries in my life. I loved to be needed and affirmed by men and possessed a great deal of false pride. I later realized that I

loved the ministry so much that it had become an idol in my life. I loved the ministry more than I loved God. I had never allowed myself to grieve about anything or for that matter to truly get in touch with my personal feelings. It was through days and weeks of personal counseling that all of these things became evident in my life and I have been able to deal with them one by one. In addition I sat weekly with other men of God who had experienced some of the same sinkholes in life that helped me to become real and authentic.

The dedication of the City of Refuge staff is unbelievable. It is a Christ honoring ministry, bathed in prayer that is helping men of God to gain emotional and spiritual health. The City of Refuge ministered to our entire family reserving time for the whole family to come to Woodstock, provide baby sitters while our humpty-dumpty family came back together again.

After months of counseling, love, grace, provision and from a very few special friends who never gave up on us and loved us unconditionally we completed our counseling. When James Eubanks stated in his office in April 2005 that he believed that we were on the road to a solid restoration we could not help but to give praise to the Lord who knew all about us from the beginning and no doubt allowed a tragedy to come so that HE could re-make us into some vessel that could be useable for His glory. In May 2005 Dr. Johnny Hunt presented to me on a Sunday morning service at First Baptist Church Woodstock the diploma of completion from the City of Refuge. Our whole family was present. A chapter in our life was closing. Now a brand new chapter is beginning.

My feelings are of freedom in Christ, renewed love for my God, open availability to Him and an eagerness to feel emotions of love, grief, forgiveness and to experience true humility. My whole family has been affected by this episode in life and it has had a very positive effect and after the rubble was cleared down to the foundation. For that we say, glory to God. My dear wife stood by me, loved me unconditionally and is truly a “Trophy

of Grace.” Wow! What a woman. In the next few pages you will be able to hear from and see her heart as well as from our three adult children concerning the last five years of our life beginning from that sad day in January of 2003.

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there was one only.
This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life,
when I was suffering from anguish,
sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints,
so I said to the Lord,
“You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.
But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life
there has only been one set of footprints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?”
The Lord replied,
“The years when you have seen only one set of footprints,
my child, is when I carried you.” **Copyright © 1984 Mary Stevenson**

Chapter Twenty One-Testimony of Betty Powell

“When you love someone with all your heart and have committed your life to him and his dreams in life, when everything you do revolves around him, when he is the one you most want to be with, to talk to, share your joys and sorrows with; betrays you... it is nothing short of total devastation to your life. There is no way to describe the emotions or pain that is felt when you have been so blind-sided.

“When my husband admitted to having an affair with someone I loved like a part of our family, my life came to a jolting stop. It was like he had kicked me as hard as he could in the deepest pit of my stomach, my legs became num, my breath was taken away, I felt nauseous, faint and emotionally spent all at the same time. It can't be, this was never supposed to happen to my loving family. You never forget the day, the place, or the time of information you wished you had never heard. You also realize life as you knew it, will never be the same.

“The voluntary resignation from the church was a nightmare. As T.A. went up to the pulpit, along with our son and our son-in-law, who were deacons, the rest of us sat as close together as possible. Holding on to each other you could not have gotten a pin between us.

“Within the week, we had moved out of our house. Pastor Johnny Hunt had made provisions for us to come to Atlanta and get counseling before we did anything else. Finding out that my husband had broken our marriage commitment after 35 years was devastating enough; I was now leaving my home and family. I found myself in the front yard trying to say goodbye to my children, their spouses and our five precious grandchildren whom I saw everyday of their lives.

“All three of my children were hurting along with their spouses. Their emotions

were spinning at what had happened in the previous week. I wanted to help them, they wanted to help me. My thoughts were "God, how will we ever get through this?"

"I didn't even think or realize all I had personally lost. All that kept going through my mind was what was he thinking, he had just given up everything he had worked for for 35 years. We had lost our ministries, our church of twenty-six years, our job, and our home, most of our friends, our testimony, and all of our income in one week. In addition to that my dad was very ill. I lived close enough to see him every other weekend, but now being 12 hours away from home that would be impossible.

"I never thought this would ever happen to me (first mistake), and if it did, I knew I would just leave, no questions asked. Now that it had, what was I going to do? When I look back I feel I was probably in shock, I went through the motions of day to day life. When it began to sink in questioned why I was in Atlanta with a man who now seemed to be a stranger, someone I thought I knew, but did not. Why should I go through hours of counseling, three times a week for someone I had given my entire life to and he had made a choice to lie and cheat on me? Could I ever forgive him?

"I was on my knees one night after one of our many difficult days and I felt God's presence almost engulf me. As I write this, tears fill my eyes as I think about God's love and presence during that time and especially that night. He impressed my heart with this message: "You don't have to stay here, you don't have to stay married, I have given you Biblical permission to leave." I bounced up and ran upstairs and began to pack my suitcase. That's all I needed to hear. That night T.A. begged me to stay. I also needed to hear that, prior to that, he had shown little to no emotions since all of this had happened.

"Later that night when I went to bed I was crying quietly as I had every night since hearing the news, and again the Lord impressed my heart, but this time with another message and it was "You can do what you want, but my desire is that you stay and work on

this marriage. It will be a testimony for others one day." I knew I didn't have the strength, but He did.

"I pictured the kids in my mind and I knew that was what they would want, so I began to work on it first of all for them, they were my main motivation. They called us every day and loved on us. Our church (which they were all involved in) had completely turned on them, as if they had done something wrong. If seen in public, the church folks would not even speak to them. There was no one at home they could turn to. Our church family was the only family they had. I really believe that these folks were also hurting and just did not know what to do or say, so they did nothing which was translated by our children as second betrayal. They perhaps had the hardest part, because they were still living in the town and having to face everyone. After the news got out in the community, there were two local pastors who ministered to them and we were so thankful for them.

"Life for the next year was an up and down roller coaster for T.A. and I. There were more bitter times than sweet times, but God took and continues to take us on an amazing journey. T.A. loved the ministry and his people more than any pastor I had ever come in contact with. Each Sunday we went to First Woodstock, I would think of how T.A. must have been feeling. Since our marriage to each other, he had always been my pastor. Things were so different now. I felt so sad that he had worked so hard and life had crashed in on him. So that you don't think, "what a godly unselfish woman", there were equal times I felt like I hated him for what he had done.

"The amazing counseling we received was invaluable. I do not believe our marriage would have made it without it. Or had we stayed together without this counseling, we would not have been as happy as we are now. Our church family, whom we had served and loved even through all of their adversities, had turned their backs on us and now these folks in Atlanta who only knew us because of our "garbage" loved us unconditionally. All of our

counselors were good, but God gave me just what I needed. On days when I didn't even want to open my Bible, Janet would always have an encouraging word from God. His truth would be so healing to my broken spirit.

“We were there almost two years. We would take two steps forward and one backward during those early months. The emotional strain was unbelievable at times. During this time, my dad's illness worsened, and we stopped counseling so I could be with him. I spent the last month of his life with him, even sleeping in his room most of the time. I am so grateful to God that I was able to do this. He died knowing what had happened to us. T.A. told him. Dad forgave this son-in-law he was so proud of and loved like his own.

“Our family is different now. We have talked openly on many occasions about what happened. We have learned of the inner strength that God enabled in each of us. We have learned much about life, people, love and brokenness. We all learned the freedom and power of forgiveness. It is a process, it is not amnesia, it is acceptance, not approval of what has been done. It is "I hate what you did, but I can separate that with the love I have for you." It is realizing that all of us have sins, they just may not be made as public as others. Are there ever times when I think about it, of course, right now, I feel I will always have a part of me that feels sadness when I think of it. That too, though given enough time may heal itself. I have promises marked in the Bible I used while in Atlanta. There were times there that I would look at those promises, shake my head, and hang on by a single thin thread. Today when I come across one I had marked all up, I have a sweet peace that comes over me, knowing that my healing has come from His precious word and loving hand.

“The growth for both of us has been significant, but T.A. has gone through a journey of metamorphosis. The counseling in Atlanta was a wonderful start and foundation for him. What God has continued to do in T.A.'s life since then, has been amazing. He has learned so much about a close and real relationship with God, about being

emotionally healthy, about loving completely. He has learned in the last four years of his life more than most people ever learn in a lifetime. I am proud of what he has become. Was he a bad man before, no, he was a good husband and father, loved by family and everyone who knew him, but now he loves us from deep within.

“Yes, the loses were great, but what we have gained cannot be bought with a price, only what God allowed in our life and has seen us through, could we be where we are today. Our marriage and our family have been remolded by the Potter’s hand, not to be set on a shelf, but to be used again for His glory.”

Chapter Twenty Two- Testimony of Sharon Powell Downey

“So writing this is requiring me to go back five years, and as weird as it is pretty much five years to the date. Seeing pain, struggle and dark days in black in white is almost stomach turning. This is my story though, and it is just that-it’s mine.

“Let me set the stage for you a bit. I am the baby of three and grew up as a preacher’s kid my whole life. The job was not so bad, I was loved by everyone around me, and had family always around-church family that is. It was as if I had many aunts, uncles, grandpas and grandmas. So the fish bowl living was easy to tolerate since there was such a bond.

“I had moved away after college and had returned home to live for good. I was living at home (yes its okay if you’re 28 with a 6 figure income and living with mom and dad-I am the baby remember), and had an incredible job. I bought my first home that summer and was so excited and pre-occupied with the dealings of getting it ready to close and to move in. Everything was just great. I was at the height of my business career with getting a promotion and my social calendar was slammed full. I was deeply involved with mentoring in the summer programs and youth group at church. I sang lead in a praise band, involved in the choir, and was playing church softball and still had time for my best friend.

“Quickly my life and the control I had on it began to unravel faster than you can imagine. Within a four month time frame I had been betrayed by my best friend, found out my credit had been demolished by another individual and I was deeply in debt, my position at work had been eliminated so I was fired. I found myself at the unemployment commission and starting to question and mistrust everyone around me.

“This is where it starts to get more chaotic. I began to notice things were not right with my dad. I had noticed some unsettling conversations and looks between him and my mom’s best friend...his secretary. I had noticed his family involvement had been tapering

off as well. We were his number one so that was extremely weird for me to see. I held these thoughts so very close to myself and would not dare breath a word of what I thought was ludicrous and frankly felt guilty for even thinking them.

“However, one October day my sister stopped by my house. I was not working so I was there all day. I mentioned that I just did not trust anyone anymore. She tried to get me to say exactly what I meant. Then it came out, there it was out in the open now for us to deal with. Was it reality, was it speculation, whatever it was she was feeling and had witnessed some of the same things. As I write this I am only feet away from where that conversation took place, and I can still feel the guilt for even discussing it. We decided this would stay between us and us alone!!! I did not want in any way for my mom to find out. With the ministry dad was put under a lot of demands and time expectations with other people, I often filled his shoes a lot with taking care of mom and making her feel special as she always did with us growing up. So, her not knowing any of this was vitally important.

“The next three months were spent following dads every foot step, phone and phone log, and daily timeline. We took turns following him-her-listening to phone calls, tracing his steps. I was determined to prove my thinking was wrong, and that it was my own distorted thinking. I slowly realized it was not creative thinking, but reality that dad was having an affair, that word and relating it to my dad still makes me feel disconnected from my own body.

“Now we were faced with how to stop it with no one finding out? Especially mom! It was a question to big for me to wrap my brain around. We confronted the two of them, and told them whatever was going on needed to be stopped immediately, and that she must quit her job! After our mind numbing conversation we all went our separate ways that day. Mom still unaware, my idea was to fix it before she ever found out.

“Well, I’m sure you can tell now by my writing this account that mom did find out.

As the details unfolded, she became such a warrior. A woman I had to let her be, I thought she would never make it through that kind of news...this is where I first hand witnessed God. At the same time I was first hand witnessing Satan's work in dad. It was an authoritative unveiling of the power of what both can do when given influence in a person's life. The powers of the earth colliding.

"The next step that had to be handled quickly was dealing with informing the church. My brother was in Michigan with his family for Christmas visits. I was desperately waiting his arrival so he could lead in this devastating situation. Dad met with the deacons and resigned his church; a move I know was so heartbreaking for him. Dad loved God-his family- and his church! I believe though at this point he was ready to spew it all out and stop the lifestyle he had lead for the last six months.

"We all met back at the house and sat in the living room. It was so dark and hopeless; mom seemed to take care of all of us, and assured us all something would work out. At that point in my mind I knew they had no jobs, nowhere to go, and would they even remain married...how would our family make it? Would are family make it? I was so angry at dad because for so many years I had tried to stay out of trouble out of respect for his job as a pastor, thinking that if I messed up he would resign his ministry. Yet, he wasn't thinking about us when he made his decisions that he had made recently. He had not been there for me through the heartaches I was experiencing and also in buying my house, etc. He was too busy. Too busy taking care of someone else.

"My brother arrived that night, and immediately went over to hug dad. Dad was nearly motionless and whimpered in despair. This began the long night before Sunday night when Dad would face the whole church. I remember this night so well, because it was just us five again, Dad, Mom, Tom, Beth, and myself. There was a silent confusion that filled the room that night. The three of us slept on the floor that night with mom and dad on each

couch. The only noise you could hear was the radio playing quietly in the kitchen. We lived in the country and the stations were static at times. The sound seemed to be clear that night as the song “Be near” played several times throughout the night.”for dark is light to You, depths are height to You and far is near but Lord, I need to hear from You -be near, oh God be near, oh God of us Your nearness is to us our good be near, oh God be near, oh God of us Your nearness is to us our good, our good...”⁴⁶

“Sunday came quickly, the Sunday night service is where dad would come before his congregation to confess. We all met in dad’s office, siblings and their spouses. We prayed and formed a bond there stronger than even our bond before. We would walk into the sanctuary together, and we would support each other until the very end. I just knew that the church would rally around us and pray for us and help us through this event. I mean it would seem likely since dad and mom had always been there for each member of that church through there joys and sorrows. This is where another wave of sheer disillusionment came from.

“After we had moved our parents to the unbelievable City of Refuge ministry at First Baptist Woodstock, Atlanta, GA we returned home and in the days and next few weeks to come we would be ignored at church, scorned at grocery stores, gossiped about, and have to attend meetings where the fate of my parent’s financial state was being voted on. We finally made a decision between the siblings that our life long church could no longer accept who we were, and that we had to find another place to worship and serve. We then supported each other. All we had ever known was the church people and they were family to us. There were so few that tried to even reach out to us. When my parents moved out of town, and my church family and friends all gone, I was in a desperate state. I even went back to church on a Wednesday night and sat in my car and wanted so bad to go in and get

⁴⁶ Shane and Shane, *Be Near*, music lyrics

some direction and some answers on what I was supposed to do now. I was noticed by another one of the pastors and deacons there. They came over to chat, but to my disappointment no prayers, hugs or encouraging words. Only their take on the whole issue and how they supposedly found that dad had been addicted to porn and stole money from the church. Well, let me tell you they were proved so very wrong in the end! I guess they figured I had given up on dad like they had, so they were just going to load more trash on him, but he was still my daddy, and that hurt.

“I was still not working and really had no intention of looking for work. I never left my house for fear of seeing church people who would turn the other way, and frankly I was an emotional zero after the months leading up to this whole fiasco, and was so dismayed by those reactions around me. It was so tough to deal with betrayal on every angle of interaction in my life. It’s like I had been thrust into a different planet of some sort, and I didn’t know which way to go, or what to do. I ignored phone calls and cut off all relationships with anyone except for my family and an angel God sent me who is now who I call my husband.

“I was in a place I can’t really describe in words to you. It’s as if the entire world knew the struggles of my family. I visited mom and dad often, but at the end of every trip was returning to my hometown. Dad had done a great job at reaching beyond his church and into the community he was in. So this greatly affected our hometown, and there weren’t too many people that he did not know in the secular and religious realms. That is just the influence he had. I began to wonder where all the people that said they loved me were. I was so naive to think that the people of our church loved me for me, not for my position as the preacher’s kid. I felt so lonely. I lived by myself and was doing nothing. I turned to alcohol daily truly just to make it through the day mentally. My whole world as I knew it had blown up like an atomic bomb. Nothing left to even piece together.

“I stopped going to church and eventually tried out a few, but it was pointless. I just wanted to be at home alone. The swirl of different emotions each day is hard to explain. I wanted so bad to wake up and it all be at the end of this terrible ride. What I didn’t realize at the time was each day was needed to experience those feelings. I didn’t feel like I could be angry really pallet what was going on, because we had to hold our heads high, and stick together as a family. Yet I wanted to scream and cut off all ties from any of this.

“We went together as a family to the wonderful God sent ministry of City of Refuge at First Baptist Woodstock. Johnny Hunt had a real vision when he had this ministry established. The leaders and counselors there were every answer to prayer for our family. It was a haven there to heal. I saw mom and dad loved and taken care of like never before. My mom’s loving friend and counselor had taken over my job of taking care of her. Dad was figuring out so many things about himself, and the two of them over the course of a year became totally different people. I attended their graduation at the church, and the only thing I can say about this is what a miracle.

“Five years have passed, and there are not enough words that can give you the highs and lows of the path I have taken. I feel like I am just on the beginning of my journey again with a God that I never knew before. My take on the God thing was do everything you can at church ministry wise, and try to not get into trouble, sing your songs, tithe, and hang out with good people.

“Through this journey I have experienced God, I have not always run to him, but as I look back on each turn of the events, He was there, in a quiet watchful way, He was there. He was there the night the five of us slept in the living room, He was there when I left my parents in Atlanta, and He was there at nights when I was alone and so confused, angry and hopeless. He was there in people placed strategically in our lives years ago that God knew would be our small support team.

“I now attend a church where freedom in Christ is so apparent. I am always learning new ways how God’s qualities of protector, comforter, forgiver, strength, trust, love are worked out in my life. I feel when I worship, I understand what I am singing, and it’s no longer about the words. I feel it; I have been there and experienced His qualities first hand. I worship His character. I look forward to every chance I have to thank Him for His map of my life and newly found freedom. I have seen Him work miracles in each one of my family members. I have seen him make dreams become reality, and seen freedom in each member. I have seen Him grow our relationships when I thought before they couldn’t get any closer. I thought no family could ever survive this, not only survive, but thrive. I have a daddy now. I never realized before how much I had to share him with so many others. It was always my mom I called if I needed anything at all. Conversations could and may have been a bit uncomfortable with dad.

“I cannot explain to you know how much I have grown to respect my mom and her abilities to guide and to be the glue and warrior for our family, and just how much I have grown to love my dad so very much and grow so very close to him, I am daddy’s little girl. Their relationship together with God in the center is truly an amazing example to me of perseverance and unconditional love. Because of that I am able to love at a deeper level.

“I’m not sure how this all is read, but they are my thoughts. I am learning each day how to be a child of God. I have a different view now of God now as being a Father. I am ready to keep growing in His love and to take the hurt, rejected, and hopeless feelings I walked through and see just how much he loves me. I have learned to love others in a real way. My real relationship with Him is just beginning and I am ready to run until I am in His arms of love. He has turned my mourning into dancing; He has turned my sorrow into joy.”

Chapter Twenty Three-Testimony of Beth Powell Baxter

“Sitting in my living room after I had learned about the devastation in our family, I believed I had literally lost everything. Our lives from this day forth would never be the same. We were completely engulfed in the ministry of that church and in that perspective, we had lost everything. Outside of me, my husband and my two children, from here on our life as we knew it would change completely. Betrayal was not a feeling that I had from my father.....it was the feeling I had from the church ministry. There was no chance at the beginning to deal with the betrayal of my father because of the extreme hurt that came from the people inside the four walls of that ministry.

“Of course, there were very difficult days, and some days you didn't feel like you could even get out of the bed, but I knew God would not allow this suffering without a great purpose for us. When you have children, everything has to be as normal as possible, so we did the best we could to hide the hurt and pain.

“I know that our family became stronger through this. Dad was always absorbed by the church and its needs and although he would be at family gatherings, his mind would be on the church and his people. We now have all of dad at family gatherings and functions. His life is still busy however; we really are his first priority now.

“I began to pray very hard for God to show us what to do and what church to worship and what school for my children to attend.

“During the time while mom and dad were away we visited them quite frequently. The ministry of City of Refuge became our new family and they began to love us like we were their own people. We felt embraced by that ministry and pastor Johnny Hunt. They would counsel us, pray with us, laugh with us, and cry with us.

“I know this was not God's perfect plan for my dad, but He allowed this to work His perfect plan in my life and the life of my siblings. Five years later.....God is so good! I

have been able to see His plan unfolding and it is so INCREDIBLE. It is far more than I would have ever dreamed that He could do with my family. I look back in my journal occasionally to see what God has done in our lives.....Nothing could compare!

“It took about 2 years for me to get over the hurt feelings from the people who I felt treated us wrongly. I feel as if I have completely recovered from this chapter in our lives and what an incredible story God has allowed us to have. The future is still yet to be determined. To HIM belongs the glory!”

Chapter Twenty Five-Testimony of Tom Powell Jr.

“I was on my way home just days after Christmas with my wife and 3 small children. We were visiting my in laws who live in the northern part of the country, about 700 miles away from home. About 5 hours from home, my sister Beth called me and told me with tears and anger that dad had an affair. I said the name of who I thought it was and she confirmed it.

“I knew this because in September, just 4 months earlier, I visited my dad at his office in our church where we were all very active. Dad always had an "open door policy". I felt comfortable walking in at anytime and saying hello and joking around with him. This particular time, I felt uneasy because this “she” was coming out of his office and walked right by me without saying anything. That was unusual because we were all very close friends.

“When I left the office, I returned to my vehicle where my wife and kids were, and I told my wife that "my dad is having an affair". She dismissed the idea. I told her what happened, but it still sounded so unbelievable.

“I can say that when I heard the news confirmed, I was not shocked. I hung up the phone and told my wife what happened followed by a quick "I told you so". We chatted for a few moments and made comments about how stupid it was, but the remainder of the trip was quiet.

“This situation separated my family (siblings and parents). We all lived as close as next door neighbors. We all were very active in our church. We hung out some nights, some weekends, and many times during the day.

“My immediate family was not as affected because the kids were so young that they did not even know what was going on. It caused my wife and me to be closer, and we

vowed transparency in our marriage so that this issue would not creep up on us.

“At first, we continued going to the same church. After all, this was my church for 27 years, and at age 33 with a small family, I had built many friendships and relationships that I was comfortable with at my church.

“It only took about 3 weeks to realize that continuing to attend the church made it more difficult for my family. We began to feel the blame for what had happened. We left the church, and began to be very complacent about church.

“The only memory of anyone ministering to our hurts was a local pastor, Dr. John Kimball, who invited me and my 2 sisters along with spouses to discuss and try to make some sense out of the situation. At that time, it was still too fresh for us to really open up. Although we did not share much with Dr. Kimball, we knew he loved us and we all appreciated his effort to reach out. He was the only one.

“After Dad and Mom left I had to develop my own convictions as a married man, age 33. This usually happens at 18 when kids leave home and begin a life of their own. Because I was so close physically to my dad (and mom), I never had the opportunity to be a man of my own. I was under their umbrella. I always responded to conviction with "what would dad say" or "how will this affect my dad at church".

“It took about 18 months to work out my salvation, but I'm on the winning side. Today, even though my dad lives 4 hours away, I feel closer to him than ever. Maybe it's email; maybe it's cell phone; maybe its text messaging ... who really knows. I'd like to believe that it is because I have a true human respect for him, not as a pastor on a pedestal, but as my dad.

“I have completely recovered and am a stronger man because of it. My faith is stronger. My convictions are stronger (and they are my own). My relationship with my current church is stronger.

“I have no bitter feelings toward anyone, nor do I have un-righted wrongs for anyone who I felt treated us badly and unfairly. I have moved on and life is much better.

“I am currently running for Mayor in the same city. I believe that God designed my life and some of my struggles to make me a stronger person and a perfect candidate for this public office. If God wills, I have the chance to carry the torch that my dad left. My dad was a true public servant that did anything for anybody. I have developed that same attribute. My job as Mayor will help me to share my faith behind a lectern instead of behind a pulpit, and do it with love.

“The hardest thing I've ever done was to take my mom and dad to Atlanta where they were seeking counseling immediately after the affair was no longer a secret. It was reminiscent of being dropped off for college, except this time I was doing the dropping off. It was only a few short days after the affair was revealed, and while I was dropping them off, I think it finally hit me what was really happening. I was at a place that I was uncertain about how to act or respond. It was the only time I wept for my mom and dad. I wanted them to work through this, and I knew they could. I just felt awful about them having to go through these difficult steps to get to eventual healing. By God's grace healing came and it's still going on.”

Chapter Twenty Five- When a Church Collapses

Tricia Hicks, who is an administrative assistant of the Liberty Baptist Fellowship at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, tells the sad but yet victorious story below of termination and recovery that she and her husband Don and her family experienced some years ago. Don is now an adjunct professor at Liberty University, a local interim pastor and is also beginning to establish a much needed program through Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary for hurting pastors involved in church conflict.

When Your Church World Collapses-- and You're the Pastor's Wife

An unexpected church conflict triggered anger, depression, bulimia and a stay in a psychiatric hospital. But God turned it around for good.

by Tricia Hicks

“Why Me?”

"Where did you go, God? Why did you allow this to happen?" I was so angry at Him. I had read enough of Psalms to know it was OK to be totally honest with God. David certainly was at times. If God knew what I was thinking, I felt I might as well verbalize it to Him. But how could this happen to me? I had been so excited about my calling as a pastor's wife when Don and I got married in 1979. I knew God had gifted my husband to be a minister, and we both had an intense desire to follow His will for our lives

“Anatomy of A Nightmare

“How could our dream have turned into such a nightmare? The answer is simple: We experienced the severe pain of rejection by the people we were serving.

“I have always known people are fickle. I had been in the ministry long enough to see adults act like children when they want their own way. Yet I wasn't prepared for the level of treachery mounted against us in November 1994.

“We felt certain that God had led us to the church Don was pastoring. We poured our love into the lives of the people, and they became

a real family to

“The Seeds of Discord

“However, amid this happy pastorate, there were those who wanted to be in control--and they looked upon ministers as expendable. And so began a year-long process of gossip and criticism. Sowing seeds of discord among the brethren, Satan often works quietly behind the scenes of a church. This seems particularly true in churches where people are being saved and are growing in their desire to serve the Lord. We are in a spiritual war--not against flesh and blood (each other) but against Satan and all the powers of hell.

“The stress became greater as the behind-the-scenes dissension became increasingly evident. Watching helplessly while a group of people conspired against my husband, I fell into a deep depression. The intense, constant criticism was destroying him--and me. As Don's wife, I knew how much he loved God and loved those people--the very people who seemed bent on destroying him. No matter how he tried, in their eyes he could do nothing right.

“Where Was God?

“I thought of God's many servants in the Bible who were persecuted unjustly. Where was God then; and where was He now?

“Never had I experienced the hate I witnessed at one Sunday night service. It was as if I was in the middle of a bad dream and couldn't wake up. Some of the deacons brought a motion to have my husband terminated as pastor. Then, after it was read, a man stood and said he thought a round of applause should be given for the godly deacons who had the courage to make such a motion. This man and his wife had always been so loving and encouraging to us. Now, out of the same mouth, came quite a different message.

“I sat in disbelief as it became clear the congregation was split right down the middle: 50 percent stood and clapped for the motion; 50 percent sat and did not clap. I was shocked as I looked at the belligerent expressions on the faces of people I loved and thought loved our family. All of this happened three weeks before Christmas. It destroyed the joyous season for me.

“The Family's Hurt

“Suddenly remembering that our son Matthew was with us in the meeting, I stood to my feet and, exploding with anger, shouted: "I can't believe you're doing this in front of my little boy! This is just hate!" Sobbing so deeply that I could hardly walk, I grabbed Matthew and left the meeting. Even then I heard the demonic murmuring of someone in the crowd: "She shouldn't have brought him in here in the first place." It was as if the congregation had become a lynch mob. By walking out, my son and I were spared from the venomous dialogue that followed. Fortunately, some precious friends came to comfort me in the room in where Matthew and I had gone. Many people were hurt, shocked and horrified that night. I wasn't the only one who left with a broken heart. I never went back to that church. My husband did, three days later, to submit his resignation.

“Healing the Wound

“How is a broken heart mended? This unexpected rejection was something I felt I could not live through. The pain was so great I wanted to die. "Love never fails," says 1 Corinthians 13:8, but it appeared to be failing for me. Although I had been a Christian for 26 years and knew all the verses for crisis situations, they didn't seem to be working at the moment. I continued to go through the motions of living, but I was dying on the inside. My husband was very loving and supportive, but I hid the extent of my inner turmoil from him.

“Coping Mechanism Failure

“When stress and anger are allowed to build up over time, they eventually will find an outlet. In my case the coping mechanism took the form of compulsive overeating and then making myself throw up--bingeing and purging. I later learned this is called bulimia, a very serious eating disorder suffered by an increasing number of people in our society. With my life spinning out of control, I found myself doubting even some of my favorite verses, Proverbs 3:5-6. I wanted to trust in the Lord with all my heart and acknowledge Him in all my ways, but how could I trust a God who would direct my path onto such a painful road? It took quite a while before I could focus on the part of these verses that commanded me not to "lean" on my own understanding. Indeed, I could not understand how Christians could treat each other so cruelly.

“During this time, my mind was never at rest. Constantly it analyzed what had happened, trying in vain to make some sense out of things and searching hopelessly for some clue to repairing the damage. I struggled to sleep, and when I did, the nightmares kept me from waking up rested.

“Overtaken By Mental Illness

“The bulimia escalated until I was purging everything I ate. Then, one evening, I began reading a book about eating disorders published by Rapha, a nationwide inpatient-counseling ministry. I unmistakably recognized myself in the pages of this book as it described my disorder in detail.

“The morning after I read this, in a moment of total despair and fear, I finally told my husband about the bulimia. I needed help, and at last I realized it. I admitted myself into the Rapha program at Charter Springs Hospital in Ocala, Florida. I'll never forget the song I was quietly singing to myself as my husband drove me to the hospital:

*“God will make a way
When there seems to be no way.
He works in ways we cannot see;
He will make a way for me.*

“Something deep inside me wanted to believe those words. A faint

flicker of hope told me my broken heart could be healed.

“Toward Recovery

“Before a problem can be solved, one must admit there is a problem. That part I had done, but going for help was another difficult hurdle. In my mind, the worst thing that could happen to a minister's wife was being admitted to a psychiatric hospital. I spent three weeks there. My first night in the hospital brought a barrage of tangled thoughts rushing through my head: What's wrong with me? Have I done the wrong thing by admitting myself to this hospital? I've let so many people down. Why has all this happened to me when I was just trying to serve the Lord?

“Recovering From Failure and Rejection

“My ability to trust people had been severely damaged by what had happened, and I was petrified by fear of what people would think when they heard of my stay in the hospital. If they criticized and rejected me before, what would they be saying now? I thought. Sadly, my thoughts were not just filled with presumptions about how I would be further rejected by people. In my trauma I also lost sight of what I needed most: the unconditional love of God. It was a perfect opportunity for the devil to taunt me: "If you don't perform correctly--perfectly-- then you're worthless, unlovable and hopeless. God will never be able to use you again."

“One Positive Result

“Although nothing is more painful than dealing with core problems such as failure and rejection, there was one positive result. The decimation of my sense of personal significance caused me to search for a self- image founded on the Word of God. The Bible speaks of the wisdom found in a multitude of godly counselors. Through the Rapha staff, the wisdom and love of God flowed to my mind and heart. The mending of my broken heart began.

“Learning To Trust...Again

“Other than my family, the first people I began to trust were the other patients in the Rapha program at the hospital. There was no pretense or facades among us. We all knew we were there because we needed help, so we began to love and trust each other-- unconditionally. We didn't have to pretend everything was "fine" as Christians often think they must in order to be accepted. I had never experienced such honesty and genuine love among a group of people. We prayed and learned together every day.

“God's Unbelievable Promise

“While packing for the hospital, I had grabbed a plaque on my dresser and tossed it into my suitcase. The plaque displayed a verse that really began to bother me, Jeremiah 29:3: "For I know the plans I have for

you, says the Lord; plans for good and not evil, to give you a future and a hope." "How could good come from what happened?" I asked God. Although I looked at that plaque every day, I told myself I didn't believe its message anymore. But as the days went by, the verse was planted deep in my heart.

“Why Me? *Why Not Me!*”

“With the help I received at the hospital, I began to see that my self-worth does not equal my performance plus the opinions of others. My performance may falter, my popularity with people may rise and fall, but God constantly and completely loves and accepts me. Seeing that, I began to trust Him once again.

“On my first night in the hospital, a patient shared his story of attempted suicide. "Why me?" he had asked a Christian friend who came to see him soon afterward. His friend replied: "Why not you? God will use this in your life."

“When I heard his story, I thought I would never be able to say, "Why not me?" Now I can honestly say, "Use this experience for your honor and glory, Lord!" That was the starting point of God taking me off the road to self-destruction and placing me on His path of healing. It has now been more than a year, and I'm still in the healing process. So is my family. God has given me a wise Christian psychologist to complete my treatment. Also, our new church is filled with wonderful, loving people. Their unconditional love--in addition to the support of my family and those at Rapha--has been a major factor in teaching me to trust people again.

“Trust God's Plan”

“Forgiveness plays a major part in the healing process. The overwhelming waves of anger I felt did not begin to subside until I genuinely forgave those who hurt me. By an act of my will I forgave them and prayed for the Lord to work in their lives. Most important is the fact that I can now see the plans God has for me is for my good, not for calamity. By bringing me out of what seemed to be a hopeless situation, God has made me a bolder witness and given me a greater love for people. As a direct result of what we have gone through, my husband and I are now embarking on a ministry to hurting pastors and wives.

“The Bible says of Joseph that when he was falsely accused and thrown into an Egyptian prison, "the Lord was with him" (Gen. 39:20-21). And so He is with us when we face unjust circumstances today. May our testimony echo Joseph's words to those who caused his pain: "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives" (Gen. 50:20).⁴⁷

⁴⁷ 1996 Strang Communications/Charisma Magazine--All Rights Reserved
Visit Strang Communications Website for more resources <http://www.strang.com/mt/stories/mtma96hi.htm>

One can only imagine the pain, heartache and emotional suffering the Don Hicks family experienced. The beautiful conclusion is of their restoration. They remember the pain of the past but now they have given their lives to help others in similar circumstances.

Chapter Twenty Six-Rulebook for Terminations

“Forced termination may be brought on by the pastor’s own doing, or it may be because some folks just decided they no longer liked him. There are legitimate reasons why forced termination would be necessary, but they are few. One can observe churches that have forcefully terminated their pastor for reasons other than doctrinal heresy, or some type immoral behavior, and the church pays an extremely high price for doing so. Not only is it devastating to the pastor and his entire family, but it does great harm to the cohesion of the church. Forced terminations are very frequent in our day, which may have a great deal to do with the fact that more than 75% of churches are not really growing.⁴⁸

The author researched the area of what might constitute a valid forced termination or guidelines and found the following article entitled *"Is there a rulebook on forced termination?"* by Charles H. Chandler, Executive Director of Ministering to Ministers.

“Several years ago, a psychiatrist assisting with a recovery retreat was appalled as he heard the stories of terminated pastors. He worked extensively with corporations in "downsizing" and noted that none of them treated employees like the churches treated the retreat participants.

“He observed three "dynamic" patterns in all of their stories. First, each minister had been "blind-sided." A group of two or three persons, usually self-appointed, approached the minister without warning and said he should resign because of loss of effectiveness. They convinced the minister that the whole church shared their feeling. The "group" presented themselves as merely "messengers" and

⁴⁸ <http://www.trinityfulton.com/why-preachers-move-to-another-place>

insisted there was nothing personal about the request. The messengers told the minister they loved him and really hated to deliver the resignation request.

“Second, while the minister was in a state of shock after being "blindsided," the "group" dumped guilt on the minister. They said the resignation and related conversation must be kept very quiet. If word got out, it could split the church. And, the minister would not want to be known as one who caused a split church! Any negative effect from the minister's leaving was dumped directly on him as though a minister could just slip away and never be missed.

“Third, while the minister was still in no condition to make a decision of any kind, the group pressed for a decision. In most cases, a few weeks or a few months of severance was offered — provided the resignation was given immediately and the entire conversation kept quiet. The "messengers" added, "We have to know what you plan to do, because if you refuse to resign or if you talk to other church members, we will take away the severance and call a church business meeting to fire you. Then you will get nothing.

“Again, the minister was told there was nothing personal about the request. They had to do what was best for the church. No reasons were given for the forced termination except that the church needed new, more effective leadership.”

Chandler further states that he had worked with hundreds of ministers who have experienced forced termination. Chandler indicated that there must be a rulebook somewhere to be followed that suggested that a few disgruntled church members can follow the above listed rules and "kick the preacher out." However no one has found that in writing. Chandler further challenges us to look with him at some of the fallacies and undesirable ethics endorsed by this phantom rule book.

“Though the "messengers" present themselves as representing the vast majority of the membership, according to a survey conducted by *Leadership Magazine*, 43% of forced-out ministers said a "faction" pushed them out, and 71% of those stated that the "faction" numbered 10 persons or less. The self-appointed "messengers" often horde the inside information, because only 20% of the forced out ministers said the real reason for their leaving was made known to the entire congregation. “Frequently, the decision is made by an informal clique without authority. And, I am convinced the statement telling the minister to remain quiet or risk losing severance money translates, ‘we do not have the votes to remove the minister via a church vote.’ Ministers often remain quiet because they are afraid to take a chance on having nothing with which to house and feed their families. A significant number of ministers have no savings due to inadequate salaries. They often fall victim to the group’s argument that remaining quiet is taking the high road. Remaining quiet also creates dynamics that make it easy for the church to become a repeat-offender church.

“Chandler states that every time a small but vocal group is dissatisfied with the minister, the same old rulebook is consulted and another minister is forced out. Disclosing the secret may be painful, but it is the only way a church is able to stay or become healthy. As much consideration should be given to leaving a position as is given to accepting a position. A minister does not owe a self-appointed "faction" an immediate answer for his style of leadership and decision making policy. Time for prayer and processing with confidants or mentors is vital. Certainly, ministers have the right to take adequate time for healthy decision making. The bottom line, as I see it, in dealing with the forced termination process is clear-cut and well defined. Written or unwritten effective rules or dynamics are in place to force a minister out. However, this process is done in secret and without proper

notification or concern.⁴⁹

“Ministering to Ministers offers effective procedures and professional guidance to help ministers and churches move toward healthier decision-making. I know, without a doubt, achieving the latter is worth the time and effort it requires.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ministering to Ministers Foundation http://www.mtmfoundation.org/Servant/Vol_5_4/v5_4_06.htm

⁵⁰ *Ibid*

Chapter Twenty Seven- Recovery is a Must

The author read dozens of stories of involuntary and voluntary terminations, weeping through many of them, personally feeling the hurt, rejection, failure and even the physical pain that lends itself to these traumatic events. Even though the author's personal termination was self inflicted and voluntary he also identified with those dear men of God who have been the objects of secret meetings, criticisms, untruthful and unfair accusations, ganged up business meetings, open hostility and finally forced termination.

In all fairness the author must mention that pastors and full time staff can also be very arrogant, self-willed, egotistical, controlling, disrespectful, prideful and stubborn. They can refuse counsel, the wisdom and discernment of Godly laymen and help from those who love them and are committed to following them. What is the answer to the problems that are affecting so many God-called men and their families as well as churches? The answer is recovery.

A warning should be issued to the pastor who moves on to another church after termination and also to the church involved in terminating the pastor. Moving on will not solve the problem. The problems will remain with the church and the pastor alike. Both of their futures will be affected adversely. It is in the author's opinion that there is a lot of emotional baggage that is gathered and piled up and if not biblically dealt with will hang around for years to come. There must be recovery from these traumatic events. The author's experience points to a realization that recovery should go much deeper and further back than just the immediate church-pastor conflict. The conflict comes from various other symptoms and is only the result of deeply embedded problems of a life time. Earlier in this thesis the author mentioned the nature and nurture by which all of have been involved all of their lives. As a young pastor my peers encouraged me to stuff the problems that I

experienced or get above any church problem that I might encounter, and I did. Their advice would be to just go on, trust God and it will work out. When stress, unresolved conflicts, hurt and anger are allowed to build up, they do find a way out, and the author's life was no different. It piled up and up and up for thirty years until one day it came out like a volcano and it spewed out over everyone in my circle of life including family, friends and church members. The author had a major broken world experience.

The author has been in recovery for the past five years of his life and cannot begin to describe it. The words that come to mind are truth, brokenness, vulnerability, fulfillment, freedom, joy, realness, grace and love. There has been a release in life much like getting out of jail or some type of bondage. The last five years of life has become authentic. The author was weighted down with so much emotional and unhealthy spiritual baggage. There were many strongholds. He thanks God for freedom even though he struggles with those old thought patterns occasionally.

Chapter Twenty Eight- Recovery Involves Emotional Health

In the book, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Peter Scazzero says that our churches are in trouble. Scazzero argues that churches are filled with people who are:

- Unsure how to Biblically integrate anger, sadness, and other emotions.
- Defensive, incapable of revealing their weaknesses.
- Threatened by or intolerant of different viewpoints.
- Zealous about ministering at church but blind to their spouses' loneliness at home.
- So involved about "serving" that they fail to take care of themselves.
- Prone to withdraw from conflict rather than resolve it.

Sharing from New Life Fellowship's painful but liberating journey Scazzero reveals exactly how the truth can and does make people free- not just superficially, but deep down. After offering a new vision of discipleship and a revealing, guided self-assessment of your own spiritual and emotional maturity, *The Emotionally Healthy Church* outlines six principles that can make a profound difference in your church. "The principles are as follows:

- Looking beneath the surface of problems
- Breaking the power of past wounds, failures, sins and circumstances
- Living a life of brokenness and vulnerability
- Recognizing and honoring personal limitations and boundaries
- Embracing grief and loss
- Making incarnation your model to love others.⁵¹

⁵¹ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003

“Scazzero says that, “emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.”⁵²

Scazzero states you can very well see that congregations are filled with the saved and unsaved who struggle with the above said problems and you add to the mix a pastor who may be Biblically correct but emotionally wavering or unstable and the results will be big trouble when conflict comes. Also, if a pastor or congregation has experienced the same problems on previous occasions without healing then they become worse and worse and spiritual and emotional health becomes heavy baggage to deal with.

The author can imagine some of you saying right now that you don’t believe emotions have anything to do with your spiritual life. If you pattern your life after the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ you will soon realize that he was a man of emotions. Jesus shed tears (Luke 19:41), he was filled with joy (Luke 10:21), he grieved and felt sorrow (Mark 14:34; Luke 7:13), he got angry (Mark 3:5), he showed astonishment and wonder (Mark 6:6; Luke 7:9), and he felt distress (Mark 3:5; Luke 12:50). One certainly cannot deny that the Psalms of David are filled with emotions including depression, grief, hopelessness, despair, pain, helplessness, confusion, rejection, anger and bitterness.

Scazzero tells us “Whether we realize it or not deep beneath the surface of our lives are layers of childhood wounds, unconscious motivations and fears, defenses, and memories/experiences we have forgotten. It takes courage to ask, “What am I really feeling in this situation?” “What’s really going on here, especially when you are experiencing a “negative” emotion such as anger, shame, bitterness, hate, grief, jealousy, fear or depression?” The past is related to the present and the family we grew up has a lot to do with how we are put together on the inside. The Bible teaches that both blessings and curses

⁵² Ibid

can be passed on in families from generation to generation.⁵³

Scazzero states that living in brokenness and vulnerability means that, in all his relationships, carried with him is the profound awareness and humility that he not perfect, that he falls short, and not by a little. Being open and honest is a hard thing to do but very necessary in our relationships. It is very normal in ministry to bury our frustrations and pain. We fight to blame others when we don't get our way.⁵⁴

Knowing personal limits is another area of emotional concern. Self-care usually results when we know our limits. For over thirty years in ministry the author was available twenty-four hours a day for anyone, everyone and for anything. That proved to be a stumbling block and it resulted in misuse of time that affected me, family and ministry.

Scazzero states that we are to embrace grieving and loss. Grieving and loss is a major theme in scripture. Two-thirds of the Psalms are laments and songs of struggle over loss. As illustrated in the book of Lamentations and Job we are to reflect on loss, pain and grief. We love to run from pain but God wants us to embrace it and grieve over our losses. Time spent in embracing and grieving over our defeats and losses is very valuable in our spiritual and emotional health.

The first five principles of *The Emotionally Healthy Church* are foundational and indispensable to our ability to love well. From taking a deep look inside, to exploring our past history, to finding strength in our brokenness, to receiving our gift of limits to embracing grieving and loss, God's intention is to transform us in order that we might love well. Jesus made it clear that love is to be the mark of the church in the world. We are to love others as Jesus loved us. We are to enter another's world and be able to listen to their hurts, desires, pain and concerns. David Augsburger says that "Being heard is so close to

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.⁵⁵

As a pastor, or anyone for that matter, is it possible to listen to an angry person's side of the story without getting upset? Scazzero asks, do people share freely with us because they know we will listen well? Are we aware of how the family in which we were raised has influenced our present listening style? When not clear on something another person is saying, do we ask for clarification rather than attempting to fill in the blanks and make our own assumptions?

Scazzero says that in order to love others as Jesus did, we need to cross over into other people's worlds, enter life in their shoes, while holding on to our own world as well.

The author concludes that recovery means understanding our nature, our nurture, our hurts, defeats, pain, losses and realizing that it is all a part of the process of discipleship. Adversities can contribute to our spiritual and emotional health and help us to love people as Jesus loved them, to view people's weaknesses with grace and forgiveness because we understand our own. The author's process of recovery has greatly contributed to him looking at people much differently than previously. Rather than fleeing the pain of ministry he now is drawn with a greater love for people. The author will never now, as before, view people as instruments to help him build the church or ministry but as creations of God to love, build up and watch God be glorified through each one.

⁵⁵ David W. Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Hear and Be Heard; How to Hear and How to Be Heard in Equal Communication* (Scottsdale, Pa.; Herald, 1982), 12

Chapter Twenty Nine-Recovery Means Forgiveness

“Forgiveness breaks down walls, frees hearts, mends countries, restores families, and draws out the best. It can turn hate into tenderness and the desire to destroy into a passion to protect. It is more powerful than any weapon, government, or wealth. Nothing else can bring such profound healing. Forgiveness forms the foundation of our relationship with God and sustains our relationships with each other. When we unleash this gift, by receiving it in humble trust that God can actually free our heart and heal our relationships, then the miraculous can happen. This powerful gift has one purpose: to protect us from the insidious harm that comes from sin done against us.”⁵⁶

In recovery we need a way home. People tell us to get over it but sometimes we can't seem to get rid of the hurt that someone else has wielded in our direction. We just can't seem to let go. Then in the middle of our misery, Jesus taps us on the shoulder and says, “I have something for you that cost me everything to get for you. Here, it's a gift of my grace for you.” Written across the gift is one word: forgiveness. The attached card reads: “Take it, apply it, and trust me to make it real. I love you, Jesus.”⁵⁷

“Forgiveness brings alienated enemies together again, people who have hated each other and done whatever they can never to see or talk to each other again. When people forgive, their hearts are woven together in love.”⁵⁸

“Sin that is committed in self-affliction and sin done against us profoundly affects us. Sometimes it can distort life and cause us to make some incredibly unhealthy judgment.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and John Lynch, *TrueFaced* Colorado Springs, CO.: NavPress, 2004

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Ibid

Extending forgiveness is more easily said than actually accomplished. I can almost read your thoughts, “you just can’t imagine what they did to me and my family or I can’t believe that I did that.” You are right but I also cannot imagine pastors, former pastors, and full time church staff that are moving from place to place spiritually limping around carrying issues of unforgiveness. You live with that burden everyday and it sometimes consumes your thought life. God’s Word teaches that you can’t be right with God unless you are right with man. How do you deal with it? The author does not have all the answers but I do have some suggestions that I have learned along the way that will send your recovery in the right direction. These principles were explained in a very real way to me in a resource produced by *Leadership Catalyst* called *TrueFaced*. Below are the keys to forgiveness.

- **“Admit something happened.** We cannot forgive until we admit we have been sinned against. Sometimes we want to deny that we have been hurt. These are the offenses that nag at us and sometimes will surface automatically. I’m inviting you right now to stop hiding the sin that someone else has done against you. To forgive, we must admit what is already true.
- **“Secondly, forgive the consequences of the act done against you.** Sometimes the consequences are worse than the sin itself. Did this termination produce a loss of reputation, friends, finances, and some of your dreams? Sometimes recalling the offense is so painful that you need to write it down. Describe the incident and how it impacted your life. What were your feelings? Were you angry, felt shame, guilt, demeaned, devalued, manipulated? Did you lose your marriage, children, your friends? How did it change your outlook or attitude toward life? To do the above is no doubt very hard and exhausting work but it is critical.

Harboring enables the sin that was committed against us to define us. If you don't believe that then you need to read the story of Absalom, David's son in II Samuel 13. This unfortunate sin against you is no doubt buried deep in your heart. The work above prepares you to forgive.

- **“Tell God what happened to you.** Once we have gone through the whole offense and felt it again then we need to tell God about it. You might say, that's silly, doesn't He already know? The important issue is to pour your heart out to God, regardless of your emotions (screaming, hollering, crying or whatever) and tell Him again how you felt during this time of being sinned against. Tell Him everything that happened and your feelings. Tell Him how it has affected your life.
- **“Forgive the offender for your benefit.** The Bible tells us in Ephesians 4:32, *and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* In forgiveness there is a vertical transaction with God before there can be a horizontal transaction with others. We first of all go before God, forgive the offenders and the consequences of the offense. That's for our own sake. The danger of not going before God first might result in going to the offender in bitterness, resentment, anger with the spirit of getting even. We need to closely follow the teaching of Jesus recorded in Matthew 6:12-15. We are to place the act and the consequences in His hands. How do we know if we have forgiven someone? Only when we offer that person our love. When forgiveness only stays in our minds and doesn't sink into our hearts, it cannot be effective. A big burden will be lifted once we forgive both vertically and horizontally. It prepares us to love again.

- **“Forgive the offender when they repent, for their sake.** Forgiving the person before God releases us of judgment, bitterness, and resentment toward our offender. When we forgive our heart heals and we are ready to forgive the one who hurt us. Of course, the one who sinned against us must repent for his or her own sake in order to be healed. Upon the other person’s repentance, we can forgive. Our goal should not be just to resolve the conflict but to restore the relationship. Forgiving prepares the way for the relationship to be restored. The amazing fact is that when we allow God to heal us from being sinned against, we get to turn around and help those who have sinned against us to find healing for their sin.
- **“Distinguish between forgiving and trusting your offender.** Forgiveness does not mean that we have to trust the person automatically. They are two separate issues. Hopefully, as a result of forgiveness you will deal very positively with restoring mutual trust.
- **“Lastly, seek reconciliation, not just conflict resolution.** Reconciliation and forgiveness are also two separate issues. Only when you are willing to say, “Will you forgive me because I did_____?” will we be able to create the opportunity for people to forgive us and sometimes even come back into heart relationship with us. Sometimes we are over anxious to fix conflicts to the point of forcing them, however that does not work. People don’t get fixed when they are forced to do so. Grace always invites rather than demand reconciliation. An apology may make the issue go away for the present time, but it won’t heal the relationship. Forgiveness always seeks reconciliation. Jesus paid with His life to bring

reconciliation.”⁶⁰

A distinguished draftsman, engineer, artist, and thinker, Leonardo de Vinci is one of the outstanding intellects of history. Just before he started painting *The Last Supper*, he had a violent quarrel with a fellow painter. Enraged and bitter, Leonardo determined to paint the face of his enemy, the other artist, as the face of Judas and thus take out his revenge by sending this man down in infamy. Judas was one of the first faces he painted, and everyone recognized the face of the painter with whom Leonardo had quarreled.

But when Leonardo came to paint the face of Christ, he could make no progress. Something was holding him back, frustrating his best efforts. Eventually, he came to the conclusion that the thing checking and frustrating him was that he had painted his enemy as Judas. He decided to paint out the face of Judas and start fresh on the face of Jesus. He did, and this time with the success which the ages have acclaimed.⁶¹

De Vinci had learned that you cannot paint the features of Christ into our own lives and paint another's face with hatred and enmity—a point well made.

⁶⁰ Ibid

⁶¹ C.E. MacCartney, as cited by Paul Lee Tan, ed., *Encyclopedia: Signs of the Times* (Rockville, MDd.: Assurance Publishers, 197), p. 457

Chapter Thirty-Recovery Means Maturity

From our study of the Church in Corinth the local Body of Christ can sometimes be very non-Christ like in its actions. Human beings are not perfect therefore, churches are not perfect. All kinds of sins can be practiced within the framework of the church. Sometimes sin is hidden and at other times it is open for everyone to see. Both the pastor and the congregation are subject to making mistakes, experiencing failure, exhibiting pride and falling into sin. Problems and adversities within the church will never cease but there is a solution to minimizing the problems. That is spiritual maturity. Churches no doubt can mature as a body as well as the pastor.

For a young pastor spiritual maturity will take years and will include failure, disappointments, humiliation, bad judgment calls and the feelings of being alone. That's the process and we all will go through it in some degree. The author is a strong advocate of every pastor having a strong, godly, mentor who is much older, one who has experienced ministry and felt the pain, rejection, loneliness, failure and the stress that is related to being a pastor trying to balance ministry and family. The author never had a mentor and paid a dear price. The pastor is the key because as he matures the church also will likely mature. A big contributing factor of the above is **time** and **patience** the two attributes that young pastors and churches seem NOT to have. Research indicates that most pastors cannot begin to be the real trusted spiritual leader unless he is at the church for a minimum of five years. The sad fact is that most forced terminations occur at three years or less.

Leadership Catalyst tells us that life in the room of Grace teaches us to wait for God's exaltation rather than pursue position or power. The timing is perfect. For one thing, our dreams are being clarified as our sin is being resolved, our wounds are being healed, and

we are in the process of maturing.⁶² In I Peter 5:5, 6 the word says, *Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.*

Anytime that we are cornered by shame, blame and anger we stop maturing. When wounds are festering, relationships lacking, and we are manipulating to gain control then maturing ceases. Without humility we miss the point of the Christian life. Humility believes that I can trust God to teach, direct, and protect me.⁶³ The Kingdom of God is a place where God uses healing and maturing people to bring His grace to hopeless and hurting people. The use of your gifts, passion, and healed heart is to show the glory of Jesus, who has loved you beyond telling from the beginning of time.⁶⁴

Any change that takes place in us comes from maturing into the person we already are, much like a caterpillar matures into a butterfly. Maturity is evident when we have learned how to live with a community of people who trust God and others with what is true about them. We and the others in this community have taken off our masks and are learning to walk in freedom but we still remember the pain of letting go of our masks and the scars we bear from where the glue tore our skin. We daily depend upon God and His power and resources. We live in daily repentance so that we can forgive others and be forgiven.

Maturity does not come overnight, it is a lifelong process. God uses many different people and circumstances in the process. Much of the process comes with the pain from relationships turned bad, failure and bad decisions as well as our handling of success.

Maturity must be surrounded in the power of love, grace and truth. As we deal with

⁶² Bill Thrall, Bruce McNicol, and John Lynch, *TrueFaced* Colorado Springs, CO.: NavPress, 2004

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Ibid

our sin and emotional baggage we must be immersed in the person and work of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Father. From the time that the author was saved in August of 1970 he became familiar with what preachers said was the “grace of God.” The author preached what he thought was the grace of God for years relating it mostly to salvation but it was not until he met Dr. Johnny Hunt and the people of First Baptist Church of Woodstock Georgia did he really understand what the grace of God was all about. From them he became a recipient of that grace and he cannot begin to tell you how it made such a difference in his life. It was that grace that was foundational at the beginning of his recovery. Also during that time Dr. Jerry Falwell who had been his friend since 1971 made contact encouraging him and his family in the spirit of Grace.

One of the greatest gifts we can offer another person is a safe place to fail.⁶⁵ If we can challenge pastors and people alike not to hide but to be real and honest about themselves, maturity can be processed. It is a place where they can disclose the sin in them as well as the sin that has been done against them.

As we mature we become more Christ-centered. Our past wounds no longer identify us, and we experience freedom in our new identity. We no longer live under the control of sin. We measure maturity by how we live with others who are maturing. Mature Christians delight in God’s exaltation of others. We do not fear other’ strengths; we understand them, submit to them, and benefit from them. The mature influence others, not so much out of the power of their position, but out of their person. We make decisions primarily for others and we are willing to suffer so that others might mature. The mature are always learning, studying, and inviting others to speak into our lives and meet our needs.⁶⁶

The grace of God is perfected in our imperfection. Being in a church with grace

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Dr. J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader* Colorado Springs, Co.: NavPress, 1988).

does not mean that we will not sin. In the church with grace we are protected by those who love us by people we have learned to trust with the deepest part of our pain, ugliness, fear and failure.

God is very involved in our lives, our dreams, our hopes, and our relationships. We are comforted by His words in Jeremiah 29:11-13, *for I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.*

God's ultimate goal is maturing us into what He says we are, and then releasing us into the dreams he designed for us before the world began.⁶⁷ Maturity is a priority in the process of recovery.

⁶⁷ Ibid

Chapter Thirty One-Recovery Involves Ministry “Within”

Along the pathway of voluntary and involuntary forced terminations are many broken relationships. Those to whom you thought were your friends dropped you like a hot coal never to make contact with you again. It became a mass exodus and your hurt became even deeper. Circumstances around the termination were ugly enough but the situation grew even worse as rumors spread to untruths, unjust criticisms, and you were judged to destruction. For many, life is over, bitterness sets in and the rest of life is spent away from your calling, love and passion. However I don't think that is God's choice in your life. The pathway of recovery must go through the inner life of the broken world person. In the author's situation he had already stood before his church, confessed and repented of his wrong doing. One element that maximized the fallout for him was that he pastored near his hometown where he had grown up, went to high school and was the senior pastor of his church for 26 years. It had a ripple effect. When his recovery was underway he sat down and wrote personal letters to over 150 people who were not members of his church. That number included pastor friends, missionaries, local doctors, businessmen all who knew him well. He confessed to them what he had done and how sorry he was for doing it. He told them that he had repented of his wrongdoing and was presently in recovery. He asked for their forgiveness. From those letters came sweet notes of grace and forgiveness. He possesses them to this day and will cherish them for the rest of his life.

In recovery the author believes that we must come to the point of our lives that involves a ministry of the inner life called prayer. One might wonder what part that might have in recovery. Prayer is a very important and necessary part of your recovery. For five years the author has been haunted by the question in his mind, *what value do I have to anyone any longer?* The author thinks that is planted there by Satan who maximizes your sin to such a high degree telling you that now all you can be is a second class Christian

citizen. The sad fact is that most who have experienced forced terminations have believed his lie. God's Word says in Job 42:10-11, *and the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in is house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money and every one a piece of gold.* Now you do remember the awful counsel of the friends of Job, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zopher. With friends like that, who needs enemies?

The author was reminded of the above as he read Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost to His Highest*, on June 20. There is a conditional promise here for us who are in recovery. Our recovery comes as we pray for our friends. Listen to what Chambers says,

"The Lord restored Job's losses *when he prayed for his friends.*" As a saved soul, the real business of your life is intercessory prayer. Whatever circumstances God may place you in, always pray immediately that His atonement may be recognized and as fully understood in the lives of others as it has been in yours. Pray for your friends *now*, and pray for those with whom you come in contact *now*.⁶⁸

The author agrees that some friends of ours seem like enemies but they are not. You may be separated from them geographically so far that you may never lay eyes on them again but your prayers for them can reach them and change them. God says that He will bring change if you pray for your friends. Recently, the Lord brought to the author's mind someone who had previously admitted to his face that he could not stand me and that I was a no good preacher who was a fake. Quite frankly I did not care if I ever laid eyes on him

⁶⁸ Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost to His Highest*, June 20 Grand Rapids, MI. Oswald Chambers Publications, 1992

again but the Holy Spirit brought him to my mind and seemed to ask me what I was going to do about him. My answer was, Lord, I am going to pray for him. Since that day I have prayed for him repeatedly asking God to bless him and use him for His glory. He may continue to dislike me for the rest of his life but I am NOT going to dislike him. The author experienced that it is very difficult to dislike someone that you are praying for. You may not trust them but you need to love them and pray for them as Christ does.

Therefore in recovery we are to take the time to pray for those friends who along the way dropped by the wayside. Your prayer for them will make the difference just like Job's prayer for his friends made a difference.

Chapter Thirty Two-Recovery Means Rest, Sabbath and Worship

All pastors need a real Sabbath meaning a full day of rest. If God rested from His creation work, why aren't we willing to rest for a day? The author realizes that there should be a reflection time in our lives where we look backward, upward and forward. It is a personal worship time very much needed by all of us.

Even though the author had a daily time with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer he failed to spend quality time in solitude, silence, listening, prayer, worship and intercession. He was never able to express his true feelings, thoughts and impressions. He was busy and stressed out for over thirty years. He desperately needed a weekly Sabbath of rest, reflection and personal time. His time always belonged to someone else.

Busy, exhaustion, frustration and overload are a way of life for the normal pastor. That was exactly the author's situation having been a senior pastor for more than thirty years. He needed to add margin to his life but was unaware of what it was.

During those more than thirty years of pastoral ministry he no lived a margin-less life, a life of overload that resulted in pain and spiritual burnout. Margin has challenged me to step back and review my life and re-evaluate my priorities.

Dr. Richard Swenson in his book, *Margin*, brought attention the fact that he had been pretty experienced in dealing with people with spiritual as well as medical problems. Swenson was not only a medical doctor but a committed Christian. His views certainly brought balance in evaluation of my own life.

"Margin says Dr. Swenson is the space that once existed between us and our limits. It is something held in reserve for continence in unanticipated situations. In chapter one he says that margin is having breath left at the top of the staircase, money left at the end of the month and sanity left at the end of adolescence. Swenson states that the book is dedicated to exposing and correcting the specific kind of pain that comes from margin-less living. He

adds that most of us do not yet know what margin is and therefore we are clueless about what margin-less is.”⁶⁹

As the author read the book all he could think of was time management, balancing life between the best things and the good things and prioritizing what is most important.

“Margin’s simple outline consists of the symptom (pain), diagnosis (overload), prescription (margin) and prognosis (health).”⁷⁰

“Our culture has changed with progress in almost every area of our lives. Almost overnight an entire wave of social, technological and economic experience has descended upon us. This progress is unparalleled in history. It cannot be compared to any other part of history. It has resulted in so many overloads that we have reached our limits and therefore pain is occurring, stress develops and our lives are falling apart emotionally. We are experiencing brokenness and burnout. We have gone beyond our limit and saturation point. We have lived with the idea that one more added thing will not hurt. The answer to this problem is that we are to choose carefully where our involvement should come. The prescription and main teaching of this book is to exercise margin. Margin should be exercised in emotional energy, physical energy, time and finances. Truly, we are overstressed, overcommitted, overworked, overspent and under exercised.”⁷¹

In restoring margin to emotional energy, Dr. Swenson recommends cultivating social supports, get a pet, reconcile relationships, serve one another, rest, laugh, cry, envision a better future, offer thanks, grant grace, be rich in faith, hold forth hope and above all love.

⁶⁹ Richard A. Swenson, *Margin* Colorado Springs, CO. NavPress, 2004

⁷⁰ Ibid

⁷¹ Ibid

“In restoring margin to physical energy he discusses the importance of rest and sleep, nutrition and exercise.

In the margin of time he deals with the problem relating to interruptions, junk mail, time emphasize and desperation. He says that everyone needs personal time, family time, sharing time and God time. In restoring time boundaries he suggests that we should expect the unexpected however we are to learn to say no, turn off the television, prune our activities, use a separate time for technology and live a contented life of simplicity. In the process we are to thank God, do the right things, enjoy, anticipate, relish memories and be available. Putting that quite simply, it means to slow down.

In dealing with finances he tells us that wealth is the blessing of a generous God but also the fast track to spiritual ruin. We care to live within our means using discipline to decrease spending, discard credit cards, increase savings, make a budget, resist impulses and put God first.

The last part of the book deals with the results of building margin into our lives, namely health, measured in continual balance, rest and relationships.

Pain surrounds us all. Much of our pain comes from progress and blatant disregard for our need of margin and much of this pain, far too much is because of neglected and broken relationships. It is difficult to be healthy in a society where relational, emotional and spiritual sickness is at epidemic levels.

When life is over and we receive our report card, Peterson says there will be three lines. How did you relate to God, how did we relate to ourselves and how did we relate to others?”⁷²

⁷² Ibid

Pastors are not indispensable. Pastors must realize that a rested, prepared man is a tool for God to use. They must be reminded that they are the leader and people will model their lives after them. If the pastors are stressed out and frustrated the people will be too.

A good night's sleep, eating well and exercising are margins that will no doubt give you a more fulfilled life and perhaps a longer life. Dr. Swenson has been very accurate in relating to us the unimportant things that we do to steal our time. He lists junk mail, too much television, and I could add "my face book" or "my space." Computers are a blessing but also could be a curse to you in marginal living. Dr. Swenson also explores margin-less finances as another curse to our life."⁷³

"Jesus provided us with a wonderful pattern for "margin." He modeled spontaneity of service. Wherever he went, He had time for the person in front of Him. I can't remember one time in scripture where he told a needy person to take a number or make an appointment.

When pastors don't make room for margins, the person in front of them is an obstacle we have to get around to get to our next appointment. But what if the person in front of us is the exact expression of ministry God planned for us next? Jesus provided a model of caring for the need of the person in front of you."⁷⁴

From the author's research his suggestions to pastors would be to not answer his phone on his day off and during meal times. If it is an emergency they will find him. Secondly, he is to exercise daily, with a good night sleep and eat nutritionally well. He needs to learn how to say no and establish boundaries. More than ever he needs to relate to God relationally. He should take time and give a full day (Sabbath) to God in silence,

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid

solitude, intercession and worship. He should desire to be closer to God, closer to his wife and closer to his family. He should have a desire to live a life of margin.

Included in our recovery should be rest, a Sabbath and personal worship.

Chapter Thirty Three-Recovery Means Accountability

The author believes that one of the great dangers of a pastors' life is when he is accountable to no one. The author confesses that he was a senior pastor for over thirty years and cannot remember being accountable to any one person or group. The author is referring to his personal life and the struggles that he faced in family, finances, moral and ethical behavior.

Accountability is a missing link today in ministry. A pastor would be lying if he believed that the struggles he faces on the inside can be handled by him alone. Sometimes our struggles overtake us and we become helpless. One of the greatest reasons pastors get into trouble is that they don't have to answer to anyone for their lives. If investigated, you will find that very few pastors have built accountability into their Christian lifestyle. Pastors fail morally, spiritually, relationally and financially, not because they don't want to succeed, but because they have blind spots and weak spots which they surmise they can handle on their own. There is no one there to ask the hard questions of how, why, what and who?

Some men have spectacular failures where in a moment of passion they abruptly burst into flames, crash and burn. But the more common way men get into trouble evolves from hundreds of tiny decisions, decisions which go undetected, that slowly, like water tapping on a rock, wear down a man's character.⁷⁵

The purpose of accountability is nothing less than to each day become more Christ-like in all our ways and ever more intimate with Him. Everybody talks about accountability and believes that it is important but very few participate or for that matter knows how. Has anyone ever asked you to hold them accountable for an area of their life? Have you ever

⁷⁵ Patrick Morley, *The Man in the Mirror* Grand Rapids, Mi. Zondervan, 1989

asked anyone to hold you accountable in an area of your life? ⁷⁶

At age 57 I sat regularly in a circle with my first accountability team, transparent, open, making myself available to the wisdom, encouragement and hard questions of five godly men. They knew my story and nothing was hidden. They influenced me with their attitudes of grace. I owe a great deal of gratitude to these men for their investment into my life. Troy Haas, Jim Law, Marty Benton, Pat Patrick and Dennis Kozakoff will be my close friends for the rest of my life. I can add to that list Randy Sharp and James Eubanks who also know my story and my heart and I would be willing to share with them any struggle or need in my life. I have sat with Randy and James dozens of times sharing the most innermost parts of my heart and soul. I consider them on my accountability team. Since moving to Lynchburg the Lord has given me two committed Christian men who know my story and have encouraged me more than they will ever realize. I meet with these guys every week. I am grateful for Mike Pogue and Chuck Donneberg, men who I trust confidentially with all the issues of my heart. They have had a desire to invest in my life and have done so, willingly.

There are so many good scriptures that encourage accountability. In Galatians 6:1-2 *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* Philippians 2: 4 tells us, *each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, *two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!* Proverbs 27:6 says,

⁷⁶ Ibid

the kisses of an enemy may be profuse, but faithful are the wounds of a friend. Lastly, Proverbs 27:17 says, *As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

Most of the time when men get together they like to fellowship and talk about news, sports and weather which are visible areas of our lives, however, accountability gets beneath the surface into areas such as the unexamined life, the secret thought life, purposes and priorities of life as well as relationship with the Lord and with the family. It investigates the use of time and money, moral and ethical behavior, pride, fear, anger, problems, suffering and discouragement. The author wishes that he had been able to bear his heart with someone over the past years. You can't second guess life but I highly suspect that things might have been different in my situation.

The author suggests that picking accountability partners or teams is very crucial because of confidential issues. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 13:20, *he who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*" All areas should be covered including moral, spiritual, financial and relational. Also men should not have accountability relationships with any women other than their wives. Unless honestly and confidentiality is exercised accountability will not work.⁷⁷

In Bible College or Seminary you can teach Biblical facts, principles and how to preach but when a young pastor gets on the field as a pastor, associate pastor or music director he needs instruction on how to deal with the attitudes of divisive lay leadership and clergy killers. From the classroom you can't teach what it feels like to be criticized, slandered and the lonely feelings of rejection that accompanies those situations. That's why a young pastor needs someone to encourage and help him in those circumstances which are

⁷⁷ Ibid

very normal in pastoral ministry. The sad fact is that many young men get discouraged, quit and throw in the towel. That's why the author advocates mentorship from an older experienced pastor. He believes that a lot of forced terminations would be prevented if proper mentorship was exercised. A mentoring ministry can certainly be classified as a part of accountability.

Bob Biehl in his book, *Mentoring*, defines mentoring as a lifelong relationship, in which a mentor helps a protégé reach her or his God-given potential. He says mentoring is more “how can I help you?” than “what should I teach you?” The mentoring relationship becomes significant the moment a person with experience asks a less experienced person the mentoring questions. One question is *what are your priorities?* Priorities can be goals or problems. They can be personal or professional. The second mentoring question is *how can I help?* As a mentor, you may need to help your protégé decide on a course of action or simply provide resources to carry it out.⁷⁸

“Mentors are those who have gone before us on the mountain of life, but who pause and extend a hand to help us along the way, or who extend a safety line of love and affirmation that may keep us from falling off the mountain. The mentoring relationship is formed when the mentor turns to the protégé and says, I love you, and, I believe in you, and I want to help you succeed. I want to make my experience and resources available to help you in any way I can to become all that God wants you to be.”

Why is mentoring so important? It is the relational glue that can bond our

⁷⁸ Bobb Biehl *Mentoring: Confidence in Finding a Mentor and Becoming One*, Nashville, Tn. Broadman & Holman, 1996

generation to the previous and the next. It is the bridge that will connect, strengthen, and stabilize future generations of Christians in an increasingly complex and threatening world.⁷⁹

Mentoring is in short supply today. Someone has said that we are only one generation from becoming a heathen nation and I would say that we are on our way. The next generation of leaders is dependent upon our mentoring today. The author would promote a “Department of Mentoring” within the Seminary made up of guys in their fifties or sixties who have had lots of experience on the field in pastoral ministry. It would be a great help in preventing forced terminations.

⁷⁹ Ibid

Chapter Thirty Four-Recovery Means Restoration

Restoration has real meaning for the author because he is in the center of that process. He has thought and reflected about personal restoration for hours and hours. He has read practically everything that any well known Christian author has had to say about it and has researched what the real meaning of Biblical restoration involves. I

The author has been in recovery for almost five years.

In matters of forced terminations restoration usually centers mostly around the issues of moral or ethical misbehavior.

Pastoral dropout because of moral failure is becoming widespread and public knowledge. “What has the Christian community done with fallen leaders? In many situations, the process seems to be:

- Relegate the former minister to the secular scene because he has "lost his calling."
- Keep the pastor on a shelf and forever limit or restrain their gifts, calling and leadership because of his moral failure.
- Drop them like a hot potato because they have embarrassed the body of Christ and have emotionally wounded you.
- Ignore them and hope they move away because you don't know how to deal with their restoration and rebuilding OR you're not sure you want to!⁸⁰

There are a lot of opinions concerning restoration but what's important is what God has to say about it. Very clearly Galatians 6:1 says, *brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* The Greek word for restore means “to mend.” It is interesting to note that there are no disclaimers here and that the types of sin are not specified. It doesn't say “restore unless the person has sinned sexually” or “restore to

⁸⁰ <http://win-edge.com/Restoration.shtml> Winning Edge Ministries

fellowship and not leadership.” It simply tells us to restore. Inherent in the word *restore* is the idea of bringing back to the original state.⁸¹

The author believes that forgiveness is instantaneous in repentance and grace can be issued and accepted immediately, however, restoration is a process and sometimes a very long process and is never declared by one self but by and through others.

As stated restoration is a process, not an instantaneous event. Before an old chair can be restored, it is stripped down to the bare wood. Before a Christian leader is able to be restored, he or she must in repentance be “stripped” down to the bare person and then in humility, be restored, by the Spirit of God working through others. An effective restoration process must deal not only with the ruin of the disaster, but also with the internal, preexisting weaknesses that caused it. The foundation for restoration is reconciliation with God. During the process of true restoration the heart of the person being restored is open to God’s discipline, grace and mercy and to the direction from the Spiritual Care team. One indication of whether a person is ready for restoration is his or her humility and lack of self-promotion. A truly repentant person knows that restoration must always be declared complete by the brethren, never by a fallen sinner. Those who have walked closely beside the restoree for an extended period of time are in the best position to determine if or when a return to ministry is appropriate.⁸²

The driving force must be complete restoration to a right relationship with the Lord. It is indeed a time of starting over, a time of following God to a renewed relationship. Some will argue that forgiveness is different from restoration and that they are not advocating

⁸¹ Earl and Sandy Wilson, Paul and Virginia Friesen, Larry and Nancy Paulson, *Restoring the Fallen* Downers Grove, Ill. InterVarsity Press, 1997

⁸² Ibid

withholding forgiveness, only restoration. The author fails to see the scriptural basis for separating the two.

The author wrote to a pastor friend back in 2004 asking his forgiveness for his self-inflicted sin. He graciously forgave me but in his letter he stated the following: “I believe the scriptures teach restoration to service and in this I believe there is a future ministry for you. But by restoration of service I do not believe you should seek restoration to a pastoral leadership position because of the character qualities that are required as stated in I Timothy 3. I would assume you have already settled that issue.”⁸³ Now there are good men who stand on both sides of the fence relating to full restoration. It is a very sensitive area and one to be handled very carefully. We must investigate God’s word in scriptures relating to restoration. Reading something into God’s Word that is not there is certainly wrong to do.

We find in Luke 15:11-32 a beautiful story of full restoration. It is the story of the prodigal son who left his father taking his part of the inheritance to a far country spending it in riotous living. When the money ran out he “came to his senses.” He was destitute and began to reflect back to his home situation realizing that his father’s hired servants had it better than him and he had forfeited the position of son ship. The story tells how his father was looking down the road as he no doubt continually did and seeing his son ran and embraced the boy and ordered a banquet to be thrown in his honor. Much to the displeasure of the older son, the younger son was restored to full son ship, with all the privileges of a son. It is important to see the difference between the son being restored to full son ship and being just forgiven of his sin. He had lost a lot however his position was restored. In this

⁸³ Letter to T.A. Powell from Pastor. Spring, 2004

passage of scripture the Lord is certainly teaching the principle of full restoration.⁸⁴

In all four gospels we have the story of Peter's denial of the Lord (Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:56-62; and John 18:16-18, 25-27). Peter denied three times that he knew Jesus, but then went out repented and wept bitterly, however, the damage was done. It seems to me that under those circumstances Peter's career was over. It was a significant moral failure, of lying, deceiving and denying. It was the Lord who forgave and restored Peter fully. He used him to preach that mighty sermon at Pentecost where three thousand souls were saved.⁸⁵

Let us return to that scene on the beach recorded in John 21. Three important things happened that morning on the beach. First, Jesus came to Peter in his world. The rebuilders went to the broken-world person knowing that perhaps, that Peter was too wounded to take the initiative himself. Second, Jesus gave Peter a chance to replace his earlier three denials with three honest attempts at a reaffirmation of his love for the Lord. And third, Jesus reissued His call. When the beach scene was over, there were no longer any second-class citizens in the community of Jesus.⁸⁶

How about David, the adulterer and murderer? There is no greater example of full restoration in the Bible than that of David's full restoration. Certainly you find the result of his sin through the turmoil in his family and nation but his full leadership was not eliminated. We are not talking about consequences but restoration. We all experience the consequences of our sin. Hardly a day ever passes without me reflecting on the

⁸⁴ Ibid

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Gordon MacDonald, *Rebuilding your Broken World*, Nashville, Tn. Thomas Nelson, 1988

consequences of my sin. David experienced sin's consequences but he was not removed from the position of king. God did not remove from the shelves the Psalms that David had written before his sin and he even wrote more after his sin. David's Psalms describing the process of repentance and restoration are some of the most gripping portions of scripture. Also, David's armies were victorious in battle when David was leading them, after his sin. (2 Samuel 12:29-31), and we must remember that when David's life was over his epitaph from God was "David, a man after God's own heart" (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

Since there do not appear to be any scripture passages that specifically prohibit fallen leaders from being fully restored to ministry, and since some examples of fallen leaders in scripture are examples of restoration, we must be very hesitant to forbid full restoration of leaders to appropriate ministry after discipline and after restoration to God and others.⁸⁷

We must also remember that the disciples ran when Jesus was arrested and awaited execution. Did Jesus label them as traitors? No, He restored all of them, except Judas, and empowered them for full leadership. How can we do any less for the repentant sinner in our midst?

Sometimes the church labels people who have fallen into sin and sad to say the label sticks. I'm glad Jesus referred to people as people. Nowhere is it recorded in scripture that Jesus called Peter a coward or Mary Magdalene a prostitute. We often just write people off, done, finished, no longer good for any service.

It is the author's belief that a Pastor who has sinned and repented, spent time in

⁸⁷ Ibid

recovery, made things right with whoever is involved, is a man of God who not only can be fully restored but can be used like he has never been used. A broken world person looks out of different eyes and has a different heart for ministry than he had before. He is more real and authentic than he has ever been.

It is the responsibility of the Body of Christ to offer restorative grace. If not, broken worlds cannot be rebuilt. Restorative grace is a gift that says there is life after failure.⁸⁸

Phil 1:6 says, *being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

⁸⁸ Ibid

Chapter Thirty Five-Recovery In Rebuilding

In rebuilding lives out of the ugly mess of forced terminations the power of the past must be broken. Living in brokenness and vulnerability means that in all my relationships, I carry with me the profound awareness and humility that I'm not perfect, that I fall short, and not by a little.

As the author stated earlier, Archibald Hart, a Christian counselor from the Hart Institute said, "I don't know of any other vocation that is more hazardous than that of a pastor."⁸⁹ A lot of pain, hurt and heartache is associated with the ministry. A person would be less than smart to want to be in fulltime pastoral ministry without being called or gifted as a pastor teacher. The difficulties never get easier regardless of the years you spend there.

A pastor, realizing his call must be mindful of the fact that God is making him into a vessel for His honor and glory and in doing so must experience the refining fire from the Master. The ancients referred to it as the "dark night of the soul." Just as a physical wall stops us from moving ahead, God sometimes stops us in our spiritual journey through a spiritual wall in order to radically transform our character. Often we are brought to the wall by circumstances and crises beyond our control.⁹⁰

Regardless of how we get there, every follower of Jesus at some point will confront the Wall. Failure to understand and surrender to God's working in us at the wall often results in great long-term pain, on-going immaturity and confusion. Receiving the gift of

⁸⁹ Ibid

⁹⁰ Peter and Geri Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Workbook* Elmhurst, N.Y. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, 2008

God in the Wall, however, transforms our lives forever.⁹¹

For most of us, the Wall appears through a crisis that turns our world upside down. It comes, perhaps through a divorce, a job loss, the death of a close friend or family member, a cancer diagnosis, a disillusioning church experience, a betrayal, a shattered dream, a wayward child, a car accident, an inability to get pregnant, a deep desire to marry that remains unfulfilled, a spiritual dryness or a loss of joy in our relationship with God. We question ourselves, God and the church. We discover for the first time that our faith does not appear to “work.” We have more questions than answers as the very foundation of our faith feels like it is on the line. We don’t know where God is, what he is doing, where He is going, how is getting us there, or when this will be over. It, the Wall, is not simply a one-time event that we pass through and get beyond. It appears to be something we return to as part of our ongoing relationship with God. When God takes us through the Wall we are changed.⁹² Isn’t that what God is after in usChange?

Listen to the statements of Christians and leaders of past and present generations:

A W Tozer

“It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He’s hurt him deeply.” (Roots of Righteousness, Chapter 39)

Calvin Miller

Hurt is the essential ingredient of ultimate Christ-likeness. (Quoted in Christianity Today, July 2007, p41)

Larry Crabb

Brokenness isn't so much about how bad you've been hurt but how you've sinned in handling

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Ibid

it. (Christianity Today, A Shrink Gets Stretched, May 1, 2003)

Shattered dreams are never random. They are always a piece of a piece in a larger story. The Holy Spirit uses the pain of shattered dreams to help us discover our desire for God, to help us begin dreaming the highest dream. They are ordained opportunities for the Spirit to first awaken, then to satisfy our highest dream. (Shattered Dreams, 2001)

Alfred Monod

“And if among the trials that you are called to bear, there is one that seems, I do not say heavier than the others, but more compromising to your ministry, and likely to ruin forever the hopes of your holy mission, if outward temptations be added to these coming from within, if all seems assailed, body, mind, spirit, if all seems lost without remedy, well, accept this trial, shall I say, or this assemblage of trials, in a peculiar feeling of submission, hope and gratitude, as a trial in which the Lord will cause you to find a new mission. Hail it as the beginning of a ministry of weakness and bitterness... which He will cause to abound in more living fruit than your ministry of strength and joy in days gone by ever yielded.” (Adolph Monod, Farewell, quoted by Amy Carmichael in, Learning Of God, (London: SPCK, 1983), 52.)

Alan Redpath

“When God wants to do an impossible task, he takes an impossible person and crushes him.” (Quoted by Gary Preston, Character Forged from Conflict: Staying Connected to God During Controversy. The pastor's soul series, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1999)

Bruce Wilkinson

“Are you praying for God’s superabundant blessings and pleading that He will make you more like His Son? If so, then you are asking for the shears.” (Secrets of the Vine, 60.)

Charles Swindoll

“Someone put it this way, ‘Whoever desires to walk with God, walks right into the crucible.’ All who choose godliness live in a crucible. The tests will come.” (Moses, Great Lives from God’s Word, 285.)

"Being stripped of all substitutes is the most painful experience on earth .” (David , p70)

Elisabeth Elliot

“The surrender of our heart’s deepest longing is perhaps as close as we come to an understanding of the cross... our own experience of crucifixion, though immeasurably less

than our Saviour's nonetheless furnishes us with a chance to begin to know Him in the fellowship of His suffering. In every form of our own suffering, He calls us into that fellowship." (Elisabeth Elliot, *Quest For Love*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1996), 182.)

George MacDonald

"No words can express how much our world 'owes' to sorrow. Most of the Psalms were conceived in a wilderness. Most of the New Testament was written in a prison. The greatest words of God's Scriptures have all passed through great trials. The greatest prophets have "learned in suffering what they wrote in their books." So take comfort afflicted Christian! When our God is about to make use of a person, He allows them to go through a crucible of fire."

Helen Keller

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through the experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved." (Quoted in *Leadership*, Vol. 17, no. 4.)

Oswald Chambers

"God can never make us wine if we object to the fingers He uses to crush us with. If God would only use His own fingers, and make me broken bread and poured-out wine in a special way! But when He uses someone whom we dislike, or some set of circumstances to which we said we would never submit, and makes those the crushers, we object. We must never choose the scene of our own martyrdom. If ever we are going to be made into wine, we will have to be crushed; you cannot drink grapes. Grapes become wine only when they have been squeezed." (Chambers, O. (1993, c1935). *My utmost for his highest : Selections for the year* (September 30). Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers.)

"No-one enters into the experience of entire sanctification without going through a 'white funeral' -- the burial of the old life. If there has never been this crisis of death, sanctification is nothing more than a vision... Have you come to your last days really? You have come to them often in sentiment, but have you come to them really?... We skirt around the cemetery and all the time refuse to go to death... Have you had your 'white funeral', or are you sacredly playing the fool with your soul? Is there a place in your life marked as the last day, a place to which the memory goes back with a chastened and extraordinary grateful remembrance--'yes, it was then, at that 'white funeral' that I made an agreement with God." (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, January 15, (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1963).)

"Jesus Christ had no tenderness whatsoever toward anything that was ultimately going to ruin a person in his service to God.... If the Spirit of God brings to your mind a word of the Lord that hurts you, you can be sure that there is something in you that He wants to hurt to

the point of its death.” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, September 27, (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour and Company, Inc., 1963.)

Charles Stanley

Does God purposefully allow suffering? “The comfortable, but theologically incorrect, answer is no. You will find many people preaching and teaching that God never sends an ill wind into a person’s life, but that position can’t be justified by Scripture. The Bible teaches that God does send adversity – but within certain parameters and always for a reason that relates to our growth, perfection, and eternal good.” (*Stanley, C. F. 1997, c1996. *Advancing through adversity* (electronic ed.). Thomas Nelson: Nashville TN.)

Paul’s theology came out of a conviction that if God was going to use him for His kingdom, he wasn’t going to do it through a spiritually polished and puffed-up version of himself, but rather through a broken, limited, and human one. Living in brokenness and vulnerability simply means honestly accepting the fact that I’m not as emotionally put-together or spiritually mature as I would like to think that I am. It’s embracing “the good, the bad, and the ugly” within myself.⁹³

In application we are to build a “Resume’ of Weakness.” In the world, it is always “best foot forward.” We mark ourselves through our strengths, accomplishments, and gifts. Yet, this isn’t the sort of resume’ God is looking for in His disciples.⁹⁴

Pastor’s need to do a first draft of their “Resume` of Weakness” before God. Encouragement will come as one considers a few sample “resume`s” of some very well known biblical figures.

- John Mark deserted Paul.

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Ibid

- Timothy had ulcers.
- Hosea's wife was a prostitute.
- Jacob was a liar.
- David had an affair, murdered, and abused power.
- Moses was a murderer.
- Jonah ran from God's will.
- Gideon and Thomas both doubted.
- Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal.
- Elijah was burned out.
- Noah got drunk.

God has been using cracked vessels all through history in order to “show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” In 2 Corinthians 4:7 the Word says, *but we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.*⁹⁵

Many great ministries are being run by people who are ministering out of their brokenness, weakness, and failure. For example, Chuck Colson is changing lives through his prison ministry because he was in prison. Many men are leading others out of addictions because they have been delivered from life-controlling addictions themselves. Back in the 1980s, Gordon MacDonald, pastor and author, committed adultery. His church disciplined him with help from leaders in the evangelical community, and after several years, he was able to resume ministry.

It's not that God can't use capable, qualified people; of course He can. But if you

⁹⁵ Ibid

bring Him capability and qualification, He is going to have to remove some of it so that He can use you anyway. It is necessary for some degree of weakness to be present in order for God to get the full glory for doing something great through you. Moses had a stutter, David committed adultery and Paul persecuted Christians; yet, all of these men have been read about for centuries as being men who did great things for God.⁹⁶

God will use us as we build our “new resume’ through our weaknesses. In Zachariah 4:6 God tells us, “*Not by might nor by power, but by my spirit, says the almighty God.*”

⁹⁶ Equipping the Man in the Mirror devotional September 12, 13, 14, 2008

Chapter Thirty Six-Recovery Means Finishing Well

In his book, *Finishing Well*, Steve Farrar tells the story of the advice given of Dr. Paul Beck to his future son in law, Dr. John Bisagno who now has been for years the Senior Pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston Texas. Dr. Bisagno at that time was just finishing college. The advice was simply, “John, stay true to Jesus.” Dr. Beck continued, “It has been my observation that just one out of ten who start out in full time service for the Lord at twenty-one are still on the track by age sixty-five. They’re shot down morally, there’re shot down with discouragement, there’re shot down with liberal theology, they get obsessed with making money.....but for one reason or another nine out of ten fall out.” For the next thirty three years Dr. Bisagno kept tabs on that statistic and among his twenty-four friends who started out in ministry only three remain.⁹⁷

At age sixty-one and being a broken world person “finishing well” is a constant desire of the author’s heart. Today, he loves Jesus more than ever. Five years ago a wall of destruction faced him and came close to destroying every precious thing that he possessed other than his salvation relationship with Jesus Christ. Today, tears of gratefulness drop on these computer keys as he thinks and reflects on what the dear Lord has done in his heart and in his family through the last five years. He has publically built a “Resume` of Weakness.” In his earlier years as a pastor, if doors were not open he would knock them down and open them anyway. Today, he is very content and available to his Lord to use him as He sees fit. The author gives God total control of his life. When his life is done he hopes beyond hope that next to his name is not written the letters DNF which means “did not finish.”

⁹⁷ Steve Farrar, *Finishing Strong*, Sisters Or: Multnomah Publishers, 1995

Several years ago, when Walter Peyton played running back for the Chicago Bears, he was involved in a football game with the New York Giants. One of the announcers observed that, at that time, Peyton had accumulated over nine miles in career in rushing yardage. Without missing a beat, the other announcer remarked, “Yeah, and that’s with someone knocking you down every 4.6 yards.” Walter Peyton, one of the most successful backs of all time, knew that endurance is the only thing that gets a person to the goal. The key is not how many times you are knocked down, it’s how many times you stand back up and start running again.⁹⁸

The author looks at his life with the possibility of comparing it to a river.

“A river reaches places which its source never knows. And Jesus said that, if we have received His fullness, "rivers of living water" will flow out of us, reaching in blessing even "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8) regardless of how small the visible effects of our lives may appear to be. We have nothing to do with the outflow— "This is the work of God that you *believe*. . ." (John 6:29). God rarely allows a person to see how great a blessing he is to others.

“A river is victoriously persistent, overcoming all barriers. For a while it goes steadily on its course, but then comes to an obstacle. And for a while it is blocked, yet it soon makes a pathway around the obstacle. Or a river will drop out of sight for miles, only later to emerge again even broader and greater than ever. Do you see God using the lives of others, but an obstacle has come into your life and you do not seem to be of any use to God? Then keep paying attention to the Source, and God will either take you around the obstacle or remove it. The river of the Spirit of God overcomes all obstacles. Never focus your eyes

⁹⁸ Bob Reccord *Forged by Fire*, Nashville, Tn.: Broadman & Holman, 2000

on the obstacle or the difficulty. The obstacle will be a matter of total indifference to the river that will flow steadily through you if you will simply remember to stay focused on the Source. Never allow anything to come between you and Jesus Christ— not emotion nor experience— nothing must keep you from the one great sovereign Source.

“Think of the healing and far-reaching rivers developing and nourishing themselves in our souls! God has been opening up wonderful truths to minds, and every point He has opened up is another indication of the wider power of the river that He will flow through us. If you believe in Jesus, you will find that God has developed and nourished in you mighty, rushing rivers of blessing for others.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Ibid. September 6

Chapter Thirty Seven-Conclusion and Recommendations

Graham Roberts tells us that there are ten lessons learned through facing conflict in Christian ministry.

“We are to accept the fact that conflict among God’s people is both normal and potentially helpful for the strengthening of relationships. We are a family and all families are made of imperfect human beings who will experience tensions among one another. All ministries of value for God will experience opposition, e.g. opposition to truth.”

- “Lesson: Be ready and prepared to experience conflict rather than fearing it or avoiding it at any cost. How we respond to conflict is the most important factor, not having conflict.”

“Conflict situations sometimes reveal as much about ourselves and areas in our lives where we need to grow as they do about the needs of “problem people,” e.g. personal testimony of my own struggles with acceptance/rejection; also our constant need to grow in humility and to put off pride. God’s work in us-what we have to learn personally through conflict situations, will be directed to areas in our lives where we have definite need.”

- “Lesson: Be open to let God speak to you through the conflict and do His refining work in you.”

“God wants to listen to the concerns or complaints expressed through those who oppose us in our ministry. It is harmful to our ministry and leadership to adopt the attitude of being “right” and rejecting as “wrong” any criticism of those who appear to act as enemies.”

- “Lesson: Be humble in your attitude toward those who criticize you. Discern between what is just “poison” and what you need to pay attention to.”

“Guard against blaming yourself for conflict or allowing other people to place blame for conflict on you. Take responsibility for your part in any conflict and do not hide it. Admit it to yourself and to others. But in every conflict situation, there are always two sides. Sinful man is always trying to pass the blame for their problems and conflicts on to others. Refuse to accept their accusations and condemnations.”

- “Lesson: Don’t give a foothold in your mind to Satan, the accuser of the brethren.”

“Don’t sacrifice your personal convictions for the sake of avoiding conflict. As a leader of God’s people, your personal integrity is of utmost significance. See Psalm 24:3-4. If we run from conflict over major issues and convictions for the sake of peace or for reasons of our own security, then we lack one of the essential qualities of godly leadership=integrity.”

- “Lesson: Work hard to prove yourself to be a godly leader/person of integrity.”

“God does not often solve conflicts instantly, or remove the source of the problem out of our lives. Praying is an important part of our facing and coping with conflict situations and “problem people.” However, do not imagine that in response to our prayer, God will answer with instant and perfect harmony. We must be prepared to lead and labor in the face of some opposition, refusing to allow the enemy to side-track us from doing God’s Kingdom work. In some situations, God will even use conflict for the expansion of His work/church. See Acts 15:36-41.”

- “Lesson: Be patient and prayerful, trusting God to work out His sovereign purposes through conflicts.”

“It is an unrealistic expectation that all Christians can work harmoniously together. Some conflicts arise because of carnality among some believers (e.g. problems in Corinth-see I Cor. 3:1-4; James 4:1-2). Other conflicts arise because of significant differences in goals and foundational convictions-cf. Phil. 1:27-2:2. Still other convictions arise because of personality differences producing tensions and frequent clashes-see Phil 4:2. In certain circumstances, it is God’s will for us to move on to another ministry rather than force people against their will to accept us as their leader.”

- “Lesson: Find where you can serve the Lord with those who share your fundamental beliefs even though you will never experience 100% agreement with everyone. However, loyalty and unity of the Spirit with your team/those you lead is a must. (e.g. Eph. 4:1-3).”

“Sometimes you may feel strongly that it is impossible for you to work within a particular ministry situation because of the tensions caused by some major difference of conviction. However, do not react quickly. The issues may not be nearly as serious or principle as you had concluded. If over time the conflict is proven to be rooted in a serious and major issue, then seek to separate the problem issue from the person/persons involved. Respond to the core problem rather than reacting to the person (s).”

- “Lesson: Work hard to find the root of any conflict, then, take appropriate Biblical action. Examples: if the root issue is some sin (e.g. gossip, slander, spreading rumors etc.), then the offender must be confronted and led to repentance and confession. See Titus 3:1-2, 9-11.”

“No leader by is ever able to see a conflict situation with 20/20 vision. We

all need people of maturity and wisdom around us to help us see more clearly any hidden factor(s) that may have caused the conflict. It is common that anyone including Christian leaders become too objectively involved in a conflict. As a result, they tend to think very negatively about the “problem” and so be tempted to give an over-reactive and unwise response. Don’t depend only on your own opinions and conclusions concerning a conflict/problem. Find and consult with a mature, wise man/woman of God outside the conflict and ask them if they would be willing to sit with you and give you some discernment concerning the issues related to the conflict. Do not find “yes” people or “nice” people who will not speak the hard word to you if necessary. Be open to listen seriously to their guidance.”

- “Lesson: Ask God to bless you with a close and trustworthy confidant, someone who will speak the truth in love and whose wisdom will throw fresh and helpful light on the conflict for the purpose of bringing about a resolution.”

“Though conflict is a normal part of a healthy, growing church or Christian ministry, we must also understand that the heart of Jesus is for true unity of the Spirit (John 17:21; Eph. 4:1-3, I Cor. 12; Phil. 2:27-3:2; 4:2 et al). Therefore, God calls us to desire UNITY and to work hard towards reaching this goal in our relationships with one another and with other believers. It is therefore the leader’s responsibility to make sure that all obstacles towards true spiritual unity are removed and true unity is promoted and pursued.”

- “Lesson: Conflict is a reality, but peace and unity is our goal. Therefore, a leader must have no part in deliberately stirring up conflict among God’s people, but must give himself/herself to leading God’s people to experience and enjoy a true sense of oneness and harmony together.”¹⁰⁰

Dr. Kenneth Newberger, a church conflict analysis from Damascus, Maryland has some very wise advice concerning church conflict and church health. He deals with a lot of the surface issues from his web site, *ResolveChurchConflict.com*. He also spends time on site with the church that is experiencing conflict. Dr. Newberger helps to facilitate healing for all those involved, a much needed ministry today.

Dr. Newberger believes that there are escalating stages in church conflict. It

¹⁰⁰ Graham M. Roberts, *Equip and Encourage International*, Hornsby, Australia, 2005

begins through an uncomfortable feeling. Soon after the uncomfortable feeling the problem arises and most can problems be solved but if not the shift changes to an individual who is either right or wrong. At this time other problematic issues can enter the picture that can complicate the situation. At this point verbal attacks and a power struggle appears. As a result the expelling and withdrawing of individuals occurs thus affecting the very work, fellowship and worship of the church. The more intense the conflict, the more irrational it becomes. Two intensifying processes take place throughout: (1) an increasing frustration / anger over the unresolved issue(s), and (2) an increasing negative perception of the character of the other side.¹⁰¹

The fearful question that we ask is what happens when church conflict is not resolved? Ongoing conflict can put the church ministry at risk.

¹⁰¹ Dr. Kenneth Newberger, ResolveChurchConflict.Com

Chapter Thirty Eight-Help For the Hurting

In my research I have met some pastors and families who are deeply hurting. Regardless of the situation the Body of Christ needs to wrap their arms around them and love them unconditionally back to spiritual and emotional health. The author and his family were blessed to experience the grace, love and encouragement from the City of Refuge housed and staffed by the First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia. Contact can be made with the City of refuge by going to their web site at www.fbcw.org.

The author believes that there is a growing awareness of forced terminations among clergy and I am very grateful that such ministries as Focus on the Family (www.family.org), the Global Pastor's Network (www.gpn.tv) and other national and international church and Para-church organizations are recognizing the tremendous need that exists. Listed below are a number of web sites that offers extensive help to hurting pastors and their families.

Hurting pastoral families should explore each web site.

- Pastor Wives Thriving
http://www.pastorwives.org/resource_directory/forced_terminations
- Clergy recovery Network
<http://www.clergyrecovery.com/>
- Dr. Kenneth Newberger
www.ResolveChurchConflict.com
- Pastoral Advocacy Network
<http://www.pastoraladvocacynetwork.com/>
- Bullied and Abused Lives in Ministry
<http://www.balmnet.co.uk/>
- Ministry to Ministers
<http://www.rasalam.com/ministers>

- The Parsonage
<http://www.parsonage.org/>
- Shepherd Care
www.shepherd-care.org/
- Smoldering Wick Ministries
<http://www.smolderingwickministries.org/pillars.html>
- Winning Edge Ministries
<http://win-edge.com/Restoration.shtml>

After extensive research the author believes that the problem of forced terminations among clergy is dramatically affecting the effectiveness of the Church of Jesus Christ. We need to take responsibility for the problems and not pretend that they do not exist. Pastors cannot be effective or their best if they are emotionally wounded carrying around unresolved hurts and pain. The author believes that more can be done to help in the crises of forced terminations.

APPENDIX

The Appendix article is in a pdf file and could not be copied and pasted in this thesis. However, *A Joint Statement on Sexual Accountability* put forward by the Pastoral Leadership and Staff of First Baptist Church, Paducah, Kentucky, dated and signed on June 24, 2008 by the pastor and staff was posted in the July 10, 2008 issue of BaptistPress.com under the title, ***Kentucky Church Confronts Danger of Moral Failure.***

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Trinity Baptist Church, Fulton, Ms. <http://www.trinityfulton.com/why-preachers-move-to-another-place->

Journal Articles

Eubanks, James W, *Leader Life, Pastors at Risk*, Spring 2006, pg. 38-41

Musical Lyrics

Smith, Michael W. *Breathe in Me*, lyrics

Shane and Shane, *Be Near*, lyrics

T.A. Powell Sr. 325 Longhill Road, Goode, Virginia 24556
phone 434-229-5367

Experience

July 2005-Present- Adjunct Faculty, Liberty University Online, School of Religion. Also on Faculty of Wilmington School of the Bible.

Founded and served as Senior Pastor of Liberty Baptist Church, 116 Romans Road, Suffolk, Virginia 23434 for 26 years. February 1978-January 2004. Congregation of 800 members. Led congregation in two million dollars debt-free building programs on twelve acres of property at a major thoroughfare.

Founded and served as Senior Pastor of Southwest Baptist Church (Presently Buford Rd.), 819 Buford Road, Richmond, Virginia for five and one half years. May 1971-January 1977. Congregation of 400 members. Led in construction of approximately one million dollars worth of improvements on ten acres of land.

Led the above churches in television, radio and worldwide internet broadcast ministries as well as with a strong worldwide missions outreach.

Served as President of the *Virginia Assembly Of Independent Baptists* in 1995. VAIB is composed of 450 Independent Baptist Churches in the state of Virginia.

Authored, “**Today**”- a daily devotional book for each day of the year. Published by The Addison Group in 2001. Total of 10,000 copies

Served as Chaplin in 2003 for the City of Suffolk, Virginia Police Department.

Education

☐ 2008- Doctor of Ministry degree from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary.

☐ - Rec~~2007~~ 2007 Master of Divinity Degree equivalency from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, Va.

☐ 2005 to 2007- Taking graduate courses toward Master of Divinity degree from Liberty Theological Seminary, Lynchburg, Va.

☐ 20022003 Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia Masters Of Arts in Religion. Graduated Cum Laude.

☐ 19681971 Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. B.S. Degree History Education

☐ 19771978 Hyles-Anderson Bible College, Crown Point, Indiana. Pastors Refresher Degree

☐ 19651967 Ferrum Junior College, Ferrum, Virginia Associate in Arts Degree

☐ 19611965 Windsor High School, Windsor, Virginia Diploma

Family

Wife- Happily married for 40 years to Betty Phelps Powell from Richmond, Virginia.

Son, Thomas A. Powell Jr. 38, married to Wendy. They reside in Suffolk Virginia with four children.

Daughter, Beth Powell Baxter 36, married to David. They reside in Lynchburg Virginia with two children.

Daughter, Sharon Powell Downey, 33 married to Casey. They reside in Suffolk, Virginia.

Skills

Human Relations, leadership, organizing, developing and overseeing special projects.

Interests

Spending quality time with family, sports events, daily exercising and a casual golf game.