

IDEALISM & REALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF
PASTORAL EXPECTATIONS & MINISTRY REALITIES EXPERIENCED BY
PROTESTANT CHURCH PLANTING PASTORS
by

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ABSTRACT

IDEALISM & REALITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF PASTORAL EXPECTATIONS & MINISTRY REALITIES EXPERIENCED BY PROTESTANT CHURCH PLANTING PASTORS

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With the majority of literature focused on reducing clergy stressors, there is a need to explore how pastors respond when ministry idealism dissipates, while familial and congregational expectations increase. When idealized expectations fade how does clergy experience resiliency? The purpose of this study was to explore how idealism affects clergy resiliency and their responses, coping, and longevity in ministry. Ten (10) new church planting protestant pastors were selected using snowball sampling. Each pastor was interviewed. Data from the two-hour in-depth interviews was collected, organized and analyzed. The findings for each interview were compared and contrasted, and themes were identified – a) utilizing coping strategies during stressful and difficult seasons, b) locating personal identity in Christ alone, c) having relational support systems, and d) maintaining a healthy relationship with his wife.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Background

Idealism is inherent in the hopefulness and optimistic attitudes of every pastor (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). However, when a pastor's sense of ministry idealism fades, while familial and congregational expectations increase, many experience burnout, discouragement, and despair (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Research states that the prevalence of supportive relationships within the congregation lowers a pastor's level of burnout and discouragement and increases their optimism about remaining in the ministry (Lee, 2010). According to Lee and Gilbert (2003), "anticipating the kinds of support needed or expected" (Lee & Gilbert, 2003, p. 255) is important in enhancing a pastor's wellbeing and longevity in ministry.

Pastors enter the ministry to make a difference over time in the lives of the people and fulfill their God given calling; not to abandon their ministry (Christopherson, 1994; Monahan, 1999). Yet the theological and practical expectations for the pastor demand "commitment to personal sacrifice, faithful obedience to the calling, and servant-leadership modeled after Jesus Christ" (Kunst, 1993, p. 208). Fulfilling the calling, "clergy are designated guardians of the sacred ideal of the call and their careers are expected to be the real life embodiment of those ideals" (Christopherson, 1994, p. 221). Clergy experience the personal responsibility for living out the truthfulness of their calling.

High expectations to fulfill this sacred calling are oftentimes met with a reality that leads optimistic pastors into despair and unhealthy ways of coping (Chandler, 2008; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McMinn, Lish, Trice, Root, Gilbert & Yap, 2005; Miner, 2007; Miner, Sterland & Dowson, 2006). As disillusionment settles in, and initial optimism, enthusiasm and expectations drift, many clergy resolve in themselves to a perfunctory work-ethic (Chandler, 2008). Additionally, the normal stressors of insufficient financial compensation, time demands, intrusive family boundaries, lack of adjustment strategies, limited social support, and idealistic expectations make leaving the ministry attractive (Ellison, Roalson, Guillory, Flannelly & Marcum, 2010; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Zondag, 2006).

If a pastor's identity and worth is defined by his success in church work, many having not experienced perceived success, leave within the first year of ministry (Krause, Ellison, Shaw, Marcum & Boardman, 2001). Research suggests the need for supportive training as idealistic expectations, and the unanticipated loss of people within their congregations create stressful situations that become a pastor's reality (Miner, 2007). Supportive training offers an opportunity for pastors to cope with new reality. Additionally, literature aids in understanding the needs of pastors.

The literature addresses stressors, burnout and coping within the ministry (Chandler, 2008; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Golden, Piedmont & Ciarrocchi, 2004; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Krause et al. 2001; Kunst, 1993; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McMinn et al. 2005; Miner, 2007; Miner et al. 2006; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Zondag, 2006). However, a small segment of literature addresses idealism and a pastor's perception and coping in his reality (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Miner, 2007; Morris & Blanton,

1994; Zondag, 2006). Literature addressing the departure from ministry in the early years due to fading idealism is exiguous (Ellison et al. 2009; Miner, 2007). Therefore, this study attempted to augment the literature by exploring church planting pastors' experiences of resilience (from idealism to realism) in ministry and their subsequent experiences of coping, responding, and continuing in the ministry.

This chapter grounded this study with a presentation of its purpose and research questions. Additionally, terms related to the inquiry are defined. The research method is briefly described followed by sections that locate the researcher and address the study's limitations and trustworthiness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore select church planting pastors' experiences of resilience (from idealism to realism) in ministry and their subsequent experiences of coping, responding, and continuing in the ministry. Since understanding, describing, and interpreting these complex human phenomena are the basis of this study, a phenomenology, a qualitative method of inquiry, is an appropriate approach to answering the research questions. Additionally, the lack of literature on this particular subject supports an initial exploratory approach, like a phenomenology, in order to unearth themes warranting further quantitative and qualitative analysis in the future (Creswell, 2013; Portney & Watkins, 2000; van Manen, 1990).

Research Questions

In this study, idealism was perceived as a common experience affecting many church planting pastors. Additionally, the presupposition for this study is that idealism (unrealistically high expectations) is misunderstood by the pastor, and consequently limits his ability to perceive, cope and thrive in his reality. With this in mind, the research questions that organized this study are:

1. How do select protestant church planting pastors describe their experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities?
2. How do the participants describe the negative impact of ministry realities associated with the dissipation of idealism?
3. How do participant responses compare and contrast?

Definitions

Definitions of terminology in this study are provided in order to ensure that there is no misunderstanding of terms and phrases and that they are operationally defined to bring clarity to the study. These are the terms and phrases that are central to the study: protestant church planting pastors, idealistic expectations about church planting ministry, realistic expectations about church planting ministry, and church planting pastors' ministry resiliency.

Protestant Church Planting Pastors

In this study, Protestant Church Planting Pastors are defined as biblically qualified (1 Timothy 3:1-7) and called men who organize and start gatherings of followers, which identify themselves as churches, meeting regularly for spiritual enrichment, and are

Protestant (religious position distinct from Roman Catholicism). Protestant pastors view the Bible as authoritative (infallible and inerrant), believe in and follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and share the message of salvation with others through evangelism. Additionally, the pastor serves among other associate pastors within the church. The associate pastors function as executives, responsible for specialized tasks as determined by the senior pastor.

Idealistic Expectations about Church Planting Ministry

Idealism, as defined in Webster (2003), is a theory that “ultimate reality lies in a realm transcending phenomena” (p. 616). Within this study, idealistic expectations are defined as high expectations that lead to a desired and anticipated state of perfection. A church-planting pastor starts his church anticipating that his calling, motivation, training, skillfulness and commitment will result in outcomes that fulfill his expectations and vision about church and ministry.

Realistic Expectations about Church Planting Ministry

Realistic expectations are defined in this study as the anticipated and prepared for realities and expectations for the life of the church-planting pastor, his wife, and family and the demands, stressors, obligation, and expectations that come from his role, family, congregation, and ministry. As a church-planting pastor anticipates the realities of pastoring, he is prepared for the outcomes of ministry instead of blinded by his or others' unrealistic, illogical or unreasonable expectations.

Church Planting Pastor's Resiliency

Resiliency is defined as a church planting pastor's ability to positively respond, adapt or cope with the demands, stressors, obligation, and expectations that come from his role, family, congregation and ministry. Resilience consists of both elasticity, the ability to perpetuate functioning when faced with challenges, and buoyancy, the ability to rebound even when functioning is disturbed (Lee, 2010).

Research Method

Qualitative research allows for exploration through in-depth interview and observation to understand human experience in its natural setting (Creswell, 2013; Portney & Watkins, 2000). Qualitative research provides rich descriptors of the complex nature of humans and how they perceive their own experiences (Portney & Watkins, 2000). It moves the reader to an in depth sense of empathy through the use of "thick description," which helps them understand the experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Therefore, a qualitative investigation into this phenomenon might try to uncover the meaning of this sensation to those who experience it and how it affects their behavior, emotions, body image, self-esteem, and interactions. The purpose of qualitative inquiry is to examine such experiences using a holistic approach that is concerned with the true nature of "reality" as the participants understand it (Portney & Watkins, 2000, p. 272).

Idealism and the responses of clergy to their experiences create an opportunity for qualitative inquiry.

This study utilized the phenomenological tradition of inquiry in qualitative research. Phenomenology captures meaning from complex analysis and is constructed from a social context (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological inquiry seeks to gain a deeper

understanding of the meaning of a person's experiences. Phenomenology allows for a discovery of what a person has experienced and lived through, and the meaning that is associated with the experiences (van Manen, 1990). This researcher believes that phenomenological methods unearthed the most meaningful data for answering the research questions.

Selection of Participants

Participants in this study were selected through the use of purposeful, criteria sampling to ensure that all the participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). A diverse sampling was sought by using the snowball sampling procedure. Snowball sampling allowed for participants to be identified for this study (Heckathorn, 2011). The researcher began with a convenience sample of initial participants by which additional participants are recruited through "natural social networks" until ten participants are identified (Noy, 2008, p. 328). The leveraging of this effective tool gave access to hidden populations with specific characteristics (Creswell, 2013; Noy, 2006).

Snowball sampling assisted in acquiring additional participants by referral from a sample of initial subjects (Heckathorn, 2011). Snowball sampling provided a social knowledge, which is dynamic and emergent among church planting pastors (Noy, 2006). The researcher accessed participants through contact information that is provided by other participants (Noy, 2006). Through a succession of referrals, the sample population will evolve in an accumulative dimension (Heckathorn, 2011; Noy, 2006). Utilizing snowball sampling provided the researcher a diverse sampling of no more than ten participants in order to avoid repetitive data (Creswell, 2013).

Data Collection

In-depth interviewing was the primary data collection method in phenomenological research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Individual, face-to-face, in-depth interviews allowed a narrative of lived experience (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). It encouraged the interviewee to openly share rich descriptions of the phenomena (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). While in-depth interviewing was the primary data collection method, other methods of collecting data were used, including a demographic survey, journals, and diaries (Rudestam & Newton, 2001; van Manen, 1990). For the sake of triangulation, participants were asked to share relevant personal writings and journals that unearth the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Roberts, 2006).

Once the convenience sample of participants was identified, each person was contacted by telephone. The researcher explained the nature of the study and invited the potential participant to take part in the study. If the potential participant agreed to review the informed consent, the researcher emailed the informed consent. If the “participant” declined participation, he was thanked and appreciation for time was expressed by the researcher. If the “participant” agreed to take part in the study, he was asked to sign the informed consent and email it back to the researcher. The researcher then proceeded to explore whether the participant had other contacts that would possibly consider participating as well. In-depth interviews were conducted.

Prior to each in-depth interview, the researcher addressed any questions regarding participation in the research process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Each in-depth interview and conversation was recorded using a high quality digital recording device, and then professionally transcribed (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In addition, field notes were taken during the in-depth interviews and during the day of each interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The in-depth interview was one and a half to two hours (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; van Manen, 1990). The researcher listened to the digital recording “while reading the transcriptions to ensure accuracy during interpretation (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 319).

Data Processing and Analysis

Qualitative data analysis occurs synchronous with data collection and provides an emerging and comprehensive understanding of the research questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In-depth interviews were digitally recorded (augmented by self-reflection) and field notes were taken, which provided the data in this study (Creswell, 2013; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Field notes were summarized and coded (Creswell, 2013). All in-depth interview recordings were coded and secured in a confidential location (Roberts, 2006). Recordings were mailed to a professional transcriptionist who transliterated all of them in order to create verbatim transcripts (Roberts, 2006; van Manen, 1990). After completion, the transcriptionist sent the researcher all transcripts and recordings (Creswell, 2013). The researcher read and edited all transcripts, while simultaneously listening to the recordings to ensure accuracy (van Manen, 1990).

As the researcher repetitively read the transcripts, themes were identified and analyzed to determine “structures of experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 79). Focusing on research questions assisted the researcher in identifying themes (van Manen, 1990). Themes were grouped and sorted “recognizing that a single unifying meaning of the experience exists” (Creswell, 2013, p. 55; van Manen, 1990) and emerged during the process of data analysis. As findings were described, interpreted and meaning identified, the discussion amalgamated the data by answering the research questions, demonstrating relationships with the literature and preconceived assumptions prior to the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Locating Myself as a Researcher

As a researcher, it is my ethical responsibility to locate myself within the research process and writing (Pettinger, 2005). This safeguard is to ensure that my judgments related to idealism and ministry reality do not inappropriately influence the processing of the data (Creswell, 2013). Thus, locating myself within the research offers a safeguard to the contents shared in the research.

As a young pastor I was full of vivid and high expectations for what would happen in my life, ministry, family, congregation, and others. Idealistic outcomes in ministry were my view of the pastorate, yet I was bluntly faced with hard realities due to unrealistic and unmet expectations. I had high expectations for success and an intrapersonal desire to be affirmed by the people I served. I expected that diligent effort would result in a “successful” church. However, when our church began to lose people

to other churches, became a target for ridicule, witnessed a loss of financial support and experienced slow growth, it created stress in my life, marriage, and family.

I was informed by other experienced pastors that people would leave the church, but I never anticipated that close friends would leave. We were ridiculed, lied about, and accused of things that were not true. My heart was broken, particularly as I watched my wife caught off guard by relational betrayal. We were both struggling. At this point, planting a church was more than we expected and we did not know how to deal with it. Instead of my idealistic expectations offering my family and me a pathway of satisfaction and success, I was silently trying to rescue myself from being burnt out and feeling discouraged. My optimistic hopes and dreams were dashed. I was physically stressed, discouraged by how slowly we were growing as a church, fearful of whom to share my struggles with, and finding my significance in worship attendance numbers. Honestly, I was burnt out, drained, isolated, afraid, and grasping for signs of success to offer me hope.

The stress progressed to a diagnosis of high blood pressure and sleep loss (particularly on Saturday and Sunday nights). The unexpected loss of close friends who left our church left my wife and me struggling with betrayal and loneliness. At the same time, I toiled with not knowing whom to talk to about my discouragement for fear of being perceived by others as a failure. In addition, I desperately searched for anything positive that would cheer me up. Any “success” within our church became my medicine for maintaining longevity in ministry.

Although it was a dark time in my life, hope began to come as I engaged with other pastors within my national church-planting network. In our conversations, I began to notice common themes and outcomes in our experiences, expectations, perceptions,

and mental and emotional responses. As we discussed our struggles, it created a sense of brotherhood, safety, vulnerability and an enlivening within our souls. Over time, as we intentionally and honestly shared with one another, it became apparent that we all had idealistic expectations and were faced with an unmanageable and undesirable reality. Through a process of mutual support and openness we discovered that we were placing our identity in our perceived “success” rather than in the God who called and empowered us for ministry. As we continued sharing, I experienced healing and hope through trusting in Christ regardless of the pastoral realities that I faced.

Personally, as I reflected over the impact that sharing openly had in my life, I became burdened for other pastors. I began wondering whether other pastors may have faced the same dilemma that I had experienced. Therefore, I decided to design a study that explored these phenomena.

Limitations

This study had limitations, which are related to common critiques within qualitative research methodology as well as the selected research design: researcher subjectivity, participant reactivity, and research sample (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Hunt, 2011; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The researcher’s perspective, perceptions and assumptions, experience, and beliefs affect the trustworthiness of the study.

Researcher Subjectivity

The researcher influences the research in some way because of his/her critical role in the research process (Brandon, 2011; Roberts et al. 2006). Researchers develop

assumptions from the literature review, experience of the phenomenon, and have personal beliefs, biases and preferences, all of which impact the study (Brandon, 2011; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Roberts et al. 2006). Albeit the researcher cannot completely “bracket” (Roberts et al. 2006) his subjectivity, process notes, however, member and expert checking will be utilized to safeguard the trustworthiness of the findings (Creswell, 2013).

Participant Reactivity

Researchers attempt to minimize bias in data collection to prevent research participants from being influenced (Roberts et al. 2006; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Morrow, 2005). In this study, the researcher avoided influencing the participants by the use of bracketing, which is restraining from the use of personal experiences, judgments, and beliefs (Roberts et al. 2006). In addition, the researcher kept a journal in order to examine the impact of the interactions and thoughts during participant engagement (Curtin & Fossey, 2007).

Research Sample

Qualitative research involves the use of purposeful sampling, whereby participants are selected based on specific characteristics (Tuckett, 2004). Specifically, snowball sampling, which involves networking through one participant to a wider range of participants, was used to select participants for this study (Kitto, Chesters & Grbich, 2008). Although generalizing this study’s findings was limited due to the sample restrictions, transferability based on thick, rich descriptions and detailed findings were allowed for application in other contexts (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Morrow, 2005). Every

pastor was able to benefit and glean from the results of this study, the implications to their personal life, marriage, family, and church and the need for longevity in ministry.

Trustworthiness

Throughout this study, the researcher attempted to establish credible, dependable and transferable work (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Nutt & Morrow, 2008). Trustworthiness is the process of establishing validity and reliability of qualitative research (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Guangming, 2007; Nutt & Morrow, 2008; Pitney, 2004; Roberts et al. 2006; Shento, 2004). Within qualitative research, issues of validity and reliability can be addressed despite the subjective nature of the data (Portney & Watkins, 2000). In this study, thick descriptions, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing was used to establish trustworthiness (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Guangming, 2007; Nutt & Morrow, 2008; Pitney, 2004; Roberts et al. 2006; Shento, 2004).

Thick Descriptions

Providing unbiased detailed descriptions promotes credibility by conveying the actual situations that have been investigated and the context around them (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Morrow, 2005; Shento, 2004). Within this study, rich descriptions of the participants' experiences and the contexts in which they occurred were used (Morrow, 2005). These thick descriptions unearthed multiple layers of culture and context that may be buried in their experiences (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Morrow, 2005; Shento, 2004).

Triangulation

Leveraging two or more data collection techniques to overcome the bias of using a sole method to collect information is known as triangulation (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009). Triangulation enhances the validity of qualitative research by combining two or more theories, data sources (in-depth interviews, observations), methods, or researchers, which facilitates robustness, consistency and comprehensiveness to the study (Morrow, 2005; Pitney, 2004; Roberts et al. 2006). The researcher used triangulation to cross check information or findings to secure an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in this study (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Pitney, 2004).

Member Checking

Involving participants in the data analysis process, allowing them to read the findings, and make comments and provides a way of ensuring trustworthiness (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Member checking gives participants opportunity to verify the accuracy of the results with their experiences (Pitney, 2004). The participants determine whether their words match their original intentions (Shento, 2004). In this study, the researcher gave the participants interviewed the opportunity to peruse and amend their transcripts (Kitto et al., 2008). While reducing error, participants will be able to actively engage in the review process, and provide new thoughts, which can then be interpreted by the researcher (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Hunt, 2011; Kitto, et al., 2008).

Peer Debriefing

Having a qualified colleague (superior, project director) who is not involved in the study frequently discuss where and how the data was generated with the researcher, ensures trustworthiness (Hunt, 2011; Shento, 2004). As discussions take place, the “investigator” helps to broaden and fine-tune the researcher’s assumptions and interpretations through observation and asking questions (Pitney, 2004; Shento, 2004). In this study, peer debriefing will take place with a specified colleague to discuss and consider alternative approaches and/or uncover flaws in the researcher’s proposed direction (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Shento, 2004). The meetings provided collaborative opportunities, whereby the investigator’s developing ideas and thoughts can help the researcher uncover his own biases and preferences (Shento, 2004).

Summary

Idealism is prevalent in the lives of pastors and when that idealism fades, due to the realities of ministry, burnout and discouragement can affect longevity in ministry (Chandler, 2008; Ellison et al. 2009; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Miner, 2007; Monahan, 1999; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Zondag, 2006). Determining ways to assist the pastor in responding appropriately, coping constructively, and experiencing fulfilling longevity in ministry are critical concerns identified in this study (Krause et al. 2001; Lee, 2010; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McMinn et al. 2005; Miner, 2007; Pector, 2005).

In this chapter, the study was introduced, the problem background was stated, the purpose was determined, the research questions and terms were explained, the research method was delineated, the researcher was located, and the limitations/trustworthiness of the research was described. Augmenting the current literature may allow pastors to

prepare for ministry with intentionality, obtain a better quality of life and experience greater fulfillment and length of service in their profession. For this study, a phenomenological design was used to acquire detailed descriptions from participants who have specifically experienced the phenomenon of interest. The next chapter will provide a literature review of the existing research applicable to this study.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature focuses on research related to idealistic expectations (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Chandler, 2008; Chandler, 2010; Christopherson, 1994; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hill & Yousey, 1998; Krause, 2001; Lee, 2010; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McIntosh & Rima, 1997; McMinn, Kerrick, McMinn, Duma, Campbell, & Jung, 2008; McMinn et al. 2005; Miner, 2007; Monahan, 1999; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Pector, 2005; Rolfe, 2007; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Sison, 2006; Spencer, Winston, & Bocarnea, 2012; Wallace, Bell, LeGrand, & James, 2012; Willimon & Witt, 2004; Zondag, 2001; Zondag, 2006; Zondag, 2007). In this literature review, high idealism among pastors entering the ministry, pastor's unrealistic expectations of the ministry, expectations and measurements of success and the relationship between narcissistic characteristics, expectations and motivation in pastors emerged as significant themes.

Subsequently, the review explored the anticipated and prepared for ministry realities and expectations of the life of pastors (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Buhrow, 2012; Buys & Rothmann, 2010; Chandler, 2008; Chandler, 2010; Christopherson, 1994; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Geiss, 2011; Golden et al. 2004, Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hileman, 2008; Hill & Yousey, 1998; Krause et al., 2001; Lee, 2010; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Lewis, Turton, & Francis, 2007; McDevitt, 2010; McKenna, Boyd & Yost, 2007; McMinn et al., 2005; Meek, McMinn, Brower, & Burnett, 2003; McMinn et al. 2008; Miner, 2007; Monahan,

1999; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Pector, 2005; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Spencer et al. 2012; Wallace et al. 2012; Willimon & Witt, 2004; Zondag, 2001; Zondag, 2006; Zondag, 2007). This literature review includes the exploration of several ministry realities such as burnout and stress, lacking social support, family boundary issues, vision conflict and mental and physical health strain, and their impact on idealism.

Next, the review examines the experience of resilience in light of idealized expectations and ministry realities. This literature review includes pastors leaving the ministry, resilience and adjustment strategies, ways of coping (including narcissistically motivated), personal strategies for learning from experience, spiritual practices that contribute to wellbeing or burnout and maintaining resiliency for longevity in ministry (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Buhrow, 2012; Buys & Rothmann, 2010; Chandler, 2008; Chandler, 2010; Christopherson, 1994; Ellison et al. 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hill & Yousey, 1998; Krause et al. 2001; Lee, 2010; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Lewis et al., 2007; McDevitt, 2010; McKenna et al. 2007; McMinn et al. 2005; Meek et al., 2003; Miner et al. 2006; Miner, 2007; Monahan, 1999; McMinn et al. 2008; Morris & Blanton, 1994; Pector, 2005; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Mueller & McDuff, 2004; Parker & Martin, 2009; Pector, 2005; Proeschold-Bell & McDevitt 2012; Purnell, 2004; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Spencer et al. 2012, Wallace et al. 2012/; Zondag, 2001; Zondag, 2006). Lastly, the review examines the relationship between the existing literature and the proposed study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Idealized Expectations

The literature on idealism suggests that all individuals experience idealism; however, pastors enter the ministry with a disparity of understanding between idealized ministry outcomes and actual ministry experiences, which could impact their longevity in ministry (Spencer et al. 2012). Grosch and Olsen (2000) contend that pastors begin the ministry with idealism, commitment and compassion but give way to disillusionment and despair. Within this section, high idealism among pastors entering the ministry, pastor's unrealistic expectations of ministry, expectations and measurements of success, and relationships between narcissistic characteristics, expectations and motivation in pastors are addressed.

High Idealism among Pastors Entering Ministry

According to Grosch and Olsen (2000) most clergy enter the ministry with high idealism and inflated optimism related to their ability to be helpful and committed to the people they serve. Clergy have within them an expectation for fulfilling their sacred calling, and experiencing the rewards of their career as well as external expectancies from their spouse, children, and congregation (Christopherson, 1994). Inherently, pastors are optimistic and idealistic as it relates to fulfilling their sacred calling (Christopherson, 1994; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hill & Yousey, 1998; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006; Zondag, 2006; Zondag, 2007). According to Christopherson (1994),

Clergy believe they will find a meaningful place in the larger community and a sense that a higher power is working through them, if they are faithful stewards in their sacred vocation. They want to be God's priest – not simply a person skilled at pleasing their congregation but the one who has been ordained to bring truth, blessing and peace to the laity. Clergy appreciate times of crisis or joy when their presence is taken for granted and their priestly status is clear. They love the inexplicable moments when ministry “works” and no one can say for certain

exactly how or why. As they describe them, these are the ‘high holy moments’, ‘transcendent encounters’, ‘the evidence of grace’ when the symbols of their faith and the convictions of their calling come together and they are convinced it is God’s work that is being accomplished (p. 228).

Zondag (2006) describes high idealism existing in ministry as early as seminary.

According to Zondag (2007), in an attempt to prepare for ministry, students enter seminary to be equipped in theology, doctrine, and pastoral ministry. They are convinced that seminary will equip them to have their idealism fulfilled (Zondag, 2006/2007).

Entering the ministry with untested interpersonal skills, pastors engage with the social context of the congregation with an idealistic perspective (Christopherson, 1994; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Zondag, 2007). Changing the church and bringing renewal to cities and the world is their aim (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Expecting to make improvements, they strive to reach an array of people and impact various situations and social contexts (Zondag, 2006).

As an outcome of years of seminary training, they seek to preach awe-inspiring, life-changing and stirring messages; witness people come to faith in Christ; and play a role in helping people spiritually grow in their faith. The meaning of success in ministry becomes attached to the realization of these ideals (Zondag, 2006). These expectations become ways of establishing means to measure achievement.

The fulfillment of intrinsic expectations becomes the measure of success and thus embedded within clergy identity. For example, a successful pastor means a larger congregation, a growing budget, and an enhanced personal reputation (Christopherson, 1994). The legitimacy of their work rests on their own identity and personal worth defined by the call and career.

Pastor's Unrealistic Expectations of Ministry

Lee and Gilbert (2003) contend that seminarians that lack experience in professional ministry enter into their first pastoral assignment with unrealistic expectations of the level of care required to serve their congregation. Over time as the pastor understands the realities of ministry and what needs to be expected, it is suggested that he help the members of his family understand these expectations in order to function (Lee & Gilbert, 2003). A pastor and his family tend to enter the ministry unprepared for what to expect (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003).

According to McMinn et al., (2008), a pastor faces unrealistic expectations from people, works long hours and experience intrusions in his family life. In an effort to prove his worth, a pastor places unrealistic demands on himself (McMinn et al. 2008). Additionally, a pastor functions under work-related and intrinsic motivation for perfection, from both members of the congregation and self-imposed, while lacking adequate social support systems (Meek et al., 2003). Chandler (2008) indicates that a pastor faces inordinate time demands, unrealistic expectations, and loneliness.

Expectations and Measurements of Success

According to McIntosh and Rima (1997), the unrealistic expectation by pastors to achieve success becomes intertwined with their own dysfunctional needs that are a carry-over from early points in life. This suggests that measurements of success become markers for enhanced clergy identity (Christopherson, 1994; McKenna & Eckard, 2009). Clergy attempt to gauge progress and advancement by measuring success (McKenna &

Eckard, 2009). According to Christopherson (1994), clergy understand where they are as it relates to status differences in church work among other clergy. For example, a pastor whose church is approximately 250 members says:

My parents go to a church that has 4,300 members, so by the standards of their church, I'd be seen as a failure serving a church like this. Which is part of my own identity, having to work through that baggage... The first question they always ask, "How big?" If it's a pastor they ask, "How many do you run in Sunday School?" That is always the measure of your success... Whenever they meet you, they have to establish the pecking order (p. 230).

Additionally, pastors seeking to "succeed" in ministry, enter ministry with an idealistic expectation to be appreciated and validated (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Hill & Yousey, 1998; Rosenthal & Todd, 2006; Zondag, 2007). Within their intrapersonal make-up is an expectation to be appreciated and validated (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Clergy who have this longing to fulfill this expectation crave admiration and gravitate to needy and troubled people – particularly their congregants (Buhrow, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000).

Relationship between Narcissistic Characteristics, Expectations and Motivation in Pastors

Hill and Yousey (1998) found that narcissistic characteristics are more prevalent in higher status occupations, including pastors. Grosch and Olsen (2000) assert that pastors who begin their careers with high idealism, Type-A personality, narcissistic characteristics, and perfectionism burnout in ministry. Narcissistic characteristics exhibit a need for attention and admiration from others (Hill & Yousey, 1998). According to Zondag (2007), characteristics of narcissism are an orientation to self, fantasies about

one's importance, power and success, and a small regard for people's concerns. Pastors who function through a persona keep their real selves latent and adopt a narcissistic personality that craves admiration and appreciation (Chandler, 2010; Hill & Yousey, 1998).

Pastors with narcissistic characteristics have unrealistically high expectations, which tend to lead to burnout (McMinn et al., 2008; McMinn et al., 2005; Miner, 2007; Zondag, 2007). Pastors that attempt the impossible are at great risk for burnout, disillusionment, psychological problems and stress (Evers & Tomic, 2003; Zondag 2006). Unrealistic expectations (including an insatiable desire for success) are often integrated with optimistic false beliefs and inaccurate discernment of the world and their own abilities (Zondag, 2006). Expectations are an important part of human motivation (Hill & Yousey, 1998; Chandler, 2010; Zondag, 2006).

Narcissistic leaders, including pastors, have an overly optimistic belief system that is generally motivated by their need for power, admiration and validation (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). They overwork because they crave admiration (Zondag, 2006). Pastors with high narcissism are motivated to select the pastorate in order to gratify their needs for social attention, prestige, and status (Hill & Yousey, 1998). These pastors are motivated by power and admiration rather than empathetic concern (Rosenthal & Todd, 2006). They are driven by their own egotism (Hill & Yousey, 1998; Rosenthal & Todd, 2006).

Pathological narcissistic characteristics within a pastor demonstrate the inability to integrate idealized beliefs he has about himself with the realization of his inadequacies (Rosenthal & Todd, 2006). Pastors with narcissistic characteristics are lost when

personal limitations become visible (Buhrow, 2010). Limitations appear to reveal inadequacies that pastors are unable to face. High idealism, unrealistic expectations, measurements of success and narcissistic characteristics all significantly impact pastors. Reconciling personal expectations with ministry realities is essential in order for pastors to maintain resilience (Grosch & Olsen, 2000).

Ministry Realities and Expectations of the Life of Pastors

Burnout and stress, lacking social support, family boundary issues, vision conflict and mental and physical health strain impact high idealism among pastors and will be discussed in this section. According to Lee (2010), ministry is both satisfying and full of demands simultaneously. Burnout and stress is considered a major demand among pastors.

Burnout

Research pertaining to clergy burnout documents two categorical reasons for burnout: (1) Pastors work in systems that burn them out; (2) Pastors are idealists, perfectionists and compulsives (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). According to Grosch and Olsen (2000), there appears to be an external and internal problem indicated by research on burnout. The external problem for clergy consists of: too much work, too little support, rigid work schedules, difficult parishioners, being ‘on call’ twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, excessive bureaucracy, and unhelpful and often irrelevant denominational structures. For the idealistic pastor these external problems tend to precipitate stress for clergy and their wives. The internal problems and struggles within

pastors tend to reflect narcissistic tendencies, low self-esteem, Type-A personality, high idealism and some difficulty in childhood development. According to Grosch and Olsen (2000),

Church members often provide the psychological function of confirming the pastor's inner experience of self-worth. One of the major reasons people become helpers is precisely because they are looking to satisfy the longing to be appreciated. The danger, of course, is when the church member becomes critically important for the regulation and maintenance of the pastor's self-esteem – in other words, when the congregant or the congregation provides a self-bolstering effect for the pastor – that the member or the church itself is treated not as a unique organism with its own independence or personality of its own, but primarily as “being there for me. (p. 621).

Consequently having distorted expectations for success and desiring to experience validation through pastoral ministry, leaves clergy unfulfilled and facing a non-idealistic reality. Research sums up both of these problem categories as systemic and intrapersonal contributors to clergy stress, burnout and lack of longevity in ministry (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Krause et al. 2001; Lee, 2010)

Burnout in the Early Years

According to Miner (2007), stress and distress are high during the initial years, particularly for solo pastors who have limited support and buffering. Despite initial expectations in ministry, many idealistic pastors were ineffective and under-appreciated, which led to discouragement and disillusionment (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). According to Ellison et al., (2010), there is a concern for new pastors burning out and leaving the ministry following seminary (Ellison et al., 2010). As initial optimism and enthusiastic

anticipation fades, disillusionment sets in (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee, 2010; Miner, 2007).

Idealizations and Insecurities Leading to Burnout

Grosch and Olsen (2000) suggest that idealizations can be flattering, leading to increased idealization and fueling of intrinsic feelings of insecurity or inadequacy. For example, if a pastor experienced inadequate empathy as a child, he may crave to be liked and admired, which increases burnout if he is not liked and admired as an adult (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Additionally, idealizations may cause pastors to over-function to meet expectations (Chandler, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000).

Lastly, burnout leads to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment (Buys & Rothmann, 2010; Chandler, 2010; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Golden & Ciarrocchi, 2004; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Miner, 2007; Parker & Martin, 2011). The erosive nature of burnout leads to a disassociation between who people are and what they are called to do (Chandler, 2010). This process impacts a person's values, self-worth, spirit, and will (Chandler, 2010; Evers & Tomic, 2003). Excessive work demands lead to emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization is an attempt to create distance from others, which could be characterized by indifference and sarcasm (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Lack of personal accomplishment is the resulting outcome of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Chandler, 2010; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Golden & Ciarrocchi, 2004; Grosch & Olsen, 2000).

Lacking Social Support

Lee (2010) suggests that having a greater number of supportive relationships in a congregation lowers the level of burnout and increases the presence of optimism among pastors to remain in the ministry. However, pastors tend to function under unrealistic expectations of occupational and intrinsically motivated perfection, without extra-familial support systems (Meek et al. 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994). But regardless of the expectations of the organization or congregation, pastors find the need to purposefully protect themselves, their wives, and families (Meek et al. 2003).

Additionally, pastors lack close friendships among people in ministry for relational support because of a high level of competition that exists between ministers (Sison, 2006). This distrust of their fellow pastors leaves them with primarily work-based relationships, not social ones (Sison, 2006). Due to the limited relational support pastors run the risk of having unhealthy churches (Buhrow, 2010). According to Buhrow (2010), supported pastors create healthier churches. Pastors without social support are isolated (Buhrow, 2010). As idealism fades and ministry reality increases, social support from outside the family (friendship, counseling and support groups) becomes a positive means of coping (McMinn et al. 2008).

Family Boundary Issues

According to Murphy-Geiss (2011), a pastor's family is often involved in his work. The pastoral profession has been labeled a "holy crossfire," (p. 189) as the clergy person and his/her family attempt to juggle the expectations of self, family, congregation, denomination, and God (Morris & Blanton, 1994). In particular, pastors' wives expect

their clergy husbands to have well defined boundaries but instead live among ambiguous boundaries (McMinn et al. 2008; McMinn et al. 2005; Pector, 2005).

Clergy families tend to lack defined boundaries between family and work (McMinn et al. 2008). The pastor's spouse is expected to cook, teach Sunday school, and lead the women and Bible studies as the unpaid assistant to the pastor (Hileman, 2008). Additionally, a pastor's spouse expectancies include maintaining stability in the midst of demanding mobile pressures, having adequate financial compensation, experiencing normalcy within family life and having social support. According to McMinn et al. (2005),

Stressors reported by wives of male clergy include lack of defined boundaries between family and work, a "fishbowl" existence, inadequate finances, pressure/expectations from congregation and community to fulfill idealized roles, loss of personal identity, loss of control over personal living environment, adjustment to frequent moves, anger, perception of being second class, lack of tangible results of work, loneliness, lack of social support, work related time demands, unwelcome surprises, routine absence of spouse/father, lack of parallel growth, lack of spiritual care, and psychological disturbances (p. 564).

Needless to say, wives of clergy have expectations that oftentimes aren't resolved, while their husbands seek to meet the needs of others out of a sense of his "calling" and idealistic expectations of ministry.

Additionally, the congregation has expectations of the pastor and his wife and family that he must deal with. Congregations view clergy as general practitioners serving as the priest, preacher, pastor, teacher, administrator, organizer, leader and promoter (McMinn et al. 2005). The congregation perceives clergy as multi-dimensional people helpers with ambiguous roles. Research suggests that they seek pastors before they seek mental health professionals (Krause et al. 2001). Lee and Gilbert, (2003) suggest that,

“According to research studies examining a variety of pastoral stressors, it was discovered that unrealistic and intrusive expectations were inflicted upon clergy by their congregations” (p. 249), which increased stress.

Intrusive expectations affect not only the pastor but also his wife and children. The pastor’s family is as involved as he is in his work (Murphy-Geiss, 2011). Expectations do not stop with the pastor’s wife. Research, related to pastor’s kids, states that they (PKs) dislike the expectations and stereotypes placed upon them and want to be normal and simply themselves (Anderson, 1998). It has been noted in the literature that these role expectations for clergy affect parental satisfaction. A host of Protestant pastors surveyed said that the difficulty of being a pastor affected their families and were reported as part of the reason why clergy were leaving the ministry (Barna, 1993).

Pastors are navigating between the multi-faceted and numerous responsibilities in an attempt to determine where to give their attention. Unlike a businessman with office hours, he is on call and expected to respond (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Morris & Blanton, 1994). Needs, desires and expectations vie for his attention (Chandler, 2008). Many expectations and contradictory demands fail to integrate well within the pastor’s role (Monahan, 1999). In addition, many congregants may not know what to expect of the clergy, therefore, they expect everything (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). They intrusively assume that clergy will fulfill their expectations without due consideration of the clergy’s priorities. However, the more the pastor seeks to fulfill the expectations of the congregation, the more the congregation comes to expect (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Regarding the role of the pastor, “it has been well documented that church attenders

typically have high and diverse expectations which often result in role ambiguity and role conflict for clergy” (Miner et al., 2006, p. 217).

Another aspect that plays a role into the expectations of the congregation is the clergy God complex (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). As the pastor speaks on behalf of God, many parishioners relate to him as a parent figure. Over time, clergy run the risk of becoming convinced that they are extraordinary and “God-like” from consistent affirmation and idealization. According to Grosch and Olsen (2000),

Idealizations can be so flattering that the minister may work in certain ways to increase idealization, which colludes with any underlying feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. The more the pastor attempts to fulfill or gratify the ideal expectations of the congregant, the more the church member (or congregation as a whole) comes to expect (p. 622).

As clergy seek to keep up with the congregation’s expectations for their own self-efficacy, it creates compromises in other important relationships, particularly their families. As family expectations increase, pastors find themselves unable to meet a multiplicity of needs (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Consequently, whether it is internal or external expectations, if unmet or unsatisfied, clergy are left to face a reality that will lead to continuance through coping or disillusionment that leads to despair (Mueller & McDuff, 2004).

Vision Conflict

Spencer et al. (2012) contend that clergy are leaving the ministry in greater numbers than ever before. Pastors are facing spiritual, physical, psychological, emotional, and social bombardment (Ellison et al. 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Spencer et al. 2012; Zondag, 2007). Interpersonal disagreements with church members, role ambiguity and

overload, lack of personal and occupational boundaries, disillusionment and financial pressure are contributors to the bombardment (Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Spencer et al. 2012).

As problems mount, pastors question their calling (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Sison, 2006; Spencer et al. 2012). As ministry expectations fall short of actual experiences, vision conflict settles in (Spencer et al. 2012). The vision that was expected is hindered by an unexpected ministry reality (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Spencer et al. 2012; Miner 2007). As disparity between ministry outcomes and actual ministry experiences exist, vision conflict and compassion fatigue will be more likely with pastors who do not have a support system or if their church has plateau or declined in attendance (Spencer et al. 2012). Thus, vision conflict is a ministry reality that requires coping (Spencer et al. 2012).

Mental & Physical Health Strain

According to Buhrow (2010), there is limited research on maintaining the mental health of church leadership. However, the psychological functioning of clergy has a direct bearing on their occupational outcomes and their personal, marital and family life (Ellison et al. 2009). Given the responsibilities of the clergy, the long hours they work and the weight of their personal sacrifice, their mental health is important to evaluate (Buhrow, 2012). Stressors such as financial strain, limited privacy, serving on call, spousal expectations from the congregation, and the lack of ministry to clergy families take a toll on clergy mental health (Buhrow, 2012).

The psychological strain on pastors has become a contributor to the shortage of congregational clergy among many Christian denominations (Ellison et al. 2009). The

psychological health of pastors is becoming a concern because many new pastors are leaving the ministry within the first few years (Miner, 2007). The strain is leading to a pastoral exit from ministry.

Studies on the physical health of pastors are limited (Proeschold-Bell & McDevitt, 2012; Wallace et al. 2011). Unfortunately, there have been high rates of obesity, diabetes, arthritis and hypertension among United Methodist clergy in North Carolina (Proeschold-Bell & McDevitt, 2012). The obesity rate for clergy is 40%, compared to 29% for North Carolinians (Wallace et al. 2011). The high rate of obesity will lead to future health problems for clergy if nothing is done to prevent it (Wallace et al. 2011).

Vocational, intrapersonal, family and social stressors impact the psychological and physical bodies of pastors (Proeschold-Bell & McDevitt, 2012; Purnell, 2004). In addition to the stressors, personal criticism, role and boundary ambiguity, unrealistic expectations and family criticism negatively impact pastors (Lee & Gilbert, 2003). According to Purnell (2004), pastors are forsaking their own health and body in order to assist others. It has been suggested by Wallace et al. (2011) that increasing daily fruits and vegetables, decreasing fat consumption, and increasing daily exercise can be an effective treatment for maintaining clergy physical health.

Burnout, lacking social support, family boundary issues, vision conflict and mental and physical health strain are common ministry realities for pastors. As their personal expectations about ministry are altered, hopes of coping within an unexpected reality become challenging (Grosch & Olsen, 2000). Determining ways to cope for sustained resilience in the ministry is necessary.

Resilience in Light of Idealized Experience and Realities of the Ministry

This section will explore pastors leaving the ministry, several resilience and adjustment strategies, narcissistic ways of coping, personal strategies for learning from experiences, spiritual practices that contribute to wellbeing or burnout, maintaining resiliency, and intrapersonal, family and community forms of care. A pastor's functioning and experience of resilience in light of personal expectations and ministry realities will be assessed.

Most of the literature related to pastoral functioning focuses on distress, impairment (particularly sexual-misconduct) and pathology, rather than resilience and coping strategies (Buhrow, 2012; McMinn et al. 2008; Meek et al. 2003). Although most psychological research explores impairment, burnout, and misconduct, pastors live each day finding ways to cope and thrive within a highly stressful occupation (McMinn et al. 2008). According to Meek et al. (2003), clergy health and coping strategies/responses have rarely been considered in psychological research.

Limited research exists on helping clergy maintain resiliency and personal morality while engaged in a demanding and stressful occupation (Meek et al. 2003). According to McKenna et al. (2007), there is little research on the long-term development of pastors. Additionally, there is minimal research related to maintaining the mental health of clergy, as well as the relationship between spirituality and burnout and the specific habits and practices necessary to contribute to emotional and psychological health, personal wellbeing and occupational organization (Buhrow, 2012; Chandler, 2010).

Pastors Leaving the Ministry

A pastor's poor health, family responsibilities and high load tasks (role-ambiguity) incite many pastors to leave the ministry (Monahan, 1999; Pector, 2005). Although congregations need pastors, dissatisfied clergy are quitting their jobs as pastors (Lee, 2010; Mueller & McDuff, 2004; Spencer et al. 2012). The ability to maintain resilience in the midst of high demand and stress is needed.

Resilience and Adjustment Strategies

Lee (2010) approaches the subject of resilience in pastoral ministry by exploring the intrinsic demands of the profession to increase the pastor's job satisfaction for longevity in ministry. According to Lee (2010), resilience consists of both elasticity and buoyancy. Elasticity is the ability to maintain healthy functioning in the midst of challenges. Buoyancy is the ability to sustain oneself even after interruptions to normal functioning (Lee, 2010). Resilience research seeks to understand what factors help pastors decrease vulnerability to the deteriorating effects of the demands and stresses of ministry. Resilience is the ability to effectively apply coping strategies as needed to maintain health functioning in the ministry (Lee, 2010; Spencer et al. 2012).

Narcissistic Ways of Coping

According to Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006), narcissistic leaders cope by deflecting advisers and assume the credit for successes and blame others for their own failures. Coping creates additional self-inflation in success and deflection of failure towards others. Narcissistic leaders associate themselves with other "powerful" people in

order to “share” power and maintain a personal sense of security (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Narcissistic pastors are unable to test reality due to over inflated idealism (Hill/Yousey, 1998; Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). The unrealistic optimism prevents them from facing reality. Bombastic ideas, behaviors and personas act as a defense against dealing with deep-seated ideas of themselves (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). In order to function in life, “the primary mode of coping with omnipresent feelings of inferiority is an unrelenting quest to gain recognition and prove their superiority” (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006, p. 620).

Rosenthal and Pittinsky (2006) suggest two ways that narcissistic leaders can cope, and thrive successfully – (1) A narcissistic leader has a trusted confidant that is steeped in reality; (2) A narcissistic leader has a therapist for intensive psychotherapy. Additionally, checks and balances within an organization help, in addition to honest feedback and suggestions from other personnel, and organizational training for dealing with narcissistic leaders (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006).

Personal Strategies for Learning from Experiences

According to McKenna et al. (2007), pastors utilize personal strategies to navigate through and gain knowledge from experiences. Learning from experiences means “adopting a learning focus, relying on personal character and values, establishing and managing relationships, relying on their faith and calling and using their expertise and knowledge” (McKenna et al. 2007, p. 190). Coping strategies utilized by pastors include accepting the situation, deliberate coping, “planning, positive reframing and prayer” (p. 191). However, clergy with high learning agility can learn the lessons that experiences

seek to teach. These leaders are able to learn new skills and strategies in tough situations and circumstances based on situational factors in comparison to pastors with low learning agility.

Meek et al. (2003) identified the following as positive strategies: deliberately maintaining balance in life, developing meaningful and healthy relationships, having a strong sense of God's calling, and being aware of one's strengths and weakness, while recognizing God's grace. Since the majority of a pastor's stress is related to relational conflict within the church, these strategies offer hope for the pastor (McKenna et al. 2007). According to Hall (1997),

Interpersonal and relational deficits are associated with the majority of psychological problems faced by pastors. These include marital and family relations, interpersonal factors (aggressiveness, passive-aggressive, conflict avoidance, dependency, inability to express affection), and unrealistic expectations set for oneself or set by others (p. 192).

McKenna et al. (2007), assert that specific situational factors allow for the greatest development and learning: drawing on God and others (receiving affirmation from God and feedback from others – whether positive or negative); learning from results (the resulting experience either encourages or forces reflection); stepping to the edge (pastors learn when challenged to leave their comfort zones); managing the ministry (dealing with supportive or difficult ministry cultures); and creating change (learning from a situation that calls for action). McKenna et al. (2007) suggests that pastors “take time to capture the learning after the impact” (p. 198), recognize God's grace in the midst of elevated pressure particularly when they feel “weak,” allow themselves to be challenged to grow in everything, and face the reality of what the situation requires (McKenna et al. 2007). In regards to change and development, “when a pastor turns toward a situation and faces

it head on, some sort of change will usually result, and this change can be the key factor in making this a key event in the pastor's development" (McKenna et al., 2007, p. 198). Capturing lessons and continuing development requires that a pastor looks to learn from every experience, looks around to draw on others, looks inside to know who they are and why they lead, and looks up to God's role in the situation (McKenna et al. 2007). Aiding in the continual development of pastors who experience family stress, challenging work/life conflict and imbalance due to the nature of their work is critical for longevity (Meek et al., 2003).

Spiritual Practices that Contribute to Wellbeing or Burnout

Chandler (2010) suggested that certain spiritual practices affect a pastor's wellbeing and other factors contribute to burnout. First, nonstop ministry demands, role ambiguity, busyness, intrusions and steady "people pleasing" impacts their overall health (Chandler, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Miner, 2007; Morris & Blanton, 1994). Secondly, a pastor's identity and value are often mistakenly measured by numerical church growth (Chandler, 2010). Thirdly, being in supportive relationships, having accountability, and personal coaching play a significant role in maintaining emotional and spiritual health (Buhrow, 2012; Chandler, 2010). Lastly, marriage relationships specifically impact a pastor's sense of effectiveness and influence as well as spirituality and life-balance.

Based on the findings of the study, the following themes emerged as factors that affect a pastor's wellbeing: devotional time, having time to rest (e.g., taking time off, attending a retreat), excessive ministry demands, role ambiguity, chronic busyness,

personal identity, measuring success, needing relational support/accountability to maintain a sense of balance and nurturing spousal and family relationship (Chandler, 2010). When a pastor becomes imbalanced the psychological phenomenon called burnout emerges (Chandler, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; Miner, 2007; Morris & Blanton, 1994). In the literature, burnout is described as emotional exhaustion, fatigue, depersonalization and the lack of personal accomplishment (Buys & Rothmann, 2010; Chandler, 2008/2010; Evers & Tomic, 2003; Golden & Ciarrocchi, 2004; Lewis, Turton, & Francis, 2007; Miner, 2007; Parker & Martin, 2011). Chandler (2010) contends that burnout may result from a loss of vision that affects a pastor's perception of himself and God. In an attempt to offer hope to the pastor, "spiritual practices such as the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, Scripture reading, journaling, intentional rest-taking, renewing fellowship with others, and coaching and/or accountability relationships were a deterrent to burnout" (Chandler, 2010, p. 7). The spiritual life of the pastor is greatly connected to leadership behavior (Hall, 1997).

Maintaining Resiliency

Meek et al. (2003) suggest that two factors are important for pastors to maintain resiliency – (a) intentionality and (b) seeing God as important. Pastors with healthy marriages incorporate effective boundaries to deal with time pressure, prioritize family life, and refuse to appease expectations of the "perfect" family. They intentionally and unapologetically maintain personal independence from their role as pastor (Meek et al. 2003). Additionally, pastors are intentionally connected. Their primary social support system is their spouses (Meek et al., 2003). A pastor's spouse contributes to a pastor's

health and wellbeing by “praying together, praying for one another, and reading the Bible together” (p. 4). The pastor’s wife speaking up when work is becoming out of balance is important as well.

In addition to the pastor’s wife, God should be important. First, having a sense of calling, the pastor understands that God calls a pastor to ministry instead of the pastor choosing the profession (Lee, 2010; Meek et al. 2003; Sison, 2006). Secondly, understanding God’s truth and communicating it, facilitates the maintaining of their relationship with God, which sustains faith and hope (Meek et al., 2003). Resting personal identity in God allows pastors to face their weaknesses (Christopherson, 1994; Meek et al. 2003). Thirdly, believing that despite weaknesses and failures, God will continue to advance and sustain them was beneficial. An awareness of human sinfulness and God’s grace sustains pastors (Meek et al., 2003).

Intrapersonal, Family and Community Forms of Care

McMinn et al., 2005, proposes three forms of care to assist in fostering resiliency in pastors: (a) intrapersonal care; (b) family care; and (c) community care. Intrapersonal coping (care) is when a pastor cares for himself. Typically this form of coping is done alone (McMinn et al. 2008; McMinn et al. 2005). The subtle competition between pastors isolates them and prevents the benefit of accountability (McMinn et al., 2005; Sison, 2006). Isolation and withdrawal leads to greater anxiety and burnout (Miner, 2006). Although pastors need friendships, they struggle building strong relationships outside of their families. They are falsely perceived by some as not needing friends based on their “pedestal” position as pastor (McMinn et al., 2005). Pastors need

friendships. However, pastors do rely heavily on spiritual resources, such as, prayer, study, and Scripture meditation (Grosch & Olsen, 2000, Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McMinn et al. 2008; McMinn et al. 2005; Miner 2006). Other forms of intrapersonal care are taking time off, setting specific boundaries, hobbies and exercise.

Family care contends that the marital relationship is vital (McMinn et al., 2005).

According to McMinn et al., 2005,

Given the difficulty clergy and clergy spouses have in developing close friendships outside marriage, it seems likely that marriage takes on a special significance. The marriage relationship is often the sole refuge where deep emotions can be expressed, struggles at work disclosed, and ambivalence about the pastoral role discussed (, p. 578).

Depending on a “narrow” support system runs the risk of failing because if the spouse is in distress, emotionally fatigued or burned out, then she is not able to fulfill her role. If the pastor depends on his own spiritual resources (intrapersonal) for support, if he becomes disillusioned or depressed, he has no resources. The pastor needs to diversify coping resources (McMinn et al. 2005).

Community care is the social support that a pastor receives from outside the family – friendships, counseling, mentoring, and support groups (McMinn et al. 2008). Although time constraints contribute to a lack in friendships among pastors, they value accountability relationships as a means to prevent exhaustion and stress (Chandler, 2008; Meek et al. 2003). Pastors appreciate support from non-competitive pastors (McMinn et al., 2005; Sison, 2006). Additionally, pastors are likely to pursue one-on-one friendships with mentors or accountability partners (McMinn et al. 2005). Congregations that avoid putting the pastor on a “pedestal” and “boxing” him in to behaving a certain way, free pastors to pursue friendships within the church (McMinn et al. 2005).

Although the research on pastors pursuing counseling is limited, interpersonal issues related to burnout were addressed with services offered by denominations (Buhrow, 2012). However, many pastors are not aware of “trusted” counseling resources or are in fear of exposure (Buhrow, 2012). Private organizations exist to provide individual counseling services to pastors with emotional issues or dealing with a dysfunctional church (Wallace et al. 2011).

Mentoring pastors is effective and appreciated (McMinn et al., 2005). Pastors need relational support, accountability and encouragement for longevity and work-life balance (Chandler, 2010). Mentors provide pastors with spiritual strength and a supportive relationship (Buhrow, 2012; Chandler, 2010). The removal of the “authority” structure makes this relationship helpful.

Denominations are providing retreats, conferences, counseling and support groups for pastors to enhance their mental health (Buhrow, 2012). Protestant health programs exist to offer support to pastors but are working in isolation of one another (Wallace et al. 2011). Having a centralized way of accessing these programs is necessary to maintain the health of pastors and prevent them from vacating the ministry.

As pastors contemplate leaving the ministry, resilience and adjustment strategies are necessary. Healthy coping and personal methods to learn from ministry experiences increase job satisfaction and sustain pastors over the lifetime of service (Wallace et al. 2011). Additionally, spiritual practices, intrapersonal, family and community enhance resilience and aid in the overall health of pastors.

The Relationship between the Existing Literature and the Proposed Study

In this section, the existing literature that asserts the stressful nature of being a pastor, demands of ministry, lack of support and coping strategies will be explored. Additionally, the gaps in the literature will be uncovered in order that the knowledge of coping and resilience can be broadened. This will unearth a relationship between the existing literature and the proposed study.

Literature indicates that empirical studies of clergy uncover not only the benefits of being in pastoral ministry but also the stressful realities of the profession (Buhrow, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee, 2010; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McMinn et al. 2008; McMinn et al. 2005; Miner 2006). Among Protestant clergy, many reported emotional, familial, social and physiological stress that spanned throughout their entire career (Lee & Gilbert, 2003). The predominant area of research pertaining to clergy deals with identifying clergy stressors and the outcome of burnout. The purpose for this proposed study is to contribute to our knowledge of the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities in hopes of ensuring longevity in pastoral ministry. A contributing factor to longevity in pastoral ministry is clergy stress. Unfortunately, “clergy stress has received most of the empirical attention without the benefit of simultaneous consideration of resource and perception factors, and studies of the level of social support provided to those in ministry are relatively few” (Lee & Gilbert, 2003, p. 249).

Additionally, according to Morris and Blanton (1994),

Stress research has historically focused on the impact of external stressors that create long-term demands on the family. Stress research that has examined the impact of work-related stressors on marital satisfaction and family functioning has typically concluded that these stressors impede the achievement of a satisfying balance between work and family life (Morris & Blanton, 1994, p. 189)

Many studies focused on the stressful character of the profession (Buhrow, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003; McMinn et al. 2005; Morris & Blanton, 1994).

Much of the research literature regarding stress seeks to offer an understanding of the demands of ministry, assess the lack of or need for support, and consider specific coping strategies. It appears that clergy research is limited to providing descriptors of stressors in hopes of preventing vulnerability to stress and its long-term effects.

According to McMinn et al. (2005),

Though much of the psychological research on clergy has been focused on impairment, burnout, and misconduct, the reality is that most clergy function day after day in a relatively stressful occupation, and find ways to adapt and even thrive in their work (McMinn et al. 2005, p. 564).

Presently, there is a visible research gap in the literature and a subsequent opportunity for assisting pastors in coping with stress in ministry. With the majority of literature focused on reducing clergy stressors, there is a need to explore how pastors respond when ministry idealism dissipates. Understanding how a pastor maintains resilience in an unexpected ministry reality is important. When idealism fades how do clergy accurately perceive their reality and experience resilience in the ministry? An alternative thought and consideration is “instead of trying to help pastors by merely reducing the occurrence of external stressors, we should pay more attention to the meanings that pastors give their experiences” (Lee & Gilbert, 2003, p. 255). How can a pastor learn from his experience and develop positive coping strategies, which provide development and longevity?

Given that the literature recognizes (a) the idealized expectations of pastors entering and serving in the ministry (b) the demands, stressors and unexpected realities

within the ministry, and (c) the need for coping, and resilience resources for pastoral longevity, this study is clearly indicated. This study will attempt to advance the knowledge of coping/resilience in light of personal expectations and ministry realities (Buhrow, 2012; McMinn et al. 2008; Meek et al. 2003). It is the hope of this researcher that this specific study will provide pertinent data that assists pastors in experiencing resiliency. This knowledge will support pastors, spouses, children, counselors, denominations and seminaries in understanding resilience in pastoral ministry.

Within the existing literature, the stressful realities of ministry and burnout, and the lack of support and coping strategies among pastors create opportunities for further research. Additionally, when idealism fades and unexpected ministry realities exist, pastors need ways to cope in order to remain in the ministry. Advancing the knowledge of resilience is asserted in this proposed study.

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature pertaining to a pastor's idealistic expectations, ministry realities and resilience. First, idealized expectation of pastors were examined. Secondly, the ministry realities and expectations of the life of pastors were identified. Thirdly, pastor resilience in light of idealized experience and realities of the ministry was explored. Finally, the relationship between the existing literature and the proposed study was reiterated.

Pastors have high idealistic expectations upon entering into the ministry. Many expectations are known; however, much is unknown. Idealism creates high optimism for fulfilling their calling, achieving ministry effectiveness and success, handling stressful

demands, and balancing family and congregational expectations. Narcissistic characteristics within pastors influence expectations and create new challenges for coping and resilience.

Pastors are expected by congregants to be superhuman (Rolfe, 2007). However, pastors experience stressful time demands, long hours, heavy workloads, personal criticism and presumptive expectations (Proeschold-Bell & McDevitt, 2012). Entering ministry, a pastor's optimism is faced with unexpected ministry realities and a lack of coping strategies to ensure longevity in ministry.

As a pastor serves under the satisfaction of fulfilling his calling within a context of inordinate demands, support structures are needed. However, pastors find themselves coping alone. With few close relationships, the pastors who are married confide heavily in their spouses; however, they are typically isolated from their peers (Buhrow, 2012).

While coping alone, expectations for his family create boundary ambiguity. Additionally, pastors' wives are expected to serve as a part of a "two-for-one" deal (Murphy-Geiss, 2011). Pastors' kids feel the pressure and expectations of the congregation as well. Lacking clear boundaries, intrusions seek to hinder family cohesion and threaten the establishment of healthy expectations.

As a pastor seeks to cope, the vision that he possessed upon entering the ministry becomes conflicting with his ministry reality. As personality clashes, power struggles and unrealistic congregational expectations mount, and pastors exit the ministry due to vision conflict churches are left without adequate pastoral leadership (Pector, 2005). The initial, anticipated outcome of ministry wanes for the pastor and discouragement and despair settles in.

Additionally, the pastor's mental and physical health is to be considered. Maintaining resilient mental and physical health aids in the overall functioning of the pastor. If the pastor has limited means and strategies to function, then his family, congregation and personal well-being suffers.

With limited research on resilience and coping and pastors leaving the ministry, resilience and adjustment strategies are eminent. However, given the narcissistic tendencies of many pastors, unique coping strategies and additional research in this area is needed (Hill/Yousey, 1998). Coping strategies can enhance longevity in pastors.

In addition to coping strategies, the health of a pastor's marriage impacts resilience. Since wives are the primary social support, this relationship is vital. The health of the marriage impacts the wellbeing of the pastor (McMinn et al. 2008; Morris & Blanton, 1994).

Spiritual practices have contributed to the health of pastors and the lack of them has led to pastoral burnout. A pastor's understanding of God's truth and resting his personal identity in God is important. Prayer is critical. Spiritual renewal is vital to the care of a pastor (Chandler, 2008).

The exploration of intrapersonal, family, and community care asserts the need for friendship, accountability and mentor relationships for the pastor (Buhrow, 2012; Chandler, 2010). Additionally, providing counseling services and support groups for pastors may enhance overall functioning (Buhrow, 2012). Offering care to the pastor attempts to assist him in maintaining resilience..

Spencer et al. (2012) identified a need for future research exploring the phenomena of personal expectations and ministry realities. Increasing remediation

between what a pastor expects and what is experienced contributes to the continuance in ministry (Spencer et al. 2012). This study will attempt to expand the literature by investigating, personal idealism and ministry reality.

The next chapter presents a detailed description of the research design that will be used for this proposed study. It will also describe the methods used.

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

The review of literature in Chapter II revealed that pastors experience high idealism and unrealistic expectations upon entering into ministry. It further clarified that pastors have anticipated and prepared for realities that affect their personal resilience and longevity in the ministry. Furthermore, leaving the ministry and developing unhealthy ways of coping, devoid of practices contributing to their wellbeing, hinder resilience. The review of literature establishes that there are exiguous studies regarding the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities. Not one study was found that addressed the experience of resilience as it relates to pastoral expectations and reality. Additional research is needed.

In this chapter, the methods implemented for this phenomenological inquiry are explained in detail. Initially, a description of goals and objectives of qualitative research and phenomenological inquiry are presented. Subsequently, the rationale for electing the principle research questions constructing this study will be reconfirmed. Next, an explanation of the methods used for the selection of participants and the implementation of proper ethical procedures, methods used for the collection, processing and analysis of data will be presented. Lastly, the steps used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings will be asserted.

Designing a Qualitative Study

Qualitative research attempts to “describe the complex nature of humans” and specifically how they discern their own experiences within a specific social context (Portney & Watkins, 2000, p. 272). It affords the data to be gathered and organized into

themes in order to be subjectively analyzed (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Additionally, it involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to understanding the subject matter (Creswell, 2013).

The comprehensive goal of qualitative research is to examine experiences using a holistic approach to determine the “true nature of reality” (Portney & Watkins, 2000, p. 272). The researcher “builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 249). Furthermore, qualitative research provides rich descriptors of the complex nature of humans and how they perceive their own experiences (Portney & Watkins, 2000). As previously mentioned, the researcher implemented a qualitative method of inquiry to expand the research in understanding the phenomenon between pastoral expectations and ministry realities.

Research Design

Qualitative research designs provide understanding, insight and development of theory about the observed phenomenon (Portney & Watkins, 2000). Such designs give depth to the research, and provide the reader with an “empathetic understanding” of the subject matter by using “thick description” (p. 78), which helps in the comprehending of experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). It provides a framework for descriptive discovery.

This study relied on the phenomenological tradition of inquiry in qualitative research. Phenomenology captures meaning from complex analysis and is constructed from a social context (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological inquiry seeks to gain a deeper

understanding of the meaning of a person's experiences. It allows for a discovery of what a person has experienced and lived through, and the meaning that is associated with the everyday experiences (van Manen, 1990). Phenomenology attempts to obtain insightful descriptions of how an individual interprets the world "pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). It brings the reader in direct contact with the world of the participant researched. In a broad sense, it is a "philosophy or *theory of the unique*" as its interest is in what is "essentially not replaceable" (van Manen, 1990, p. 7). Additionally, according to van Manen (1990),

Phenomenology appeals to our immediate common experience in order to conduct a structural analysis of what is most common, most familiar, most self-evident to us. The aim is to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the world (p. 19).

With this in mind, along with the researcher's passion to understand personally the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities, the study will contribute to the existing research by exploring the common experience of idealism among church planting pastors. As previously mentioned, the primary research questions framing this study are:

1. How do select protestant church planting pastors describe their experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities?
2. How do the participants describe the negative impact of ministry realities associated with the dissipation of idealism?
3. How do participant responses compare and contrast?

Selection of Participants

The participants in a study must be individuals who have experienced the phenomenon being explored (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, they must be willing to “articulate their conscious experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 111). The data for the phenomenological inquiry are to be gathered from a group of individuals selected because of their likelihood of experiencing the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). With this in mind, the participants of this study were selected because they have most likely experienced the phenomenon of interest, deeply understood the impact, are willing to participate in an extensive in-depth interview, are open to be recorded and will give permission for contents to be published in a dissertation (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants in this study were selected through the use of purposeful, criteria sampling to ensure that all the participants have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). A diverse sampling was sought based on varying ages, marital status, years in ministry and/or the pastorate, church size experience, and educational and occupational background prior to starting the church plant.

Snowball sampling was leveraged as an effective tool to gather information on and access to hidden populations with specific characteristics (Creswell, 2013; Noy, 2006). Snowball sampling entails asking participants to suggest other potential participants, who are then asked to suggest other research participants (Heckathorn, 2011; Noy, 2006). An evolving “snowball effect” takes place as part of the sampling procedure (Noy, 2006). Through a succession of referrals, the sample population evolved in an accumulative dimension (Heckathorn, 2011; Noy, 2006). Snowball sampling is useful when participants with “specific characteristics are hard to locate” (Portney & Watkins,

2000, p. 149). Snowball sampling provided no more than ten participants in order to avoid repetitive data (Creswell, 2013). These procedures became the basis of selecting protestant church-planting pastors.

All participants were male Protestant pastors, serving in full-time pastoral ministry for a minimum of six months. Church planting pastors with churches of six months to five years old were selected as participants in this study. Since most pastors leave the ministry within the first several years of pastoral ministry (Miner, 2007), selecting participants with churches of six months to five years old provided an opportunity to explore idealism, ministry realities and existing coping strategies. Participants were all first time church planters ranging in age between 25-53 years old. Participants were married to a Christian woman and vary in years of marriage. Each participant was interviewed.

Data Collection

In-depth interviewing is the primary data collection method in phenomenological research (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Interviews provide a disciplined process for gathering data (van Manen, 1990). Individual, face-to-face, in-depth interviews allow a narrative of lived experience (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Interviews encourage the interviewee to openly share rich descriptions of the phenomena (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). While in-depth interviewing was the primary data collection method, other methods of collecting data were used, including a demographic survey, journals, and diaries (Rudestam & Newton, 2001; van Manen, 1990). For the sake of triangulation, participants were asked to share relevant personal

writings and journals that unearth the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Roberts, 2006).

Triangulation is a process of using “multiple perceptions to clarify meaning” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 72). This was the procedure of interviewing for data collection (Creswell, 2013; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; van Manen, 1990).

Prior to each in-depth interview, the researcher addressed any questions regarding participation in the research process via the phone and then had them sign an Informed Consent for Participation in the Research Study, which was emailed to the participant (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The Informed Consent Agreement (see Appendix A) explained the goals and objectives of the study, the methods to be executed, and the risks associated and the issue of confidentiality (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). Each person who signed the informed consent was invited to participate in this study.

The interview agreement to be used in this particular phenomenological inquiry was designed in a conversational format from a prepared interview guide (see Appendix B). With a focus on the research questions, the interview ascertains data specific to answering these questions (van Manen, 1990). Data saturation was the goal after the ten participants were interviewed.

The in-depth interview was one and a half to two hours (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; van Manen, 1990). The interviews were face to face, which allowed the researcher to establish rapport with the participants and obtain a comprehensive collection of data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To ensure that every qualified participant was interviewed, the researcher was prepared to conduct phone interviews if face to face meetings were not possible due to geographic limitations (Creswell, 2013). However, the goal of the researcher was to interview each participant face to face.

The names of each participant were substituted with pseudonyms to guard their personal identity (Rudestam & Newton, 2001). The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary. If they desired to not participate, they were freely allowed to forgo the opportunity. Additionally, each in-depth interview and conversation was recorded using a high quality digital recording device, and then professionally transcribed (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Each digital recording was secured in a safe location prior to transcribing (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In addition, field notes were taken during the in-depth interviews and during the day of each interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2013; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Field notes were summarized and later coded (Creswell, 2013).

All in-depth interview recordings were coded and secured in a confidential location (Roberts, 2006). Recordings were mailed to a professional transcriptionist who transliterated all recordings in order to create verbatim transcripts (Roberts, 2006; van Manen, 1990). After completion, the transcriptionist sent the researcher all transcripts and digital-recordings (Creswell, 2013).

All physical participant data (notes, digital-recordings, and transcripts) were kept in a locked filing cabinet. After each data collection event, all information (typed transcripts, debriefing notes, handwritten notes, and digital-recordings) were contained in a secure location in a heavy-duty envelope (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). Backup copies of digital-recordings were stored in a separate secure location. The digital-recording data was guarded and destroyed after analysis was complete (DiCicco-Bloom, Crabtree, 2006). All other participant information will be

stored in a secure file cabinet for at minimum three-years after the completion of this research study.

Data Processing & Analysis

Qualitative data analysis occurs synchronous with data collection and provides an emerging and comprehensive understanding of the research questions (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Analyzing phenomenological data takes place divested from any prejudicial experiences from the researcher (Creswell, 2012). In order to prevent hindrances to data analysis, the researcher used bracketing, horizontalization, and clusters to allow for saturation (Moustakas, 1994). First, the researcher instituted “bracketing” in order to suspend and “set aside all prejudgments” (Creswell, 2012, p. 52). Secondly, “horizontalization” was used to “list every significant statement,” which is relevant to the topic (Creswell, 2012, p. 235). All statements and themes that are significant to this study were analyzed and investigated for meaning (Creswell, 2012). Thirdly, the researcher grouped the statements into clusters with like meaning (Creswell, 2012). Lastly, “saturation” was complete when no new themes or categories emerged (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). After the integrated findings were determined, an exhaustive description of the phenomenon was conveyed (Beck, 2009).

Following the interview, the researcher listened to the digital-recording “while reading the transcriptions to ensure accuracy during interpretation” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 319). The researcher read and edited all transcripts (van Manen, 1990). Through member checking, the participant verified that the transcribed documentation is consistent with his experiences (Pitney, 2004). After the transcriptionist reviewed the

recordings, and completed the verbatim transcript, it was mailed to the participant. If discrepancies and inconsistencies were identified, clarification was made (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Creswell, 2013).

As the researcher repetitively read the transcripts, themes were identified and analyzed to determine “structures of experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 79). Focusing on research questions assisted the researcher in identifying themes (van Manen, 1990). Themes were grouped and sorted “recognizing that a single unifying meaning of the experience exists” (Creswell, 2013, p. 55; van Manen, 1990) and emerged during the process of data analysis. During the reading of the transcripts, key words, themes, and phrases were manually highlighted in color. Specifically, words, themes and phrases related to personal expectations, ministry realities and resilience were highlighted. A detailed iterative process was instituted once research was conducted and data was collected.

As findings are described, interpreted and meaning identified, the discussion amalgamated the data by answering the research questions, demonstrating relationships with the literature and preconceived assumptions prior to the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

Ethical Procedures

The researcher is “morally bound” to conduct research in a way that will not harm the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2001). Throughout the research process, the researcher remained attentive to ethical issues. The confidentiality of the participants

was informed and granted prior to the conducting of the interviews. At the conclusion of the interview, all participant information was securely stored in a locked file cabinet.

If a participant experienced emotional or mental disturbances or trauma, the researcher carefully and compassionately processed the moment with him. If there was an inability to facilitate adequate support, the researcher informed and sought support from a mental health professional or primary care physician at the permission of the participant.

Ensuring Trustworthiness of the Findings

Throughout this study, the researcher attempted to establish credible, dependable and transferable work (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Creswell, 2013; Nutt & Morrow, 2008). Trustworthiness is the process of establishing validity and reliability of qualitative research (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Guangming, 2007; Nutt & Morrow, 2008; Pitney, 2004; Roberts et al. 2006; Shento, 2004). Ensuring that the findings are an “authentic reflection of the personal and lived experiences of the phenomenon” is essential (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). Within qualitative research, issues of validity and reliability can be addressed despite the subjective nature of the data (Portney & Watkins, 2000). In this study, thick descriptions, triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing were used to establish trustworthiness (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Guangming, 2007; Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Nutt & Morrow, 2008; Pitney, 2004; Roberts et al. 2006; Shento, 2004).

Within this study, rich descriptions of the participants’ experiences and the contexts in which they occurred were used (Morrow, 2005). A detailed description of the context and specific circumstances pertaining to the phenomenon was recorded (Curtin &

Fossey, 2007). These thick descriptions unearthed multiple layers of culture and context that may be buried in their experiences (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Morrow, 2005; Shento, 2004). Additionally, the researcher used triangulation to cross check information or findings to secure an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon in this study (Curtin & Fossey, 2007; Pitney, 2004). In-depth interviews, observations and field notes were the data sources used to enhance the validity of the qualitative research (Crescentini & Mainardi, 2009). To affirm whether the data analysis was “congruent with participants’ experiences,” member-checking was used (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 92). Member checking gives participants opportunity to verify the accuracy of the results with their experiences (Pitney, 2004). The participants determine whether their words match their original intentions (Shento, 2004). The researcher will give the participants interviewed the opportunity to peruse and amend their transcripts (Kitto et al. 2008). Lastly, a faculty advisor conducted regular peer reviews of analyzed data to discuss and consider alternative approaches and/or uncover flaws in the researcher’s proposed direction (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008; Shento, 2004). Having a qualified colleague who is not involved in the study frequently discuss where and how the data was generated with the researcher ensures trustworthiness (Hunt, 2011; Shento, 2004). As discussions take place, the “investigator helps to broaden and fine-tune the researcher’s assumptions and interpretations through observation and asking questions” (Pitney, 2004; Shento, 2004). The peer reviewer functions as a “Devil’s advocate,” scrutinizing each area of the study (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 100). The meetings provided collaborative opportunities, whereby the investigator’s developing ideas and thoughts can help the researcher uncover his own biases and preferences (Shento, 2004).

Summary

This study utilized the phenomenological inquiry in an attempt to investigate the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities among church planting pastors. Ten pastors participated in the study. Each pastor was given a pseudonym, and individual interview transcripts were recorded and professionally transcribed. The data was analyzed, categorized and integrated into a comprehensive display of the themes and descriptions of all the participants. Thick descriptions, triangulation, member checking and peer debriefing were all used to ensure trustworthiness of the findings.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to further understand the experience of resilience in light of the personal expectations and ministry realities among church planting pastors. This study attempted to investigate the individual experiences of pastors and the negative impact of their ministry realities associated with the dissipation of idealism. The research design used was qualitative research.

In qualitative research, an exploration of lived experience is conducted in a thoughtful way, reflecting on the significance of the phenomena studied (van Manen, 1990). Specifically, phenomenological research reawakens the lived significance of an experience expanding it in a robust manner (van Manen, 1990). It allows for in-depth insight into the lived experience.

For this study, the researcher collected qualitative data by conducting in-depth interviews. Participants in the study included ten church planting pastors. The data were coded, analyzed, and organized first by the research questions and then by categories, which guided the conceptual framework of the study. This chapter begins by presenting introductory portraits of the ten participants whose experiences were explored. Following the portraits, research question number one is addressed, which explicates the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities. Next, research question number two is presented, which clarifies the negative impact of ministry reality associated with the dissipation of idealism. Research question number

three is addressed throughout the findings, identifying themes among participants related to resiliency that are compared and contrasted.

Portraits of Individual Participants

This section presents the distinct stories of ten church planting pastors, Chip, Dale, Calvin, Randolph, Jerry, Bart, Thomas, Ted, Ralph and Drew (all pseudonyms) that formed this study. Eight of the ten participants, within this study, are paid full-time by their churches and two are bi-vocational. Every participant is the original church planter that started the church. All participants currently pastor in the Southeast United States.

The participants are Caucasian men with churches between 28 weeks and five years old. They are serving churches in size ranging from 55 to 500 people. They have been married from 4 to 23 years. They range in age from 29 to 53 years old. Each participant has graduated with a college degree. Nine participants have master's degrees from a seminary. Two participants have master's degrees from non-religious institutions.

The portraits of these participants were recorded and developed by the researcher (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Care has been taken to display an integral representation of each participant. Prior to the interview, participants previewed the questions and each was eager and enthusiastic about sharing and participating in the interview process. Participants invested themselves in sharing their candid, vivid, and heart-felt experiences. The topic of resiliency as it relates to personal expectations and ministry realities seemed to give each participant a joyful freedom to tell his story. Each participant seemed to enjoy sharing his story with raw honesty, some holding back emotions when sharing the depths of their pain. The authenticity was clearly visible among all participants.

The next section provides a portrait of each participant as it relates to the number of years married, number of children, highest degree earned, employment status, areas of enjoyment, calling to church planting, pre-church planting expectations, sources of greatest drain, measure of success, reasons for persevering in ministry, and recommendations for longevity in ministry.

Chip

Chip has been married for 13 years. He has two elementary aged children and a set of infant twins. He has a master's degree from a seminary and is paid full-time by the church he has planted. His church is 11 months old. His average church attendance per week is approximately 95 people. He enjoys being a pastor and loves meeting with people and hearing their hurts:

I love meeting with people and hearing what's hurting, what's making them hurt, and trying to help, and just trying to be there for them, listening, finding ways that I can just kind of how can I help walk you through this, I'm going to walk with you through this, because so many times they just, they don't have that, especially when they're hurting.

Chip felt called to plant his church to help hurting people. He mentioned,

I think I got the call to church plant, because all of these people were hurting, and it just didn't seem like there were – I thought about churches to send them to, and I couldn't find a church that I would want to send them to. The churches that I attended, they didn't fit in.

Chip expected that when he planted his church everyone would come, due to him having grown up in the community. However, the attendance waned and the lack of commitment among his members put pressure on him to handle most responsibilities. Additionally, Chip stated, "Most of my relationships are draining because of people's

expectations and my people pleasing.” He fought the temptation to believe that numbers are visual proof of success. He felt the weight of growing a church and providing for his family. The call and his love for people would not allow him to quit. He believed that longevity in ministry comes from having adequate finances, mentors and coaches, managing expectations, balancing family life and not eating junk food.

Dale

Dale has been married for seven years. He has two elementary aged children. He graduated with a master’s degree from a seminary and is bi-vocational. His church is 3 years old. His average church attendance per week is 300 people. He enjoyed starting things, seeing things grow, but is challenged by maintaining it [growth]:

I don’t know how to phrase that right, but seeing things continue to grow, because I feel like God has wired me as a starter, and this is the first time I started a church and I was able to get it off the ground, but then when the real work begins, that frustrates me...

Dale expected to be a mega-church pastor, but instead struggled with where his church was numerically:

I wanted celebrity “pastorism” but faced with my inadequacy; and I found that I was faced with my inattention to detail, and I found that I was faced with my sin, because ultimately, in a lot of ways, as I was doing this as a motivational factor for Jesus, I was twisting it with ego and fame, and so yeah.

He spoke candidly about his ego, pride, and desire for people to think he was great. He referred to himself as a people pleaser. However, Dale stated, “People excite me and drain me.” He wanted to be successful; but he measured success solely by seeing results. He has wanted to quit the ministry before, but did not want to fail. Dale believes that

having longevity in the ministry comes from maintaining the “fire in the belly, my calling, a healthy marriage, and that my kids still love Jesus.”

Calvin

Calvin has been married for eight and a half years. He has two elementary aged children. He graduated with a master’s degree from a seminary. Calvin is paid full-time by his church, which is 2 years old. His average church attendance per week is 180-190 people. He enjoys being a dad, sports, outdoors, fishing and hunting. Additionally, he enjoys seeing things grow, expand and become healthy. He desired to witness numerical growth and life change. However, prior to planting he expected that people would get the gospel and grow if his church offered ways to grow. Calvin stated, “If we had decent worship, biblical teaching, life groups, that people would get the gospel, would love the city and make disciples.”

Calvin is drained by administration and managing people. He struggled with balancing home life and ministry. Calvin never had numerical growth as a measure of success or health:

So I had no expectations that hey, we’re going to blow it up and, you know, that we’re going to have 500 people by X. I never said that, never had a goal of a numerical thing, because I think I’ve seen numerical growth be the sign indicator of health, and I just don’t buy it.

Calvin hasn’t quit the ministry because he believed God has called him to do what he is doing:

I’m convinced that if I was doing anything else, I would be 100% running in the opposite direction of what he’s called me to do. So the days I want to throw in the towel, I don’t go back to oh, we had an incredible service two months ago and

X amount happened, and we baptized X amount, and I go back to the reality that God called me to do this, and I want to be faithful to that.

Calvin believed that longevity in ministry comes from having a fully functioning, interdependent leadership team and knowing that his family has a healthy view of church.

Randolph

Randolph has been married for 23 years. He has two adult children still living at home. He graduated with a master's degree from a seminary. He is paid full-time by his church and belongs to a denomination. Currently, he has eight elders that serve as volunteers. His church is 5 years old. His average church attendance per week is 130 people. He enjoyed and felt called to preach the Word, mentor and disciple and visit members of his church. Prior to planting his church, he expected more support from the mother church where he served before starting his church. He was disappointed that the large mother church offered financial resources but no leadership manpower or structure:

But there also ended up being a little, not a small amount of tension, between – like the mother church didn't like the fact that so many people did go out, and then some of us were disappointed that some of the leaders didn't come out and really help us.

Randolph becomes discouraged by low church attendance numbers and feels like he competes for people with larger churches around his church:

The low in ministry, I'll tell you what my absolute low is right now, and that's a new thing, I'd say, in the last few years. Our people love this culture, and they're going to all the ballgames, and their kids are in all the club things, and they're gone too much. I mean, I just, I mean, literally, just had some e-mails with the elders because we have – it's not just this one bad Sunday where a lot of people are gone. It's just over this course of time, I realize probably half our people are going to be gone half the time, two out of four Sundays.

He stated, “If people aren’t at church, it feels like it’s my fault and it doesn’t make me feel good.” Randolph admitted to not prioritizing his ailing wife in the early days of ministry and regretted that she wasn’t interested in ministry right now.

Randolph admitted that he doesn’t know how to measure success. Randolph asks himself, “Why aren’t you quitting?” once per week. He has recently considered merging with a larger church. Nevertheless, Randolph believed that longevity in ministry came from “having a fellow minister couple or two,” developing his relationship with the Lord, and spending time “doing non-church stuff” like hobbies, golf, and gardening.

Jerry

Jerry has been married for four years. He has one toddler-aged child. He graduated with a master’s degree from a seminary. Currently, he is bi-vocational, but works full-time for the church, which is nine months old. His average church attendance per week is 55 people. He enjoyed gospel conversations and hearing about people serving each other.

Jerry felt called by God but questions his calling during difficult times. Prior to planting his church, he expected that the attendance numbers would be higher, people would be “sold out on discipleship” and that his church would start a movement. He felt financial pressure because his wife wants to come home with their four-year old child. He also felt pressure when attendance numbers are low and becomes drained by people’s lack of commitment:

It makes me frustrated. I guess, you know, if someone’s supposed to, you know, play a certain role at a gathering, or something, and they’re like, “I’m not feeling

great,” part of me’s like, “Just suck it up and come.” You know, “Just get here.” So it’s a let – it’s not very compassionate.

Jerry experienced a shifting perspective on how to measure success. He has redefined success as being faithful, as opposed to solely numerical growth. Jerry has not quit the ministry because of his clear call to pastor:

And why haven’t I quit. And, honestly, it really goes back to that all. That was – I so – the call was so clear that at that time I felt like God had never spoken to me before until that moment, you know, and I just remember it so vividly, so certain about it, and that’s probably why I haven’t quit...

He believed that longevity in ministry came from receiving consistent affirmation from God, a healthy relationship with his wife, a shifting definition of success, setting boundaries, and changing his expectations.

Bart

Bart has been married for 15 years. He has two middle school children. He graduated with a master’s degree from a non-religious institution. He serves and is compensated with full-time pay by his church. His church is three years old. His average church attendance per week is 300 people. He enjoyed ministry and seeing and knowing that people’s lives are changing, but struggled with the pressure to demonstrate progress:

I want to see, you know, people’s lives changed. I want to see people made new through Jesus, and growing in their faith. That is something that motivates me a lot. I also like to see progress being made. So this plateau, like for the last year, has really bugged me, and I know part of that’s pride in my life. You know, you want to be successful. Because the first thing anybody asks you when you see them, if you haven’t seen them in a while, is, “So how’s the church going?” You know, “How many are you running?” That’s the question that people ask. They don’t say, “How many people have received Christ?”

Bart felt like his church has experienced a plateau over the last several years. He tried to avoid the up and down seasons of tracking numbers by reminding himself of what God thinks of him:

I just have to remind myself what God thinks of me, and who I am in Christ, and the fact that my sufficiency doesn't come from how much we grow, or, you know, if something was, you know, cool this Sunday, or whatever the case may be. It's about the fact that I am valuable because of what Jesus did for me, and that's how God sees me, no matter how small or how big my church is.

Bart didn't know what to expect before planting a church and was not mentored to understand the challenges of church attendance and ministry expectations. He felt at times tempted by the desire to be successful.

So, you know, of course that temptation was always there, and you want, you know, part of me wants it to be big so that people think I'm successful, but I hope, I really hope that there's a genuine side of me that just wants to help as many people as I possibly can, and I think, you know, that is the case.

He hasn't quit the ministry because he felt he was supposed to be doing what he's doing. He believed that his identity in Christ, feeling he's where he is supposed to be, seeing lives changed and reaching the unchurched is why he's still pastoring. Bart believed that the keys for longevity in ministry are having boundaries in place, taking a day off and periodically unplugging from electronic devices. He shared, "I think probably having some boundaries in place, you know. I think the Friday thing definitely has helped, and I got that from my mentor in Georgia."

Thomas

Thomas has been married for 12 years. He has three elementary aged children. He earned his master's degree from a seminary. He serves on staff full-time with his

church with seven other people. His church is three years old with over 500 people in attendance weekly. He loved the church, relationships and meeting with people. He enjoyed teaching, preaching, shepherding people and strategic planning in the church.

He felt called to plant his church but expected support from the church that he served on staff with, prior to planting. Thomas shared, “When I started, my expectation was that it was going to be a plant out of that church.” When he told the pastor that he desired to plant his church, he was fired. His expectation prior to planting was that he would be supported by his former church:

It’s amazing. So expectations when we started were to plant out of there, and then, you know, once we got started where it was, honestly, wow. I just, and I mean this, I really was hoping that we could make it just a year or two. I remember him saying to me, “You know, if you stay in the city, people are going to think that you’re still connected here and that you’re my successor,” and I remember saying to him, “What do you want me to do?” I’m not kidding. I remember him saying, “Pack up your family and leave.” That was the quote.

Thomas relied on his wife and friends during hard times. He was drained when he did not have breaks in his preaching schedule and when he experienced difficult relationships. He believed his church is successful. Thomas shared, “Being successful is staying true to what you felt God was calling you to do.”

Thomas felt that he would only quit the ministry if he blew it relationally with the people he was leading with:

I don’t know completely, but if I lost relationship with—not just have a, you know, one hard moment or a one hard—but I think if multiple people around our leadership table—not just staff, but elders and key leaders, and relationships—if there were multiple kind of shipwrecks, then I think that would probably motivate me to want to, something’s wrong here with me, you know, I either need to quit, or figure something out. That would definitely make me want to.

Thomas' view of longevity in ministry was largely impacted by the health of his relationship with his wife. Additionally, finding a rhythm of how many times he preached would help him not to become drained as well as establishing sustainable systems and structures.

Ted

Ted has been married for ten years. He has three elementary aged children. He earned a master's degree from a non-religious institution. He is paid full-time by his church and belongs to a denomination. He has an apprentice that serves with him as a volunteer. His church is two and a half years old. His average church attendance per week is between 55-100 people. He worked really long hours, which affected his marriage. However, Ted shared, "She won't ever let me get away with being a workaholic."

Ted enjoyed entrepreneurial books, fishing and starting things. He liked to start things, pass it on to someone else, and try something else new:

I love starting things. That's one of the things I realized that I kind of have an entrepreneurial sort of thing, so launching something that starts and getting it at least part of the way down the road to where it looks—at least superficially—like a success, really excites me, but then I'm pretty quick to pass those things off to other people and try something new.

Ted was wrestling with whether he wanted to be a church planter long-term. Prior to planting his church, he expected that he would have a church for "non church-goers"; however, he has not seen that happen yet. He believed that those that were not following Christ would follow him. Ted had a genuine heart for lost people but is challenged with

how to disciple troubled people. He wanted people to get better but he does not know how to help them. Additionally, Ted is drained by tedious work and parenting:

Tedious things drain me. I mean, honestly, in some ways that's why parenting is hard for me, because it requires so much slow and steady wins the race sort of an approach if you're really going to go after your kids' hearts rather than just their behavior.

Ted confided in his apprentice for encouragement during difficult and stressful seasons of ministry. He has considered quitting and asking his wife for a job in her business. Yet, Ted believed that the keys to having longevity in ministry begins with having a ministry peer as well as a strong relationship with your wife, transparency with peers, and ambition and drive.

Ralph

Ralph has been married for 14 years. He has one teenager, two elementary aged children, and a newborn. He earned his master's degree from a seminary. He is paid full-time by his church, which is about 28 weeks old. His average church attendance per week is approximately between 130-140 people. Ralph considered himself the main person who carried the workload of ministry within his church.

Ralph became a believer at 36 years old after being a successful business owner who earned millions but lost it all. He worked in his church with the mindset that Christians have limited time to work before Jesus returns. He believed that eternal rest is enough motivation to relentlessly work in the ministry now. He shared, "I'm going to have eternal rest. I know whose feet I'm going to sit at. I'm going to drink from the cup in His hand. I'm going to lay on His chest and breathe for eternity."

His life was ministry. His entire family was engaged in the relentless work of the ministry. Ralph shared, “It’s just what God has put on me.” He loved seeing God work. He stated, “Well I just love seeing God work, and that is just where it’s at. Seeing God moving amongst His people, seeing God moving in my life, seeing people struggle with who Jesus is.”

Prior to church planting he had no expectations other than what he was doing. Ralph shared, “God called me to it, and he’s building it as I’m here. He didn’t call anyone else to it. He called me and my family.” Ralph was excited about people meeting Jesus, but drained by fruitless “Christians” who do not know what they believe:

What drains me, is the people who say, “Oh I believe in Jesus,” but they’ve never challenged it. They just say, “Oh,” – “Well when did you accept Christ?” “Oh, I’ve always known.” “Well what’s the fruit of your life in Christ?” “Well, I don’t really know.”

He was committed to “chasing after God.” He defined “chasing after God” as seeing God work, obeying God and doing whatever God wanted him to do.

Ralph believed that success had nothing to do with numbers. He shared, “Success is obedience.” He was convinced that he would never quit the ministry and that he would not pastor any longer when “it stops being about God.”

Drew

Drew has been married for 11 years. He has four elementary aged children. He earned an undergraduate degree from a religious institution. He serves full-time and is paid by the church. His church is three years old. His average attendance per week is between 150-200 people.

He enjoyed making a difference in people's lives. Drew shared, "I want to do something memorable with my life." "I want to help shape the kingdom." Drew was committed to serving in ministry, but not at the expense of losing his family. He was committed to not being like his father, who was a successful businessman that abandoned his family. He wanted to reach thousands but not at the expense of his family.

Drew believed that resiliency came from his calling to the ministry. He reflected on his calling regularly. He desired to be a faithful steward of what God has given him. Prior to church planting, Drew shared, "I don't think I knew what I was getting myself into." However, he thought he would have a full-time paid staff in two years, have a church attendance of a couple hundred, and no financial pressures; however, every leader he has is bi-vocational, attendance numbers are low and fluctuating and his is plagued by financial pressures.

Drew became drained from relational pain. Drew shared, "Bringing people in too close and putting leaders into place too early without truly knowing them has caused the most heartache." He felt that this was the way to build the church but has learned that this was ineffective. He is also drained by the pressure and expectation to have a certain number of people at the church in a specific period of time to be considered successful. After several years he believed that success was doing what God said.

He has been tempted to quit and get a job in an established church given the resources that exist in comparison to what he has now:

The biggest temptation for me in church planting has not been to go sleep with another woman, it hasn't been to steal money from the church, it hasn't been – it's been to give up on what we're doing to go take an established church, because now there's some people, there's a big network, and I could find a job. I could have a staff, and I could love them and pay them to hang out with me, you know?

Drew shared, “I would quit if I didn’t prioritize my wife and kids.” He seemed determined to not fail his family as he felt his dad did. He believed longevity in ministry would depend on a pastor keeping his family a priority.

The research participants shared information regarding the years of marriage, how many children, highest educational degree, employment status, enjoyment in ministry, call to plant, brief explanation of expectations prior to planting, drains in ministry, measurements of success and keys to longevity. This information provided a basis of understanding for each participant. A summary of this data is presented in Table 4.1. Individual research participant information established a comprehensive demographic overview. The next section presents the first research question and subsequent themes exhumed from the research.

Table 4.1

Portraits of Individual Participants

	Chip	Dale	Calvin	Randolph	Jerry	Bart	Thomas	Ted	Ralph	Drew
# of yrs Married	13	7	8.5	23	4	15	12	10	14	11
Ages of Kids (in yrs)	8, 5, Infant Twins	2, 4	6, 20 mos.	19, 17	4, 2.5	14, 15	8, 6, 4	7, 5, 2	17, 12, 4, 8 mo.	4, 6, 8, 9
Degree	MAR	MAR	MDiv	MDiv	MA	MA	MA	MA	MAR	BA
Empl. Status	FT	Bi-Voc	FT	FT	Bi-Voc	FT	FT	FT	FT	FT
Church age (in yrs.)	11 mo.	3	2	5	9 mos.	3	3	2.5	28 wks	3
Avg Attendance	95	300	180-190	130	55	300	500	55-100	130-140	150 - 200

Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Reality

This section of the findings provides themes that emerged as a result of the participants describing their experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry reality. These themes include: Finding Refreshment and Emotional and Physical Rest, Reflecting on Identity in Christ, Enjoyment in Ministry, Not Quitting in Stressful Times, Managing Growth and Progress Pressure, Needed Relationships, and the Support of the Pastor’s Wife.

Finding Refreshment and Emotional and Physical Rest

Eighty percent of the participants take a personal day off to refresh themselves and take at least one to two weeks of vacation per year. The majority of the participants take one week of vacation per year. It appears that they protect these times of refreshment to cope with the persistent stress levels in ministry.

Seven of the ten participants proudly made reference to their commitment to protecting and fighting for their “Sabbath” day off. Dale shared, “Like I don’t violate my Sabbath.” He shared with great confidence his passion to maintain his commitment. He seemed to leverage his “Sabbath” as a way to stay refreshed but also balanced with family life and ministry. When he first started the church, he admitted, “that the church wasn’t healthy enough” for him to take time away from it but now it’s at the point where he can afford to take off. His initial statement about protecting his “Sabbath” seemed to be a result of possible neglect of it, poor choices and decisions made during the early years of the church plant. After hearing the remainder of his story, it possibly was a result of lessons learned.

Drew, who demonstrated a strong commitment to his wife and family, shared, “So we take Wednesdays off, and that’s just our Sabbath, and we really guard that. I make people mad because I say no all the time to Wednesdays.” His mentioning of “we” appeared to be based on a joint decision and commitment by him and his wife to enjoy Wednesdays together. When he stated this, it appeared clear that Drew and his wife were determined to partner together to guard this day.

Jerry tries to make Saturdays his Sabbath and Sunday afternoons are “just purely hanging out, laying around, taking a nap.” Bart, in a declarative tone shared, “Friday is

my day off, and then, you know, Saturday is usually time I can spend with my family. Of course, part of that day is spent studying for Sunday.” Bart apologetically mentioned that part of his family day possibly could be interrupted by sermon prep for Sunday. This could be the reason why he initially shared the previous statement about Fridays being his day off so declaratively. He possibly guards Fridays knowing that his Saturdays could be interrupted by sermon prep.

Chip says that he “tries to take Fridays off but it gets clouded because there is always a fire to put out somewhere.” He compared being a former staff pastor with church planting. He shared, “It’s been more difficult for me to secure it.” He blamed “the responsibility and burden” as a church planter for his inability to be consistent with taking off. Unlike Chip, Calvin simply confessed, “I really haven’t been faithful to take days off in the past two years, to be honest.” He says, “I think days off for a church planter is a foreign idea.” However, his leadership team is discussing with him ways to have a day off:

One of the unique things too about my new expectations and role, is that monthly the guys are holding me accountable to a day of Sabbath rest, where—and actually it’s tomorrow—to where I go get alone and just hear from God, pray, journal and write, just seek vision for my own heart and life, and it’s just something the guys want to see, and they’re holding me accountable to that, so I’ve got my other two lead guys that...

Until Calvin officially has his day off, he shared that he’s a “big reader” who spends Monday’s reading, which he calls his “Sabbath intentionality.” It appeared that “being a reader” in his own way excused or justified his need for a day off. Similar to Calvin, Randolph believes that people think that he does not take enough time off. He confesses, “I don’t take a specific day off:”

I think, over the past four, the first four years of planting this church, I just didn't feel like I had the freedom to take off, and just if it's going to happen, you have to be the one who makes it happen. But now, I mean, we're pretty well established, even though we don't have our own property, so I could take a day off, and my elders would welcome me. You now, they'd like to see me do that.

However, Randolph does feel the freedom to take half days off.

It appears that taking a day off is either mandatory for some, a fight for many, and something that doesn't appear possible for others. The participants that take a day off consider it part of their resiliency routine. The participants that "try" by fighting to have a day off seem to allow other things to interrupt their need for refreshment and rest. However, those that do not think it is possible seem to be too over-involved and over-tasked in the ministry to be able to get away from it or simply reasonably content with excusing the need for it away.

In addition to an "intentional Sabbath day," eight out of ten participants spoke with excitement, and a sense of commitment to their families, to take a vacation each year. Calvin, who struggles taking a day off, proudly shared that he and his family take two vacations per year. Randolph does not take vacations, but spends a lot of time with his kids, at times at the expense of spending time with his wife. Ralph seemed to dismiss his need for a yearly vacation by declaring: "everyday was a vacation." Based on his reality, it seemed like this statement was not possibly truthful. With the hours that he works, it appeared that "everyday" being a vacation was a contradiction to the struggles that he mentioned later in the interview. It seemed as if his previous statement might have been his attempt to justify not taking a vacation possibly due to the passion he has for what he is doing. However, it appeared that the participants who take a day off have

planned vacations each year as well. Although Calvin struggles with taking a day off, he seemed to take joy in taking his family away on vacation each year.

It appeared that the majority of participants protected and fought for their day off out of obedience to their “Sabbath”, as if there was a correlation between emotional and physical rest and obedience to God. The majority of participants demonstrated a commitment to yearly vacations out of a joyful obligation and commitment to their wives and families. It appeared that family vacations were easier to protect than days off. The participants appreciated emotional and physical rest, which was consistent with the literature for enhancing a pastor’s wellbeing (Chandler, 2010). Table 4.2 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. The next theme that emerged in reference to the research question Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities is the discipline of Reflecting Identity in Christ.

Table 4.2

Finding Refreshment & Emotional & Physical Rest

Pseudonym	“Sabbath” Day Off	Vacation
Chip	yes	yes
Dale	yes	yes
Calvin	no	yes
Randolph	no	no
Jerry	yes	yes
Bart	yes	yes
Thomas	yes	yes
Ted	yes	yes

Ralph	no	no
Drew	yes	yes

Reflecting on Identity in Christ

A persistent theme that emerged from each interview was the desire of each participant to refocus his identity in Christ. Participants appeared to define identity in Christ based on who they were in Christ and not what they sought to accomplish for Christ. They fought for their identity not to be defined by their ministry, success, or behavior. Identity appeared not to be in their gifts, position, performance or finances or lack thereof. Their identity seemed to be rooted in Christ’s righteousness. In Ephesians 2:3-14, “in Him” is repeatedly mentioned offering security and refuge for the Christian, not based on his personal righteousness but Christ’s work on the cross. Reflecting on identity in Christ means that the pastor is reminded through personal reflection that he is loved, forgiven, set-free, and guaranteed an inheritance apart from any personal activity.

Consistently reflecting on their identity in Christ appeared to be a key for dependence, discovery, and confidence in Christ and a resource to them for maintaining resiliency. Whether stressful seasons, finding significance in growth and numbers, or needing a perspective check on a bad day, seventy percent of the participants longed to depend, discover and find their identity in Christ to successfully continue in the ministry.

Each participant alluded to the fact that he desired that his identity remain in Christ. Coping and responding appropriately to expectations, demands, and stress, and having longevity in the ministry appeared to rest in the ability to remember who he was in Christ. Instead of intrinsic expectations becoming the measure of success lodged

within clergy identity (Christopherson, 1994), his identity was pursued in Christ.

Personal worth was relocated based upon how participants perceived that Christ valued them.

When describing the way he replenished himself spiritually, physically and emotionally, Dale appears to seek to be identified daily with his identity in Christ by spending time with Jesus Christ:

I mean, this is my place, so like, depending on the day whether I start praying or reading, it just depends, but I just, I come here and I close the door, and I talk to Him, and spend time in His Word. Sometimes I'll journal alongside of this. Sometimes I'll listen to music alongside of it. Sometimes I'll go in a completely different place just for some fresh perspective. But yeah, just pray and meditate on the Scripture reading.

Dale described his need for refreshment and perspective from Christ when he shared:

But, for me, I mean, that, just in the last year that has shaped me so much, my dependence on getting my refreshment and my confidence and my identity, just being rooted from—I just want to say my daddy—telling me what to do...

Jerry, who admitted to struggling with finding his identity in numerical growth, mentioned that for him to maintain longevity in ministry, he needed consistent affirmation from God. However, there seemed to be a desire for God's affirmation of the work, and not the affirmation of his identity in Christ. It appeared from what he stated, that he possibly defined affirmation based on what he did and not what Christ has done for him. However, he also mentioned that as his definition of success has changed, he's been more settled in his identity in Christ.

Bart felt the pressure of demonstrating progress to people. He shared, "We will try to remind ourselves of what God has already done, and what He is doing currently in the lives of people who are attending our church." Instead of condemning himself for not

being able to demonstrate higher attendance numbers, he celebrated what God had done for his church and in his people's lives. This statement and perspective appeared to be a healthy way of maintaining resilience. Additionally, in order to press through seasons of fluctuating attendance, Bart identified with his need for reflection on God:

I just have to remind myself what God thinks of me, and who I am in Christ, and the fact that my sufficiency doesn't come from how much we grow, or, you know, if something was, you know, cool this Sunday, or whatever the case may be. It's about the fact that I am valuable because of what Jesus did for me, and that's how God sees me, no matter how small or how big my church is.

This statement appeared to be the clearest, verbalized reflection of identity in Christ among the participants. Although, it seemed like he was discontent with his attendance numbers, he was content with his identity in Christ. This is worth mentioning even before his next statement regarding why he has not quit. Furthermore, this possibly gives credence to the health of his identity in Christ and the benefits that he receives from it.

Additionally, Bart shared that the reason that he has not quit the ministry is because of "who God says we are in Jesus." Bart also shared the importance of his wife in reminding him of his identity in Christ when he loses perspective in dealing with people in the church:

And then, again, my wife like reminded me of those things. You know, this is who you are in Christ, and you can't really control what other people do. You can just control kind of how you react to it.

From his previous statement concerning his wife's reminders, it appeared that he has given her freedom to hold him accountable to maintaining his identity in Christ. This seems to benefit his marital relationship as well.

It appeared that reflecting on and being reminded of who God says they are in Jesus offered encouragement to the participants. Additionally, reflecting on what God

has done seems to enhance resiliency. Instead of allowing situations, progress, and advancement to be a measuring tool for success (McKenna & Eckard, 2009), participants sought to find comfort, security, and sense of worth from their identity in Christ.

Spiritual practices that contribute to wellbeing and longevity in the ministry included not measuring success by numerical numbers (Chandler, 2010). Consistent with the literature on burnout, participants in this study challenged themselves to find their identity in Christ, not numbers. This focus appears to allow them to face their weaknesses and limitations with greater resiliency (Christopherson, 1994; Meek et al. 2003). Table 4.3 presents a summary of the findings related to this theme. Enjoyment in Ministry is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring the Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities.

Table 4.3

Reflecting on Identity in Christ

Pseudonym	Replenish Spiritually, Physically, and Emotionally
Dale	“spending time with Jesus”
Jerry	“affirmation of the work from God”
Bart	“remind myself of what God has done and is currently doing “reflecting on God”
Calvin	“discovering identity in the Gospel, and in Christ”
Thomas	“identity and refreshment from Christ”
Ralph	“God, keep things on my mind that are in your kingdom”
Chip	“my relationship with Christ motivates me to do

	well”
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Enjoyment in Ministry

Resiliency seemed to be associated with the participant’s excitement for helping people, witnessing people meet Jesus, and making a difference in people’s lives. These experiences give participants great joy. However, these same activities can also be a drain and source of discouragement for the participants. Chip went into depth about his love for meeting with hurting people:

I love meeting with people and hearing what’s hurting, what’s making them hurt, and trying to help, and just trying to be there for them, listening, finding ways that I can just kind of how can I help walk you through this. I’m going to walk with you through this, because so many times they just, they don’t have that, especially when they’re hurting.

With heart-felt compassion, Chip shared, “What excites me: sitting down with people and being able to be involved in their lives as God turns the light on, that excites me.”

However, Chip confessed, “I carry their burden with me.”

It burdens me, because until he turns the light on it’s tough to deal with their issues and their problems, and the mistakes they make, and the mistakes that even after sitting down with people they continue to go make.

If I don’t “turn off my brain... if I focus on it, it consumes me.”

Like Chip, Dale shared of his desire to see “broken people become found and grow.” Similarly to Chip, Dale shared, “People excite me and drain me:”

It excites me when they’re growing. It drains the crap out of me when they are, you know, I’m saying the same thing, and they’re still doing the same thing, or I’m telling them this is a good way to help you, and they just continue going down the road. Or you know what they need to do, but you can’t – I mean, you got to be a parent in some situations and let them fall down, and then say, “Well, let me pick you up.”

Both Chip and Dale deal with the drain by “casting their burdens” on God. Dale finds comfort in prayer whereby he is able to “pour out his problems.”

Calvin shared that he’s excited when “the light bulb comes on for people to embrace the gospel.” Unlike, Chip and Dale, his excitement seems to be more focused on a gospel motivation than helping people get better:

Whether I’m teaching and I, you know, you see a light bulb come on sitting across the table at coffee, and it begins, the aha moment. Not just when they say, “I get it,” but when they begin to orient their life around it; they begin to embody the truth of following Jesus for the sake of reproducing that. That, that’s why I do what I – that’s when I – I mean, it just keeps me going...

Calvin appeared less drained by people than Chip and Dale, based on his expectation that Jesus will change people and help them orient their lives to living for him. It could be possible that Calvin experiences greater freedom and less drain because he is not invested in people’s lives as the source of change. He appeared more drained by religious people who do not embrace who they are in Christ.

Ralph displayed a strong excitement with voice inflections, when asked about what excites him. Ralph repeatedly shared that he “just loves seeing God work, and that is just where it’s at... seeing God moving amongst His people, seeing God moving in my life, seeing people struggle with who Jesus is.” Ralph resonated with Calvin, in his disdain for religious people who don’t fully embrace Christ, yet call themselves Christians. Ralph exclaimed, “Working with sinners is draining:”

I love skepticism, because I think that’s a great basis to discover who Christ is, because too much time – and what drains me, is the people who say, “Oh I believe in Jesus,” but they’ve never challenged it. They just say, “Oh,” – “Well when did you accept Christ?” “Oh, I’ve always known.” “Well what’s the fruit of your life in Christ?” “Well, I don’t really know.” So those are answers that give us insight. So the same thing that pumps me and drives me, is the same thing that drains me,

you know, because if you're in God's presence, you ain't going to stand. You know, you're going to, it's going to wear you down.

Drew shared that he is driven and excited about “making a difference.” He wants to “do something memorable with his life and help shape the kingdom.” Although Drew was excited as well about people meeting Jesus, he wasn't drained by peoples' hurts and pains.

It appeared that having an excitement for people meeting Jesus is common among participants, but the difference among them is based on who carries the burden. Surrendering people's problems to Jesus seemed to offer the participants relief, while carrying burdens appeared to drain them. Additionally, trusting Jesus to help hurting people, offered support and enhanced resilience among the participants. Table 4.4 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Not Quitting in Stressful Times is the next theme that relates to the research question: Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities.

Table 4.4

Enjoyment in Ministry

Pseudonym	Excites	Drains
Chip	“love meeting with hurting people” “excited when God turns the light on”	people
Dale	“see broken people become found and grow” “excites me when they are growing”	people
Calvin	“excited when people embrace the gospel”	religious people
Ralph	“just loves seeing God work”	religious people
Drew	“making a difference” “do something memorable with my life and help shape the kingdom”	nothing
Randolph	“enjoys visiting people”	“people not coming”
Jerry	“gospel conversion and hearing how people are serving one another”	“people called to the church but leave”

Not Quitting in Stressful Times

The majority of participants indicated that reflecting on their ministry calling was essential to them not quitting in difficult and stressful times. This appeared to be a healthy coping method to utilize, which, according to the literature also increases job satisfaction and sustains pastors in difficult times (Wallace et al. 2011). Although the research on resilience, coping, and pastors leaving the ministry is limited, these findings should offer insight into further study.

When asked the question, “Why haven’t you quit?” every participant referenced that they felt like they are called by God to do what they do. It appeared that quitting would be an act of disobedience against what God wants them to do. When asked the question, “Why haven’t you quit,” Chip smiled and told me, “The call will not allow me to quit.”

The call will not allow me to quit. That is the only thing as I deal with other pastors who have quit, or deal with other pastors who are thinking about quitting, that’s usually my question, is “What is your call,” because once you identify that call, you’re not going to be able to get away from it.

Although, he admitted that he’s considered quitting, he persistently referenced his call. Chip boldly stated, “The call doesn’t allow me to quit because it keeps calling.” Then shortly after, he said, “I love people. I want to see their lives changed.” From his statements, it seemed like calling and loving people were closely connected.

As we discussed the connection between calling and quitting, it seemed like Chip viewed himself as the “Savior of his people”, which prohibited him from considering quitting. When I asked him what if God called him to do something else, he said, “It would be very shocking to my spiritual system and I would have to sit down and make sure that it was what God wanted.” However, he shared that he’s wrestled at times with whether he should pastor or fly planes. Being a pilot is one of his childhood dreams.

Dale shared that he thought about quitting, but did not because he did not want to fail. He shared deeply, that oftentimes; he “beats himself up” because he feels like he’s only good at starting something, not sustaining it. Therefore, it seemed like quitting would be failing to him and further evidence that demonstrates that he is only good at starting things.

Randolph confessed almost reluctantly that he asks himself, “Why haven’t I quit” daily. Although he mentioned “daily,” I believe that he may have been facetious. However, he was actually negative in his self-critique when asked various questions throughout the interview. He admitted that he needs daily perspective checks because he tends to be over critical of himself. However, Randolph tells himself regularly, “If God put us together, who am I to say quit doing something” to encourage himself. Yet, he is considering merging with a larger church.

When asked, “Why haven’t you quit,” Calvin shared, “Because He’s called me.” He shared, “God’s called me and I want to be faithful to that. I’m convinced that if I were doing anything else, I would be 100% running in the opposite direction of what he’s called me to do.”

Lance mentioned that he would have quit the ministry if his perspective on his calling had not changed. Lance recalled the growth that he has made since planting the church. He seems to think that when his expectations of ministry and people became more realistic, he was able to settle into what God was calling him to do as a pastor. Additionally, he shared that “the call was so clear that at the time I felt like God had never spoken to me before until that moment... I remember it so vividly.” It appeared that Lance is committed to obeying his calling, despite the temptations to quit.

Like Chip, Calvin, and Lance, Bart believed that he is “supposed to be doing what he’s doing until God shows me differently.” He shared that his identity in Christ, feeling like he is where he is supposed to be, and the opportunity to reach the unchurched, keeps him from quitting.

The calling and thought of “doing what they are supposed to do” seems to remind and recalibrate the participant’s intentions or considerations to quit, even in the most difficult circumstances. As mentioned, fear of failure, having an identity as a savior for the people, and not seeking to thwart what God desires, are all reasons for not quitting. However, obedience to the “calling” was consistently referenced as a reason for not quitting in every participant. Table 4.5 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Managing Growth and Progress Pressure is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring the Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities.

Table 4.5

Not Quitting in Stressful Times

Pseudonym	Considered quitting	Reminder to not quit	Reasons to not quit
Chip	yes	“the call will not allow me to quit”	savior for the people
Dale	yes	“the call”	“didn’t want to fail”
Randolph	yes	“God put us together” “calling”	“don’t want to thwart God’s plan”
Calvin	yes	“he’s called me”	“I want to be faithful to that”
Jerry	yes	“the call”	“the call was so clear”
Bart	yes	“the calling”	“suppose to be doing this”
Ted	yes	“my apprentice is watching me”	“Wife reminds me this is the coolest church, the best

			church I've ever been involved with"
Drew	yes	"I have a shared calling with my wife"	"the only think that keeps me in the game is my calling"

Managing Growth and Progress Pressure

Participants acknowledged that a contributing factor to their lack of resilience in ministry was the pressure for growth and progress. Prior to church planting, Calvin revealed that he was driven by growth and expansion:

I'm a driven guy naturally, I think I'm a driven leader, so I like to see things grow and expand. So I feel like leading fulfills me. Not that I, in any way, am turned off or not fulfilled by following, but I feel driven to lead, if that makes sense.

Calvin confessed that when the church begins to grow and lives change, he "finds his identity" in how he has contributed to the growth. He revealed that in order to not be tempted to find his identity in church growth, he asks himself daily, "Who am I? Who am I leading for? Who am I serving for? Who's my audience?"

Chip expressed the tension of financial pressure, which he admitted causes him to want "higher attendance numbers in order to have more money for his salary." He stated, "Our salary isn't huge, but we survive." Chip is paid by the church and has medical but no dental insurance:

I hope as the church grows, the financial aspect can begin to level off over here, and so that puts pressure on me to want the church to grow, which becomes, in many ways, a negative thing because it's not about numbers, but the numbers all circulate back into, "I can survive if I had more numbers." More numbers then I get a raise.

Chip's son has to have surgery that requires a \$7000 deductible to be paid. In addition to the surgery, Chip had to replace the transmission in the truck that hauls the church trailer. It appeared that he felt the pressure as a husband and father, but also as a pastor because he shared, "People want to see the numbers." In order to cope during these times of pressure, he reflects on "God's continual blessing in everything" and listens to motivational messages.

Bart identified with Chip's desire for more attendance growth at his church but for different financial reasons. Chip shared, "What are our generous people thinking when they don't see tremendous growth?" He confessed his concern that some of his biggest givers may not continue giving because the church has reached a plateau over the last several years. Asking God why has become a part of his regular prayer. However, he revealed that he's grown by not finding his identity in attendance numbers and the pressure to deliver results. He shared that he's trying to avoid the ups and downs of tracking attendance numbers by reminding himself what God thinks of him, and who he is in Christ. Although no one mentored him prior to planting in how to deal with fluctuating attendances, he has learned helpful information through what he reads. His statement about not having been mentored possibly creates an opportunity for support for church planters as it relates to dealing with attendance issues. It appeared that he believed that he could benefit from help in that area.

Dale, Jerry, and Bart confessed that prior to planting they wanted the church to be big so that people would think they were successful. With marginal and stagnant growth, they seek to find their identity and drive to be resilient in trusting Christ's plan for their

church. The researcher wonders if more of the participants desired the same growth expectations but were not willing to share it.

Randolph seemed to struggle with taking responsibility for people not being at his church. He remorsefully confessed that he feels challenged in advancing the church because of the regularity in which people in his congregation miss church:

Part of it is a sin thing, and that is that I feel like if they're not there, it's my fault or it doesn't make me look good. Well that's just pride. So I've got to fight through that and repent of it. But in terms of advancing the church, it's a real problem. It's not a pride issue.

The researcher sensed discouragement settling into Randolph's heart due to the lack of commitment from his people to attend church gatherings, particularly as he labors for long hours to prepare to preach and they are not present.

The pressure to grow was evident for the majority of the participants. Financial pressure, fulfilling growth expectations and dreams prior to planting, wanting to be big, finding identity in growth success and sincerely wanting to advance the church challenged resilience. However, as the participants sought to discover their identity in Christ, instead of growth or progress, it seemed to encourage them. Drew, Thomas, and Ted did not express a need to manage pressures. Table 4.6 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Needed Relationships is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring the Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities.

Table 4.6

Managing Growth & Progress Pressure

Pseudonym	Specific Pressure	Response to Pressure	Coping Belief
Calvin	Driven by growth and expansion	Identity is in his contribution to the growth	“remembering who I am in Christ”
Chip	Financial	Wanting the church to grow	“I can survive if we have more numbers”
Bart	Increased attendance #'s	Identity is in attendance #'s	“what God thinks of me and who I am in Christ”
Dale	Increased attendance #'s	Identity is in attendance #'s	“trusting Christ’s plan for my church”
Jerry	Increased attendance #'s	Identity is in attendance #'s	“trusting Christ’s plan for my church”
Ralph	Increased attendance #'s	People coming to the church	“my fault”

Needed Relationships

According to Chandler (2010), pastors with an accountability relationship or coach are typically deterred from burnout and experience resiliency in ministry. This is consistent with what all of the research participants shared as well. The participants cherished their ventilating friendships, coaches and mentors.

Chip seemed to yearn for close friendships. Other than his wife, he feels like he has no support system because his mother church does not encourage him:

The friendships and relationships that I have—because of my personality—are usually incredibly draining. It’s, even our close friends have major mess-up

issues, and I carry their burdens and try to help them out, and so they're usually really hurting people that don't have friends outside of our friendship.

This statement possibly indicates that Chip saw himself as the “hope” for his friendships. It appeared that he knew that they were “needy” prior to engaging with them, but after engaging realized that they would not be able to support him as well. He did not expect to be in relationship with friends that would not be able to support him. Chip appeared to believe from his above statements that friendships would include mutual support. It seemed he was disappointed that this was not happening for him. Yet, Chip has a coach that he talks to periodically, but seems to long for more time with him.

Dale felt that as he has gotten deeper into ministry, almost all of his closest friends are in ministry. He shared “I have a lot of close knit relationships with guys that I go to, talk to, pray for, pray for me, have lunch with a lot, you know, go with.” Dale shared that when his marriage was troubled there was no one in the church he could talk to. He has two close friends, and two more that he meets with every three months.

Although Calvin served with other men as a team within a shared leadership structure, he confides in two “great friends that are church planting pastors four and seven years in.” Like Dale, Calvin relished that within these relationships he can be open and honest. Their relationships outside the church seemed to refresh them from the burdens of ministry.

When asked about whether he had any good friendships, relationships or support network, Randolph shared,

I really do with leaders in the church, and not just leaders, but just, you know, people, some guys younger than me that are big cut ups, and they really help me a lot. They know how to make me chuckle and lighten up. I do have that. But what I do realize that I miss, is I had a—and my wife misses it too—we both had

some best friends when we were in other cities. We don't have any real best friends...

Randolph seemed heartbroken over not having a best friend, particularly since his wife no longer is engaged in ministry due to her interest, physical illness, and consequential limitations. Additionally, he shared the challenge of getting together with other couples with children who require specific scheduling arrangements for acquiring babysitters. He is not used to this because he and his wife are empty nesters.

As he was sharing, it was like he had an epiphany. Randolph shared, "It's a tender thought, that I think what God's wanting me and my wife to be is to be our, the best friend to each other." This was a very moving moment.

Thomas, Ralph, and Drew all appeared to have vibrant, and healthy ventilating relationships with the other pastors. Having other men to vent concerns, issues, frustrations, temptations and problems and pray with, seemed to refresh and encourage the participants who have friendships. For those who long for best friends, it appeared that having more companionship is desired. The participants who have coaches seemed to appear more equipped for the challenges of ministry.

The participant's friendships affirmed the research that suggests, "Being in supportive relationships, having accountability, and personal coaching plays a significant role in maintaining emotional and spiritual health (Buhrow, 2012; Chandler, 2010). None of the participants appeared isolated or in competition with other pastors in their area, which would prevent the benefit of accountability as would be suggested in the research (McMinn, 2005; Sison, 2006). Every participant desired friendship. Table 4.7 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Support of the Pastor's Wife is

the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring the Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities.

Table 4.7

Needed Relationships

Pseudonym	Has Ventilating Friendships, Coach, Mentor
Chip	No
Dale	Yes
Calvin	Yes
Randolph	No
Thomas	Yes
Ralph	Yes
Drew	Yes

Support of the Pastor’s Wife

The effect and importance of a pastor’s wife’s support for her husband was confirmed among the participants (Meek, 2003). All the participants reported that their wives played a significant role presently and in their longevity in ministry. Chip explained that he always makes himself accessible to his wife so that she knows that she is first. He described his relationship with his wife as a “very good team... just doing life together.” He shared, “I married way above my pay.” He hoped that as he serves in ministry that his family maintains a healthy view of the church.

Dale and his wife have been to a marriage counselor to strengthen their marriage. Dale admitted that he has not been praying for his wife, but desires that “the Lord brings them closer back together and that affection back for one another.” Dale appreciated that she stands up to him and tells him when he is not paying enough attention to her. It appeared that her support for the home matters to him.

Unlike Dale, Calvin shared that he has a “deep love for his wife more than ever.” He reported that his marriage was like church planting in that it reveals “all of your flaws, all of your pride and your issues.”

But I’ve always been a strong proponent in all of my ministry, that I would never be married to the ministry. I would be married to my wife. Now you probably could argue, what was that eight and a half years with school like? Were you not married to that? And there’s probably some truth to it, but I’ve never—and I really believe if she was sitting at the table she would affirm this—I call that red ink. We, I red ink every week, and it’s usually time with my family, and it’s date night for us, and it’s a big priority on our agenda. And do we do it every week? No. But we are constantly creating margin for us to be alone, to date, to encourage, to have margin just to talk, and man, one of the things we’re wanting to, you know, we’re trying to grow in right now in our relationship.

Calvin confessed, “[She] disciples me probably as much as I disciple her, which is, it’s just so cool to see what God’s doing in her life.” Like Chip, Calvin wants his family to have a healthy view of the church. Calvin’s wife seems supportive to his ministry and church. She currently leads the children’s ministry.

Like Dale, Randolph admitted to not leading his wife well. Randolph shared, “I should have been a better husband.” In the past, he wanted his wife to be a “helpmate in ministry” but her illness has prevented her. He confesses, “Sometimes ministry and children took priority over God and my wife.” With visible sadness, he shared, “My wife is lonely.” He then continued sharing, “So parenting and ministry, sometimes took too

much priority over wife, and even God, which sounds weird, but you can almost love the ministry and spend less time with the Lord.”

Randolph’s wife “called him out” and he has made drastic improvements to balance ministry and his relationship with her. However, Randolph remorsefully shared, “She’s not in the game anymore (marriage, kids) and she’s not in the game in the church anymore.” He admits that it is getting better with counseling. Although he does not experience the same support from her that she had when they first started the church, their marriage seems to be improving.

Unlike Randolph, Bart’s wife is supportive of the church. Bart shared that in difficult and stressful times, she reminds him of what God has done. He describes her as “his cheerleader.” Thomas, like Bart, shared that his wife helped him through tough times in life and ministry. On the other hand, Ralph viewed his wife’s support in ministry as they serve the church as a partnership.

Like Dale and Randolph, Ted’s wife has “called him out” when he seems to lose perspective on his priority for the family because of giving attention to the church and not his wife. Similar to Bart’s wife, Ted’s wife reminds Ted of what God is doing through the church.

The participants believed that receiving support from their wives through encouragement in difficult and stressful times, reminding them of God’s faithfulness in times of discouragement, and “calling them out” when their priorities waned, supported their resiliency in ministry. The participants that have struggled in marriage admit that their longevity in ministry will be determined by the health of their marital relationship with their wives. Table 4.8 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme and

Table 4.9 illustrates a comprehensive summary reflecting all of the themes that emerged relating to the research question: Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities.

Table 4.8

Support of the Pastor's Wife

Pseudonym	Supportive	Support Described
Chip	Yes	team player
Dale	Yes	“stands up to me”
Calvin	Yes	“supportive”
Randolph	No	“calls me out”
Bart	Yes	“cheerleader”
Thomas	Yes	“my wife and kids mom”
Ralph	Yes	“serves the church w/ me”
Ted	Yes	“calls me out”

Table 4.9

Summary of Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Reality

Pseudonym	Protect Sabbath	Reflects on Personal Identity in Christ	Enjoy People	Reflect on Calling	Manage Growth Pressure With Identity in Christ	Desires Relationships	Values Support of Wife
Chip	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Dale	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Calvin	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Randolph	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Jerry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Bart	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Thomas	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ted	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Ralph	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Drew	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The research participant's experiences of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities was demonstrated by their commitment to finding refreshment and emotional and physical rest, reflecting on their personal identity in Christ, experiencing enjoyment in ministry, not quitting during stressful times, managing

growth and progress pressure, having needed relationships, and having a supportive relationship with their wife. In order to maintain resilience, the research participants protected their Sabbath “day-off” and enjoyed yearly vacations with their families. These experiences offered refreshment and emotional and physical rest, while functioning as their coping strategy during stressful and difficult seasons of life and ministry.

Resilience was discovered in each participant’s ability to reflect on and rest in their identity in Christ as opposed to their progress or success as a church planter. Finding a way to be reminded of who they are in Christ appeared beneficial to their overall wellbeing.

It appeared that experiencing enjoyment in ministry came from people. However, it seemed to be evident that people excited and drained the research participants. Finding ways to enjoy people, despite the drain seemed, to be what offered resilience.

During stressful times and seasons, resilience to not quit appeared possible as the research participants reflected upon their calling to do what God desired them to do. To quit appeared to be considered an act of disobedience. Thus, the participants focused on the “call” to endure during times of stress and difficulty. Resiliency, while managing growth and progress pressure for the research participants, sought to be experienced the healthiest by finding identity in Christ and not in achieving increased church attendance numbers. The greater dependence on Christ equated to less pressure experienced.

Relationships were explored among the research participants. Everyone desired friendships. Many had ventilating relationships, while others longed for a coach and best friends. It seemed apparent that friendships, mentors and coaches enhanced the resiliency of the participants.

The support of the pastor's wife seemed to play a large role in the experience of resiliency. Several participants verbally demonstrated admiration for their wives and applauded their support for them as pastors, while others seem to remorsefully confess that they have been neglectful of their wives.

The experience of resiliency among the research participants seemed evident and was demonstrated in the findings of this study. The next research question explored in this study is the Negative Impact of Ministry Reality Associated with Dissipation of Idealism.

Negative Impact of Ministry Reality Associated with Dissipation of Idealism

The second research question explored in this study is How the Participants Describe the Negative Impact of Ministry Reality Associated with Dissipation of Idealism. In this section, three themes that emerged from the data analysis are presented: Frustration from Performing Unexpected Duties, Discouragement with Low and Fluctuating Attendance Numbers and Being Drained by People. Pastors desire to fulfill their sacred calling but are faced with a reality that appears to be unexpected. Pastors enter ministry not knowing what to expect (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Lee & Gilbert, 2003). The research suggests that pastors enter the ministry with intrinsic expectancies for fulfilling their sacred calling, and to experience the rewards of their career (Christopherson, 1994). However, as idealism concerning expectancies wane, reality settles in, and it appears from this study that negative impacts arise. The first theme described is Frustration from Performing Unexpected Duties.

Frustration from Performing Unexpected Duties

Research participants reported that they entered ministry not knowing what their roles and responsibilities would include. Consequently, in the beginning of the church plant, most of the participants admit to doing everything, which led to frustration and discouragement.

Chip shared:

The roles and responsibilities in the church that I have are essentially just you do everything. There's not a role or responsibility you don't have. So it's as simple as filing for your non tax-exempt status. It's keeping that paperwork somewhere so you don't lose that tax-exempt status. It's your church insurance. It's keeping up with that.

Chip exclaimed as if exhausted, "I'm responsible for this, but I don't want to be responsible for this." He confessed that the call continues to keep him from quitting.

Dale shared, "During year one and two of the church, I did everything from cleaning bathrooms, doing paperwork, making copies, and designing sets. I mean, everything." However, as his church has grown, the people in his congregation seem to have embraced the vision, which has helped him experience a relief of certain unexpected duties. In addition to performing unexpected duties, Dale seemed to struggle with having to work a part-time job as a pizza delivery person, to support his family financially. He didn't expect to have to deliver pizzas as a seminary graduate. It appeared from this statement that his heart was bent on being employed full-time by his church without having to drive a pizza delivery truck for a living. From his statements, he possibly was processing his unavailability to his family because of the demands of having to work part-time delivering pizzas.

Like Dale, Calvin used to do “everything” in his church until it began to grow. He admitted that he is at a more healthy place, solely focused on mission and vision, communication, development of the teaching team and partnership with other organizations across the city. However, he would rather be focused on his areas of gifting. From both conversations and statements these participants gave the possible indication that as a church grows the pastor is not forced to do “everything” since there would be more people to share the load of ministry.

Jerry, whose church is 9 months old, started his church thinking that he would be the “speaker on Sunday” and main discipler, but is doing graphic art, set-up and teardown. Jerry shared the frustration of “backfilling” people who have either left the church or lack the commitment to be consistent. The combination of people leaving and not demonstrating commitment, in addition to performing a role that he didn’t expect, makes him want to “throw in the towel.” From his previous statement, it appeared that quitting was linked to him bearing the weight of responsibility that others at one point and time considered carrying. Carrying the weight of other’s responsibility seemed to be what leads him to wanting to quit.

It appeared that Ralph, who has been pastoring his church less than a year, would prefer to delegate certain tasks and responsibilities to others, but doesn’t have enough people to share the load. Unlike Chip, Dale, Calvin, and Jerry, Ralph felt that God has called him to keep the church going. As a forty year old, he shared, “What else is there for me to do? God has called me to this.” From Ralph’s statement regarding keeping the church going, it appeared that he was not willing to allow the lack of people to hinder

him from what God has called him to do. Consistently, Ralph pushes forth in ministry regardless of any specific barrier.

Calvin, Bart, Thomas and Drew seem settled and now able to enjoy their roles of preaching, teaching and casting vision since their churches are older than two years. Ted and Randolph appeared content with their roles and duties as well. When discussing roles and responsibilities it was evident that there was more delight in comparison to the other participants.

The participants seemed to perform any necessary role or responsibility, despite being frustrated, stressed or overwhelmed in order to maintain progress of the church. However, as their churches began to grow, they expressed a greater contentment with their preferred roles. Although the participants did not expect to be doing everything when they first started their church, dissipating idealism and realistic expectations helped them survive. Table 4.10 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. The next theme that emerged in reference to the research question, Negative Impact of Ministry Realities Associated with Dissipation of Idealism is the emotional toil of Discouragement with Low and Fluctuating Numbers.

Table 4.10

Frustration from Performing Unexpected Duties

Pseudonym	Unexpected Responsibility	Relieved from Frustration By
Chip	“doing everything”	Reflecting on calling
Dale	“year one and two of the church I did everything”	Church Growth
Calvin	“used to do everything until we grew”	Church Growth
Jerry	“graphic artist, setup/teardown”	Reflecting on calling
Ralph	Nothing is unexpecting	Embraces his calling to “keep the church going”

Discouragement with Low and Fluctuating Attendance

From discussions with the participants, fluctuating and declining attendance numbers seem to create vision conflict, discouragement and disappointment, and compassion fatigue. The participants exposed the need for coping and support during the fluctuations in attendance (Spencer et al. 2012). Prior to planting, Chip thought, “everyone would come to his church.” Although he mentioned that he thought “everyone would come to his church,” the researcher wondered whether he was more disappointed that who he had expected to join him did not. The researcher noticed in discussions with other research participants that there was an expectation that certain people would come to their church but for whatever reason had not. Chip’s disappointment with the size of his church seemed to be related to both the disappointment of certain people not being

“with him” and low and fluctuating attendance numbers. Typically, his church attendance is in the 90’s; however, over the summer it dropped in half. Chip shared, “You talk about depressing.” Expecting everyone and attendance dropping by half presented two potential causes for disappointment. People not being present who were expected and fluctuating attendance numbers seemed to cause the same discouragement. Additionally, it appeared that pressure comes from the actual attendance lows and the core team’s expectations of people being present:

I hope somebody shows up today, and I know they love church, and I know that they love our community, but they’re all busy. I hope somebody shows up today. And so that is, that’s hard whenever your key team people look at it and go, “Why’s nobody here? What do you need to do differently to get the people here?”

Chip felt the pressure of having to solve the attendance problem. He appeared exhausted with how to remedy the attendance challenges.

Dale assumed he would be a mega-church pastor when he first planted his church. He expected 500 people at his launch and 200 people would be saved. Nevertheless, Dale shared, “After several years of God knocking me on my face and helping me face my inadequacies, inattention to detail and face my sin and twisting up ego and fame, I’ve learned.” Dale seemed sober and humbled by what God taught him about numbers and fame. He confessed to the challenge of still struggling with desiring more numbers for the wrong reasons.

Calvin proudly confessed that he’s never had a goal for numerical growth. He expressed that numbers were not an indicator of health. His perspective appeared extremely grounded as it related to how he measures progress and success. The researcher noticed that Calvin appeared free from discouragement about low and

fluctuating numbers. He had no expectation thus no discouragement about attendance numbers was present.

Randolph thinks that if people are not at church it is his fault and a poor reflection of his leadership. This led to feelings of inadequacy and discouragement. In addition to those in his congregation who sporadically attend, his elders are included in the list of people who sparsely attend church. It appeared that there is a deeper problem with those who have been appointed as elders. Randolph mentioned his elders in the same context of the congregation that sporadically attended his church. It appeared that Randolph did not know how to differentiate between his elders and congregation not choosing to attend. His discouragement seemed tied to two sets of people: elders and congregation. Nonetheless, Randolph seemed burdened by the pressure to grow his church.

Jerry expected his attendance numbers to be higher than they are now. He fights against discouragement from people saying that they were called to the church, but leave, in addition to, fluctuating attendance. As mentioned above, it appeared to be a dual discouragement with Jerry: the called leaving his church and fluctuating church attendance numbers. It appeared that he was hurt deeper by those who left his church after saying they were called to it than the fluctuating attendance numbers. He reported that people's commitment was the reason for his discouragement. After he shared, it seemed like people's lack of commitment to stay and be present at the worship gatherings brought forth the discouragement. The lack of commitment of his people to be present at his church possibly could be the source of the discouragement. Jerry expected more of his "core team to stick around." Six couples moved with him from Florida, but four of

the couples are gone in nine months. He feels let down at times and even depressed by the “lack of progress.”

Like Jerry, Bart desires that his attendance numbers be higher. His church has been at a plateau of 300 people for the last few years. He battles not blaming himself, or falling prey to the expectations of other people for defining success. To ensure that he does not fall prey to the expectations of people, he renews his mind and heart by reminding himself of his identity in Christ, but still admitted that it is a low for him managing the “constant tension of why can’t we grow?” Bart admitted that one of his unmet expectations as a man is the current size of his church. He feels the pressure as well from the congregation to be bigger. The tension to grow creates a need for his mind to be renewed and dependent on his identity in Christ. The struggle in his heart was clearly evidenced.

Thomas has the largest church out of all of the participants and does not seem to express disappointment regarding attendance numbers. Prior to planting, he did not seem to have big attendance dreams. He was simply content with making it past two years as a church. However, he admitted that he was “surprised by the people who haven’t journeyed with them, especially when you plant in a city you grew up in.” However, he appeared unimpressed with attendance numbers.

Ted and Ralph did not share any expectations or desires regarding attendance numbers. They seemed settled with the size and attendance of their churches. However, the pressure to grow his church by a certain period of time discouraged Drew. He was optimistic about the future of the church, but did not seem gripped by attendance numbers.

Attendance numbers seem intertwined with a pastor’s identity, ego and metrics for success. However, it appeared that as the expectations of the participants became more realistic and the church progressed in age, those that were discouraged seemed to be less affected by numbers. The participant’s churches, who were less than one year old, seemed to struggle the most. However, Randolph appeared burdened by his progress especially after five years. The participants who were educated about the effects of fluctuating numbers and pastoral identity appeared less discouraged and more prepared than those who were not mentored. Table 4.11 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Drained by People is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring the Negative Impact of Ministry Realities Associated with Dissipation.

Table 4.11

Discouragement with Low & Fluctuating Attendance

Pseudonym	Prior Expectations about Attendance Numbers	Motivation	State of Being
Chip	“everyone would come”	Attracting certain people	“depressing and discouraged”
Dale	“mega church pastor”	“ego and fame”	“humbled by God”
Calvin	“no numerical growth goal”	Faithfulness to the Call	Grounded
Randolph	“people would come”	Want to hear him teach	“blame” “inadequacy”
Jerry	“expected high attendance”	“growth”	“fights discouragement”
Bart	“higher attendance”	“success”	“battles not blaming self”

Thomas	“no big attendance dreams”	None	None
Ted	None	None	None
Ralph	None	None	None
Drew	“larger than it is”	“make a difference”	“pressure to grow”

Drained by People

Prior to planting, the participants expected to evangelize, encourage, disciple and shepherd people. Out of obedience to God, faithfulness to their calling and their desire to make a difference, they embarked on the mission of planting their church. However, what has been discovered from this study is that what excites the participants also drains them. People excite the participants and drain them. The tension between excitement and drain seemed to create a need for emotional balance. It seemed as if consistent excitement and/or drain affected resiliency. However, the examples of what drained the research participants was conveyed with stronger emotions and expressions than what excited them.

Dale identified himself as being drained by people. When asked about what drains him, Dale shared, “All the challenges. People. People excite me, and they drain me.” Although he made the statement, “All the challenges”, he reported first that people excited him and then that people drained him. It appeared that the stronger emotion was his excitement, yet he was left somewhat unprepared to deal with the drain. He shared that “managing people drains me because when they aren’t doing what I want them to do it makes me mad.” He admitted that he doesn’t have the “stones enough to just call them out on it.” It appeared that his inability to confront people when they don’t

follow instructions causes him to feel drained. It seemed like people weren't the drain, his inability to courageously confront created the draining effect. Dale explained that being alone with Jesus refreshes him during these times.

Calvin resonated with Dale in his disdain with managing people. However, Calvin added that administration and the management of people is draining. He did not feel gifted to administrate and manage people. The above statement could be more associated with his gifting rather than a personal problem with people. The absence of administrative gifts seemed to create angst for him in dealing with people more than the people themselves. Unlike Thomas, who is administrative, shared, "Difficult relationships are draining."

Jerry seemed to be drained by people but more specifically by their lack of commitment. He shared candidly, "It makes me frustrated when people have certain roles but don't do it... they call me and say that they aren't feeling great so they can't show up... I'm thinking to myself, suck it up!" His statements of frustration above seem to be stemming from a lack of commitment rather than people themselves. Lack of commitment in others becomes his responsibility. Jerry appeared to pick up the slack from people's lack of commitment, which brings about bitterness.

Unlike the other participants, Ted is drained by parenting, particularly when he is off from work, but has to watch the kids He shared, "So Monday's my day off... I'm supposed to be vegging out, right? I'm parenting all day, and I'm wiped out on Tuesday, but I'm excited to get back to work." His drain appeared to come from having the expectation to rest but having to engage and correct his children on his day off. Ted made comparisons between his parenting and church planting by admitting that he gets

excited about starting things but struggles getting excited about developing things he starts. He sheepishly grinned and suggested, “I’m good at making babies.” From his statements, it appears that Ted did not expect to have to manage his kids as a father when he did not expect to.

Ralph shared that working with sinners is draining. Drew identified with Ralph when he shared, “Relational pain is draining.” Drew gave away leadership responsibilities too fast and seemingly experienced deep wounds by people close to him. He reported that he refreshes himself in the Word every day to be nourished and replenished. Chip shared that he was drained by his friendships because he gravitated to friends who were hurting. Bart, Thomas and Randolph did not appear drained by people.

Whether the participants experienced the drain of people, or managing people, or their lack of commitment or the drain of the process of developing the people in their possession, they seemed to find refreshment in God to prevent people from draining them over time. Instead of high times of excitement balancing the draining times, it appeared that the participants actively sought to regain perspective in prayer, and time in the Word. Table 4.12 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme and Table 4.13 provides a comprehensive summary of the themes that emerged in reference to the research question: Negative Impact of Ministry Realities Associated with Dissipation.

Table 4.12

Drained by People

Pseudonym	Drain	Possible Reason
Dale	“managing people”	“inability to confront/manage people”
Calvin	“managing people”	“lack of admin gifts to manage people”
Jerry	“people’s lack of commitment”	“lack of commitment in others leads becomes his responsibility”
Ted	“parenting”	“having to manage kids when he didn’t expect to”
Ralph	“working with sinners”	“sin is challenging”
Drew	“relational pain”	“relational wounds” and misunderstandings

The research participants experienced negative impact of ministry reality associated with dissipation of idealism. Prior to church planting, idealism appeared high among the research participants. However, as ministry reality settled in, idealism began to dissipate. Three factors appeared to negatively impact the research participants: drain from unexpected duties, drain from unexpected attendance numbers, and drain from unexpected people. Consequently, these factors seemed to negatively impact resilience. This concludes the explication of the two research questions: Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities and Negative Impact of Ministry Realities Associated with Dissipation of Idealism. The next section compares and contrasts the findings that have emerged.

Table 4.13

Negative Impact of Ministry Reality Associated with Dissipation of Idealism

Pseudonym	Drain from Unexpected Duties	Drain from Unexpected Attendance #'s	Drain from Unexpected People
Chip	“do everything”	“everyone will come”	Helping hurting people
Dale	“used to do everything”	not a mega church	Confronting sinful people
Calvin	“used to do everything”	Not drained	No admin gifts to manage people
Randolph	”the administrative part drains me”	thought people would come	Not drained
Jerry	“graphic artist, setup/breakdown”	“expected higher attendance”	“people’s lack of commitment
Bart	No unexpected duties	“desire higher attendance”	Not drained
Thomas	No unexpected duties	Not drained	Not drained
Ted	”pastoral ministry” – dealing with people with many problems	Not drained	“not expecting to manage kids on day off”
Ralph	No unexpected duties	Not drained	“sinners are challenging”
Drew	No unexpected duties	“larger than it is”	“relational pain from leaders”

Comparisons and Contrasts Among Participants

This section presents comparisons and contrasts among the findings that emerged from an analysis of the themes. These themes include: Drive to Plant the Church, Need to Escape from Stress, Pursuit of Counseling, and People Pleasing and Longevity.

Drive to Plant the Church

Seven participants expressed a relentless drive to faithfully serve God. During the conversations with the participants, five categories described their drive and motivation: Relationship with God, Results and Naturally Driven, Love for God's People and Church, Obedience to God, and Making a Difference for the Kingdom.

Chip identified with a resilient drive and motivation to serve God based on his relationship with Christ. When asked about what motivated him, he stated, "My relationship with God is my motivating factor, and I want to say in everything that I do... that's what motivates me to do well." It seemed like his resilience would be challenged only by the strength of his relationship with God.

Unlike Chip, Dale was driven by results. He mentioned that he wanted to not simply start something; he wants to see results and outcomes. It appeared that he thinks he never really finishes anything in life. Dale seemed to believe that producing results would give credibility to his ability to finish something well. Having a drive to prove credibility seemed to run the risk of faltering because the motivation appeared driven by his performance. Like Chip, if he performs well then his resiliency could be maintained, but if he doesn't can he survive.

Calvin, unlike Chip and Dale, identified himself as “naturally driven.” He likes things that grow and expand, become healthy, and create numerical growth and life change. Calvin appeared to desire to witness results, which become visible by growth and expansion. Calvin admitted that he’s driven, but does not want to fail.

Jerry resonated with Dale and Calvin, while Thomas was driven by a love for God’s people and church. Thus Thomas’ resilience was associated with his love for God’s people and His church, instead of results.

Ralph mentioned that he was driven by obedience to God. He consistently stated, “I’m just chasing after God.” At first, the previously mentioned statement appeared unrealistic and over-spiritualizing until he clarified further throughout the interview. His resilience seemed to stem from his relentless pursuit of obedience to God. Having become a believer late in life seemed to be a motivation factor for him, in his own words, “staying after it for God.” It appeared that a love for God and His people and obedience to God would make resilience in ministry more likely.

After seeking to understand what motivated the participants, loving and obeying God appeared to be the best motivation for sustaining longevity in ministry. One’s relationship with God, obedience and faithfulness to God, growth and expansion of the church, love for people, and making a difference for the kingdom seemed to contribute to resiliency. Table 4.14 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Need to Escape from Stress is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring Comparisons and Contrasts Among the Participants.

Table 4.14

Drive to Plant

Pseudonym	Drive is based on
Chip	“relationship with God”
Dale	“results”
Calvin	“naturally driven”
Jerry	“results”
Thomas	“love for God’s people and church”
Ralph	“obeying God and doing what He wants”
Drew	“make a difference”

Need to Escape from Stress

Resilience in the lives of the participants was visibly evident and mentioned by every one of the pastors. Each participant portrayed his own way of escaping to cope with the stress of ministry. The need to escape was expressed by outdoor activity, exercising, watching television and movies, reading, and playing sports.

Thomas described leisure as an escape “to lose oneself in a different world.” When the researcher asked him how he escapes, he brightened up and began sharing details about his passion for running and training for marathons. Thomas talked in-depth about the way running kept him orderly due to the consistent rhythm and routine to stay in shape. When asked how all of it was tied in, he stated, “It just does something for me that orders everything else, including that spiritual rhythm.” He described running as a way for him to connect with Jesus.

Chip seemed to escape to the movie, Top Gun. When asked why, he stated, “It’s my go to movie, and everybody knows, when I start quoting Top Gun, that I am stressed.” He further described the needed escape as “It helps just go to this place where I kind of go and just kind of veg.” Chip continued sharing about certain lines that mattered to him from the movie:

It’s after the lead guy has lost his counterpart, and it, he felt personally responsible for it, and he goes and talks to his mentor, his leader, and the guy says this. He goes, “What we do up there is dangerous,” he goes, “and you have to evaluate continually what you learn.” And he goes, “I’m not saying you can, you should quit, but I’m saying it would help.” And so, and that’s what I think a good pilot’s always forced to evaluate, and apply what he’s learned. That’s the line.

Chip made a parallel from the movie to his life, by stating, “I can quit, or I can evaluate and apply what I’ve learned and it will make me better.” When asked, “What is it about being a pilot that excites you, he stated, “It’s freeing, it’s in the air... it’s a very different environment than what I am in now. It’s almost an escape.” Throughout his ministry, he has contemplated giving up the ministry and becoming a pilot:

Here, there’s lots of people. It’s continually dealing with everybody’s burdens and all of their issues, and working through their relationships, and working through feelings, and making sure that I’m leading well, I’m doing all of this stuff. In the cockpit, it’s closed, and it’s you and the sky, and the only time you’ve got to talk to the tower is whenever you’ve got to tell them you’re going to do something different, and that’s it. Other than that, it, you’re there. So that, I think that’s part of it, which is part of the draw on my bad days.

It was evident by his excitement that he really enjoyed escaping into the movie as a pilot.

Dale identified himself as needing to escape as well when he is emotionally exhausted. When asked how he dealt with it, he described his routine:

Honestly, I got to withdraw. Whether it is a long car ride, whether it be go to Starbucks and just sit and chill and read a book, or whether it be go to the driving range, or go to the gym, or something like that.

He stated, “I just need to get away and get perspective.” He didn’t call it an escape, but his “get away” seemed to help him process and refresh and recharge himself.

Ted identified himself as needing an escape as well. His escape or “get away” was reading entrepreneurial magazines. When I asked him what type of things interest him, he stated, “Everything from entrepreneurial literature to, you know, team building, to how to bring new products to market, and those kinds of things. I mean, I really love that stuff...” Like Dale, Chip and Thomas, Ted found pleasure in “vegging out.” During these times, it appeared that the participants disconnect from their current stress, fatigue or situation to experience relaxation.

Jerry sought to escape to leisure, golf or food. However, due to his weight gain and exercise routine, he was trying not to default often to food. Chip identified with the dangers of escaping to food. Chip described his go to snacks as he shared, “Coke and Little Debbie’s, so if I’m really stressed, I’m usually drinking a Coke and eating some sort of sweet food somehow or something.” Chip realized his tendencies to escape to unhealthy food but states that he “enjoyed eating healthy... but you can only eat so healthy on a minimal budget, you know.” Chip and Jerry, unlike the other research participants admitted to escaping to something in addition to food.

Bart enjoyed escaping into golf when he was able. Ralph enjoyed hunting. Drew and Randolph did not share a tangible way to escape from stress.

Maintaining resiliency by escaping from stress seemed to be both positive and beneficial for the participants as long as what they escaped to was not harmful or a hindrance to their wellbeing. The need to escape from stress seemed to be an effective coping strategy to maintaining healthy functioning in ministry (Lee, 2010; Spencer,

Winston, & Bocarnea, 2012). Table 4.15 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. Pursuit of Counseling is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring Comparisons and Contrasts Among the Participants.

Table 4.15

Need to Escape from Stress

Pseudonym	Description of an Escape	Things to escape to
Thomas	“lose oneself in a different world”	Running and marathons
Chip	“my go to movie” “it’s almost an escape”	Top Gun movie, Coke, Little Debbie snacks
Dale	“go to withdraw” “get away and get perspective”	Long drive, Starbucks, read book, driving range, gym
Ted	“get away”	Entrepreneurial magazines
Jerry	“get away”	Leisure, golf, food
Calvin	“get away”	Time with God, reading
Ralph	“getting away”	hunting
Bart	n/a	golf

Pursuit of Counseling

Research participants affirmed that they were open and willing to pursue counseling services to assist them in maintaining resilience in the ministry. The majority of the participants in this study indicated that they have engaged in some type of counseling since starting their church. They have consulted and participated in

counseling with a private organization to deal with some emotional issue (Wallace et al. 2011). The counseling issues include: depression, marriage, and anxiety.

Chip shared that he went to counseling for depression to deal with issues that he experienced in his prior church. As explained by Chip, his former church “invested in him, spiritually from the time that he was young.” He shared that he found out that his mentor was a sexual predator and had been abusing boys, but fled to another country. The pastoral staff knew about him abusing boys, but covered it up. Chip shared that prior to church planting, he had confided in his mentor for advice and encouragement. When Chip left to plant, his relationship with his former church became somewhat contentious because they found out that he knew. He was discouraged and at a low point in his life.

He mentioned that he “struggles with times when he gets down.” He appeared reluctant to call it depression for some reason, but it sounded like it. When asked about how he “unsaddens himself”, he stated, “I would say that the way to do that is by spending time with my family, spending time with God, getting alone, getting back in the Word.” He eventually confirmed that he went to counseling.

Dale mentioned as well that he and his wife have utilized counseling resources to repair their marriage. He shared that a lack of attentiveness to her has made things difficult at home:

We had no significant relationships in the church, so it was just us, and so we fought a lot, and she saw that ministry would be my God, or, you know, I would love my ministry and not love my bride.

It appeared visibly that Dale was ashamed of how he had not been loving his wife in the past.

Unlike Chip or Dale, Calvin had never been to counseling. However, like Dale, Randolph utilized counseling to improve his relationship with his wife, who suffers with a chronic illness, and has been neglected due to his passion and attention for ministry:

Sometimes I put being a minister, or being a dad, over being a husband. So my wife would have unmet expectations of marriage... she began to get sick with fibromyalgia, and some depression, and I'm gone more in ministry, and she needs me more, and she's less involved in the ministry. So that created some emotional disconnect.

Randolph shared that they "got counseling" as well as "the right doctor for her to get on the right medications," which has helped greatly. As he shared, it seemed like a huge burden was lifted from his heart.

When asked about how he responds to unmet expectations, stress and emotional exhaustion, Jerry explained in-depth about what happened to him while working in a pastoral role in his former church. He shared,

... We just had a newborn, I was finishing my Master's degree, working like 70 hours, you know, absolutely insane, and I was just burned out completely. Went to counseling, and got on Prozac for a little while... chemical stuff. I didn't want to...

He explained that when he moved to his current city to plant the church he stopped taking his medications. Jerry shared, "I stopped taking Prozac cold turkey, which is stupid, and last year I was an emotional wreck – not because of the Prozac. I'm just saying, that would have been not the prime time to stop taking the medicine I was on." He shared that after feeling like he was having a heart attack, without feeling stressed, he realized he was having an anxiety attack. He mentioned that the doctors recommended that he "get back on the Prozac" and so after two weeks, the symptoms were gone and he felt great.

Thomas expressed that he was a firm believer in counseling. He shared the heart-wrenching reality that a year and a half after he had married his wife, his dad committed suicide. He shared, “So part of processing that, you know, has been, that’s probably some of my bent towards counseling too, so I’m journeying with a couple of different guys, counseling.” Thomas continued sharing that his story has encouraged him in the gospel as he has had to trust God because “it’s a story that he wouldn’t have chosen.” Further in the conversation, Thomas shared that as couple, he and his wife, go to a counselor once a quarter for a checkup for their marital relationship. Although he currently sees a counselor, it seemed to be for preventative measures rather than a current problem. Bart, Ted, Ralph, and Drew did not mention any previous participation in counseling.

Based on the past experiences of many of the participants and their participation in counseling, it appeared that pursuing counseling in ministry is a more likely option if needed. This offered a new perspective, hope, and opportunity to enhance the existing literature regarding pastors and counseling. In order to enhance resiliency in ministry pastors may benefit from the pursuit of counseling. Table 4.16 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme. People Pleasing and Longevity is the next theme that emerged in reference to the research question exploring Comparisons and Contrasts Among the Participants.

Table 4.16

Pursuit of Counseling

Pseudonym	Had Prior Counseling	Reason for Counseling
Chip	Depression	Pain from former church experience
Dale	Marital	Lack of attentiveness to his wife
Calvin	None	None
Randolph	Marital	Lack of attentiveness to his wife
Jerry	Anxiety	Stress and anxiety during demanding seasons
Thomas	Father's Suicide	Father killed himself

People Pleasing and Longevity

The literature stated that “people pleasing” impacts the overall health of a pastor (Chandler, 2010; Grosch & Olsen, 2000). It appeared from this study that six participants confessed to being people pleasers and recognized the adverse effects it can have on their lives, ministry, and resilience.

Chip mentioned several times that he was a high people pleaser. He confessed, “It’s me failing people... but if I’m failing people, I want to fix it.” He shared, “Because I am a people pleaser, so I will always sacrifice myself for the needs of others.” Chip stated that because he’s a people pleaser, he struggles with having healthy relationships because he gravitates to those who are hurting. He said as he spends time with them, it

drains him. Carrying the burden of even close friends who have major mess-up issues, drains him. He concluded that it's his personality that puts him in this social situation.

Dale resonated with Chip as a people pleaser. He mentioned that he feels good when people tell him that he does a good job. He admitted, "I'm a people pleaser by nature, so when people tell me I do a good job, or they tell me something specific that I did well, it makes me feel good." He stated that he "feels delight, especially when the people that are closest" to him say something. Unlike Chip, Dale, does not empathically carry people's burdens, but enjoyed the good things that people say about him.

Calvin conjoined with Chip and Dale as a people pleaser, but seemed more of one who would switch his schedule around to meet the needs of people even at the expense of something more important or previously scheduled. Calvin never admitted to being a people pleaser but honestly wondered at times what people think when he does not have margin in his schedule for them. He does recognize that he is "actually unintentionally, passively, showing them, teaching them, that that thing is always more important." He admitted that it is "unhealthy." He shared candidly, "I mean, it arises from an unhealthy view of they need me. Like I'm going to be the savior." He appeared to believe that having other leaders around him with equal authority has helped him not be the "savior for people." Since his church totals around 190 people, he has begun scheduling his meetings three weeks in advance to protect his family margin. However, he expressed his feelings of guilt, when scheduling someone three weeks out when they need to meet sooner.

Thomas identified himself as a people pleaser and a performer that seeks "to meet people's expectations, but painfully realizes "the bucket for people never fills up, and you

can never do enough.” Thomas seemed to realize that although he is a people pleaser, intrinsically he knew that he could never do enough to satisfy people, so why try?

Ted identified himself as a people pleaser. He shared that he has “people that are just so difficult to pastor, but knows that I’m a people pleaser by nature.” He explained that this created anxiety for him. With a sense of frustration, he shared that instead of knowing he should extend grace to difficult people, he wants to “open a can of whoop-ass on these people.” It appeared that Ted wanted to be direct with difficult people, but intuitively felt like he needed them to like him. When talking to Ted, it was apparent how this dichotomy of emotional desires created anxiety within him.

It appeared that people pleasing in the form of carrying the burdens of hurting people, posturing oneself for people to say good things about you, functioning as a savior for people, meeting people’s expectations or wanting people to like you, affects resiliency and longevity in ministry. Five participants identified with being a people pleaser, while the other five participants did not. Table 4.17 depicts a summary of the findings related to this theme.

Table 4.17

People Pleasing & Longevity

Pseudonym	Identified People Pleaser	Reason
Chip	“I’m a high people pleaser”	“If I’m failing people, I want to fix it.”
Dale	“I’m a people pleaser by nature”	“feels good when people tell me something that I did well” “pleasing people becomes my motivation
Calvin	“Savior for people”	“What do people think when I don’t have margin in my schedule for them”
Thomas	“People pleaser”	“Seek to meet people’s expectations”
Ted	“People pleaser by nature”	“I need people to like me”

The research participants identified with one another as it relates to the four themes mentioned in this section. Each participant demonstrated a drive to plant the church that they started. Escaping from stress was evidenced in the participants as well. Whether it was outdoor activity, leisure, sports, food or reading, the participants used their escape as a way to cope with stressors. The need to pursue counseling appeared not to be a hindrance for the participants experiencing resiliency. Six out of ten of the participants had already participated in counseling. The participants considered the dangers of being a “people pleaser” as it relates to the long-term impact on their ministry.

Fifty percent of the participants confessed to being a people pleaser, however, each one desired to not continue living this way.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the ten research participants who shared their experiences related to the two research questions: Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities and Negative Impact of Ministry Realities Associated with Dissipation of Idealism. The findings of this study, related to research question one, suggested four conclusions regarding factors that significantly impact the experience of resiliency among church planting pastors. The factors that notably impacted the experience of resiliency among the research participants of this study include: (a) Utilizing coping strategies during stressful seasons to maintain enjoyment in ministry, (b) Locating personal identity in Christ alone, (c) Having relational support systems, and (d) Maintaining a healthy relationship with my wife. The findings of this study related to research question two suggested one conclusion regarding the negative impact of ministry realities associated with dissipation of idealism. The factor that notably impacted resiliency when idealism dissipated among the research participants of this study include: Reflecting on God's calling in difficult or discouraging times. The following table, [Table 4.18] demonstrates a comprehensive summary of the data explicated from this chapter. It addresses the five factors that affect the experience of resiliency as it relates to the two primary research questions addressed within this study. The subsequent and final chapter will provide sound conclusions, implications, and

suggestions for further research based on the findings discovered from the data in this study.

Table 4.18

Comprehensive Summary of the Data Explicated from Chapter 4

	Utilizing coping strategies	Reflecting on God’s Calling in Difficult or Discouraging times	Locating Personal Identity in Christ alone	Having Relational Support Systems	Maintaining a Healthy Relationship with his Wife
Research Question 1: Experience of Resiliency in Light of Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities	Sabbath and healthy escapes appeared to refresh the participants	Being reminded of God’s call during unexpected times kept participants grounded	Reflecting on personal identity in Christ appeared to replenish and redirect participants off of numbers and pressure	Ventilating relationships, friendships, mentors and coaches seemed to offer participants relational outlets and fellowship	Wives offered support, encouragement, reminders, accountability and partnership as the participants served in the church
Research Question 2: Negative Impact of Ministry Realities	Sabbath, Vacations and specific “leisure” escapes seemed to offer	Reflecting on the personal call seemed to help the participants during times of	Locating personal identity in Christ appeared to greatly assist the participants	Having ventilating relationships seemed helpful to maintaining resilience when	Wives appeared to support the participants when discouragement

Associated with Dissipation	freedom the drain from unexpected duties, people and pressure.	frustration from performing unexpected duties and low attendance	in times of discouragement from low and fluctuating attendance numbers	the participants became drained by people	settled in from low and fluctuating attendance numbers
Research Question 3: Comparisons and Contrasts Among the Participants	Eight out of ten participants valued their Sabbath and every participant had an “escape” during stressful times	The personal calling is questioned and trusted in at various times in the participants ministry	Reflecting on the identity in Christ was the primary way that the participants prevent quitting the ministry	Every participant appeared to value supportive relationships and reported significant benefits from those relationships	The participants seemed to recognize the importance in a healthy husband/wife relationship for longevity in ministry

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This study investigated the phenomenon of resiliency as described by church planting pastors in light of their personal expectations and ministry realities. In this chapter, the research question is answered by explicating the factors related to the experience of resiliency, as identified by the research participants. These factors are first discussed in light of the related empirical literature. Next, five conclusions are described from this analysis and implications of these conclusions follow. Finally, in order to expand on the conclusions and implications of this study, the chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Findings Related to Literature

In this section themes that emerged in this study are discussed in light of those found in the empirical literature related to the research questions. These themes include: a) Personal expectations and ministry reality, b) Pastors and untested interpersonal skills, c) Coping with reality, d) Idealism and the sacred calling, e) Replenishing by finding identity in Christ, f) Need for relational support and accountability, and g) Role of the marriage relationship in ministry.

Personal Expectations and Ministry Reality

An overlap exists between the experience of resiliency identified by the research participants in this study and those identified in the literature. Both include descriptions whereby pastors enter the ministry with a disparity of understanding between idealized ministry outcomes and actual ministry experiences (Spencer et al. 2012). These

corroborating findings reflect that some pastors enter ministry unable to differentiate between hoped for outcomes and ministry realities resulting in a disparity between what is desired and how to cope with what is real. For these pastors this idealism centers on commitment and compassion but tends to give way to disillusionment and despair over time (Grosch & Olsen, 2000); they are unprepared for how to cope with discouragement, assessing progress, handling expectations, and managing stress in ministry. Unrealistic expectations, measurements of success, reaching people, bringing renewal to cities, preaching awe-inspiring messages, witnessing people come to faith in Christ, playing a role in helping people spiritually, and the expectations to reach varied people were identified as overwhelming for some, in both this study and the related literature (Buhrow, 2012; Grosch & Olsen; McMinn et al. 2008; Zondag, 2006).

Pastors and Untested Interpersonal Skills

This study's findings are also consistent with the literature, that suggests that some pastors enter the ministry with untested interpersonal skills, expecting to make a difference and reach an array of people, but are unprepared for what to expect (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Zondag, 2006). These findings suggest that some pastors enter the ministry with an untested ability to deal with people and are unprepared for the interpersonal pressures of church planting ministry. Unrealistic expectations from people, long hours, and intrusions in family life create a need for support in obtaining resilience to endure in this type of ministry (McMinn et al. 2008). In this study, each research participant identified individual ways of maintaining resiliency, which identified with the literature

in regards to pastors incorporating effective boundaries, prioritizing family life, and relying on the support of their wife for personal and pastoral wellbeing (Meek et al. 2003).

Coping with Reality

All of the participants in this study addressed the importance of escaping to an outdoor activity, spiritual exercise, book, or sporting routine in order to deal with the stress of ministry. This paralleled the literature regarding pastors' reliance on spiritual resources, hobbies, and exercise to experience refreshment and cope with the realities of embedded in church planting ministry (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; McMinn et al. 2005).

Idealism and the Sacred Calling

Participants in this study reported that they entered the ministry with a desire to serve the church and faithfully fulfill their sacred calling, which was consistent with the research by Christopherson (1994). However, high expectations to fulfill the sacred calling were oftentimes met with despair and unhealthy ways of coping. The participants identified with the research of Chandler (2008), which discussed that initial optimism and enthusiasm about ministry often drifts to a perfunctory work-ethic for many pastors. Dale, for example, reflected on his tendency to drift into discouragement without a perspective check.

Replenishing by Finding Identity in Christ

This study found the participants replenished themselves by reminding themselves of who they are in Christ in order to avoid the discouragement that comes

from measuring personal success by numerical attendance growth. Research by Chandler (2010) substantiates this finding and clarifies that some pastors correlate value with attendance numbers and the size of their church. However, the pastors in this study reported that when they utilize disciplines that support them in finding their identity in Christ, instead of in attendance numbers, they experience more resilience in church planting ministry.

Need for Relational Support and Accountability

This study confirmed the literature recommendations of Chandler (2010), which suggests that pastors obtain relational support and accountability to maintain a healthy balance in ministry. Eight participants were in friendships with other pastors for accountability, while two of the participants desired close friendships and were not in accountability relationships. Participant responses showed that competition among pastors was not a reason for why pastors were not in relationship with other men, as suggested by Sison (2006).

Role of the Marriage Relationship in Ministry

This study affirmed the research by McMinn et al. (2008) that suggests that the marital relationship plays a significant role in church planting pastor's resilience and wellbeing. Each participant expressed value for their spouses as people and for the supportive role they play in their ministry.

Based on the results of this study regarding the experience of resilience in light of personal expectations and ministry realities, five conclusions were unearthed and will be explored in the next section. These themes and conclusions are depicted in Table 5:1.

Table 5.1

Emerging Themes Identified in Empirical Literature

Theme From the Study Found in the Literature	Researcher Conclusions
Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities	Church planting pastors may enter ministry with a disparity of understanding between what is desired from ministry and how to cope with the realities of ministry.
Pastors and Untested Interpersonal Skills	Church planting pastors may have an untested ability to deal with people and don't know what to expect in ministry.
Coping with Reality	Church planting pastors seem to need healthy and tangible ways to refresh themselves when dealing with the realities of ministry.
Idealism and the Sacred Calling	Church planting pastors may enter the ministry out of obedience to fulfill their calling with high expectations.
Replenishing by Finding Identity in Christ	Pastors appear satisfied in ministry when they find their identity in Christ.
Need for Relational Support and Accountability	Pastor's friendships seem to help to keep them thriving in ministry.
Role of Marriage Relationship in Ministry	A pastor's wife may play a significant role in a

	pastor's resilience in ministry.
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Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest five conclusions regarding factors, which most notably impact the experience of resiliency among church planting pastors. These include: (a) Maintaining healthy rhythms of refreshment, (b) Remembering the call when discouraged, (c) Being reminded consistently of identity in Christ, (d) Having ventilating relationships and a coach, and (e) Nurturing a loving marital relationship with the spouse. These factors are explored in the following section.

Maintaining Healthy Rhythms of Refreshment

Maintaining Healthy Rhythms of Refreshment refers to a coping strategy that allows pastors to deal with the stress, disappointments, and rigors of ministry in order to maintain resiliency. Themes related to this conclusion include a) Unprepared for What to Expect in Ministry, b) Limited Support and Stress on a Pastor's Health, and c) Needing Healthy Rhythms of Escape.

Unprepared for what to expect in ministry. When a pastor enters his first pastoral assignment, he may have unrealistic expectations of the level of care required for himself, his family, and his congregation. As the stress of ministry affects him, particularly from dealing with people, coping strategies are needed to maintain his resiliency in ministry. Lee and Gilbert (2003) and Grosch and Gilbert (2000) suggest that seminaries need to prepare seminarians, who lack experience in professional ministry, to

understand what is required and to ready themselves and their families for their first pastoral assignment. This holds true for church planting pastors as well.

Bart echoed this when he stated, “I didn’t know what to expect when I started.” Unaware of what to expect, pastors may develop and respond to unrealistic expectations in order to prove their worth. This was confirmed by the participants and consistent with the research of McMinn et al. (2008). Based on inadequate preparation for the realities of church planting ministry, the participant’s idealism became their driving motivation as pastors. As unrealistic demands and stress became their reality, while idealism dissipated, many participants struggled with discouragement. Church planting pastors’ may find that education about and preparation for possible unrealistic expectations placed upon them aids them in creating a resiliency plan.

Limited support and stress on the pastor’s health. The findings of this study substantiated the work of Miner (2007), who suggested that stress and distress takes its toll on solo pastors during the early years due to limited support and buffering. Solo church planting pastors experience the full weight of the ministry and the accompanied stress because they are unable to share the load with other capable volunteers or leaders. Pastors who serve small churches may lack the support they need from people to share the stress and pressure of the ministry leading to frustration and burn out. Dale and Calvin recognized that in the early years they were discouraged and frustrated from performing unexpected duties because they did not have the support of people to delegate to.

Consistent with Purnell (2004), who found that pastors are forsaking their own health and body to assist others in their churches, participants in this study understood the

impact that stress has on their health and bodies. Caring for people in their churches can cause pastors to risk neglecting their own health. Pastors who give and give to others need to attend to personal health and refreshment in order to maintain resiliency.

Participants in this study had a clear understanding of their need to find ways of coping for sustained resilience in ministry.

Needing healthy rhythms of escape. Participant's responses corroborated with those of Lee (2010), who concluded that resilience comes from the ability to apply coping strategies to maintain healthy functioning. Participants in this study found refreshment in their healthy rhythms of escape. They identified with the need to "disconnect" from the ministry in order to engage in a fun, relaxing, and refreshing experience. The majority of participants found refreshment in their "Sabbath." The Sabbath was their day off. The participants identified with the research of Meek (2003) and the notion of deliberately maintaining balance in life by protecting and guarding the Sabbath. As the pastor endures the stress of ministry, he balances it by taking a Sabbath. Having a Sabbath appears to bring refreshment, but it requires protecting and guarding. During the Sabbath, participants were refreshed by extended devotional time, rest, reading, spending time with family and with God. As they engaged in consistent prayer, study, and Scripture meditation, as suggested by the research of Grosch and Olsen (2000), the participants experienced refreshment. This is also consistent with the findings of McMinn (2005), who suggested that other forms of intrapersonal care such as setting specific boundaries and enjoying hobbies and exercise are also indicated. Outside of the Sabbath, participants enjoyed activities such as: hiking, hunting, running, fishing, golf, movies, long rides, and exercise. Participants appeared to use these activities as a way to

escape from the consistent demands and stressors that admittedly had an effect on their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing. The analysis of the data revealed that the participants' proclivity to maintain resiliency while church planting was possibly due to them intentionally taking time to refresh their physical bodies, emotional state, and spiritual perspective in light of ministry reality. Engaging routinely in a Sabbath and in activities outside of the ministry revitalizes and replenishes the pastor for continuing in the work of the ministry.

In addition to guarding their Sabbath, and routinely engaging in refreshing activities, having annual vacations were also considered important to participating pastors. Participants reported that family vacations were refreshing to their entire family and served as a "payback" to their families given the persistent demands of ministry and stress that were incurred to the family. Although the majority of participants relied on a vacation, two participants did not feel that they needed it.

The literature and the findings of this study concur that at least some pastors enter their first pastoral assignment without being prepared for the stress of ministry and without coping strategies to maintain resiliency in ministry. This creates an opportunity for seminaries to prepare pastors by equipping them with a multi-faceted approach to stress management that would comprehensively deal with the physical, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of coping and staying refreshed in the ministry (Wallace et al. 2011). This could provide a way to prevent pastors from seeking to prove themselves as they try to meet unrealistic expectations. Additionally, coping strategies could help solo, church planting pastors deal with the stress and pressure incurred as a result of serving

the church without a staff to support them. Perhaps this can prevent stress from impacting a pastor's physical and mental health.

Recommended coping strategies proposed by the researcher of this study would suggest healthy rhythms of escape. These would include taking a Sabbath day off, scheduling an annual vacation, and routinely engaging in activities, leisure, recreation and hobbies outside of the normal routines and rigors of ministry. Although pastors would have to fight to protect and guard these "escapes" in order to maintain refreshment, this could aid in the health of his wellbeing along with his family. The next section will explore the conclusion Remembering the Call when Discouraged.

Remembering the Call when Discouraged

The second conclusion drawn from this study is: Remembering the Call when Discouraged. When a pastor remembers his clear call from God, it can encourage him to maintain resilience and possibly alleviate his discouragement in ministry. This entails a) Discouragement from Workload, People, and Low and Fluctuating Attendance, and b) Questioning the Call and Being Encouraged by the Call, which are described in this section and followed with implications.

Discouragement from workload, people and low and fluctuating attendance.

Participants identified serving as a pastor as difficult and discouraging due to the workload, people, and low and fluctuating attendance. Pastors entered the ministry to fulfill their sacred call and to experience the rewards of their career, but reported developing feelings of discouragement and despair due to these factors. These findings concur with those of Zondag (2007) who concluded that pastors may enter the ministry

out of obedience to God for calling them, but experience more discouragement and despair than rewards from ministry. However, a pastor can enter the ministry, obey God, and experience the rewards of ministry, without the feelings of discouragement and despair being the predominant reality of the pastor. The importance of helping pastors discover ways to keep discouragement and despair from becoming their predominant feelings is one strong implication of this research.

In this study, when participants were frustrated or discouraged by performing unexpected duties, dealing with low and fluctuating attendance numbers, or draining people they purposefully remembered God's call and maintained resiliency. Instead of hoping for more people to attend the church to relieve the pastor from stress and discouragement and measuring effectiveness by attendance numbers, being reminded of God's call facilitated a shift back to a healthier mindset.

Participants' comments corroborated with the literature related to pastors feeling unfulfilled because of distorted expectations for success and attempts to be validated through pastoral ministry (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Krause et al. 2001; Lee, 2010). In order to refocus themselves, most of them mentioned the need to remember God's call. Remembering the call to pastor diminished discouragement and refocused them on faithfully serving. Mindfully focusing on "the call" encouraged the pastor, reminded him of his value, and alleviated the need for him to personally measure his effectiveness by attendance numbers that were out of his control.

Questioning the call and being encouraged by the call. Although many participants questioned their call during times of discouragement, they also remembered their call to encourage themselves. This corroborates with the findings of Spencer et al.

(2012) who concluded that the call could be questioned when a pastor is discouraged, and that remembering the call can be encouraging. In this study, it appeared that times of discouragement caused the participants to determine whether they were fit or “called” to serve in ministry. In order to encourage themselves, the participants remembered their calling as a way to garner strength and to alleviate their discouragement.

Additionally, findings from this study uphold the literature that states that a pastor understands that God calls a pastor to ministry instead of pastor choosing the profession (Lee, 2010; Sison, 2006). The assumption is that being called by God provides greater encouragement and hope for resilience than being called by oneself. Being called by God seems to provide a trusted foundation for reliance upon in discouraging times.

Many of the pastors reported that they considered quitting at some point in their ministry. Yet, “the call” kept them from giving up on what God was calling them to do (Lee, 2010; Spencer et al. 2012). Participants reported believing that if they quit, they were disobeying God and His plan and that it was their duty to continue in the ministry for the sake of fulfilling God’s call. This offered hope that prevented them from quitting. Pastors, in developing their resiliency plan, may need to include reminding themselves of their call to ministry. This may also provide them with an opportunity to be clear about who has called them. Additionally, pastors could enrich themselves through maintaining the spiritual discipline of prayer, worship, daily Scripture reading, journaling and establishing consistent time with an accountability partner.

Pastors experience rewards and discouragement in the ministry. When stressors mount discouragement may ensue due to lack of participating members and a focus on numbers sometimes results. It appears that focusing on “the call” can encourage the

pastor, remind him of his value, and alleviate his need to measure his effectiveness by attendance numbers. Even though “the call” is questioned in discouraging times, remembering a clear call from God can encourage a pastor and enhance his experience of resiliency. Perhaps it would benefit church planting pastors if they were taught to prepare and develop a clear call to ministry in order to assure themselves of God’s call. This could assist the pastor when discouragement may tempt him to question or doubt his call. The next conclusion drawn from this study is Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ.

Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ

The third conclusion drawn from this study is: Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ. A pastor has a choice to either find his identity in success or lack thereof, or in Christ. This entails a) Finding Significance in Success, b) Being Reminded of Identity in Christ, c) Relying on God for Validation and Affirmation, and d) Identity in God and Personal Weaknesses, which are presented in this section and followed with implications.

Finding significance in success. The participants in this study find themselves fighting the temptation to put their identity in their “success,” or lack thereof, rather than in God. Some participants reported struggling with finding their significance in their perceived success or effectiveness as a pastor. These findings are validated in literature that states that the measure of success is embedded within clergy identity and founded on achieving success in ministry (Zondag, 2006). However, participants in this study also attempted to rise above this temptation and find personal identity outside of congregation

size and enhanced personal reputation. This finding corroborates with Christopherson (1994) and McKenna and Eckard (2009) who reported that clergy can develop the ability to find personal identity outside of perceived measures of success. The participants in this study worked hard at not allowing measurements of success to become markers of enhanced identity as stated in the literature. Participants in this study maintained that church planting pastors must make a deliberate effort to avoid allowing external measurements of success to become associated with personal identity. Despite the temptation to find personal identity in success, research participants believed that finding their identity in Christ allows them to maintain resilience in ministry.

Being reminded of identity in Christ. To circumvent identity being placed in success, or attendance numbers, pastors in this study consistently reminded themselves of their identity in Christ. For example, Dale reported that “spending time with Jesus” helped replenish his perspective. The tension for where their identity rested, however, appeared evident. Bart said, “I remind myself of what God has done and is currently doing often” and Calvin reported, “Discovering identity in Christ refreshes me.” Purposefully spending time with Christ in personally meaningful ways, as often as possible, reminded participants of who they are in Christ, what Christ had done for them, and served to protect them from finding identity in success. It is thus important to determine how to help pastors continually find identity in Christ for sustained ministry and to support them in putting these ideas in their resiliency tool box.

Relying on God for validation and affirmation. Participants in this study identified with the research literature that states that pastors enter ministry with an idealistic expectation to be validated and affirmed (Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Rosenthal &

Todd, 2006). Consequently, the pastor is left depending on people, circumstances and even success to validate and affirm him. When validation and affirmation did not come from perceived ministry “success”, participants in this study were left feeling discouraged and contemplating quitting. To cope with this, they depended on their devotional time with God, praying, conversations with their wives, and self-reflection to refresh themselves and to remember their identity in Christ. Depending on God for validation and affirmation appears less discouraging than trusting in people, circumstances and success.

Although attendance numbers appeared to be the source of their challenge related to personal identity, each participant desired to find their identity and value in Christ. Participants reported that high numbers had the tendency to boost their ego, but they knew that this could not be where their identity rested (Hill & Yousey, 1998; Rosenthal & Todd, 2006).

Identity in God and personal weaknesses. Findings from this study parallel the literature that suggests that resting personal identity in God allows pastors to see their weaknesses. According to Meek et al. (2003) by resting identity in God, the pastor is reminded of his sufficiency being only in Christ, and not in himself. This seems to cause the pastor to recognize his personal weakness and need for God. Whenever a participant recalled his identity in Christ, it was in order to prevent his identity from being placed in something else. When seeking identity in Christ, the participants seemed to intentionally seek to turn from placing their identity in a “false” self and shift to their true self in Christ. In this moment, it appeared that grace, love, and acceptance in Christ was realized for them despite their weakness to find their identity in something else other than Christ. As

Meek et al., (2003) suggest, the awareness of human sinfulness and God's grace sustains a pastor. Participant reports substantiated this as they confessed their constant need for grace. Identity in Christ seems to be where grace is stored up for the pastor to sustain him in the ministry as opposed to finding identity in anything else.

In this study, participants were refreshed and encouraged by remembering their identity in Christ. It appeared that maintaining resiliency in ministry was a result of remembering and resting in their identity in Christ as people who were accepted and loved as they are and not for the ministry accomplishments. Since personal identity and success appear to be connected, pastors deliberately try to maintain identity in Christ to maintain resiliency. The following passages can further aid in understanding identity in Christ: Psalm 139:13-16; John 15:15; Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 3:26-27; Ephesians 1:4-5; 2:6, 10, 19; Philippians 3:20; Colossians 2:13-14; 3:3-4, 12; and 1 John 3:1.

Pastors appear to maintain their identity in Christ by spending time with God in prayer and reading the Scriptures. During their time with God, pastors reported feeling validated and affirmed by God. The Scripture and prayer remind the pastor of who he is in Christ. However, the temptation remains for pastors to rest in what they do instead of who God is. It appears that the temptation to find identity outside of Christ is an ongoing challenge. At the same time, the temptation reminds pastors of their personal weaknesses and sin of trusting in other things rather than Christ. Yet, as they find identity in Christ, God's grace sustains them. The experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities is enhanced by consistently being reminded of identity in Christ. The next section will explore the conclusion: Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach.

Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach

The fourth conclusion drawn from this study is: Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach. Pastors can benefit from ventilating relationships and friendships as well as a coach when planting a church in order to maintain resiliency in ministry. This entails a) Understanding the Impact and Need for Supportive Relationships, b) Value of Friendships with Other Pastors, and c) Benefits of Having a Coach.

Understanding the impact and need for supportive relationships. According to the literature, pastors lack adequate social support systems and are consequently led into loneliness (Chandler, 2008). However, contrary to the literature, in this study the findings reported that the majority of the participants participated in healthy ventilating relationships and participants believed this enhanced resiliency in ministry. This study demonstrated that not all pastors lack adequate social support and consequently experience loneliness. Chip reported that he “desired a companion in ministry” for support. He did not express loneliness, but a desire to have a partner on staff with him in ministry to share the load. His church was small and he was the sole pastor and responsible for doing everything. Randolph stated that he “desired a best friend” and reported that he enjoyed the other elders on his team, but wanted someone in his season of life that could do things with him from time to time.

The participants identified with Lee (2010), suggesting that supportive relationships in a congregation lowers burnout and enhances optimism among pastors to remain in the ministry. Participants shared that they enjoyed supportive relationships that allowed them to vent. Participants described ventilating relationships, as a time to share their struggles, be honest, face weaknesses, find encouragement, and simply “let their

hair down.” Participants reported the need to connect and fellowship with friends at least twice a month.

Pastors in this study reported that their primary ventilating relationships were with fellow pastors outside of their congregations. Perhaps the participants felt that having a sense of confidentiality was unattainable within their churches. According to participants, ventilating relationships offer emotional, mental and spiritual support. Findings from this study corroborate with recent research reflecting that pastors need a social network of trusted people (Staley, McMinn, Gathercoal, & Free, 2013).

Value of friendships with other pastors. Most of the participants had relationships with fellow pastors in their area. Contrary to the literature, the participants were not hindered from having close friendships because of high competition or distrust among other pastors in their area (Sison, 2006). Participants in this study were in relationship with fellow pastors in a 2-4 mile distance from their existing churches and found these relationships related to ministry resilience. Resilience seems to be enhanced by supportive, ventilating friendships with other pastors. Finding ways to connect pastors in deep and meaningful relationships may provide emotional, mental and spiritual health for them.

Contrary to the findings of Staley et al. (2013) none of the participants in this study were isolated, without social support, or lonely. Chip, for example, who desired a fellow companion on staff with him, had a relationship with a coach, who was a church planter in another state and clarified how beneficial this was to him in terms of ministry resilience.

Benefits of having a coach. Participants were interested in a coach in order to help them avoid certain mistakes in ministry and believed that preventative measures, such as having a coach or mentor, would assist them in not making costly mistakes. Bart, for example, reported that he wished a coach had warned him about the “ups and downs” of attendance numbers. He shared his interest in a coach for ministry support and not necessarily for ongoing ventilating. There seems to be a difference between what ventilating relationships offered the participants compared to what a coach offered. Ventilating relationships provided support for the pastor as a person, while a coach enhanced effectiveness in ministry. This finding substantiated the research of Buhrow (2012), which suggested that supportive, accountability relationships and a personal coach play a significant role in maintaining emotional and spiritual health of pastors.

Although Buhrow (2012) suggests that pastors lack close friendships and confide heavily in their spouses, participants in this study didn't confide heavily in their spouses. Instead, most of the participants utilized their ventilating relationships and coaches as “sounding boards” when faced with difficult issues in their lives and ministry. Pastors may need assistance understanding the importance of developing ventilating relationships in order to experience support and accountability and a personal coach/mentor to help them learn and avoid mistakes in ministry. In this study, the participants maintained resiliency in ministry with the support of ventilating relationships and coaches. Helping pastors obtain a coach and ventilating relationships for support, accountability and guidance may enhance the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities among church planting pastors. The next section will explore the conclusion: Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship with the Wife.

Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship with the Spouse

The final conclusion drawn from this study is: Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship with the Spouse. Findings from this study reflect that participating pastors found that when they nurture and love their wives well resilience is enhanced. This entails a) Understanding the Need for a Supportive Wife, b) Protecting the Wife from Becoming an Unpaid Assistant, c) Nurturing the Wife through Stress and Difficulties, and d) Refreshing and Valuing the Wife.

Understanding the need for a supportive wife. When a pastor plants a church, his family plays a significant role in the longevity of his church and ministry. In this study, the participants confirmed that their wives played this kind of role in their ministry. According to Meek et al., (2003), a pastor's wife contributes significantly to a pastor's health and wellbeing. The majority of the participants reported that their wives were supportive of their church and ministry. Participants described their wife's role in the church in the following ways: "being a team player, cheerleader, partner and my wife and kids mom." The participants not only expressed a need for their wives as companions and partners but also supportive participants in the ministry. To nurture this relationship, participants in this study were passionate about praying with their wives, reading the Bible together, and encouraging them in the faith. The support in the husband-wife relationship appeared mutual. The participants seemed to spiritually lead and nurture their wives, while the wife supported her husband as he served the church and the family.

Protecting the wife from becoming an unpaid assistant. The participants sought to protect their wives from becoming "the unpaid assistant to the pastor," a finding cited as important by Hileman (2008). Although Calvin said that his wife "ran the

Children's Ministry" he mentioned that this was her only role in the church. Instead of encouraging his wife to function in roles that were incongruent or unsatisfying for her, Calvin nurtured her as a separate person and protected her from being swept up by the needs and expectations of the church. Although none of the research participants in this study described their spouses as their "unpaid assistant," findings from this study do concur with those of Murphy-Geiss (2011) that the family is vested by "default" based on the pastor having a family. It seems unavoidable for a pastor's family to be involved in the church. Ralph, for example, stated that he gladly included his entire family in church ministry but he also clarified that he nurtured and protected his wife during times when their ministry required countless hours for him or their family.

Nurturing the wife through stress and difficulties. Data from participants confirmed the research of McMinn (2005), which suggested that inadequate finances were stressors reported by wives of male clergy. For example, Chip and Dale stated that finances were a burden for their wives. To nurture his wife, Dale reported working a part-time job delivering pizzas in order to relieve the financial burden. Although he seemed humiliated by delivering pizza as a pastor with a seminary degree, he sought to nurture her by this financial provision.

Participants nurturing their wives included allowing them to "call them out" when they diminished the importance of the home for the sake of the advancement of the church. For the research participant, nurturing the wife allowed her to use her "voice" to redirect his priorities when they are out of balance. For example, Dale, Randolph and Ted reported that they were all "called out" by their wives when they neglected to nurture them. Since they understood the importance of nurturing their relationship with their

spouse, they valued how her “voice” provided “wake up call” for them. For these participants reprioritization of their spouses was part of what allowed them to remain in the ministry.

Participants were aware of the impact that ministry could have on their families. Randolph was the only participant whose wife was disengaged from ministry. He confessed that his neglect of her negatively impacted her involvement in ministry. He reported that he did not nurture her and consequently, serves by himself in ministry with not much support from her. He regrets not having her onboard and appeared to feel like he paid a high cost for losing sight of the need to nurture his wife over time in ministry. The cumulative effect of neglect may disengage a wife from the ministry.

Refreshing and valuing the wife. The participants’ commitment to taking days off, maintaining family boundaries, and having an annual vacation refreshed themselves and also their wives. The demands of ministry appeared to motivate the participants to make choices that demonstrated value to their wives. In this study, nurtured wives offered encouragement and support in difficult times, reminders of God’s grace and the importance of reflecting on personal identity in Christ, care for the children, and service to the church. It appears that creating times of refreshment for a pastor’s wife and nurturing her is helpful for the pastor’s marriage and resilience in ministry. For Ted, the current state of his marriage is interpreted by him as relating directly to not adequately valuing and nurturing his wife.

The finding in this study that nurturing a loving relationship with the wife impacts the wellbeing of the pastor substantiates those of McMinn et al. (2008), who concluded that a pastor’s nurture and love of his wife significantly impacts his personal and

professional resilience.. As the primary social support system, nurturing the marital relationship enhances longevity in ministry. Whether it was the pastor's protection of his wife from becoming unpaid staff, relieving financial stressors, taking a day off, allowing concerns to be voiced, investing time in the family, faithfully maintaining family boundaries or taking an annual vacation, nurtured wives enhanced the longevity of their husband's ministry.

Summary of Conclusions Derived From this Study

In this study, five conclusions regarding the factors that most notably impact the experience of resiliency among church planting pastors were revealed and explored. These included: a) Maintaining Healthy Rhythms of Refreshment, b) Remembering the Call When Discouraged, c) Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ, d) Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach, and e) Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship with the Wife. In the next section, implications of these conclusions will be discussed. Table 5.2 depicts the five conclusions and the implications that are described in the next section of this chapter.

Table 5:2 Synthesis of Conclusions and Implications.

Table 5.2

Conclusions and Implications from the Study

Five Conclusions	Researcher Conclusions	Implications
Maintaining Healthy Rhythms of Refreshment	Pastors may be unprepared for what to expect in ministry but can benefit from developing healthy rhythms of refreshment.	Pastors can be prepared for what to expect in ministry. Seminaries can help equip pastors to develop healthy ways of refreshing themselves.
Remembering the Call when Discouraged	Pastors may experience discouragement from being overworked, dealing with troubled people, and low and fluctuating attendance but can be encouraged by remembering the call.	Pastors can be equipped for times of discouragement. Pastors can be encouraged to develop a clear call to the ministry.
Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ	Pastors may be tempted to find significance in success but relying on God and finding identity in Christ gives them validation and affirmation.	Pastors can find lasting satisfaction in finding identity in Christ as they spend time with God.
Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach	Pastors seem to thrive and benefit from ventilating relationships and a coach.	Pastors can have meaningful friendships that give them an “outlet”, support and encouragement. Pastors can benefit from having a coach.

<p>Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship w/ the Spouse</p>	<p>Pastors benefit from having a supportive relationship with their wife. Pastors who protect and nurture their wives, especially during stressful and difficult seasons, seem to have enhanced resiliency in ministry.</p>	<p>Pastors can be trained in how to nurture, protect and refresh their wives. Pastors can give their wives a “voice” to hold them accountable to their maintaining home as a priority.</p>
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Implications

Several implications emerged from the conclusions drawn from this study, which impact individuals and institutions. Specifically, these implications can be applied to individual churches who support church planting pastors, church planting networks that support pastors, seminaries and colleges who train pastors, denominations that hold pastors accountable, and the counseling field that ministers to pastors and their families.

Implications for Churches, Church Planting Networks and Denominations

Pastors can teach their churches about the tendency of congregations to create unrealistic expectations of the pastor and his wife and family in order to seek to minimize its effects. Church congregations can avoid infringing on the pastor’s family boundary and respect his need for time with his family. Additionally, congregations can free the pastor and his family from being “on call,” which can provide time for the pastor to care for himself and his family. This is consistent with McMinn’s (2005) recommendations. By the congregation providing the pastor time for himself, he is able to care for himself

and be attentive for his family. This could prevent the pastor from solely being attentive to the demands and needs of the congregation.

The literature offers no suggestions for how church planting networks enhance the experience of resilience among church planting pastors. This study creates opportunities for church planting networks to assess new church planting pastors and their wives, specifically in their ability to cope during stressful seasons and offer suggestions on how to maintain resiliency within the first five years of ministry. The five conclusions in this study can provide the areas of focus in the assessment. Depending on the outcome of the assessment, action items and conditions could be determined and discussed prior to the new pastor planting a church. This would assure that the pastor is prepared prior to planting the church.

Based on the findings of this study, denominations could teach existing church planting pastors how to refresh themselves, understand clearly their call to ministry for recall during discouraging times, remind themselves of their identity in Christ, connect with coaches, mentors and other pastors, and nurture, love and shepherd their wife. This would expand the offerings of denominations that are already mentioned in the literature. These preventative measures can be provided via retreats, conferences, counseling and support groups to pastors to enhance mental health (Buhrow, 2012). Implications for churches, church planting networks and denominations provide opportunities for pastors to experience resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities. The next section will explore: Implications for Colleges and Seminaries.

Implications for Colleges and Seminaries

Colleges and seminaries train pastors to serve in ministry and could consider applying findings from this study to their curriculum. Graduates of seminaries could be at risk of being unprepared for the demands, expectations, drains, interpersonal challenges, pressure, discouragement, and identity crisis in ministry. A focus on the expectations and demands of ministry, developing healthy rhythms of refreshment in stressful times, the benefit of ventilating relationships, and how to nurture, love, and protect their wives in their college seminary training is indicated. Every participant identified with having been trained at a theological school, yet confessed to not being prepared for church planting.

The researcher conducted a review of several schools' curricula related to church planting and found that seminaries that currently do not offer church planting concentrations could consider adding them, seminaries can benefit from more specific courses that develop the church planting pastor, and seminaries can consider balancing the theological curricula with courses that assist pastors in the immediate application of the theology.

The researcher reviewed the curriculum of five prominent seminaries to investigate the academic programs that focused on developing church planting pastors. The Masters of Divinity (MDIV) was the program that included this focus with schools having programs that varied from 88 to 106 hours. One of these schools had a strong church planting concentration with 20 hours dedicated to developing church planters. The courses in this program were geared to pastoral ministry, counseling, and church planting strategy, methodology and multiplication. Although more investigation is warranted, this

seminary, as well as the others, appeared to lack church planting courses that prepare pastors for the expectations, stress, demands, interpersonal challenges, coping strategies, identity issues and family leadership that may ensue during church planting ministry. If this is the case, it may be beneficial for students if faculty of these seminaries increased courses and learning experiences that promote understanding the conclusions drawn from this study and support future church planting pastors in developing a resiliency promoting plan for their future ministry.

Drew identified the need for seminaries to prepare pastors for resilience in ministry. In discussing his desire to influence other pastors, he stated,

Well I'm on the Board of the university now that I went to, so I get to be a part of these conversations now, and so I – probably more exposure to guys like us that are out there now doing it. Pulling back the veil of how to navigate disappointments and manage the emotion of the ministry. And then like not relying so much on creating people that are going to be scholars, although I believe that scholastic endeavor is very powerful. That when we value a scholastic pursuit more than we desire, you know, then we teach people how to remain in obedience and manage the other side of life, we've only created smart people, not healthy pastors.

Drew continued to share,

So probably exposure, I would say, to guys that have failed, instead of showing me all the successes, and introducing people to how many people are in that church, and I think it would be great for these kids to see guys that had moral failures, and why, and come out the other side. Guys that failed in ministry and found the way to get back up again. And, because, you know, I look back on the guys that I graduated with, and the ladies that I graduated with, and I'm in the minority.

Additionally, colleges and seminaries could incorporate into the curriculum the findings of this study, but also specific assistance for pastors who need to know how to shepherd, nurture and disciple their wives in the context of church planting. This could take place through offering seminars and conferences, which would allow local pastors

and church planting pastors to participate. Since high idealism exists as early as seminary (Zondag, 2006), seminaries could expose students (pastors) to the realities of ministry to help set the expectations prior to graduation and church planting (Zondag, 2006). This would offer a sobering reality to new pastors prior to planting the church.

The findings of this study can empower and equip colleges and seminaries to prepare students and future pastors for the personal expectations and ministry realities of ministry. The next section will explore: Implications for Counseling.

Implications for Counseling

In this study, pastors were open to counseling. The majority of pastors were exposed to counseling in the past, and some were currently in counseling. For example, Thomas stated that he and his wife periodically see a counselor to check-up on the health of their marriage. This is consistent with the literature that suggests that counseling services enhance overall functioning for pastors (Buhrow, 2012).

To further the effectiveness in supporting pastors, it would benefit pastors in counseling to meet with counselors who are aware of how to support and help equip pastors in maintaining resiliency. Although the research on pastors pursuing counseling is limited, this study affirmed the openness of pastors to counseling and their freedom from fear of exposure (Buhrow, 2012).

Professional counselors have the opportunity to serve pastors in individual, pre-marital, marital, and family counseling. Pastors need counseling services given the complexity of their calling and ministry. Additionally, counselors can facilitate support groups for pastors who need support. This is consistent with the literature, which

suggests that support groups are positive means of coping for the pastor (McMinn et al. 2008). Findings from this study indicate that pastors want to be understood in safe environments; therefore, support groups could prove to be an effective resource for pastors. Counselors equipped with the findings from this study can aid in the maintaining of resilience among church planting pastors. Through counseling and support groups, pastors can enhance resiliency and facilitate the health of their families and congregations. The final section of this chapter provides suggestions for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout this study, the researcher attempted to establish credible, transferable and dependable work (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Yet, there are limitations in this study. First, although the researcher did not know the research participants, he was a church planting pastor himself and was familiar with the common struggles of church planting. For this reason, it was important for the researcher to locate himself prior to conducting the research interviews and to do what he could to be aware of and remove the influences of his own personal experience. Secondly, although the researcher sought to present an authentic reflection of the personal and lived experiences of research participants, the interviews could have been scheduled and conducted, for example, on “good” or “bad” days for the pastors, which could affect the data collected. In future research, interviews could be scheduled and conducted on separate days to allow for a varied data to be collected, include journals kept over time, utilize focus groups, etc. to gain additional data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Lastly, the pastor’s wife wasn’t a part of the in-depth interviews that were conducted, therefore, she was not able to validate the

information shared by the pastor as it relates to the marriage. Despite, these limitations, however, rich descriptions of the participants' experiences and the context associated seemed to offer a trustworthy, exploratory study as a basis for future research.

The following suggestions for future research were developed from both the conclusions from this study and the rich experience of conducting this study. The hope of the researcher is that the research on this topic will be expanded so that additional resources supporting longevity in ministry may be unearthed. Although many research opportunities could spring from the foundation of this study, this section provides three particular suggested research areas that take on prominence to the researcher: Exploring Identity in Christ and Personal Wellbeing, Faithfulness and Fruitfulness as a Measurement of Success, and Identity in Christ and Family Life.

Exploring Identity in Christ and Personal Wellbeing

The findings of this study indicated that a pastor's identity in Christ significantly impacts his personal wellbeing. Chip appeared frustrated and at times discouraged because of inability to help everyone who needed help. He remarked, "I carry the burden of 95 adults." Randolph seemed worn out from carrying the load of ministry, while those in his congregation invested themselves in "going up to the mountains or down to the beach." Bart carried the burden for the lack of "high" attendance numbers in his church. Ted felt hopelessness and insufficiency from his inability to assist and disciple so many people in his congregation who had troubled lives.

Additional quantitative and qualitative exploration of a pastor's identity in Christ could provide an opportunity for pastors to be equipped in how to reflect on identity in

Christ throughout the ministry. With the weight of ministry, this exploration could offer further insights that provide hope and empowerment to pastors and possibly provide additional means of reducing the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual load that they tend to carry. Research questions to consider on this topic may include: A) How can applying the gospel to life strengthen a pastor's identity in Christ? B) How does Christ shape the identity of church planting pastors? In addition to exploring identity in Christ and well-being, further research on how to support pastors in measuring success on faithfulness and fruitfulness as opposed to gauging effectiveness by lows and highs of attendance numbers may be illuminating.

Faithfulness and Fruitfulness as a Measurement of Success

The findings of this study indicate that it may be beneficial to explore how pastors can be supported in focusing on faithfulness and fruitfulness vs. gauging effectiveness by the lows and highs of attendance numbers as a measurement of success. Chip demonstrated a visible reduction in energy when discussing the current attendance numbers within his church. He remarked,

Numbers are motivating and lack of numbers are demotivating... we've been running around 90, 95 people at church... in the summertime that dropped in half. I mean, we were at 50, which meant about 20 kids and about 20 people in service. You talk about just depressing. So that's depressing.

Dale also recognized his attachment to measuring his success by the attendance of his church. He confessed that his ego drove him to want to be a mega-church pastor. It was apparent that this was his view of success. Results were his measurement of success. Bart shared his consistent frustration with not being able to grow his church more than

the current attendance. He confessed to worrying about what people are thinking when they do not see tremendous growth.

Finding ways to measure success in a healthy way appeared at the forefront of the participants' minds. Suggestions for research include quantitative and qualitative studies exploring how to facilitate the shift from gauging effectiveness by the lows and highs of attendance numbers to the faithfulness and fruitfulness of pastors as a measurement of success. Specific research questions that may be explored to facilitate this understanding include: A) How do pastors measure obedience over time?, B) How do pastors measure spiritual growth within the congregation?, and C) How do pastors measure outcomes of faithfulness? Such studies would be valuable because they are rooted in a pastor's obedience and faithfulness to Christ and His work through the church as opposed to fluctuating attendance numbers and the size of the church. An additional recommendation for an area of further research related to this study is personal identity and family life.

Personal Identity and Family Life

This study focused on pastors and surfaced an opportunity to understand his impact on his family life. A pastor's identity in Christ could have an impact on his family life. Chip shared that at times it's hard for him to leave home in the morning. He said, "They want daddy around the clock." Additionally, he stated that he always wants to be accessible to his wife. Dale shared his regrets for not being a better husband and father. He admitted that work and neglect negatively affected his marriage until his wife redirected his attention back to the home. Calvin expressed the tension of "crowding" his schedule to the point when it infringes on his family time. Randolph carries the weight of

past choices and unintentional neglect of his wife. Ted expressed disdain for having to “watch his kids” on his day off.

Participants in this study appeared to recognize that enhancing personal identity tends to happen at the expense of family life. From their wives’ perspectives, it appeared that they had a tendency to put their ministry and church before their families.

The fact that the participants struggled prioritizing their families leads the researcher to ask the question, “What is the ministry providing to their identity that family life doesn’t provide?” “How can a pastor’s identity in Christ enhance his family life?” The participants appeared convinced that the greater use of time and energy is best given to what could enhance his personal identity instead of his home. While the participant struggles to figure this out, the wife and family suffer.

Quantitative and qualitative studies that explore the personal identity of pastors would be beneficial to discovering why they choose to respond to life and ministry at the expense of their families. This possibly could prevent pastors from choosing to enhance their personal identity at all costs, and even to the neglect of their families. It could impact how they make daily decisions, manage their schedule, create margin for their families, and experience greater contentment and resilience in ministry. Research questions that might be considered include: A) How does being a pastor compare to being a husband and father?, B) How does the drive of a pastor prevent or enhance his ability to be an effective leader of his home?, and C) How does the pressure of performing as a pastor compare with being a leader of the home?

It appears that personal identity has an impact on a pastor’s wellbeing and his family. Equipping pastors with the ability to understand how his identity impacts his

personal wellbeing could offer encouragement and equip them with knowing how to balance life and ministry. Identity seems to affect how a pastor measures his own success and effectiveness. Does he measure success by attendance numbers or can he become equipped to measure his impact by faithfulness and fruitfulness? Identity seems to affect family life. It appears to impact the way a pastor spends his time, schedules work and family life, and how he nurtures or neglects his family. Further research of a pastor's identity in Christ, faithfulness and fruitfulness, and identity as it relates to his family life, could offer outcomes that could increase the health, wellbeing and longevity of pastors and their families.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications and suggestions for further research from this study. When compared and contrasted with the existing literature, the findings paralleled with a number of research literature cited including: a) Personal Expectations and Ministry Realities, b) Pastors and Untested Interpersonal Skills, c) Coping with Reality, d) Idealism and the Sacred Calling, e) Replenishing by Finding Identity in Christ, f) Need for Relational Support and Accountability, and g) Role of the Marriage Relationship in Ministry. Conclusions based on the findings in this study identified five factors, which impact the experience of resiliency in ministry: a) Maintaining Healthy Rhythms of Refreshment, b) Remembering the Call When Discouraged, c) Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ, d) Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach, and e) Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship with the Wife. The implications from this study, which were the

result of the conclusions, can be effectively applied to pastoral leadership, individual churches, church-planting networks, denominations, colleges, seminaries and the counseling field. Suggestions for further research included: a) Exploring Identity in Christ and Personal Wellbeing, b) Faithfulness and Fruitfulness as a Measurement of Success, and c) Personal Identity and Family Life.

Final Summary

This study explored the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities among church planting pastors. In chapter one, the researcher presented the problem background, purpose of the study, and research questions. Then, he located himself as a researcher and shared limitations and the trustworthiness of the research study.

In chapter two, the researcher conducted a review of the literature. He identified the primary categories of literature as follows: a) Idealized Expectations, b) Relationship Between Narcissistic Characteristics, Expectations and Motivation in Pastors, c) Ministry Realities and Expectations of the Life of Pastors, d) Resilience in Light of Idealized Experience and Realities in the Ministry, and e) Relationship Between the Existing Literature and the Proposed Study.

In chapter three, the researcher discussed the method used in the research study. This method included: the design of the qualitative study, research design, selection of participants, data collection, data processing and analysis, and ethical procedures and trustworthiness of findings.

After the research, data collection, and analysis were complete, the researcher presented the findings of the study in chapter four. Portraits of the individual participants were presented as well as their experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities. The following findings related to the experience of resiliency in light of ministry realities were presented: a) Finding Refreshment and Emotional and Physical Rest, b) Reflecting on Identity in Christ, c) Enjoyment in Ministry, d) Not Quitting in Stressful Times, e) Managing Growth and Progress Pressure, f) Needed Relationships, and g) Support of Pastor's Wife. Next, the negative impact of ministry reality associated with dissipation of idealism was presented. The findings related to the negative impacts were the following: a) Frustration from Performing Unexpected Duties, b) Discouragement with Low and Fluctuating Attendance, and c) Drained by People. Lastly, a comparison and contrast among the participants was presented. The following themes were explored and presented: a) Drive to Plant, b) Need to Escape from Stress, c) Pursuit of Counseling, and d) People Pleasing and Longevity.

The last chapter presented the discussion based on the findings related to the literature, conclusions, implications, and suggestions for future research. The findings from the literature were presented. Five conclusions were presented including: a) Maintaining Healthy Rhythms of Refreshment, b) Remembering the Call when Discouraged, c) Being Reminded Consistently of Identity in Christ, d) Having Ventilating Relationships and a Coach, and e) Nurturing a Loving Marital Relationship with the Wife. Implications were made for pastoral leadership, individual churches, church planting networks, denominations, colleges, seminaries and the counseling field.

Following the implications, suggestions for future research were presented and recommended.

The pastor's responsibility continues to affect the lives of people in churches across America. Understanding how to assist him in maintaining resilience and enhanced longevity in ministry is necessary for the furtherance of the church. It is the hope of the researcher that this exploratory study encourages others to apply these findings and further expand the empirical foundation for this vitally important topic of Pastoral Expectations and Ministry Realities Experienced by Protestant Church Planting Pastors.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent for Participation in Idealism & Realism: A Phenomenological Exploration of Pastoral Expectations & Ministry Realities Experienced by Protestant Church Planting Pastors.

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study will be conducted to further the understanding of the experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities among church planting pastors. You were selected as a potential participant in this study because you currently are a church planter, married and have a church less than five years old. Your participation in this study will require an interview, which will be approximately two hours in length. With your permission, the interview will be digitally-recorded and transcribed in order to retrieve an accurate record of the discussion. Confidentiality will be affirmed. Your name will be replaced by a pseudonym on all transcripts and data collected.

This study will be conducted by Dwayne Bond, researcher and Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia, as a partial fulfillment of the degree of Ph.D. in Professional Counseling.

Your voluntary participation in this study will allow for the gathering of information regarding personal expectations and ministry realities in the pastoral ministry. Qualification for participation will be based on your current role as a pastor and serving for no more than five years. All qualified participants will be married. As a participant, you will be invited to answer specific questions pertaining to personal expectations as a pastor, ministry realities and the experience of resilience.

A face-to-face interview will be conducted by Dwayne Bond. You may refuse to participate, or choose to terminate your participation at any time, without fear of negative or personal consequences of any kind. Your decision to participate or not will not affect current or future relations with Liberty University, North American Mission Board (NAMB) or the Acts 29 Church Planting Network. Additionally, if you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting any relationships, and if you decide to withdraw the digital recording will be erased. After the interview, all data collected will be secured in a locked file cabinet at 1032 Arroyo Vista Lane Matthews, NC 28104. All interviews and data will be assigned coded names and/or a numbers to assure confidentiality. In addition, a confidential professional transcriptionist will transcribe all data collected.

All physical participant data (notes, digital recordings, and transcripts) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in an office at 1032 Arroyo Vista Lane Matthews, NC 28104. After each data collection event, all information (typed transcripts, debriefing notes, handwritten notes, and digital recordings) will be contained in a secure location at 1032 Arroyo Vista Lane Matthews, NC 28104 in a heavy-duty envelope (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). Backup copies of digital-recordings will be stored in a separate secure location at 1032 Arroyo Vista Lane Matthews, NC 28104. The digitally- recorded data will be guarded and stored in a secure file cabinet after analysis is complete for three years. All other participant information will be stored in a secure file cabinet at 1032 Arroyo Vista Lane Matthews, NC 28104 for at minimum three-years after the completion of this research study.

This research will hopefully contribute to the understanding of the experience of resilience among church planting pastors. A potential benefit to this study would be the sustaining and longevity of pastors in the ministry. Additionally, it could assist in the holistic health of pastors and increase their effectiveness in the ministry. At times, there is risk involved in participating in this type of study. These may include: (1) anxiety, distress or exhaustion from the questions asked, (2) discovering underlying issues of pertinent depth and difficulty in your present or past. If you become weary, emotionally exhausted or fatigued, you will be allowed to take a 10-15 minute break before proceeding with the duration of the interview. If for some reasons issues of depth require additional assistance, the researcher will encourage the participant to contact Tajshen Campbell, National Referral Network Coordinator with Focus on the Family at (719)-531-6791 to receive a referral for a Licensed Professional Counselor in their area. The participant understands that there will be no compensation for participating in this study.

The results from this study may be printed in a professional journal utilizing pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Please direct questions regarding your participation in this research study, or participants' rights to the researcher by email at dwayne.bond@gmail.com or by calling (704)-661-9323. This research will be conducted under the supervision of Lisa Sosin, PhD (lssosin@liberty.edu). The Liberty University Institutional Review Board may be contacted at irb@liberty.edu or by writing to the attention of the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University, 1971 University Blvd., Campus North, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24502.

[] I agree to be digitally recorded during the interview.

I, _____, have read and understand the information explaining the purpose of this research study and my rights and responsibilities as a participant. My signature below allows my consent to participate in this research study, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Printed Name	Participant Signature	Date
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Printed Name	Researcher Signature	Date
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APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Possible Interview Questions

How do select protestant church planting pastors describe their experience of resiliency in light of personal expectations and ministry realities?

1. Can you please tell me about yourself? (Born? Childhood highlights? Parents? Education? Marriage? Children? Vacations? Leisure activities? Day off?)
2. What are the things that drive, motivate and give you a sense of personal accomplishment? (Past? Present?)
3. How would you characterize your life as a pastor? (What excites you? What drains you? What did you expect before you started your church? What are your challenges? Do you experience pressure (if so, how do you handle it?) What are your highs and lows in the pastorate? How would you describe your ministry reality? Would you consider yourself “successful?” What things bring you delight, affirmation, and satisfaction?)
4. Why did you become a church-planting pastor, and why haven’t you quit?

How do the participants describe the negative impact of ministry realities associated with the dissipation of idealism?

1. What are your role(s) and responsibilities in the church, and did you expect to be doing these things prior to church planting?
2. Describe a bad day, week or month. What was it like for you?
3. Do you have unmet expectations as a man, husband, father and/or pastor?

4. Does your wife, children or congregation have expectations of you that you feel unable or incapable of meeting?
5. How do you respond to unmet expectations, stress, emotional exhaustion, and anxiety in your life?
6. What is your definition of perfection?

How do participant responses compare and contrast?

1. Tell me about your relationships, friendships, and support network? (Mentor? Coach? Confidant? Ventilating Relationship?)
2. How do you nourish and replenish yourself spiritually, physically, emotionally and mentally? (Daily? Weekly? Pre/Post service?)
3. How would your wife describe life as a pastor's wife? (Kids?)
4. What would help you have longevity in ministry?
5. Is there anything further you'd like to say?