TEN ESSENTIAL LESSONS LEARNED WHEN TRANSITIONING FROM A LONG-TERM TENURED PASTOR IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

TEN ESSENTIAL LESSONS LEARNED WHEN TRANSITIONING FROM A LONG-TERM TENURED PASTOR IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCH

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2017
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When a pastor has served a long tenure at one church, the members hold this individual in high regard. He has conducted many marriages and countless burial ceremonies, baptized most of the membership, and have been there for the members and their families during their most difficult moments in life. When pastors are called to these churches, they are faced with several challenges. The church is unsure of the leadership ability of the new pastor, their expectations are high, congregants are hesitant to change things, and refuse to be challenged with new methods of doing ministry. This research is based on questionnaires of two African American Baptist congregations and interviews of ten pastors who were called to churches where the prior pastor served over twenty years. This project will offer life-learned lessons from the author on how to properly transition a church with grace and limited confrontations. It is the investigator’s hopes that this project would assist and afford new pastors with the proper tools to improve the transition process. This thesis project will provide ten lessons learned that would energize, encourage, and enhance congregations to move to the next level.

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Introduction

The call to pastor God’s Church comes with a blessing and a burden. The blessing is that God has entrusted the pastor to lead His people. The burden comes when the pastor is responsible fortransitioning the church and leading the congregation through God’s agenda. Each pastoral call comes with various transitional challenges. Upon being called to a church, there are numerous settings new pastors may encounter:

• A new church plant.
• The previous pastor had moral failures and resigned from the church.
• The previous pastor was not a good fit for the church, so the church voted him or her out of the church.
• The church is familiar with voting a new pastor in every three to five years.
• The church has endured a church split and is experiencing mounds of turmoil.
• The church loved the previous pastor but God changed his assignment.
• The previous pastor was great but died while serving the church.
• Finally, the previous pastor served exceptionally well for over 20 (twenty) years and the church is grieving the loss of a great man or woman of God.

With each context, there are various challenges new pastors will face when attempting to transition any church. Transitioning is never a "cake walk."

Transitional can be chaotic, frustrating, confusing, and complicated. It’s necessary, but many do not enjoy the conflict and change that comes with newness. Pastoral transition brings a combination of emotions, including excitement and anxiety. The new pastor will be excited about the change, but filled with anxiety about the uncertainties that comes with the change. A healthy pastoral transition is one that enables a church to move forward into the next phase of its external and internal development with a new leader appropriate to those developmental tasks and with a minimum of spiritual

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programmatic, material, and people losses during the transition.\textsuperscript{2} Pastoral transition is a difficult process. No matter which context a new pastor is leading, it is never an easy endeavor.

This project will focus on how to transition a church where the previous pastor has served well for over 20 years. The purpose is to provide the proper tools required to overcome numerous challenges new pastors face when selected to lead a congregation where the predecessor is considered as a “legend.” The researcher defines a “Legend Pastor” as someone who served faithfully for over 20 years, left a great legacy, and was loved greatly by the congregation because of the wonderful attributes he or she left behind. In addition, this pastor experienced life’s lows and highs with the majority of the membership. Following a legend pastor is a unique position.

New pastors must understand that the transition process requires grace and patience. Effective pastors must be willing to embrace the transition process with confidence and assurance. Those who have never pastored and are selected to enter a context where the previous pastor served well for an extended sum of time will experience a substantial amount of on-the-job training. If on-the-job experience is a critical element of business leader development, this should be no less true for pastoral leaders.\textsuperscript{3} Too often, new leaders are left to navigate through this transition process on their own. They are forced to learn on the job. Research over the last two decades has indicated that most leadership development in today’s business organizations happens on-the-job, as leaders are doing their work and facing the challenges that come with the


job of the leader. Seminary does not prepare many of its students for some of the challenges that they will face in the local church; however, the researcher desires to offer new pastors a strip map to follow for success.

Leaders require those around them to abandon the known and embrace the unknown—with no guarantee of success. This can be the most challenging part of being a pastor; trying to get people to let go of their comfort zones. Pastors must be willing to take people to places they have never been before and where the pastor has never visited. The writer has made many mistakes but has also succeeded in many areas of pastoral transition. It is the writer’s passion to develop a strategy and plan that will help naïve new pastors in this environment to prosper in their service to God and the church.

**Statement of Problem**

It is a unique position to be in when one is called to a church where the previous pastor served a long term exceptionally well. New pastors succeeding what some would call “legends,” can be a very difficult position. There are multiple challenges and difficulties a new pastor may face when they are called to a context where the previous pastor served over 20 years remarkably. The previous pastor has had the privilege to be engaged in the lives of many of the congregants since birth. He or she has performed baby dedications, funerals, marriages, house blessings, all major accomplishments and shortcomings, and has been able to be a part of the good and bad days of the lives of his or her parishioners. D. Darrell Griffin, in his book *Navigating Pastoral Leadership in the Transition Zone* suggests when a new pastor is called to a church that is already established, it is similar to someone arriving at the movie theater and the

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movie has already started. Upon being called to an established congregation the new pastor encounters a story that is already in progress. A congregation already has a history, a full story of complex subplots and a myriad of intriguing and intricate characters.\(^6\) It is the responsibility of the new pastor to develop strategies in transitioning their church to new levels in ministry. Some common challenges new pastors will face in this context are:

- The membership will possess high expectations for the new pastor.
- The membership is hesitant to change and new concepts.
- Membership has become complacent, is satisfied with where the church is, and offers the infamous words, “We have always done it this way.”

There are also some advantages to being called to a church where the previous pastor was a legend:

- The members know how to love a pastor.
- The church already has a solid foundation.
- The church has already established a mission and vision.

**Statement of Limitations**

Although this research was carefully prepared, there are still limitations that do not permit for an all-encompassing research. This research project will focus predominantly on the method and manner Union Branch Baptist Church and Zion Baptist Church of Petersburg, Virginia transitioned from their previous pastor who served each congregation for over 45 years to the current new pastor. The author surveyed both congregations; however, the parishioners’ responses may limit the research because many may have loved the previous pastor and were biased to the current pastor or vice versa. The new pastor of each church has not served over five years, which limits the research for a proper assessment of the transition process. This thesis project is limited in scope to the lack of experience in pastoring of the author. Due to the author focusing on how pastors handle the transition, there are limited resources on this topic. The

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The author will focus on pastoral leadership of new pastors attempting to transition their church. Ralph Watkins, suggests when it comes to pastoral transitions, “It is a decision that can't be taken lightly and can't be done without a systematic approach that is led by the Holy Spirit.”

**Theoretical Basis for the Project**

Being called to be a pastor of any church is a daunting task; however, being a new pastor of an established church where the previous pastor served well for over 20 years, can feel like an overwhelming assignment. In reality, although the new pastor is now installed, he or she has yet to become the pastor. Though seminary offers new pastors awesome tools for the journey, seminary does not give practical means for pastoring God’s people in this context. Effective pastoral transition requires strong pastoral leadership. Pastoral transition is a process that must be approached strategically and intentionally. The transition will require patience, persistence, and a strong prayer life from the pastoral leader and the church. This research was conducted in two predominantly black churches; however, the methods are profitable for the universal church. Any new pastor searching for a sound strategy in transitioning their church will find these ten lessons learned extremely beneficial for their assignment.

**Statement of Methodology**

This research was developed from the ministry context the researcher experienced first-hand and in which he was successful in transitioning his church. The methodology of this research includes interviews with 10 pastors who were called to churches where the previous pastor served over 20 years, survey of Union Branch Baptist Church congregation, in Prince George, Virginia where the pastor served 45 years, Zion Baptist Church in Petersburg, Virginia

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where the previous pastor served 48 years, and Pastor Andrew J. White who pastored Union Branch and Zion Baptist Church for over 40 years. This project will feature ten lessons learned by the researcher that allowed him to be successful in transitioning his church where the previous pastor served well for 45 years.

Chapter one will focus on being intentional during the transition period. New pastors must be comfortable with who God has called them to be, understand the history of the ministry context they are about to enter, and be able to provide the proper vision in order to transition the church effectively. This chapter will help new pastors understand that pastoral transition requires intentional effort and proper planning.

Chapter two will encourage new pastors to trust the process. Patience is extremely vital while the church is in the pastoral transition process. The process will require transitional preaching, strong pastoral leadership, and excellence in pastoral care and will express the importance of honoring the previous pastor.

Chapter three investigates the significance of self-care during the pastoral transition process. If the new pastor is going to be effective during the pastoral transition, they must be committed to taking care of themselves. This chapter helps new pastor understand every pastor needs a pastor, home is their first ministry and offer some helpful systems in avoiding spiritual burnout.

Chapter five will be the conclusion of this research project. Hopefully, this research will provide helpful tools and techniques that would help new pastors transition their churches to new levels in ministry.
Literature Review

Books

Leading Your African American Church through Pastoral Transitions by Ralph Watkins provides a practical process in which pastoral transition can occur. A healthy pastoral transition is one that enables a church to move forward into the next phase of its external and internal development with a new leader appropriate to those developmental tasks, and with a minimum of spiritual, programmatic, material, and people losses during the transition. The writer speaks of how the transition of power must take place in order for the incoming pastor to be successful.

Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins by Aubrey Malphurs offers an effective method in which to implement change within the church without tearing the church apart. It discusses the difficulties, opposition, and headache church revitalization can cause in a traditional church. When a leader introduces change into a church’s ministry, the people will generally fall into four categories according to their response: early adopters, middle adopters, late adopters, and never adopters.

Passing the Baton by Dr. Terry Roberts is an excellent book on planning for pastoral transition. Dr. Roberts stresses the importance of having a succession plan in place for a new pastor. Because the new pastor has no prior experience in the life of the church, the previous vision dies, or it changes so radically that people can’t make the shift.

Passing the Torch by Donald H. Bowen is a unique book in that it addresses how to properly handle a successful pastoral transition of a senior pastor who has served over thirty

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10 Malphurs, Aubrey, Pouring New Wine into Old Wineskins: How to Change a Church Without Destroying It (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993), 100.
11 Robert, Terry, Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition, (Columbus, SC: RoseDew 2015), 4, Kindle.
years. The writer speaks from first-hand experience of how he helped his church excel in the transition. The succession plans the writer provided his church helped the transition in many ways. It provided the church with an opportunity to prove there could be a transition without conflict.\textsuperscript{12}

*Changing Pastors* by Thomas P. Sweetser and Mary Benet McKinney is a great source for pastoral transition. The authors offer help for the transition to the congregation, outgoing, and the incoming pastor. In this book, the transition is simply considered as a way of life. They are all traumatic experiences that grabs one attention and use up large amounts of their time and energy.\textsuperscript{13}

*One Great Truth* by Jonathan Falwell is a book that provides insight on how the writer overcame his emotional battle when his father and pastor Jerry Falwell died. The book speaks of how Jonathan becomes pastor of Thomas Roads Baptist Church where his father had pastored for over fifty years. Jonathan Falwell’s theme throughout the book is “Not I, but Christ.” This book helps the reader understand that when one is faced with life changing events they can depend on God to help them through their transition. The trials and challenges pastors face have a purpose: to give God the opportunity to manifest himself and miraculously deliver and make one stronger.\textsuperscript{14}

*The Emotionally Healthy Church* by Peter Scazzero stresses the importance of leaders being healthy in all dimensions of life: physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and social. The writer stresses that the people follow the actions of the leader. The starting point for change in


any nation, church, or ministry has always been the leader: as go the leaders, so goes the church.\textsuperscript{15}

\textit{Spiritual Influence} by Mel Lawrenz has helped transform my understanding of what true leadership is. Spiritual influence matters because it touches the essence of what it means to be human and focuses on the issues that matter most in life. \textsuperscript{16} The value of this book is immeasurable to a Christian leader who desires to do God’s will.

\textit{The Me I Want to Be} by John Ortberg is an excellent book for understanding when one is attempting to become the best version of them; it allows them to live a life of freedom and joy. The writer suggests that it is God who created pastors and designed them to be who God purposed them to be. The most important task of one’s life is not what he or she does, but who they become. \textsuperscript{17}

\textit{Margin} by Richard Swenson reflects on the importance of leaders participating in self-care. When the pastor’s load is greater than his or her power, they may enter into negative margin status, that is, they are overloaded.

\textit{The Divine Mentor} by Wayne Cordeiro offers some helpful insights and tools that will allow one to develop or improve a healthy relationship with God. The writer stresses the importance of making a daily devotion a habit. The author explains how the believer can hear God’s voice through the Holy Spirit.

\textit{We Have This Ministry} by Samuel Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor explains the importance of truly understanding the role of the pastor in the church. The writers suggest that


\textsuperscript{17} Ortberg, John. \textit{The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of Me}. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 13.
there isn’t any other position that one can occupy that can be greater than being a pastor called by God. The pastor is called to give purpose, meaning, coherence, direction, and authenticity to the total human sojourn and then to have the audacity to insist on a grand surmise about the journey’s end.\textsuperscript{18}

\textit{A Change of Pastors} by Lorden B. Mead is a book that focuses on how congregations handle the pastoral transition process. The author defines the traumatic emotions congregants encounter after losing one pastor and adjusting to another. Mead desires that the incoming pastor develops an effective relationship with the congregation. Early on, it became clear to me that the quality of that relationship between the clergy and the laity was a key to the health and growth of the whole system.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{Managing Transition} by William Bridges offers wonderful techniques for handling change and navigating through organizational transitions. This book demands leaders to use wisdom when implementing change in their organization and the importance of developing a plan for transition. Understanding this will give the pastor the opportunity to lead with confidence, communicate with clarity, and reassure his or her people that they are following a roadmap.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{Next} by William Vanderbloemen and Warren Bird is a great book for current pastors who are considering retiring or leaving their present ministry. This book offers a proper succession

\textsuperscript{18} Proctor, Samuel D; Taylor, Gardner C."Pastoral Theology." \textit{We Have This Ministry: The Heart of the Pastor's Vocation,}" (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996.), 5.

\textsuperscript{19} Mead, Loren B. \textit{A Change of Pastors...and How it Affects Change in the Congregation} (Herndon, VA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012.), 12, Kindle Edition.

plan that will make the transition easier on the church and the incoming pastor. Planning for that
day of succession may be the biggest leadership task a leader and church will ever face. 21

Next Generation Leader by Andy Stanley is an amazing book for training future leaders. The transition process of leadership will be unprofitable if there are no trained leaders to step up to the position. Stanley offers five characteristics that leaders must have: Courage, Clarity, Competence, Coachability, and Character. The more one know about leadership, the faster they grow as a leader and the farther they are able to go as a leader. 22

Journal Articles

“Broken and Empty: Pastoral Leadership as Embodying Radical Courage, Humility, Compassion and Hope,” by Ryan La Mothe examines essential qualities required for strong pastoral leadership. Mothe offers four characteristics that will empower the pastor to lead carefully and fully committed even in the face of failure.

“Learning Agility in Clergy: Understanding the Personal Strategies and Situational factors that Enable Pastors to Learn From Experience,” by Robert B. McKenna, Tanya N. Boyd, and Paul R. Yost cites that pastoral leadership is a journey. Many new pastors enter the position with many ambiguities and uncertainties. The writers suggest on-the-job development is necessary for pastors.

“Getting Started in a New Pastorate,” by Charles D. Belt offers seven insightful areas new pastors must be aware of when they are called to a church. The writer provides encouraging words for new pastors who desire to make the pastoral transition a success.

1 Corinthians 3:5-9 - “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.” These verses speak of the changes that may occur in pastors; however, the work of the Kingdom of God must continue to advance.

Jeremiah 3:15 “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” Here, the writer informs all that God only places pastors over His people who share his heart.

Acts 20:28 “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” Pastors must understand that the Holy Spirit is a requirement for leading God’s people. Pastors must also know that the church belongs to Christ who purchased it with His blood on the cross.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a good testimony.
among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” These verses inform anyone who desires to become a pastor of the requirements for the position. If the pastor adheres to these standards he will be very successful in ministry.

Romans 8:28 “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.” These are words of encouragement to the incoming pastor who must endure the task of taking his or her congregation through the pastoral transition.

Joshua 1:17 “Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses.” The prayer of the incoming pastor is that the parishioners will at some point accept him or her as their leader and not simply their preacher. This text reveals that the blessing of listening to the Man of God is that God will be with them.

Deuteronomy 31:7 “Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it.” These words are to the incoming pastor who may be afraid of implementing new ideas and programs. It takes courage and strength to endure the challenges of leading God’s people.

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” This scripture instructs congregants on how they must treat their pastor; however, this treatment comes with a high responsibility on the pastor to watch over their souls.
Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.” This passage helps the pastor to understand that God has a plan for his life and ministry.

Philippians 2:6-7 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” These are great words for the transitional process. Prayer must lead the pastor in all transitions he or she may encounter.

Ecclesiastes 7:8-11 “The end of a thing is better than its beginning; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. Do not say, “Why were the former days better than these?” For you do not inquire wisely concerning this. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun.” This text helps the pastor who is going through transition. Allow wisdom and patience to prevail in every action.

Proverbs 3:5-6 “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Every pastor must take heed to these words. The pastor must trust in God for everything and allow Him to guide the pastor in all he or she may do.

Deuteronomy 31:8 “And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you, He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.” This verse reminds every pastor that the greatest thing pastors have is that the Lord is on their side.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 “To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck what is
planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace.” This passage reminds pastors that change is constant. The pastor that is facing transition must know that things do not always remain the same.

Galatians 6:9 “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” This scripture provides hope to the pastor who is faced with various challenges the transition has presented.
Chapter 1

Get Understanding

Proverbs 4:7 states, “Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore, get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.” Having a clear understanding of the ministry context one is about to enter is essential to a healthy transition for the new pastor. New pastors must gain some understanding of the previous pastor and the congregation they have been called to serve. Over the next three chapters, the writer will expound on 10 essential lessons learned when transitioning from a long-term, tenured pastor.

Lesson 1: Get Understanding of the “Legend”

September 12, 2012, the author preached his first sermon as the pastor at Union Branch Baptist Church in Prince George, Virginia. Unbeknownst to the writer, Pastor Andrew J. White had just retired after serving the church extremely well for almost 45 years. Dr. White is a legend in the community. He is well known due to his countless acts of kindness, his commitment to the church and community, and his unwavering love for all. Dr. White became the pastor of Union Branch Baptist Church October 1966 and retired December 2010. Dr. White was introduced to the church because several funeral directors called upon him to preach challenging eulogies of individuals who did not have a pastor. He preached numerous funerals at Union Branch; therefore, Union Branch called him to be their pastor after their previous pastor had resigned. During the researcher’s interview of this legendary pastor, Dr. White discussed the many accolades and accomplishments humbly to the researcher:

- Dr. White had the distinguished honor of introducing the late, great preacher Dr. Martin Luther King. He heard Dr. King speak over 25 times, escorted Rosa Parks around Petersburg, VA, and met the Reverend Jesse Jackson several times.

- Dr. White served as the chairman of the board responsible for collecting over 145 million dollars to build Southside Regional Hospital in Petersburg, VA.
• Dr. White was essential in raising necessary funds for a multi-million dollar newly built Library in Petersburg, VA.

• Dr. White led the efforts for raising the proper amount of funds for building the Baptist Children’s Home of Virginia.

• Dr. White currently serves on the board of the Titmus Foundation, which has donated over 25 million dollars to surrounding churches, charity and civic organizations.

• Dr. White served as the co-chairperson for the establishment of the Appomattox Regional Governor’s School in Petersburg, VA.

• Dr. White led the efforts to build a $4.0 million dollar sanctuary at Union Branch Baptist church with a congregation who only attended worship twice per month.

• Petersburg High School named its new football field after “Andrew J. White.”

• Dr. White served as the Chaplin for Southside Regional Hospital in Petersburg, VA for many years.

• Dr. White served on the Southside Area Mental Health Association.

• Dr. White served as the President of the Baptist General Convention of Virginia.

• Dr. White was a program instructor for the Evan-Smith Institute of Church Leadership for the School of Theology at Virginia Union University. The Institute offers educational opportunities for learners and leaders.

• Dr. White served as the Moderator of Northern Neck Baptist Convention.

• Dr. White was a high school teacher for many years.

• Dr. White served as an Assistant Principal and basketball coach.

• Dr. White was the President of the W. Morgan Teaching Association.

• Dr. White is a lifetime member of NAACP.

Dr. White explained, “When the pastor becomes a servant of the community, he or she goes beyond the church.” The influence of the pastor must reach outside of the church walls and must overflow into the community in which the church resides. An important truth that is often

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1 Dr. Andrew White, interview by author, Petersburg, Virginia May 27, 2016.
overlooked is that spiritual leaders can influence all people, not just Christians.² Dr. White expressed that the pastor must be approachable and transparent as a pastor in order to have a long tenure in pastoral ministry. Dr. White articulated so well the importance of approaching ministry with a servant-hood mentality. Humility is a choice that pastoral leaders must exercise in order to help, coach and inspire their parishioners. Dr. White’s community involvement and commitment to pastoral excellence is extremely unique and unmatchable.

Dr. White served as the pastor of two churches: Union Branch Baptist Church for 45 years and Zion Baptist Church for 48 years. He was the spiritual leader for so many people. Through the many years of his service, he performed 35 funerals in one family. This tremendous distinction in pastoral care proved to his parishioners and members of the community that Dr. White was a man full of love and compassion, concerned for all people. Dr. White’s ministry focused on loving the people and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. Dr. White is an exceptional man of God who led God’s people on God’s agenda.

For many of the members who worship at Union Branch and Zion Baptist Church today, Pastor White is the only pastor they have ever known in their lives. Many may have been dedicated as a baby and baptized as a teenager by Dr. White. Dr. White may have attended all of their life’s major accomplishments and was present for the low points in life. Dr. White may have married many individuals and counseled countless persons through the challenges of life. Many of his members remember the powerful sermons possessing inspiration, motivation, and encouragement. For some, Dr. White’s words lifted them when they were in despair and provided strength when they were weak.

After interviewing Dr. White the researcher understood why so many members of Union Branch defined Dr. White as a great pastor. Dr. White was connected with the community and served the church well. Dr. White had a 45-year long relationship with the members of Union Branch Baptist Church. When a relationship has been this long with pastor and people, parishioners struggle to put closure to the pastor’s leadership, while trying to come to grips with the fact that the pastor is indeed leaving. In many ways, retirement can resemble a death. Despite knowing the inevitable, many were not prepared for the emotional distress they would face after Dr. White had retired. They were not equipped to endure the grieving process of losing someone they held in so high regard. The questionnaire revealed various emotions members experienced when Dr. White retired:

- Uneasy
- Sad
- Lonely
- Wanted to leave the church
- Disappointed
- Felt like a family friend had moved
- Felt left out and depressed
- Felt like I had lost a best friend
- Upset
- Unhappy
- Wasn’t ready for him to leave
- Lost
- Worried and uncertain about the direction of the church

The questionnaire also proved that the church was devastated about losing this “legend.” In a church, a pastor commands such a major place in the everyday life and operations of the

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community that there are consequences when he or she departs for whatever reason; issues of grief and loss, issues of uncertainty and reorientation, healing and new direction.\textsuperscript{5}

**Lesson 2: Get Understanding of the Grieving Process**

Many of the congregants in this context are struggling with the fact that their childhood pastor will not be leading the congregation anymore. Losing a pastor can be a hard, emotional blow, triggering all the emotions of grief— it is not strictly a rational exercise.\textsuperscript{6} The emotions one associates with grief are likely to be present in the congregation that is losing its pastor— unreasonable anger, debilitating depression, simple denial, bargaining, and, with luck, acceptance flowing through congregation members— in different proportions and at different times.\textsuperscript{7} Pastor John Faison of the Watson Grove Missionary Baptist Church in Nashville, Tennessee during an interview with the writer, expressed the importance of recognizing the stage of grief the church is experiencing. “Many of the members in Watson Grove could not love me as the current pastor and the previous pastor who had served for 37 years at the same time.”\textsuperscript{8} They felt like they were cheating on the past pastor even though he was no longer alive. Many felt they had to love one and hate the other.\textsuperscript{9} Due to the relationship between pastor and people being so great, it is difficult to simply forget their spiritual leader. Some new pastors fail to help the congregation process their grief in losing the previous pastor.\textsuperscript{10} They may show impatience or

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 368-370.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} John Faison, interview by author, Chesterfield, May 18, 2016.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
anger toward the congregation for not transitioning quickly enough to a new era or ministry model.  

The Kubler-Ross model offers the five stages of grief: denial, anger, depression, negotiation, and acceptance. As with grieving humans, the church as a corporate body will go through the various stages in different ways and at different times. Kubler-Ross focuses on death and dying; however, any loss of something beloved brings about the grieving process. Everyone will face times of anger, grief, pain, and distress. The new pastor must be conscious that his or her church is going through the various stages of grief. The new pastor has to focus on developing relationships and dealing with the grief the church is going through. The new pastor must be intentional in knowing the congregants on a personal level. If the incoming pastor knew their story, he or she would be able to comprehend why they defend certain areas of the church or why they are so stubborn on other things. Some simply may be just mean, but there are many who are merely trying to cope with losing someone who meant so much to them. The new pastor is unaware of how much the previous pastor meant to the congregation; therefore, he or she must attempt to understand why the members loved their previous pastor. The new pastor must realize that the congregation's grief doesn't necessarily mean they don't want the new pastor, but they are grieving the loss of the relationship that they had with the former pastor.

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11 Ibid.
16 Ibid., 140-141.
When a pastor who has served the local church extremely well and retires, the congregants experiences multiple emotions: anger, sadness, depression, confusion, and fear. The retirement of a beloved pastor can in many ways resemble the death of a loved one, there may be wisdom in working through some of the similar questions that can come up in grief counseling.  

How do you feel about your lifelong pastor retiring?

What fears do you have because of his or her leaving?

How can I help you during this transition process?

Asking these simple questions can assist the new pastor during the transition process. These emotional states can be mistaken for bad morale, but they aren’t. They are the signs of grieving, the natural sequence of emotions people go through when they lose something that matters to them. New pastors cannot become discouraged as their members endure the grieving process. He or she must be exceptionally patience with the members of the church. The new pastor must anticipate and acknowledge the signs of grieving with Christian love and not hostility. Dr. William Bridges offers some great advice in avoiding resentment during the grieving process:

Everyone, manager and managed alike, feels angry at the organization for the pain that transition causes. This is natural. But when that aspect of the grieving process is not managed sensitively, the anger deepens and lengthens into a continuing resentment that poisons the whole organization. When yesterday’s changes leave such a legacy of resentment, today’s changes are undermined even before they are launched. In addition, resentment leads to sabotage and the subtler forms of pay-back that organizations experience today.

It is the responsibility of the new pastor to detect the emotions of the congregation. He or she must implement “get acquaintance sessions” or “listening parties.” During these events the new

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19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 2658-2662.
21 Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors and How it Affects Change in the Congregation*, 22, Kindle
pastor will be able to discover the emotional state of his or her congregation. The leaving of one pastor opens deep dimensions of grief in a congregation and the installation of another requires touching equally deep emotions of new relationship.\textsuperscript{21}

Acts 20:36-38 reads, “And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul’s neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.” The church in Acts was grieving the departure of their pastor, which was Paul. They had shared many great moments with this wonderful leader and it was difficult to see him leave and know that he would not return. December 2010 Union Branch Baptist Church felt the emotions of the church in Ephesus. Their life-long spiritual leader was leaving and would never be their pastor again. When the writer, a young preacher with a few months from graduating from seminary at the Samuel Dewitt School of Theology at Virginia Union, enthusiastic about pastoring, excited about being called to pastor one of God’s best churches in the world accepted the call, he did not know the context in which he was about to encounter. He also attempted to learn about the “legend” who had just retired from the church. In order for a healthy transition after following a “legend,” the new pastor must be intentional on learning and knowing the past leader.

\textbf{Lesson 3: Get Understanding about Transition}

Pastoral transition must be handled with care and precision. Though pastors are humans cannot manipulate the will of God with systems, strategies, and models for a fail-proof pastoral transition, it is better to have a plan then not to have one at all. God must be the leading force if any pastor is going to have a healthy pastoral transition. Deuteronomy 31:8, “And the Lord, He

\textsuperscript{21} Loren B. Mead, \textit{A Change of Pastors and How it Affects Change in the Congregation}, 22, Kindle Edition.
is the One who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you; do
not fear nor be dismayed.” This scripture assures the pastor that God is with him or her;
therefore, there is no fear or doubt but the new pastor can press forward because God is present.
Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” It is imperative that the new
pastor adheres to these words. Trusting in God and observing his direction will provide the
transition in which both pastor and people can be successful.

Similar to the fact that the new pastor must understand the context in which he or she has
been selected to serve, the members of the church must make a conscious decision to trust God
in the process or allow the church to be hindered because of their refusal to accept the transition
of pastors. A major problem Union Branch faced was that they did not develop a transition plan.
They did not clearly define a method of how the church would adjust after the retirement of this
“legend.” Like the hand-off of the baton in a relay race, a good transition plan helps the church
gain an “extra step” by combining the creative energy of a younger leader with the wisdom of an
experienced veteran.22 The transition of the new pastor becomes difficult when the members are
so comfortable with what is old that they become complacent about their service to God.
Jonathan Farewell, suggests in moments of grief, “There is a choice at these pivotal times: (1)
one can retreat within him or herself and let grief overwhelm them and prevent them from
feeling God’s tender touch, or (2) one can allow God to carry them to greater heights as a result
of the suffering they experience.”23 The choice to trust God in the process must be decided by
all during the transition process. As willing as the incoming pastor must be to learn the
congregation, the congregation must be willing to get to know the new pastor. This new

22 Roberts, Terry, “Passing the Baton: Planning for Pastoral Transition,” (Columbia, SC: Rose Dew,
relationship requires commitment on both pastor and people. Proper pastoral transition becomes very limited when the incoming pastor ignores the past and the congregation attempts to relive the golden moments of ancient past.

Transition is never an easy process. The new pastor must be able to see where the church is going, understand the church’s current condition and, learn from where the church’s history. When a new pastor follows a legend, an icon, or a long-term pastor, he or she is confronted with a church culture where, for some in the congregation, the outgoing pastor is the only pastor they know. Pastor Otis Moss III of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois followed Pastor Jeremiah Wright who served the church well for over 35 years and is considered a “legend.” As Pastor Moss began to refocus the church, one of the first things he did was to help the church refresh how they saw themselves. This is very critical in the transition process. While honoring the tradition that was in place, Pastor Moss had to find creative ways to have those moments where he could walk with Trinity as they began to take a new look at themselves. A church can't move forward if the members can't see where they are going. The road may seem difficult and sometimes weary but the new pastor must offer a positive direction in which the church is heading. When a pastor follows an icon, the church is prone to have tension between how to see themselves as they were and how they will look in the future. The past is what often prevents churches within this context from moving forward. Their vision is limited and diluted because of their attempt to stay in the past. Many members assume the new pastor is trying to eliminate the past. The incoming pastor must be very careful not to insult the past. During an interview with Pastor Tolan Morgan of Fellowship Bible Baptist Church, in

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24 Ibid., 1071-1074.
25 Ibid., 1078-1079.
26 Ibid., 1082-1085.
27 Ibid., 1090-1093.
28 Ibid.
Warner Robins, Georgia, he stated “The new pastor doesn't have to be an enemy of the past in order to move in the future.” Pastoral transition should not be an effort to delete the history of the church. The goal is to extend and build on the past. The past has the ability to help more than the possibility to hurt the church moving into the future. The storied history of the church has to be honored and extended by the successor. The new pastor must be aware of the past in order to prepare the church for their future ministry and help them see how the past is the foundation for building.

Transition is ending something old and starting something new. William Bridges suggests that many individuals do not enjoy endings.

Before you can begin something new, you have to end what used to be. Before you can learn a new way of doing things, you have to unlearn the old way. Before you can become a different kind of person, you must let go of your old identity. So beginnings depend on endings. The problem is, people don’t like endings.

When a church has had a pastor for over 20 years, they’ve become accustomed to the method in which he or she preaches, leads, administers, and even something as simple as to the way he or she shakes hands or hugs parishioners. It is difficult for lifetime members to just forget their previous pastor and begin to love the new pastor without reserve. Union Branch Baptist Church struggled to accept the new things the new pastor was doing. Often, he faced opposition and had to fight for new ways to conduct effective ministry in the church. Many were excited about newness, but the members who had been with the previous pastor for at least ten years were not adapting to change very well. Some of the senior members thought the new pastor was attempting to push them to the side. However, that was not the case. Due to the church not

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31 Ibid., 1110.
having anything for the youth and now having multiple programs and more involvement from the youth, the older members assumed that they were being intentionally disregarded.

In the questionnaire conducted by the researcher, a question was asked, “What challenges has the church faced since the transition?” The most common answer was that many were unwilling to accept change. One questionnaire declared, “Some members are hesitant to just remember the old pastor, while accepting the plans, vision and direction of the new pastor.” The new pastor must understand that transition is not an easy process. Transition does not occur overnight, but requires patience and grace. Transition happens in stages and must be approached with extreme care and awareness. Transition must be done in love and respect. The new pastor and church must understand instant transition can sometimes lead to a road called destruction. There should be a systematic process that allows for transition in the life of the church.

When new pastors ignore the transitional process, he or she may take on the risk of losing the church. It should be the goal of the incoming pastor not to lose the church while trying to transition the church. When a change happens without people going through a transition, it is just a rearrangement of the chairs. A common comment that may suggest the new pastor may have lost some in the church is, “The new pastor is moving too fast,” or “The new pastor has made too many changes.” Be careful that in urging people to turn away from the past one doesn’t drive them away from the new pastor or from the new direction that the organization needs to take. Often, the new pastor may have made changes that are applicable and needed in order to improve the church; however, if the membership is not excited about the vision and direction of the church, the pastor may be on a journey by himself or herself. One of the most important

34 Ibid., 1097.
35 Ibid., 166.
leadership roles during times of change is that of putting into words what it is time to leave behind.  

Decisions in the transition zone critically establish the relational health and potential of a pastor-congregation partnership to minister internally and externally.

New pastors must understand the motto Thomas Sweetser’s and Mary McKinney’s book *Changing Pastors*, describe and they must attempt to adopt this motto as their own, “Give transition the attention it deserves.” When a new pastor arrives to a church where the previous pastor has served well over many years, it is difficult for the congregants to close the door on the past and accept the transition of their life long pastor to the new pastor. Pastoral transition can be a difficult process. Even comparatively gentle transitions, such as a change in homes or jobs, can be disruptive as to cause sleep loss, anxiety, and irritableness that continues for some time after the change has taken place. Pastoral transition happens over time and should not be considered as a short-term goal. D. Darrell Griffin suggests pastoral transition is similar to showing up to a movie that has already started. Jim Ozier and Jim Griffith, declare that successful pastoral transitions are similar to the passing of a baton during a relay race. Dr. David Lescalleet, conducts a case study on eight different pastors during transition and categorized pastoral transition in three stages: “Good, Bad, and Ugly.” Dr. Ralph C. Watkins says, “A healthy pastoral transition is one that enables a church to move forward into the next phase of its external and internal development with a new leader appropriate to those developmental tasks, and with a

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37 Ibid., 746-749.
40 Ibid.
minimum of spiritual, programmatic, material, and people losses during the transition.”

Understanding transition must be imperative for new pastors.

In the biblical narrative of John 16:5-15, Jesus is preparing His disciples for his departure. Jesus speaks of the transition period in which the disciples will endure. Jesus declares that He must leave in order for the Holy Spirit to come. Acts 1:8 declare, “…but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” If new pastors were to examine the disciples, they would notice that without the Holy Spirit, they were weak individuals when Jesus was not around. As Jesus was about to be crucified, Peter denied Jesus. The other disciples abandoned Jesus and went into hiding until the Spirit came. They may be considered as cowards and deserters without the Holy Spirit, which did not come until Jesus had transitioned back to heaven. After the transition and the Holy Spirit dwells inside of them, they become agents of change who were courageous and bold servants of God. They all understood the consequence of preaching Jesus in a pagan world; however, because of the Holy Spirit, all except John become martyrs for the sake of the gospel. Without the Holy Spirit dwelling inside of the disciples, the gospel would have not spread from nation to nation. Jesus was in the flesh and could not be in all places at all times; therefore, Jesus had to transition in order to allow the Holy Spirit to come in order to reach the world.

Dr. William Bridges suggests, “Transition, on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about.” New pastors must know that their members

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are enduring a mental change from their previous pastor they loved so dearly, to the pastor they are trying to get to learn. Bridges offers three stages that must take place during transition.

The first stage is “letting go of the old ways and the old identity people had.” This stage can be the most difficult for new pastors. This first phase of transition is an ending, and the time when one needs to help people to deal with their losses. Allowing the congregants to let go of the past requires grace and patience. It has various lengths, even for the people undergoing the transitional experience. In the transition the goal is not to wipe out the past. The goal is to extend and build on the past. Too often during the transition period, inexperienced pastors desire that the congregants totally ignore and forget what had allowed them to be where they are upon the new pastor arriving to the church. Whether of long or short duration, this stage of endings is filled with many conflicting emotions and behaviors, including disorganization, disengagement, letting go, and withdrawal.

The second stage is “going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn’t fully operational.” This time zone is called the “neutral zone”: it’s when the critical psychological realignments and repatternings take place. This period overlaps with the first because both pastor and people, in preparing for transition, feel as if they are in limbo. This stage may take the longest. It is during this stage the new pastor is able to gain the trust of the church. Many parishioners just want to know what if the new pastor really loves them as the

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46 Ibid.
47 Thomas Sweetser and Mary McKinney, Changing Pastors, 8.
49 Ibid.
50 Thomas Sweetser and Mary McKinney, Changing Pastors, 8.
52 Ibid.
previous pastor who had served them for so many years. This stage is vital to the transition process because during this phase people are wondering will they accept the new pastor or not.

The final stage is “coming out of the transition and making a new beginning.” This is when people develop the new identity, experience the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that makes the change begin to work. This third stage is where the work begins.

Because transition is a process by which people unplug from an old world and plug into a new world, pastors can say that transition starts with an ending and finishes with a beginning. Bridges also argues that change and transition is different. With a change, one naturally focuses on the outcome that the change produces. The starting point for dealing with transition is not the outcome but the ending. New pastors will be unable to produce until they are able to accept that something has ended.

Robert Dale offers what he calls “Three Faces of Transition.” The three phases are: endings, turnings, and beginnings. Pastoral transitions do not happen after the pastoral installation service is over. Transition takes consistent work and persistence. Each phase of transition simultaneously fills ones head with questions and calls everyone to grow. New pastors must endure the transition process and not give up when they assume the church is not turning at a rate that is desirable to them. The first phase of transition may just be the most difficult. Dale defines this first phase as, “Ending as Transition.” First, endings close the door on the old. It is very difficult to accept new things when the old things still occupy space. When buying new furniture and the furniture store is delivering the furniture, they ask a question that

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55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 199-200.
57 Ibid., 231.
58 Ibid., 235.
60 Ibid.
must be answered, “Does any old furniture need to be taken away?” If the old and new furniture occupy the same space, the room will look chaotic and confusing. Many hold on to old things longer than what they need to because they are comfortable, they fit them well, and they do not have to make any effort to adjust to the old; however, transitions require energy. Ironically, endings guard the beginnings of chapters yet to be written. In order for transition to start there must be an ending.

Second, turnings encompass that confusing “time out” stage when old has been jettisoned but the new hasn’t quite taken root yet. The second phase may be the most deceiving phase. Turnings overflow with the ambiguities of “not yet” while being emotionally and spiritually sandwiched between “no longer” and “soon to be.” This phase may seem deceitful because there will be moments where the new pastor assumes that the church has transitioned to them being the new pastor; however, there may also be a moment where the church reminds the new pastor that he or she is just in the turning phase and the transition is not complete.

The final phase Dale offers is “Beginning as Transition.” Beginnings introduce one to those unsteady first steps that takes them over new and unexplored thresholds. When a child first learns how to walk, his or her steps are shaky, wobbly, and the child often stumbles and falls. Those first steps may seem frightening and courageous at the same time because the probability of falling is still present. Yet, the child still attempts to walk. The child has decided that he or she can no longer be the same and transitions to walking on their own. This beginning

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 5.
64 Ibid.
stage demands courage and faith in order to get to places the church may have never been before. Pastors must exercise the faith and take the risks of endings.65

Sweetser and McKinney in their book present Spencer and Adams seven stages of transition:

- Losing Focus
- Minimizing the Impact
- The Pit
- Letting go of the Past
- Testing the Limits
- Searching for meaning
- Integrating66

Sweetser and McKinney prescribe these stages to the pastor who is leaving a congregation; however, they can also apply to a pastor who is receiving a new congregation. In order to make a healthy transition, each stage must be visited. Spencer and Adams stages are similar to Bridges and Dale, but the phase of “The Pit” will happen in each transition. There is no prescribed time limit for pastoral transition. Each ministry context is uniquely different. As much as pastors’ strive to make transition smooth and without incident, they always include uncertainty, anxiety, and trauma.67 It is difficult to avoid the pit of transition. Even the pleasant, desirable transitions have a “pit” stage associated with them.68 The pit comes with feelings of abandonment, isolation, anger, sadness, and depression. This pit stage of transition can be of long or short duration, but it cannot be avoided.69 The hope of this is to give hope and inspiration to new pastors that will allow them to overcome The Pit transition stronger, wiser, and better.

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Thomas Sweetser and Mary McKinney, Changing Pastors, 11.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
Jim Ozier states, “How fast one run will keep them in the race; how well one hand off will win it!”\textsuperscript{70} Ozier’s desire is that incoming pastors must be intentional on having smooth pastoral transition. Ozier suggests pastoral transition is similar to a hand-off in a relay race; the exchange of the baton is very critical to the success of the team winning the race. The smooth transition of pastors is essential to the church moving forward and to new levels in ministry. Ozier defines transition as the “Changeover Zone.” It’s a length of time in which a precise set of activities take place, often at fast-paced frenetic speed, in which an amazing display of teamwork can make for a successful handoff of leadership responsibilities, and where the new pastor gets off to a running start.\textsuperscript{71} The new pastor must be able to gain traction and trust during the transition period. Whatever the length of an actual pastoral transition, what happens during the Changeover Zone makes up the period of time in which the various participants— the pastors, church and leaders, and supervisors— execute a set of actions that have been thought out in advance (with the skills and strengths of the participants in mind), planned and prepared for, and carried out with the precision of a successful team.\textsuperscript{72}

When the researcher met his wife, she had recently divorced. She had an eight-year daughter who did not know how to approach the situation. All she had ever known was her biological father. However, now this other man is now trying to do something she thought only her “real” father was able to perform. During this transition period, there were moments when the child literally hated, resented, and did not want to be around her stepfather. However, over time and after the researcher had gained her trust and love, she decided not to call him by his first name any longer, but called him dad. It was a moment of complete joy and excitement. It took

\textsuperscript{70} Jim Ozier, \textit{The Changeover Zone: Successful Pastoral Transitions}, 180, Kindle Edition.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 208-210.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 210-213.
patience, commitment, and devotion from the researcher to love the child even when she felt as if she did not care to have him around at all. Likewise, when it comes to pastoral transition, it is not until the members began to call the new pastor by their correct name and pastor that the process for transition begins. Upon the researcher coming to Union Branch Baptist Church, many of the members never addressed him as pastor. Some called him their minister, their preacher, by his first name and sometimes Pastor White, which is the previous pastor. It was not until the congregants began to address him as their pastor that the process for transition began.
Chapter 2

Build on the Foundation That Has Already Been Established

Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9,

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building.

For the incoming pastor to be successful in transitioning a church where the previous pastor was a “legend” and served well for over 20 years, he or she must be a passionate, persistent, and precise builder. Building requires planning, teamwork, patience, intelligence, and innovativeness. As with Paul and Apollos in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, in a ministry context as such, a solid foundation has already been laid for the incoming pastor. The responsibility of the incoming pastor is to build upon that foundation. To be an effective builder in this ministry context, the incoming pastor must build a vision, build trust, build bridges, and build a monument for the former pastor.

Lesson 4: Build Trust

One of the new pastor’s highest priorities should be to build trust amongst the membership. Just because one has been voted upon, selected, called to be the pastor of the church, and their name may be on the marquee, does not mean one is the pastor. The church the new pastor is going to has had a man or woman to be their spiritual leader for over 20 years and just because they have called a new pastor does not make him or her everyone’s pastor. The new pastor may have gained their vote, but now he or she must gain their trust. The most efficient way to gain the trust of the membership is to meet each qualification Paul gives to Timothy for anyone desiring to be a pastor.
This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous; one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.¹

If the pastor adheres to these standards he will be very successful in ministry. It will take time to build the trust through strong, compassionate, and consistent pastoral leadership.

**Build Trust through Communication and Connection**

Ozier and Griffith suggests that the first 100 days are very critical for the new pastors. This should be a period of time in which the new pastor simply gets to know the members of the church. Before one attempts to present vision, transition methods, or start new ministries, one must first get to know the people in which they are serving. Communication is very vital to the overall success of the ministry. This level of communication requires work from both the pastor and the people. John Maxwell’s advice on challenges the pastor to try to communicate and connect before one try to lead. People cannot succeed in life without communicating effectively.² Communication is truly an essential part of life. Pastors must communicate with others in order to express their emotions, needs, and desires. In pastoral leadership, communicating and connecting properly is very necessary. To be successful, one needs to learn how to really communicate with others.³ Too often, many are selected to be leaders but they do not possess good communication skills. They attempt to lead without any concern of their followers.

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¹ 1 Timothy 3:1-7 NKJV
³ Ibid., 2.
The ability to connect with others begins with understanding the value of people. Leaders must know that they are not leading robots, but they are leading people with feelings, morals, and standards. While leading in the Army, the writer did not have to worry about the feelings of subordinates. The Army teaches its soldiers to take on the mentality “Mission First.” This means no matter what, ensure the mission is accomplished. However, too often this mentality forsakes the human aspect of soldiers. This method of leading is definitely not the prescribe method for leading God’s people. The new pastor will only be able to reach his or her potential—regardless of the profession or chosen path—when they learn to connect with other people. Otherwise, one will be like a nuclear power plant disconnected from the grid. One will have incredible resources and potential, but he or she will never be able to put them to use. This statement is so true. No matter how great one may be, his or her success depends on the connection with those in which one leads. There should be no such thing as a ‘Lone Ranger,’ in leadership. A leader’s potential depends on those around him.

T.D. Jakes places high value on connecting with others; he states that connections serve as catalysts for collaborations and corporations. Leaders must be able to connect with others in order to accomplish the mission without losing their followers. Connections build teams that are passionate about the organization. Connectivity must not be used to inflame the greedy or empower the selfish. Jakes informs his readers that when they connect with others, it should not be because of any selfish ambition. Pastors must connect because they want what is best for the church and for the people in which they are serving. The difference between a community and a

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4 Ibid., 15.
5 Ibid., 9.
6 Ibid.
8 Ibid., 226.
crowd is connection. If connections must happen anywhere, it must be in the church. It is impossible to lead a crowd; the new pastor must develop connections in order to lead a community of believers.

Connecting with others does not simply come with talent, but it requires skill. One must learn to connect with others by making the most of whatever skills and experience he or she have. Communication and connection must be done intentionally. It will not just happen. New pastors must know people desire to be included, loved, and know that they are a part of the team. John Maxwell explains that ego, immaturity, failure to value everyone, and insecurity is the cause of not having a great connection with the people one leads.

During the researcher’s first three years of pastoring the Union Branch Baptist Church in Prince George, Virginia he experienced a lot of turmoil. The researcher assumed it was only the people complaining; however, during this research project, it was revealed it was because he was not connecting with everyone properly. Over the years, he was able to make positive connections with many of the members, but he had neglected to use any type of skills to connect with everyone.

**Build Trust with Courage**

New pastors must understand that pastoral leadership requires courage. Courage is strength of mind, capable of conquering whatever threatens the attainment of the highest good. In leadership, more than anything, one must have a strong mind with the fortitude to push forward despite the circumstances that may surround the new pastor. Courage will sometimes get one in trouble in order to keep them out of trouble. Courage allows the limits and restrictions to

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be taken off. The writer pastors a traditional black Baptist church where many of the congregants refuse to change. Making the decision to end some programs and ministries demands courage in order to lead effectively. Nothing is more discouraging to a leader than the prospect of being stranded in an environment where progress is impossible.\textsuperscript{12} Often, progress presents change and many are totally uncomfortable with change. The leader must be willing to implement the necessary changes with losing those in which he or she serves. Leaving things as they are is not a choice for leaders who desire progress.

Leaders challenge what is for the sake of what could and should be.\textsuperscript{13} Leaders must be able to see around the curve. Leadership is taking people to places they were not able to get to on their own. If the leader does not have enough courage to move the people to some places that may be uncomfortable, he or she is not prepared to lead. A leader is someone who has the courage to say publicly what everybody else is whispering privately.\textsuperscript{14} A leader is not trying to win a popularity contest. In the Army, the writer’s First Sergeant stated, “Leaders must be able to know the difference between leadership and likership.” Likership is doing things to ensure everyone likes the leader. Leadership is getting the job done no matter what.

Courage to act defines the leader, and in turn the leader’s initiative gives those around him or her the courage to follow.\textsuperscript{15} Leadership is having the courage to step out of the boat. In Matthew 14:22-33, Peter steps out of the boat when all the other disciples were in fear. Peter demonstrates to all what it takes to be a leader.

\textsuperscript{12} Stanley, \textit{Next Generation Leader}, 49.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 51.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
One must trust the voice of Jesus even when he or she cannot see Him.

The disciples are in a windstorm in a boat trying to cross over to the other side. They listen to the words of Jesus when he instructs them to go to the other side; however, even though they follow Jesus’ instructions, trouble still showed up. The disciples are afraid, but Peter is the only person who trusts the voice of Jesus despite not being able to visibly see Him. The leader must trust Jesus on the shore and as well as in a storm. Jesus power and authority never changes.

One must be willing to leave when everyone else stays.

Peter is the only person who steps out of the boat. The rest of the disciples decide to stay in the safe place. True leadership is being willing to forsake the comfortable and have enough courage to trust what is unable to be seen but having enough faith that if Jesus calls one to an unknown place He is also able to keep one from falling and dying in that place.

One cannot be afraid of failing.

Peter had enough courage to get out of the boat; however, his courage diminished when he felt the winds and the waves. Peter began to sink because he loses the courage he started out with. While implementing some projects, leaders start off with energy and excitement; however, some storms come along. Some naysayers and negativity may cause the leader to sink. Conversely, the leader must know he or she can call on Jesus when sinking. Peter shouted, “Lord, save me,” and immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and lifted Peter up. Spiritual leaders are not afraid of sinking because they serve a God who can lift them when they are sinking.

Leaders require those around them to abandon the known and embrace the unknown— with no guarantee of success.\(^\text{16}\) This can be the most challenging part of leadership; trying to get people to let go of their comfort zones. Leaders must be willing to take people to places they

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 52.
have never been before and where the leader has never visited, also. Spiritual leadership must be
done with competence, courage, and clarity. Effective and strong pastoral leadership builds trust
within the congregation. The new pastor’s leadership must be consistent without wavering or
changing from one circumstance to another. This trust will not be established overnight, but it
will take hard work and dedication on the part of the new pastor.

**Be Willing to Make the Difficult Decisions**

Any leader, whether in the marketplace or a spiritual leader in church, must be able to
make the best decision for the organization. Oftentimes, that decision may not be in favor of
everyone; however, the leader must be concerned about the decisions they make for
improvement and enhancement and how the decision affects the future of the organization.
Anyone who is in a leadership position is required to make decisions. If the new pastor is unable
to select the best course of action for his or her organization and leave the choice to subordinates,
he or she is not an effective leader. Leaders may consult counselors, seek consensus, and gather
information, but ultimately they make choices. 17

The Blackabys offer five guidelines for making decisions:

- Leaders seek the Holy Spirit’s Guidance
- Leaders strive to be teachable
- Leaders master their history
- Leaders plan
- Leaders give an account to God

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Spiritual leaders must allow the Holy Spirit to direct them in the decision making process. The spiritual leader communicates to the Holy Spirit through prayer. It is imperative that the spiritual leader spends devoted, meaningful, isolated time in prayer. Jesus revealed this in his leadership model. Jesus was consistently found separating himself from the disciples for the purpose of mediation and prayer to the Father. Jesus demonstrated that prayer was vital to His life and ministry.\textsuperscript{18} Prayer is a two-way communication system in which God has established for humanity to talk to divinity and divinity to talk back to humanity. The spiritual leader must demand God’s wisdom for making decisions. Prayerless leaders are like ship captains without compasses; they can make their best guess at which direction to go, but they have no assurance they are heading the right way.\textsuperscript{19} The leader must pray. How tragic for leaders to be facing a major decision that desperately calls for God's wisdom, only to discover they have grown unfamiliar with God's voice.\textsuperscript{20}

When making decisions spiritual leaders seek the Holy Spirit guidance through prayer, the Word of God, other believers, and circumstances. Just as God speaks by his Holy Spirit through prayer, the Bible, and other believers, so God can send clear messages to leaders through their experiences.\textsuperscript{21} Too often pastors assume that their difficult circumstances are there to destroy them, but God is trying to develop them. The best teacher is experience. Experiences help drive the pastor in the direction in which God desires him or her to go.

Spiritual leaders must always be willing to learn. Any leader who can suggest that he or she has seen or done everything within their scope of duties is deceiving themselves. A major

\textsuperscript{18} Heuser, Rodger and Shawchuck, Norman, “Leading the Congregation: Caring for Yourself While Serving Other.” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993), 47.
\textsuperscript{19} Blackaby, “Spiritual Leader: Moving People on to God’s Agenda,” 221.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 221.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 225.
aspect of a leader's decision making is maintaining a teachable spirit.\textsuperscript{22} Every leader needs a mentor. Every pastor needs a pastor. Pastors need someone to help guide them through problematic circumstances as well as celebratory experiences. When the author prescribed that leaders master their history, it really helped him understand the issues of his current ministry context. Leaders must look back in order to help them move forward. Reading the history of the organization offers the new pastor a small picture of who the church is. In writer’s context, the previous pastor served over forty-five years. A new pastor should review the minutes of past business meetings to learn what the people sensed God leading them to do previously.\textsuperscript{23} This piece of information caused the writer to call the secretary immediately and ask for the minutes. Leaders also plan. The writer learned this lesson in his second year of pastoring. He set vision for the church but did not define the method in which to achieve that vision. Finally, leaders give an account to God. The writer’s mentor who expresses this statement fully is Pastor George Jolly. He demonstrates what it means to be holy and lead by example. Pastor Jolly often express the words of Hebrews 13:17, “For they watch out for their souls, as those who must give account.” Pastors are responsible for the souls of the people.

\textbf{Build Trust with a Team}

No leader can be successful as a lone ranger. It requires a team effort. Spiritual leaders understand the need of having others involved when trying to move people from where they are to God’s agenda. Having an effective team does not lessen the value of the spiritual leader; however, it increases the value of the spiritual leader. Leaders are unwise to merely take on people who see and do things the same way they do.\textsuperscript{24} The leader must be able to surround him

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 226.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 227.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 297.
\end{itemize}
or herself with individuals who are not afraid to voice their own opinions concerning the mission and vision of the church. The saying goes, “If one is the smartest person in his or her group, he or she may need to find another group.” All pastors need people to challenge them and push them to greater levels in life and in God. George Barna, in his book *Turn-around Churches* says, “Leaders must lead by preparing people to take on responsibility and authority in ministry activity, and a commitment to delegating as much responsibility and authority as possible.”

Empowering congregants will allow the new pastor to lead a group of leaders and not just followers. Spiritual leaders must learn to build effective teams. Blackabys offer six effective ways for building teams:

- Leaders develop a dynamic culture
- Leaders maximize diversity
- Leaders love their people
- Leaders maintain focus
- Leaders foster healthy communication
- Leaders maximize their people.

New pastor must focus on number three; Leaders love their people. People entrust their hopes, dreams, self-worth, and skills into their leader's hands. The leader must be able to prove that he or she cares about the wellbeing of all in which he or she leads. Team members, working toward a meaningful goal, feeling cared for by their leaders, will bond with their co-laborers.

The leader is responsible of building a community. Whenever the writer encounters someone who has served long tenures as pastor, he often asks them a question, “What is the secret to being a pastor for so long?” Many have responded with the same answer, “Love the people.” The thought or the saying may seem easy but to actively love unconditionally can sometimes be a

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26 Blackabys, “*Spiritual Leader: Moving People on to God’s Agenda.*” 302.
27 Blackabys, “*Spiritual Leader: Moving People on to God’s Agenda.*” 302.
difficult task. The new pastor must love the ones who support the new pastor and the ones who don't. As Christians, Christ has charged all to love their neighbors and instructed the disciples that others will know that they are His by the way they love each other. God has given the leader the Holy Spirit to overcome the many traps of the enemy that attempts to cause discord and division within the church. 1 Peter 4:8 says, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins.” 1 Corinthians 13:8a says, “Love never fails.” All leaders must be lovers of people. In difficult, challenging circumstances leaders must allow love to abound.

Lesson 5: Build Bridges

Preaching is the most important act the preacher performs. Paul writes to Timothy instructing him with the ingredients of preaching. Paul gives the command, Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. Paul desires that pastors understand the importance of the preaching moment. The preacher is compelled to deal with issues that prick the soul and the conscience of society, issues of liberation and transformation as dictated by culture or life situation and by the biblical text. The preaching moment incumbents various facets that allows the preacher to connect, correct, and convince the congregation. Preaching is a means of discipleship, a shaping of men and women into the people God wants them to be—growing, deep believers able to face the world in which they live because they have been nurtured to do so by the Word. Augustine said that the

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28 Harris, James H., “Preaching Liberation,” (Minneapolis, MN; Fortress Press, 1995), 1.
29 2 Timothy 4:2 New King James Version
30 2 Timothy 4:2 New King James Version
31 Harris, “Preaching Liberation,” 4.
The purpose of preaching was to explain, edify, and persuade.\(^{33}\) The preaching moment on Sunday morning is when the largest crowd appears at church. The new pastor must take advantage of this moment in order to build a bridge from where the church is, to persuade the congregants to where the new pastor desires the church to be. The congregation is able to get a glimpse of the character of the pastor during the preaching moment. The pastors sermons allows the congregation to get an understanding of who the new pastor is, what he or she is most passionate about, and how well he or she is able to articulate the transition of the church.

The end of a thing \emph{is} better than its beginning; the patient in spirit \emph{is} better than the proud in spirit. Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools. Do not say, “Why were the former days better than these?” For you do not inquire wisely concerning this. Wisdom \emph{is} good with an inheritance, and profitable to those who see the sun.”\(^{34}\)

This text helps the pastor who is going through transition to allow wisdom and patience to prevail in every action. The preacher must use Godly wisdom in selecting the proper sermon to preach during the transition of the church.

The preaching moment is not a time to destroy or tear down the church because of what they have done in the past or what they refuse to accept in the future. The consistent message of scripture is that God created His people and brings them to life through the word.\(^{35}\) The preaching moment is there to give the people hope and biblical inspiration. The preaching moment should not be used to compare the new pastor to the former pastor. One of the pastors interviewed for this project expressed vividly how he failed to take advantage of the preaching moment by including the faults and failures of the previous pastor. The preaching moment is a time to build up and not tear down. The sermonic presentation must be focused on the word of God and not the new pastor’s personal feelings towards the previous pastor. Another pastor

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 16
\(^{34}\) Ecclesiastes 7:8-11 New King James Version.
stated that he once told his congregation, “I wear a size 13 shoe; therefore, I cannot wear the shoes of the previous pastor.” 36 This statement caused the congregation to develop some resentment toward the pastor because they assumed that he was attempting to challenge and attack the accomplishments of the previous pastor in which they still love dearly. The pastor is charged to preach the Word. When the writer was first selected to be the pastor of Union Branch his mentor instructed him that the congregation should never be able to say he cannot preach. They may say a whole lot of other things about the pastor, but lacking in preaching should not be one thing they should be able to say. The pastor must be committed to the preaching moment and not allow personal differences with the congregation or the previous pastor to prevent the bible from being preached effectively.

Sermon Preparation is Key

If the pastor is going to be effective during the preaching moment, he or she must be dedicated to sermon preparation. The preparation of sermons involves a series of tasks that the preacher must accomplish one at a time. 37 Wayne McDill offers four essential tasks for sermon preparation. The first step he prescribes involves a commitment to inductive Bible study. This technique aims at a careful examination and analysis of the text in all its details to discover what the writer intended to say. 38 Second, the method for getting from text to sermon is a traditional one called the key word method. 39 This method keeps the preacher on track for allowing the text to speak through the sermon in its content and purpose. 40 Third, the selection and arrangement of

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38 Ibid., 167-168.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid., 170-171.
sermon material uses rhetorical elements common to persuasive speech. With this approach, preachers recognize that sermon material functions in four ways: explanation, illustration, argumentation, and application. Fourth, the method presented here for planning the sermon presentation focuses on an oral design for maximum audience appeal. This audience-centered approach for presenting the sermon aims to communicate the biblical ideas in the most effective way. A sermon is by definition an oral presentation and must be planned for the ear of the hearer.

The writer, through trial and test, developed his own standard for sermon preparation. The researcher takes on this same mentality when it comes to sermon preparation. There is an extreme fear that should haunt any preacher who is not properly prepared for the preaching moment. The researcher has developed a seven-step process that would help the preacher be ready to stand and proclaim the gospel of Christ. The steps are as follows:

1. Allow God to give the text through prayer. The pastor should never pick the topic and then try to put the topic with the text because sometimes the preacher’s topics will not match the selected text. Ensure the sermon is within the context of the text. Don't assume what the text is saying; interpret what the text is saying.

2. Go to a bible website and look up at least ten different versions of the text one is preaching from. Read all versions at least three times. This will allow the pastor to become familiar with the text before using extra biblical material. As one is reading, begin to ask questions of the text.

3. Develop an outline. Always have a main idea. The main idea will allow the preacher to preach within context. The sermon should be a bullet and not a buckshot. The main idea is a sentence stating what the whole sermon is all about. Before the preacher start to develop the sermon, he or she must have a main idea. Also, the outline should include the movements in the text.

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Ibid., 167-168.  
Ibid., 173-174.  
Ibid., 167-168.  
Ibid.  
Ibid., 176-179.  
For each point the preacher discover, he or she should look for at least six different commentaries. Use concordances for word searches and Greek or Hebrew translation, bible dictionaries, and attempt to have some preaching partners that he or she can share their sermon with.

Look for illustrations, stories, and humor.

Develop a proper way to close the sermon out. The black preacher is known for celebrating at the end of the sermon. One must always close the sermon by giving the people hope.

Sermon preparation takes time, but it’s worth it. The preacher must be willing to sacrifice many hours of preparation before the preaching moment. There should never be a time when the preacher should be preparing a sermon on Saturday night nor Sunday morning.

The researcher discovered that preaching with a plan prevents poor preparation habits. Some preaching books suggest the preacher should plan their sermons for at least a year out, some suggest six months; however, the writer has decided to forecast his sermons 90 days out. Preaching with a plan allows the preacher to know what they are preaching each week. The researcher was taught that “Saturday Night Specials,” would not help grow and develop the congregations. If more preachers came to the responsibility of preaching — text selection, planning, and sermon construction — with the understanding that they are nurturing disciples, their preaching might be different.\footnote{Gibson, Scott M., “Preaching with a Plan”, 17.} For many, sermon preaching appears to be more of a performance — about how the preacher looks or sounds or comes across — than about how preaching fits into the overall ministry of a pastor who feeds his or her flock.\footnote{Ibid., 18.} During the transitional period of the church, the new pastor must use the preaching moment to point to the direction he or she desires the church to go in.

**Transitional Preaching**

The ultimate goal of the pastor is to transform the heart of the sinner and educate the
Saint. Jesus must first be preached before attempt to preach transitional sermons. The new pastor must change hearts before he or she focuses on changing the direction of the church. Sermons can assure the congregation that God will guide pastor and people through the daunting process of transition and renewal. The Bible is the essential document of instruction for the church. As preaching occurs during Sunday morning worship, the most well attended of the congregation’s weekly events, the sermon uniquely assists congregants with understanding sensitive issues and helping them correlate their challenges with the Scriptures. The preaching moment should motivate the congregation and inspire them that God will be leading them through the pastoral transition. As the primary vehicle for transmitting God’s revelation to the people, sermons disclose a pastor’s personality, beliefs, vision, and passion. The sermonic presentation has the ability to provide biblical evidence to support the direction the new pastor desire the church to go in. Successful transitional preaching determines whether a pastor and parishioners develop a sufficiently strong connection to work together toward a new vision of ministry.

Upon arriving to Union Branch Baptist Church, the writer admits that the church was failing to be the church the Bible instructs it to be. Thom Rainer instructs the church to be aware of the country club mentality. For them, membership is about receiving instead of giving, being served instead of serving, rights instead of responsibilities, and entitlements instead of sacrifices. This is a common state of the church when the previous pastor was up in age and served for more than 20 years. Therefore, the new pastor must execute proper transitional preaching to transform the mind of the congregation. Union Branch had become so isolated that they were not able to see anything that was going on in the community, they had forgotten about

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50 Ibid., 102.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
the youth and the young adults of the church, and everyone was just paying their dues in order to keep the church operating. It took sound transitional preaching that allowed them to see where they were in order to see where God’s vision was taking them. The sermons empowered them to face the challenges of ministry they had forsaken. When the church gets its act together, it is the most potent force for the transformation of the world.\textsuperscript{54} The preaching moment offers the congregation inspiration to change the direction of the church and their behaviors.

A sermon series that helped move Union Branch was entitled “Trusting God through Transition.” The writer used various passages of scriptures in chapters 14-17 of Exodus. These scriptures allowed the church to see how God had transitioned the children of Israel from slavery to freedom. The sermons consisted of:

Exodus 14: 10-29 “Where Do We Go from Here:” This sermon speaks of the children of Israel escaping the hand of the Pharaoh in Egypt. God answers their prayers and they are freed from slavery. They arrive to the Red Sea and are unsure of how they are going to survive. Therefore, God proved that he could be trusted in transition. When moments of uncertainty arise it is not the time to depend on the leader, but on God who created heaven and earth.

Exodus 15:22-27 “Living through the Bitter Moments of Transition:” During the transitional process everything will not always go as planned. Likewise, in this sermon the children of Israel experienced a wonderful victory by being released from slavery and walking through the Red sea. It’s similar to the pastoral installation. Not referring the previous pastor to Pharaoh, but using him as the old leadership that lasted for a substantial amount of time. When unexpected occurrences happen, the first thing people desire to do is, return back to what is familiar and reject what’s new. The people arrive to Marah and are afraid that they will die of thirst. However, God proves himself again by making bitter water sweet. During the pastoral transition there will be bitter moments, as well as sweet moments. The new pastor must be willing to enjoy sweet moments when they present themselves and navigate through the bitter moments with complete trust in God.

Exodus 16:1-9 “There Is a Blessing in the Test:” Again the children of Israel are faced with the challenge of transition. They are unfamiliar to who God is and He is trying to prove to them that he worthy to be trusted through the transition. They have water but now they are in need of food. The children of Israel begin to remember how they had food in Egypt but they forget they were slaves. This is how churches often respond to new ministry ideas from the

new pastor. They would rather stay the same than to trust the direction God is trying to lead them in. In this sermon God displays extreme patience with the people speaks, God proves He can be trusted during a test, and the test will leave the people with a testimony.

Exodus 17:1-7 “The Lord Is Still with Us:” Again, the people complain against Moses because of the trials they are facing. The new pastor within the same context as Moses but remember God is still with him. The struggles of transition is not uncommon but in order to overcome these moments the new pastor must know that God will stand by his promise. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” In this sermon Moses proves that prayer still works, the Lord will offer perpetual mercy, and God promises the leader with his promise. This sermon offers the new pastor hope in uncertain situations.

Exodus 17:8-16 “Winning with Your Hands Up:” This sermon helps the new pastor understand that he or she is unable to win the battle in isolation. Joshua is fighting in the valley and Moses is on the hill praying with his hands lifted up. As long as the Moses held the rod in the air, the children of Israel prevailed. However, when his arms became tired and went down, the children of Israel began to lose. This sermon allowed the congregation to understand that the new pastor needed leaders to help him or her to lead that the congregation may win each battle they would face during the transitional process.

During the transitional period the new pastor must be able to build an effective bridge through preaching. It is through the preaching moment during Sunday morning worship where the pastor the best opportunity to have a positive impact on his or her congregation. He or she must use this time wisely and with great caution. It should be used as a moment to present the vision and direction of the church, but also to encourage and motivate the congregation. The congregation not only needs a leader who provides direction and builds skills, but also recognizes what the people are doing and acknowledges and celebrates their growth.\[^{55}\] Too often, pastor beat the people with words of their ineffectiveness and not their improvements and progression. The preaching moment is very important and vital for building a bridge between the new pastor and congregation, where the is and where the church desires to be, and from yesterday to tomorrow.

\[^{55}\] Barna, George, “Turnaround Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church,” (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 64.
Lesson 6: Build a Vision

“Where there is no vision, the people perish” Proverbs 29:18 KJV

Proverbs 28:18 speak volumes to the church. It explains that the absence of vision triggers the absence of purpose and with no purpose there is no production. Therefore, in the absence of production, people perish. This scripture is true for the members of Union Branch Baptist Church. The people were in the building, but the church was perishing. Upon the writer being called to Union Branch Baptist Church, he discovered the church did not have a vision nor had they articulated a statement defining the direction of the church. The people had no agreed-upon direction in which they assumed God was leading them. Due to the previous pastor being there for over 45 years, they had become complacent and had set the church in cruise control. The members of the church were not on the same course of doing God’s will and being agents of change. Many were coming to church because it had become the routine thing to do. There were some who were only supporting the church because they had legacy in the church. Their ancestors help build and establish the church; therefore, in order to prevent the church from falling or failing, they committed themselves to the church. As the new pastor of a church within this context of following a “legend,” as the spiritual leader, the new pastor must be able to restart, revive, and rejuvenate the congregants to do greater work for Christ.

When the new pastor is called to this ministry context, it is similar to trying to start an old lawnmower. The equipment is still able to get the job done, but it requires attention, patience, and work. Likewise, when the pastor of a church that has been sitting and doing nothing for at least the last five to ten years of the previous pastor term, the new pastor must administer care, give accurate attention and patience, and work with the church in order to take the church to the next level. The challenge for leaders is to understand how vision motivates followers to do things
they would not attempt otherwise. One out of the ten pastors the researcher interviewed stated that his new church was ready to receive him as their pastor and accepted his vision without a fight. However, the other 90% declared that setting vision was a building process. Of the pastors interviewed for the research project, the implementation of vision varied. From three months to three years; and one pastor who had been pastor of his church for six and a half years had yet to set vision. Pastor John Faison suggested that his church was in need of desperate help and direction. When the vision was presented, no one fought it and was excited about it. When the new members became larger than the existing members, “…it helped me to push the vision forward.” Pastor John Wynn stated that he did not present vision until after his second year of pastoring. The church was very receptive to the vision. Preaching the vision before presenting the vision helped the people understand the vision. Pastors in the transition zone must see preaching as one of the major catalysts for navigating transition and positioning the ministry for revival and growth.

Also, of the ten pastors interviewed, there was only one pastor who was unable to set any vision for the church. Pastor Karl Marshall stated, “I have tried year after year to set vision but the members of the church would never buy in.” They have consistently rejected the vision I presented. The rejection of the vision falls on the pastor and the people. At times the reason people do not embrace a vision is because they have not developed the maturity to recognize when God is leading. For a vision to move people, the people must be convinced it is a promise

57 John Faison, interview by author, May 20, 2016.
58 John Faison, interview by author, May 120 2016.
59 John Wynn, interview by author, May 19, 2016.
60 John Wynn, interview by author, May 19, 2016.
from almighty God and not merely the dream of an ambitious leader.\textsuperscript{65} When people sense they are a part of something God is doing, there is no limit to what they will do or sacrifice.\textsuperscript{66} The reception of a new pastor’s vision varied in each church of the pastors interviewed. The churches where the previous pastored retired and left the church after serving more than twenty years found it difficult to initially implement vision, but the church was able to receive the vision over time. Congregations where the previous pastor had passed away prior to calling the new pastor found that it was easier for the church to accept their vision; however, when the previous pastor retires, but remains a member of the church, the new pastor found it difficult to cast and implement vision. As difficult as it was for Moses and Aaron to exist together as leaders of God’s people, it is also difficult for the new pastor to lead with the former pastor still participating in the operations of the church.

The pastor must work to set the proper vision for the ministry context he or she is leading. The new pastor must investigate the culture and the narrative of the church.\textsuperscript{67} During the interview process, a common question pastoral search committees ask is, “What is your vision for this church?” It is impossible for the new pastor to set a vision for people he or she does not know. The new pastor does not know the needs of the church and the community; therefore, without proper assessment the new pastor will offer a vision the people can never achieve or one they will not receive. The new pastor must take in consideration the capabilities of the church financially, their Christian maturity level, and their willingness to follow the vision of a pastor. The mistake the researcher committed upon being called to Union Branch Baptist Church was setting vision that the people did not commit to. The writer understands that his initial vision failed because he assumed numbers helped the people to catch the vision. Blackabys state, “In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 111.
\item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Tolan Morgan interview by author, May 10, 2016.
\end{itemize}
reality, visions consisting of numbers do not have the same impact as a vision involving vivid imagery." Having a clear understanding of the individuals that will help ensure the vision come to past must be imperative for a new pastor. The researcher waited until year two of his pastorate to issue vision, but did not submit a plan to accomplish the vision. He was not aware of the capability of the congregation and his vision never was accomplished. Due to the lack of knowledge about how to properly present vision, the researcher faced harsh criticism from some of the congregants because the membership never came close to achieving the vision he had set. The leader’s job is to buy into the concept for quality concern, cast the vision, and never delegate the core value. In order to ensure the vision of the new pastor come to the past, one must first understand the importance of vision, capture God’s vision, and he or she must be able to articulate their vision effectively.

Capture God’s Vision

When people create a vision that is not God-centered, it may result in temporal progress but unlikely will provide a positive, long-lasting impact. The new pastor must ensure that the direction in which they are taking the church is God ordained. Vision is born out of the revelation of God, not a textbook approach to crisis management. Every time leaders develop their own vision instead of seeking God's will, they are giving people their best thinking instead of God's. That is a poor exchange indeed. Whenever one fails to seek God for vision it becomes like a dream that is forgotten about once one is awaken from their sleep. The vision will never be able to be reached and there will more discontentment amongst membership than the

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72 Ibid., 101.
73 Ibid.
required unity to make the vision come to past. Pastors must understand their limitations when
they are forming vision for their congregations. Visions created by men are, nevertheless,
tempered by their perceptions of human limitations, resource realities, and incomplete
information about the environments they seek to conquer. Every visionary learns that they must
be well-informed and well-equipped to accomplish their targeted achievements. However, one
must ensure that he or she is within the will of God. The leader's job is to communicate God's
promise to the people, not create the vision and then strive to enlist followers to buy in to it. When the congregation has faith that the vision is God-sent, they are excited and are willing to
work to ensure the vision is achieved. Spiritual leaders must also consider that if the Holy Spirit
is not convincing people to move in a new direction, perhaps God is not the author of the
vision. God will support what he authors.

The prevention of creating vision for God’s people demands humility from the pastor. Humility is an act of Christ. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and
became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. If the greatest man ever
known chose to forgo his status for the good of others, reasoned the early Christians, greatness
must consist in humble service. The shameful place is now a place of honor, the low point is
the high point. Pastors must depend on God to supply the direction the church is heading. It is
very easy for the pastor to see a path in which he sees best without consulting God in prayer.
When developing vision, the pastor must dedicate himself to prayer and fasting. Sharing the
contents of the vision with a mentor can also prevent self-guidance. Humility will allow the new

76 Ibid., 109.
77 Ibid.
78 Philippians 2:8
80 Ibid.
pastor to achieve more than he or she ever thought they could. Often, new pastor want to put on
the persona that they are equipped for the task. The reader learned early in ministry that there are
some deacons, trustees, and church leaders who have been serving God and the church for a long
time and they understand the behavior and mood of the church. Therefore, they can help the new
pastor avoid pitfalls and failures if he or she allows them to by removing their arrogant or self-
righteous spirit.

**The New Pastor Must Be Able to Articulate His Vision Effectively**

A properly presented vision is a properly prepared vision. Clearly, one must understand
the vision in all its scope and nuances before he or she can hope to describe all of its dimensions
to other people. The new pastor’s vision must motivate him or her before the vision is able to
motivate the congregants. Vision is the centerpiece of strategy; strategy is the means to effective
church development; effective development of the church is the means of transforming the world
with His love. For this reason, helping the people comprehend the vision is extremely important
to do the work of God. Vision must be viewed as a direction provided by God and as strategic
framework for ministry. If the new pastor desires to move the church forward, take them to a
new level in ministry, or lead the church in a more productive direction, the articulation of the
vision must be just important as formulating the vision.

The researcher’s first assignment as pastor of Union Branch Baptist Church required a
mound of work, patience, and collaboration in order to achieve the vision of becoming a full-
time church. After being called as the pastor in September 2012, Union Branch was a church that
only had worship service on the second, fourth, and fifth Sundays of the year. This was because
Pastor Andrew White was pastoring two churches: Union Branch and Zion Baptist Church. The

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82 Ibid., 135.
83 Ibid.
first goal of the incoming pastor was to ensure the church had service every Sunday. This was the vision, but the vision required individuals to help the vision come to past. Therefore, before this vision was ever presented to the church, it was presented to the deacons of the church. The purpose was to gain their trust and support more so than their approval. Vision should not be done in isolation, but the pastor must be willing to allow his or her spiritual leaders to assist in sharing the vision of the church. The leader may generate new views of the future and may be a genius at synthesizing and articulating them, but this makes a difference only when the vision has been successfully communicated throughout the organization and effectively institutionalized as a guiding principle.84

After seeing the excitement within the spiritual leaders, the researcher then scheduled a meeting with the trustees of the church who also were excited about the vision of the church. After a collective effort between pastor, deacons, and trustees in preparing a presentation for the church to see the vision and what it was going to take to achieve this vision, the leaders were finally ready to introduce the vision to the church. The researcher was new to the church and understood that the reasoning for changing the amount of times the church worshipped God should not have come from him but from church leaders who had been in the church their whole life. The presenters were homegrown and were intentionally selected because they had grown up with the people and knew them far better than the new pastor. The goal for the presentation was to present the vision in such a way that there would be no questions to be ask even though there was allotted a question and answer period. The new pastor’s presentation must be clear. During communication, the new pastor can notice who is paying attention and who is not. Once one pay attention to what the speaker is saying because of a positive perception, his or her feelings about

84 Bennis and Nanus Leaders, 99.
it and the way it sounds will influence the reception of and attention to what is being said. The presenter of the vision must be able to speak in a way that captivates the audience to see where they are going and understand what it is going to take to get there. The leaders were so precise in their presentation that the congregants were extremely impressed that there were no questions asked. After the presentation, it was time for the vote. The vote was by ballot and it would prove the mood of the people and their level of trust in the new pastor’s vision. The count came in with an overwhelming victory for the new pastor of 75 for the vision and only one person who voted against this new initiative for the church. This vision had started four months before it was presented to the church, but it was articulated in such a way that people could not resist the motivation to move forward.

Members desire a clear, concise, and Christ-centered vision. If the new pastor explain why and the reason behind it and for it, it not only helps others to understand the purpose but it also allows them to buy into the vision and be a part of it. Then one can work together!” A clear vision, one that has truly gripped hearts, has the ability to push everyone through their uncertainty. If the vision is initially presented clearly, when moments of uncertainty attempt to attack the vision it will not perish because of how the members felt when it was first presented. When one follow their instincts and transform their vision into reality, they will discover that accidents, mistakes, and conflicts become creative material. As the new pastor presents the vision, please know everyone will not accept the vision. It may be that the church invites the presence of the pastor’s vision and the novelty of his or her ideas, as long as those ideas don’t mess with the sacred pillars or practices and methods that have been held dear by that

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87 Ibid.
congregation long before the pastor arrived. New ideas are good ideas as long as they don't require anyone to actually do anything new. If leaders are going to share a vision, they are also obligated to ensure their people are prepared to properly respond to it. Today Christian leaders often develop a vision and then demand the members either get on board or find another organization. A vision cannot be established in an organization by edict, or by the exercise of power or coercion. It is more an act of persuasion, of creating an enthusiastic and dedicated commitment to a vision because it is right for the times, right for the organization, and right for the people who are working in it. Presidents, like all leaders, need to be able to describe where they are going (vision), persuade people to come along with them (consensus), connect on a personal level (charisma), and demonstrate credibility, i.e., do what they say they will do (trust).

**Lesson 7: Build a Monument**

The pastors interviewed for this research project that were successful in transition with limited conflict had done something that allowed the previous pastor legacy to live on. Once the researcher assumed the role as pastor of Union Branch, he began to think of ways in which he could honor Andrew J. White Sr. who had served Union Branch for over 45 years. In honoring the previous pastor, it proves to the church that the new pastor is not trying to compete with his accomplishments, but appreciate him for his accomplishments. An area where many new leaders fail miserably is at honoring the persons who occupied the seats he or she now occupies.

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93 Ibid., 108.
94 Bennis and Nanus “Leaders” 99.
95 Ibid., 100.
often new pastors forget that one day if they stay in the ministry they will retire or die. If they have served the ministry for many years they would hope that someone would build a monument that would allow his or her legacy to live on forever.

Whenever Dr. White would attend Union Branch, the writer made it his goal to invite him to the pulpit, ask him if he wanted to say anything, or just honor him and his wife for worshiping with Union Branch. It is the responsibility of the new pastor to honor the previous pastor. Even if the church members refuse to offer a way to honor him. Some may even talk bad about the previous pastor, but do not fall into that trap. No matter the circumstances, never publicly dishonor, speak negative words, or condemn any aspect of their time, tenure or turn as the leader. Often times, when the new pastor or CEO arrives, the urge to win support is often through the vehicle of attacking the flaws and failures of the former leader. If the new pastor attacks the previous pastor than it will be as if they are attacking the current members of the church. It does not take much to ensure that the new pastor honor the previous pastor. The new pastor will lose no honor by honoring their work. The members are observing the new pastor’s actions towards the previous pastor. The way the new pastor treats the previous pastor will depend on the way the congregants treats the new pastor. Anthony Chandler suggests that new pastors should, “Maintain a loving closeness and healthy distance.” This approach will help the new pastor have a relationship with the former pastor, but will also allow the new pastor to pastor without his interference.

Union Branch loved Dr. Andrew J. White. He had served them extremely well and had become family to many. He envisioned the current 4.2 million dollar sanctuary they currently

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98 Ibid., 71.
99 Ibid., 69.
100 Ibid., 79-80.
101 Ibid., 79.
worship in. He had eulogized many of their family members, married many of them, counseled them through the hardships of life, and was there to celebrate with them through their many achievements and successes. After he retired he did not ask for anything. He left and did not continue to try to have a say in the ministry of the church. They afforded him the title of Pastor Emeritus, but he allowed the writer to pastor Union Branch without his public involvement.

After noticing his humble disposition, the researcher saw a need to honor Dr. White for serving this one congregation for so long. Dr. White gave the charge to the church during the researcher’s installation service. Instructing them that he was passing the baton. He stated, “I am unable to take the church any further, and God has now given Pastor Allen the responsibility to lead this church.” This moment really impressed the researcher. The influence Dr. White had on the congregation was like no one can ever imagine. In the presence of many in the congregation, Dr. White handed the writer the baton to run on. This event was very impactful in forming an effective relationship between the new pastor and people. After much consideration and careful thought, the church voted to name the fellowship hall after Dr. White (Andrew J. White Empowerment Center). The church agreed to take on a $27,000.00 remodeling project in order to honor Dr. White. The church raised the money through a campaign and celebrated the grand opening shortly thereafter. This event proved to me how much the people still loved Dr. White even though he had been retired for almost four years. Their love towards him also exhibited to the writer that the church knew how to love a pastor.

The new pastor of a church where the previous pastor served well for over 20 years must discover a method in which to honor the previous pastor. Karl Marshall stated his predecessor still attends his church. Therefore, he often lifts him up before the people and allows him to preach. Joshua King predecessor also is still a member, but he is devoted to allowing the people
to connect with him. Despite Karl’s actions of appreciation his predecessor continues to cause dysfunction within the church. Pastor Hobbs of Metropolitan Baptist Church predecessor is still living, but he was too sick to attend the church. Hobbs created a computer lab out of the old church and named it after Pastor Bland. This allowed the people to watch Hobbs lift Pastor Bland in his absence and sickness. Pastor Faison did something very unique that helped build a relationship with his church concerning the previous pastor. While his church was building its pastor died during the process. Therefore, some things were left incomplete. The highest thing on Pastor Faison was to complete the balcony. After raising enough funds in the name of the previous family, the church was able to complete the balcony and church agreed to name the balcony “Curtis Goodwin View from Above.” Pastor John Wynn simply gave the previous pastor a special day of celebration. Pastor Kendrick named the church’s annual revival after the previous pastor. Tyrone Jackson state “I will always honor the previous pastor wife and every time she is in worship I will ensure to give her something.” Tyrone is committed to honoring the wife of his predecessor. He once raised an offering for her at a church he was preaching at and she came. He also honors her husband every fourth Sunday in March. During this day the church honor someone who has been serving well in leadership at the church. Pastor Tolan Morgan followed in the same way of Pastor Jackson. He honors the previous pastor’s wife on a consistent basis. Also the first Sunday in May is Founder’s Day, where the church honors the accomplishments of Willie Reid.

Each of these pastors was intentional in their efforts to ensure the church understood that the previous pastor deserved to be honored for their service. This is not a hard task to complete when the congregation loved the previous pastor. No matter how rewarding, remarkable, or
ruining their tenure or time of leadership was for them, pastors do themselves a great injustice in their failure to honor, commend and value their position in transformation as successor.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 68.
Chapter 3

Ministry Depends On How Much the New Pastor Cares

The writer served as the interim pastor for Union Branch for over 18 months. During those 18 months, he learned how to implement pastoral care to the people God had allowed him to pastor. He had only preached the eulogy of one of his family members, never officiated a funeral, or gave the graveside committal. He had never visited members who were unable to get out of the house nor had he ever had to pray with a family that was wondering should they take their love one off life support. During those 18 months, the writer officiated or preached the eulogy of 25 different members of Union Branch. It is because of the love, care, and commitment he showed towards the people of church that he was able to become the senior pastor of Union Branch. It was during his first night of pastoral care class in seminary where he received a call that one of his members was in the hospital. He informed his professor of the situation and the professor allowed him to leave. The researcher had no idea what to say or what to do when he arrived to the hospital. This was his first time performing pastoral care. So the writer asked his professor what he should do. The professor informed him to just be there for the family. The ministry of presence means more to members than having the right words to say in moments of despair. Presence is a powerful tool in bringing perspective to pain.¹

After Jesus died and was resurrected from the grave, He shows up at the shore while the disciples are fishing. Here on the seashore, Jesus gives Peter a lesson on caring for His sheep from which all pastors can learn how to care for the members of their congregation. Jesus draws a parallel between loving Him and taking care of His sheep. Pastors who have been called by God must tend to His sheep.

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Feed My lambs.” He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My sheep.” He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”

The new pastor must understand that his love for Christ will cause him or her to love whom Christ loves, the church. The way the pastor conducts pastoral care speaks to how he or she love Christ. If a pastor can say that he or she loves Christ, yet fails to demonstrate that love by taking care of Christ sheep, than he or she does not deserve to serve in the role of a pastor.

**Lesson 8: Tend to the Sheep**

Tending to God’s sheep require so much more than just preaching on Sunday morning. Many pastors fail in ministry not because they are not good at orators of the Word of God, but because they fail to tend to the sheep properly. Pastoral care consists of many different facets of ministry: Visiting shut-ins, ministering to the sick, ministering to those who are grieving, ministering those who are in crisis, and conducting counseling sessions, funerals, weddings and baptisms. These various acts allow the pastor to develop positive relationships throughout the congregation. The first opportunity that allows the new pastor to work on their relationship is during the negotiation process. If the incoming pastor is able to, ask for a covenant and not a contract. Contracts are based on responsibilities; covenants are based on relationships. Contracts define boundaries of and bind; covenants provide for growth and becoming. Asking for a covenant helps build a relationship with the church’s leaders from the beginning. It is extremely

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2 John 21:15-17
4 Ibid., 50.
difficult to build positive relationships with the leaders of the church if the new pastor comes in fighting about the specifics within the contract. The covenant removes the legalistic part of the contract. It allows all to follow the method in which God followed when connecting with his people. A dynamic covenant allows for and facilitates growth.\textsuperscript{5}

The church is able to grow to higher heights when the new pastor is connecting well with the congregation. Pastoral counseling will become the one area of ministry where the new pastor may feel he or she was not prepared for, unless the pastor has received some formal training in this area. There is a limit to what pastors can accomplish by talking about counseling skills.\textsuperscript{6} Counseling is like golf.\textsuperscript{7} One learns it by doing it and reflecting on what happened, preferably with the help of skilled supervisor or “pro.”\textsuperscript{8} Pastors must be very careful with their words because in counseling sessions one can either help or hurt the individual that is seeking help. Understanding the importance of pastoral counseling is vital to the transition of the church. Often, people do not desire a plan but they only want someone to listen to their problems. People need a counselor to truly hear them.\textsuperscript{9} Pastors must learn how to be good listeners. New pastors must become an empathetic listener. At this level, listeners refrain from judging the talker and place themselves in the other’s position, attempting to see things from his or her point of view.\textsuperscript{10}

One will face many different circumstances that will test who they are and what they believe. The writer faced a counseling session that challenged him on many levels he had never imagined. A young lady comes to the church and asks, “Can I please talk to the pastor?” The

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 50.
\textsuperscript{6} Killen, James L. Jr. “Pastoral Care in the Small Membership Church.” (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005), 12.
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
young lady sits and talks with the researcher for nearly three hours. She began to explain how she had no reason for living, God was angry with her because she was a lesbian, and she was hearing voices telling her to kill herself. The author is one who believes homosexuality is sin, but God’s love supersedes all sin. The young lady was told that God still loves her and she did not have to take her life. This was the most difficult counseling session the writer had ever faced. He was totally ill equipped for this young lady, but God provided him with the right words to say. After leaving that day, the young lady met with the writer a few more times. After the third meeting, the writer referred her to a professional counselor. What pastors are not able to do for members and attendees because of time and training limitations can be provided by competent counselors.11 Pastors must know their own limitations. After several meetings with no progress the pastor must be willing to send his or her member to get some professional help. The writer instructed the young lady’s mother to get her some professional help. However, one day he received a call stating that the young lady had been admitted to the hospital. The young lady had jumped in front of an 18-wheeler on the highway, but God spared her life. After being released from the hospital, the young lady began to come to church. She would sit in the sanctuary for only a moment and then leave. Then she started to sit in the balcony, but she would stay the whole service. God continued to work on her heart and she would sit on the lower level with everyone else. God had made a complete change in this young lady’s life. When she walked into the writer’s office the first time, she was in darkness and did not have hope. However, a year later she had a smile that was brighter than the sun and she began to serve on various ministries in the church. Watching her life change proved to the writer that God is very real. Never had the writer seen someone so lost, but was revived through effective pastoral counseling.

Pastoral care is very important to the success of the new pastor, especially if their predecessor was one committed to being presence in the lives of his or her members. The congregants of the church desire to see the pastor, hear from the pastor, or just know that he or she cares about them. People do not care about how much one knows until they know how much one cares. When the pastor visits the sick, sits with a family that has lost a love one, or counsels a member who is in despair, they take the hope of Christ with them. Members understand that the pastor do not have the power to change the situation they may be in, but they believe that pastors have a great connection with God. So, when the pastor arrives to their homes, hospital, or funeral home the member’s burdens are lighten because the pastor is there to help them through the difficulties of life.

Emmanuel Lartey offers five models of pastoral care: (1) Pastoral Care as Therapy. Under this model, the task of pastoral caregiver is to remove, or correct, what is wrong and in some way or by some means to return the sufferer to functioning order. This model of pastoral care is desired by many of the church’s congregants. Lartey argues that pastoral care has become a form of psychotherapy. (2) Pastoral Care as Ministry: Where ‘ministry’ is the underlying assumption, pastoral care is understood as the operation or activity of particular persons, views as agents or intermediaries. Pastoral care plays a role in every facet of ministry: proclamation, teaching, service, fellowship, administration and worship. (3) Pastoral Care as a Social Action: This model of pastoral care implied in this approach has been described as prophecy to structures or speaking truth to power. The pastor must be aware of the conditions his or her congregants endure and provide a voice to the voiceless. The issue of racial prejudice and snubbing and

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12 Griffin, “Navigating Through Pastoral Transition.” 105.
14 Ibid. 56.
15 Ibid., 58.
suspicion and mistreatment is not a social issue; it is a blood-of-Jesus issue.\(^\text{16}\) John Piper may not see this as a social issue, but it must definite require the leadership of pastors to move Christians to love those who are not of the same race as them. Sunday mornings are the most segregated times of the week. The pastor must be the priest and the prophet. He or she is responsible for speaking to the social issues of day and provide help to the helpless. This speaks to how much the pastor cares about the ones who attend the church. (4) Pastoral Care as Empowerment: In contrast to a therapeutic model of pastoral care, in an empowerment model the emphasis is on the fact that there is something good, something of worth and value within human persons as they presently are.\(^\text{17}\) Empowerment implies not weakness, but rather some pre-existing strength upon which one builds.\(^\text{18}\) The task of pastoral care under this model is the ‘drawing out and building up’ of the unnoticed strengths and resources within and around people and communities.\(^\text{19}\) This model opens up the untapped potential of the congregants who are looking to be involved in ministry but is unsure to how to do it. (5) Pastoral Care as Personal Interaction: In this model, relational skills are employed to assist people explore, clarify and change (or else cope more effectively with) unwanted thoughts, feelings and behavior.\(^\text{20}\) The writer recalled hearing a sermon where the preacher stated, “Shepherds should smell like sheep.” Pastoral care requires the pastor to commit his or herself to the people they are serving. As the shepherd of God’s sheep, pastors should not be in isolation or in a place where the sheep cannot get to him or her.

\(^{16}\) Piper, John. “\textit{Brother, We are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry.}” (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2013), 228.
\(^{17}\) Larkey, \textit{“In Living Color,”} 58.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., 58.
\(^{19}\) Ibid.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 59.
When it comes to pastoral care, the pastor simply must show up. Whether the church is a large congregation or a small one, the welfare of the members must be the pastor’s ultimate concern. Too often pastors are so entangled in helping the community that their own church’s suffer and die. Pastors are called to tend to sheep. Pastors have been assigned to shepherd God’s people and that must always be in the forefront of their minds. Perhaps the greatest blessing one can offer one another is that of authentic presence, which means being as completely there with the other person as one is able.\(^{21}\) In order to be effective in pastoral care, pastors must be connected to God through prayer and a daily devotion. Pastors never know when someone will need them to pray for them or provide them with advice to handle life circumstances. Praying for oneself is just as essential as praying for others.\(^{22}\) Pastors must be committed to prayer in order to be spiritually prepared when they are called upon for help.

**Transform the Heart**

The researcher has discovered that Jesus must be the theme of each sermon. The sermonic moment on each Sunday serves as a method of Pastoral Care. Transitional sermons are important in moving the church from where they are to God’s agenda but Jesus must be the theme of the sermon. In his book *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology*, Goldsworthy focuses on proving that the Bible is one big story where everything is totally connected and Christ is the main purpose of the Holy Bible. This is called biblical theology. Biblical theology is the quest for the big picture or the theological wholeness and the overview that brings out the unity, the plan, the cohesiveness, and the purpose of God as that plan moves through the course of

\(^{21}\) Peterson, Sharyl B. *The Indispensable Guide to Pastoral Care.* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 23.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 30.
history.\textsuperscript{23} When the Bible ceases to be a mass of unconnected stories and other bits of writing, and begins to look like a unity that connects the narratives of Israel with those of the four Gospels, that shows up the progression from the creation to the new creation, and that highlights the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the prime focus of the whole Bible, people usually sit up and take notice.\textsuperscript{24} As proclaimers of the gospel, it is duty of the preacher to bring Jesus out of every passage in the Bible.

Dennis Johnson instructs preachers to focus their preaching on Jesus as the theme in all texts.\textsuperscript{25} Johnson desires that preachers to preach the Bible like Peter and Paul. This type of preaching requires Jesus to always be the focal point of the sermon. For what preachers preach is not themselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and the preacher as the servants for Jesus’ sake.\textsuperscript{26} It is the responsibility of the preacher to always preach Jesus whether the text is in the New or Old Testament. Preacher must preach “Christ in all of Scripture.”\textsuperscript{27} This hermeneutic approach to the text allows the preacher to reach everyone each Sunday. Jesus is what makes a difference in the preacher’s sermon no matter what the topic may be. Jesus can be incorporated with any text bringing life and great understanding to the passage of scripture. Preachers must and should always preach the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The theme of the whole Bible is all about Jesus. From the first mention of the protoevangelieum in Genesis 3:15 throughout the whole Bible speaks of Jesus’ coming, Jesus’ works, or Jesus’ second coming for his people. This is a great method to look at the scriptures in preparing a sermon. All marriages should be taken

\textsuperscript{26} 2 Corinthians 4:5 New King James Version.
seriously and each party must be fully committed to each other. Johnson wants the preacher to be married to preaching Jesus. To testify faithfully and effectively about Jesus the Christ in the twenty-first century, as the apostles did in the first, one need to reconcile three divorced “couples” whose “marriages” were made in heaven: the preacher needs to reunite Old Testament and New Testament, apostolic doctrine and apostolic hermeneutics, biblical interpretation and biblical proclamation. By reconciling these divorces, the preacher will develop the ability to preach Jesus through the whole Bible. Johnson makes this great analogy of how the proclaimer must approach the text.

Johnson offers the readers an excellent method of being an authentic preacher. The pastor who is trying to transition his or her church must first be willing to transform hearts before they can attempt to transform the direction of the church. If the preacher is unable to preach Jesus, they may need to ensure it was God that called them to proclaim the word of God. Johnson tells of the current trends in preaching. Pastors tend to preach to convert, preach to edify, or preach to instruct. In these intentions through preaching Johnson notes that the pastor desire to transform their listeners. The writer submits a different approach to preaching: “The Gospel Changes Everything”: An Approach to Evangelistic, Edificatory Redemptive-Historical Preaching. In one way or another, this approach to preaching and its purpose agrees with all the other approaches: preaching must be Christ-centered, must interpret biblical texts in their redemptive-historical contexts, must aim for change, must proclaim the doctrinal center of the Reformation (grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, God’s glory alone) with passion and personal application, and must speak in a language that connects with the unchurched in culture, shattering their stereotypes of Christianity and bringing them face to face with Christ, who meets sinners’ real

\[28\] Ibid., 200-205.
\[29\] Ibid., 981.
needs—felt and unfelt. This method allows the message to have helpful information for the believer and the unbeliever. Christ-centered preacher allows the message to be directed to everyone.

In the 15th chapter of the gospel according to Luke, Jesus tells a parable about a certain woman who has lost a silver coin. The text says the woman lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds the lost coin. This is the approach or mentality the pastor must attempt to take each time they stand in the pulpit and proclaim the gospel. The woman would turn the light on causing darkness to leave the room, take a broom, sweep a dirty dusty floor, searching for the lost coin. Preaching should cause darkness to leave, shining the light of Christ, using the word as a broom, separating the dirt from the floor, until that person who is lost is found. It is the preacher’s responsibility to turn the light on in the lives of the people, in which he or she is preaching to, causing the people to be changed by the preached word of the proclaimer. The preacher must sweep the house searching for the lost souls in the congregation. Johnson does not give a hidden secret to preaching or an amazing new approach but he helps the reader redefine his purpose in the pulpit. The privilege God gives the pastor to stand and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ is one that should not be taken lightly.

Preaching has the ability to communicate change. The new pastor must not be afraid to use Sunday morning sermons to help articulate the vision of the church. It is during the sermonic presentation where the new pastor can build a bridge of hope and a future. The preaching moment provides healing and it is therapeutic. Dr. Greg Howard contends that language or rhetoric is very important to the preaching moment. The rhetorical approaches and holy utterances of yesteryear that were liberating, comforting, and hopeful back then are still capable

30 Ibid., 982-988.
of moving the hearts and minds of modern-day listeners as well as helping to bridge the generational gap between congregants.\textsuperscript{31} In building this bridge during the sermonic presentation, the preacher must have knowledge of the condition of the church. Samuel DeWitt Proctor wrote, “Preaching at its best will begin where the people are, and educate them in the possibilities of refined and improved human relations.”\textsuperscript{32} Preaching in a sense does not commence from the pulpit, but it rather starts in the pews.\textsuperscript{33} Similar to leading and caring for the congregation requires the new pastor to get to know them, likewise, a sense of knowledge about the membership helps to build stable bridges between pastor and people.

\textbf{Lesson 9: Allow God’s Grace to be Sufficient}

And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.\textsuperscript{34} One cannot do it all. Too often new pastors think that they must compete with the previous pastor. Especially, when the congregants still love the former pastor so dearly. The new pastor may not say it, but each week he hears the chatter, “The old pastor did it this way,” “The previous pastor made this happen.” These comments puts a desire inside of the new pastor to be better than the former pastor. The new pastor often attempts to live up to the expected desires of the congregation that he or she is unable to meet. This challenge is what often pushes new pastor to be great is what also pushes them to spiritual burnout. When the new pastor assumes the pastorate, he or she must understand that it is in their weak moments where they can be great.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} 2 Corinthians 12: 9–10
In H. B. London Jr.’s great work Pastors at Greater Risk, he states these startling statistics:

- 80 percent believe that pastoral ministry affects their families negatively.
- 33 percent say that being in ministry is an outright hazard to their family.
- 75 percent report they’ve had a significant stress-related crisis at least once in their ministry.
- 50 percent feel unable to meet the needs of the job.
- 90 percent feel they’re inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands.
- 25 percent of pastors’ wives see their husband’s work schedule as a source of conflict.
- Those in ministry are equally likely to have their marriage end in divorce as general church members.
- The clergy has the second highest divorce rate among all professions.
- 80 percent of pastors say they have insufficient time with their spouse.
- 56 percent of pastors’ wives say that they have no close friends.
- 45 percent of pastors’ wives say the greatest danger to them and their family is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual burnout.
- 52 percent of pastors say they and their spouses believe that being in pastoral ministry is hazardous to their family’s well-being and health.
- 45.5 percent of pastors say that they’ve experienced depression or burnout to the extent that they needed to take a leave of absence from ministry.
- 70 percent do not have someone they consider a close friend.  

Find Some Margin

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December 2010, the writer began to suffer from unexplained convulsions and seizures. One day while he was sitting in his vehicle waiting to go to work, he fell asleep. After a few moments, he was awaken by his whole body shaking uncontrollably. After the shaking had stopped, he just went to work like a normal day. Assuming there was nothing wrong, he just brushed it off. As he slept that night the same thing happened again. His wife was extremely terrified and called the ambulance. After multiple tests at the hospital, nothing was discovered. Week after week he would see a neurologist and it seemed that he could find nothing wrong with him. Finally after a month the doctor asked, “Where is the stress coming from?” The author replied with “nothing.” However, the doctor did not believe him. He asked, “What is an average work week like?” The researcher replied, “That he works 12-14 hour days Monday thru Friday as an Army Instructor. He goes to school for his Masters in Divinity in Richmond, which is a 30-minute ride from his house Friday nights and Saturday mornings, and he is the pastor of a local church, so he has to preach every Sunday morning.” The doctor informed the writer that he was working seven days a week. The researcher never saw it that way. He was just trying to provide for his family by working, improve himself by going to school, and do God’s will by pastoring and preaching every Sunday morning. In doing all of this, the writer had reached the point of complete overload. He was living a marginless life. He had no time for family, fun, or fellowship. This caused a lot of distress in his life.

In his book, “Margin,” Richard Swenson labels marginless living as a disease. New pastors must understand the importance of controlling and managing their time by restoring margin in their life. Despite the writer’s ignorance to the disease, he had been suffering from marginless living for a while. According to Swenson, the need for progress is the cause of this
disease. Simply stated, progress means proceeding to a higher stage of development.\textsuperscript{36} Due to having the desire to move forward many often approach life with the mindset of “by any means necessary.” There can be little doubt that the contemporary absence of margin is linked to the march of progress.\textsuperscript{37} The faster things change and progress the more individuals are willing to sacrifice for success and not stability. Margin allows pastors to enhance their relationships with others and their service to God. More than anything, pastors need to allocate time for private devotion with the Lord. Margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion, the space between breathing freely and suffocating.\textsuperscript{38} Living a marginless life is dangerous to the new pastor’s health and spiritual well-being. To be healthy, pastors require margin in at least four areas: emotional energy, physical energy, time, and finances.\textsuperscript{39} These areas are very important in every pastor life. If pastors continue to suffocate themselves in these areas they would find themselves emotionally damaged, physically exhausted, financially bankrupt, and no time for anything. Time is very important. Margin living requires pastors to be mindful and thoughtful of their every action. To live a marginless life will only lead to complete burnout. While doctors can still be good doctors even when their private lives are severely disrupted, ministers cannot offer service without constant and vital acknowledgement of their own experience.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Connect with One Emotions}

Pastors must focus on being whole. The writer of “The Emotionally Healthy Church,” suggests that one of the biggest problems amongst leaders is that they are disconnected from their emotions. Often, pastors only look at the spiritual side of being the pastor of God’s people

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., 78.
and neglect the emotional aspects of being a pastor. It is not possible for a Christian to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature. The two go together and are inseparable. Pastors must be willing to follow the example of Jesus. Jesus was able to express his emotions to others unapologetically and unashamed. The writer’s desire is that all pastors reach a place where they become vulnerable to their emotions and that they may be able to develop others through their weaknesses and not just their strengths.

**No One Can Take Care of Oneself Better Than Himself or Herself**

May 2014, the researcher received a message that his father was in the Intensive Care Unit in Clarksdale, MS. Due to his father not being in his life, the researcher wrestled with going to see his father. After receiving advice from his mentor, he went. After getting there, his father died on a Thursday, but the funeral was not until the following week Saturday. Therefore, he had to miss preaching on that Sunday and teaching bible study. The writer buried his father on that Saturday and then drove to the airport attempting to get back to preach at his church that Sunday morning. Upon arriving back home, no one at the church asked how he was feeling. No one asked was it too soon to get in the pulpit. The people simply missed him preaching the prior week and wanted to hear their pastor this week since he was back in town. It was a terrible mistake for the writer to get into the pulpit and preach because he was unprepared. The reason why he rushed to the pulpit is because of what he thought the church expected from him. That Sunday his sermon beat the people and did not give hope to anyone. Due to him being angry with his father and then having to attend his funeral unwillingly caused his anger to come out of his preaching. He did not understand that no one would know what he was going through unless he told someone. The writer admits he went back to the pulpit too soon. He should have taken some time off to grieve.

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and figure out the emotions he was dealing with. Despite noticing that there was something obvious wrong with the pastor, no in the congregation seemed to care.

This has taught the researcher that no one will take care of him like he can. Self-care is required for pastors. This profession of being a pastor is a lonely one. Self-care can be as simple as going to bed on time, taking some time off, exercising, and maintaining a diet. In the book Resilient Ministry, the writer makes a statement that all pastors should want to live by in ministry; “I want neither to burn out nor rust out; I want to finish out the race.” To finish strong, one must learn to rejuvenate his or her spirit early in their ministry. In order to finish, one must be willing to do whatever it takes. Pastors must commit to taking time off, delegating responsibility, using their vacation time, etc. All pastors must focus on finishing the race. Many pastors neglect self-care because expectations can become unrealistic; they don't view it as an “ethical imperative, and some “spiritualize away” from self-help. Self-care is a holistic concept that explores how five aspects of one's life are interwoven: the emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual and physical. This statement should encourage all pastors to focus on all areas of life. If one is neglected then it will affect the others.

**Family First**

1 Timothy 3 lists the qualifications of a pastor. Within the qualification one has encouraged the writer to always put his family first: One who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?); The place that suffer the most if the pastor do not intentionally provide care to, is the home. According to this scripture, if one is unable to

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44 Ibid., 70.
45 1 Timothy3:4-5 New King James Version.
take care of his or her own household, then he or she is ill equipped to lead God’s house. This scripture proves that family must come first, even before the church. This is such a difficult part of ministry because the pastor has to help so many other people that he or she often neglects the ones that the pastor loves the most. Ministry and marriage are hardly ever discussed, but are connected in so many ways. If the pastor’s family is suffering, then the ministry will also suffer.

A healthy marriage and family gives strength to the pastor. The authors of *Resilient Ministry*, list five stressors ministry couples face:

- The normal pressures of marriage and family life
- The nature of ministry: always on the job
- The conflicting loyalties of church and home
- Abandonment from always being on the job
- The unmet needs of ministry spouses for confidants

Marriage is already a stressor and being in ministry adds more pressure to being the best dad, husband, and pastor. A pastor’s work schedule is different from others. He or she is always on call and must be ready for duty at a moment’s notice. “Pastors can only dream of a nine-to-five job, in which the whistle blows and the work stays behind as one heads for home.”

Many pastors have not taken vacations because they feel they must always be available to the church while their marriage is on the rocks. Many pastors do not know how to turn it off for a while just to spend quality time with their family. A special emphasis must be applied to being the best spouse and father one can possibly be.

**Lesson 10: It’s Not Good for Man to be Alone**

“And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

This scripture is primarily offered when it comes to a man finding a wife; however, God is suggesting that everyone needs a human connection to make it in life.

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47 Genesis 2:18 New King James Version.
Humanity was not complete until God made a partner for Adam. Pastors are in need of healthy relationships. Pastors require intimate relationships that will help them make it through the hardships of ministry. Intimacy with others is built on foundation of intimacy with God.\footnote{Wilson, Michael Todd, and Brad Hoffmann. “Preventing Ministry Failure.” (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 45.} In Christian friendships, one connects with the \textit{imago Dei} (image of God) within them.\footnote{Ibid., 45.} This is one of the reasons scripture has so much to say about the need for Christian community.\footnote{Ibid.} Pastors need each other to survive. Pastors cannot live in isolation or on an island alone. Positive relationships are very vital to a successful transition in ministry, especially when the previous pastor is a “legend.”

**Pastors Are Not Alone**

It seems as if no one understands the pastor and he or she must live a lonely life. Due to ministry being so challenging and sometimes perplexing, many pastors abandon the pastorate and sometimes the ministry for a lifetime. Ministry leadership is a tough, but highly rewarding job.\footnote{Burns, Bob, Tasha Chapman, and Donald Guthrie. “Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving.” (Downers Grove, ILL: IVP Books, 2013 ), 85, Kindle Edition.} The loneliness of ministers is especially painful, for over and above their experience as people in modern society; they feel an added loneliness, resulting from the changing meaning of the ministerial profession itself.\footnote{Henri Nouwen, “The Wounded Healer,” 89.} Loneliness can be the most painful human wound. However, pastors must develop relationships that will commit to them. Having healthy fellowship with other pastors is essential to ministry accomplishments. The researcher discovered that having a simple chat group with other pastors helps him manage the difficulties of ministry, school, home and family. The writer also started a Sunday morning prayer conference call with about 20 pastors across the country, praying that God would lead them all in their sermonic presentation.
and their everyday life. With the expectations and demands that congregants place on the pastor, he or she needs someone to vent to but also provide him or her with valuable testimonies that can help them to make it through the rough patches of ministry. Friends in ministry will help pastors cope with the difficulties of ministry.

**Every Pastor Needs a Pastor**

It is essential that every pastor have a mentor. The new pastor needs someone who can provide leadership, direction, and purpose. The new pastor must not feel he or she know everything there is to know about ministry. He or she must have someone they can depend on for mentorship. The researcher discovered that he was able to use several mentors. The variety of mentors helps one to receive various opinions to the circumstance to may need help with. For the researcher Pastor Coffee was a classmate and a mentor. Pastor Coffee was the founder of his church and was a very relational person. His mentorship allowed the writer to apply the gentle touch to leadership; however, Pastor Jolly and Pastor Diggs would give the straightforward advice that is sometimes tough. Each of these individuals has molded the researcher to be the pastor he is today.

In selecting a mentor, ensure that they are pastors of integrity. This is important because one can become similar to the one in which they listen to. If the mentor is a drunk or promotes adultery, it will give one the license to sin he or she may have been looking for. New pastors need someone who will hold them accountable for their actions, someone who will also lift them, and encourage them when they want to quit. New pastors also need a mentor that will watch over them and pray for them. Because new pastors are rarely able to self-diagnose, much less give ourselves good counsel; they need a wise mentor, a spiritual guide, or a counselor. Just as Steph Cosgrove, “Church Conflict,” 341-342, Kindle Edition.
Curry needs a shooting coach despite holding the record of shooting the most three-point shots in a season, so must a pastor have a pastor that is willing to coach, train, and mentor them to help propel him or her to be great in ministry.
Chapter 4

Thriving in Transition

The surveys of the two churches and ten current pastors transitioning from a long tenured pastor prove that transition is not an easy task for the church or the new pastor. Regardless of the reasons for the transition or the age of the church, there will be anxiety about the change of leadership in a local church.\textsuperscript{1} Proper transition requires a collective team effort on the parts of the new pastor and the congregation. Many may want to be a pastor, however, they are unaware of the challenges in which pastors may face. Before taking a pastoral assignment, the person seeking to be the pastor of the church must conduct some research about the context he or she is about to enter. With every church comes a different dynamic. And within this context of ministry where the previous pastor served very well for over 20 years, following him or her comes with different types of challenges that if the new pastor is not prepared, he or she may not be at the church long.

Union Branch Baptist Church and Zion Baptist Church of Petersburg, VA are the participants of the churches surveyed. The previous pastor of both churches was Dr. Andrew J. White. Dr. White served Union Branch for 45 years and Zion for 48 years. The congregants of both of these churches had become accustomed to him leading them and many never imagined that he would be leaving. The survey of the churches revealed how much these churches truly loved and adored their pastor. He had meant so much to them. Dr. White’s retirement caused a lot of mixed emotions amongst the congregants. Some were sad, some were excited for him to be able to retire in good health, and some just thought it was time for a change. Entering a ministry

context as such requires the new pastor to be totally confident with who God has called him or her to be because many of the members would want him or her to be like the previous pastor.

The various pastors interviewed for this research project offered an immeasurable amount of knowledge and wisdom that can help any new pastor in similar ministry environments. Each church is unique and does not function identical as any other church. The survey of these pastors proves that each church must be handled according to the characteristics and mood of the congregation. It also proves that strong leadership is required after following a “legend” pastor. All pastors agreed that the method in which one lead is very important in this ministry context. All pastors declared that they practiced the participative leadership style. This style of leadership allows the pastor to lead while walking and working with the congregants. Understanding the congregation is imperative in transitioning the church. The surveys of the churches and interviews of the current pastors of churches within this ministry context will explain the effects of transition, engaging in transition and emerging through transition.

**Effects of Transition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did you feel when Pastor White Left?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union BranchBaptist Church</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

![Graph showing feelings of members]

It was time for him to retire
Figure 1

There is no greater profession or ministry to have than that of a pastor. The pastor carry such a great load that many who has never served in the capacity of the role of a pastor will never understand. There are great days and there are some sad days. There are moments where one is grateful that they answered God’s call to lead God’s people. Then there are moments where one wonder was that God’s voice or his or her own desire because ministry had become so heavy. To have been able to serve in this ministry for more than 20 years is a huge accomplishment. The pastors who stay this long should be commended for their commitment to doing God’s will and work. The pastors interviewed for this research predecessor served for an average of 34 years. The longest tenure was 46 years and the shortest was 20 years. The members of these churches had developed an outstanding relationship with these pastors who had served for so long. Often, in ministry when a pastor is installed, some liken it to a marriage between pastor and people. When the pastor retires or dies, the members of the church feel as if they are going through a painful divorce and will remarry soon. The congregants had grown to love this pastor. Some have even loved the pastor more than their own family members.

Figure 1 offers the research the emotional state of Union Branch and Zion after Dr. White had retired. Each church presents different results. Both churches loved Dr. White profoundly. However, Zion expressed sadness but also a high number thought it was time for him to retire. Some of the members stated on the survey that Dr. White was too old and he had allowed the church membership to decline. As much they were sad that he was leaving, they were looking for someone to revive the church. Union Branch was even in their emotions and a small amount thought it was time for a change. Union Branch was happy for Dr. White’s transition. Attempting to understand the emotional state of the church one is pastoring is very important to transition. A
successful transition takes work and effort in the Changeover Zone and beyond! In these ministry contexts, many of the members are grieving the loss of a great pastor.

![Bar Chart](image)

**What did you expect from the new pastor?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Union Branch Baptist Church</th>
<th>Zion Baptist Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be like former pastor</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Direction</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Leadership</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2**

The expectations of the new pastor following a long-term tenured pastor can be very demanding. David Keck suggests, at its root, disappointment comes when the congregant’s expectations are not met, and anger arises when their expectations are violated. Congregants within this context expect the new pastor to be similar to the previous pastor. They knew what helped them in their relationship with the previous pastor and they don’t want to change. When the current pastor fails to live up to congregant’s expectations anger is an emotion that is often expressed. On one survey in answering the question, “What did you expect from the new pastor?” the surveyor stated, “To be like Dr. White.” What high expectations! Dr. White was an expert on pastoring. However, the surveyor wanted someone to come to the church that did not

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2 Ibid., 447-448.
have a relationship with the people, know the history of the church, and basically a complete stranger of the church to come in and fill the shoes of someone who had become a “legend” in the church. Expectations can also function as a kind of “entitlement”—individuals expect something so strongly that they assume it is their just due—and, rightly or wrongly, they grow upset if expectations are not met. Attempting to live up to these expectations is what will cause the new pastor’s failure, spiritual burnout, and discord within the church. Union Branch was looking for someone that was able to take them in a new direction. They were thankful of the service of Dr. White, but they were ready for fresh ministries, ideas, and methods to grow and build the church; however, Zion predominately wanted someone to pastor them similar to the way Dr. White did. Having this mindset attributed the difficulty the new pastor faced when trying to transition the church to his leadership style. Both churches were similar in understanding that in order to transition the church it required a pastor with strong leadership qualities, but also someone who was able to connect with the people.

These two churches represent the expectations of most churches in this context. The congregants’ desire is split. Some want to move forward while others desire to stay the same. The new pastor must be aware that everyone is not excited that his or her pastor had left. On one survey the surveyor said, “Dr. White was my only real pastor,” even after selecting a new pastor. As if the new pastor did not exist at all. The pastor must handle individuals like this with the Spirit of Christ. If not they will find themselves allowing their emotional state to control their preaching and how they lead their congregation.

Too often, new pastors are left to navigate through the process on their own. They are forced to learn on the job. Research over the last two decades has indicated that most leadership

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4 Ibid., 281-282.
development in today’s business organizations happens on-the-job, as leaders are doing their work and facing the challenges that come with the job of the leader. The writer admits that being a new pastor has come with a lot of on-the-training. Seminary does not prepare many for some of the challenges that new pastors will face in the local church.

It is both natural and necessary for young leaders to try to prove themselves by doing everything themselves. New pastors are trying to gain the trust of those he or she has been appointed over. In the church environment as a pastor, the congregants are wondering if they can trust the new pastor and the new pastor is attempting to do as much as he or she can in order to gain that trust. This is a dangerous method for the leader and the followers. Some dangers are:

The leader may experience spiritual, mental and physical burnout due to always being involved in all things.

The leader will prevent others from becoming leaders by always completing every task presented. In their book *Spiritual Leaders*, the Blackabys suggest, “Leaders lead followers, great leaders lead leaders.” To become a great leader, one must be willing to allow others to lead.

The leader will attempt to prove their worth at any cause. Sometimes, the leader is so focused on finishing and success that he or she forgets about the well-being of those in which he or she leads. Leaders who achieve their goals but whose people suffer and fall by the wayside in the process have failed.

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8 Ibid., 123.
These are just a few dangers or pitfalls new leaders should attempt to avoid. No pastor desires to assume responsibility of an organization and fail. Therefore, he or she attempts to be involved in all activities that may affect his or her efficiency.

The problem many new pastors face is they often attempt to perform outside of their core competencies. Pastors must know their strengths and weaknesses. The writer’s strengths are excellent communicator, great motivator, very creative, and awesome visionary. The writer’s weaknesses consist of poor record keeping, lacks in proper follow-up, conducting meetings in the format of Robert Rules of Order, and tends to dwell on insignificant things for too long. The writer understands that he does not have anyone to rate or evaluate his performance as the pastor of his church. There are no boards or committees devoted to informing him of what he does well and what areas he is least likely to excel in. Therefore, an honest self-evaluation must be conducted frequently. Pastoral leaders who do not practice the discipline of self-awareness are likely to err on the side of pride, believing that they possess not only the truth, but all the truth there is. Proverbs 16:18 says, “Pride goes before destruction.” Leaders must not be afraid of the results from their evaluation. Great leaders understand who they are and they know their capabilities and their inabilities.

Every pastor possesses his or her own style of leadership. Upon being selected to pastor within this context, the incoming pastor should investigate the leadership style of the previous pastor. If he or she pastored for over 20 years the people have become accustomed to their way of leading them. Therefore, it is profitable for the incoming pastor to learn what the people will follow. Pastor Morgan’s leadership style focused on empowering his leaders. He declared that he used Christ as a model. Christ understood that the kingdom of God is never solely about one

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person. But as Christ empowered His disciples, so to must the pastor empower his leaders. Pastor Morgan stated, “My goal is to empower hands. The more empowered hands, the more work the church can handle.”

Pastor Morgan also expressed the importance of giving leaders room and rope to make mistakes while they lead. The other nine pastors stated that their leadership style mostly focused on being a servant leader. Meaning that one must be able to relate with the people and lead them at the same time. Pastor Hobbs expressed that a leader must lead by example. He explained, “I won’t ask them to do what I won’t do.”

Understanding the various leadership styles will help pastors better connect with their members and inform them how the new pastor intends to lead them.

Acts 20:28 states, “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” The church has been bought with the blood of Christ and God has allowed humans to lead His spiritual establishment. The members of the congregation deserve the best leader one is able to present, however, he or she cannot be at the best in all things. Pastors should not attempt to focus on improving what they are not great at, but concentrate on improving their strengths. Due to not being a perfect leader in every area of leadership, the leader must know where to concentrate his or her attention. The first thing that sometimes keep new pastors from playing to their strengths is that the idea of being a balanced or well-rounded leader looks good on paper and sounds compelling coming from behind a lectern, but in reality, it is an unworthy endeavor.

No leader is able to be great in all arenas of leadership. Pastors must know their strengths and attempt to enhance them and gather a team around them that is able to cover their weaknesses. It requires radical humility when a leader allows someone else to perform a task he

11 Lamont Hobbs, interview by author, May 9, 2016.
or she is weak at, but it falls within his or her duty scope. To put it bluntly, there are things pastors are responsible for that they should keep their noses out of.\textsuperscript{13} This is very challenging for the new pastor who desires to be involved in every aspect of his or her organization. The pastor must understand and be comfortable knowing that more can be accomplished when he or she learns how to delegate.

Engaging in Transition

![Graph of Age of Membership]

Figure 3.1

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 25.
Figure 3.2

The size of the congregation, age of membership, length of membership and the age of the new pastor attribute to how well one will be able to transition the church. The pastors who lead smaller congregations where the previous pastor served over 30 years faced more challenges than those who pastored larger congregations. Due to many of these pastors being up in age when they retired or died, the congregation began to age as well. Both churches had very few members that were in the age of 18-40 years old. Zion only had one person in this age group. Dr. White had become up in age and was not able to reach the younger generation anymore. Both churches were requesting the new pastor to reach the younger generation of the membership. Zion’s members are older than the members of Union Branch. The new pastor of Zion is still trying to transition the church after four years of being the pastor. The people are still committed to Dr. White and the research attributes it to the age of the membership and their length of membership in the church. Due to so many of the members being a part of the church for such a long period of time, they were under the assumption that the church belonged to them and not
God. The membership of Union Branch possessed long tenured membership also. However, what helped the transition was having new members join the church. The members that had been there for many years were the disciples of Dr. White. However, when the new members joined the church, they became the new pastor’s disciples. It also helped that these new members were young adults ready to do the work of God.

The longer the previous pastor served also attributed to those churches that took the longest to transition. Many members of the church simply could not get over the fact that their lifelong pastor had left. The research proves that positive connections with pastor and people are very strong. No matter how great the new pastor may be; he or she will never be able to mount up to the previous pastor. The age of the new pastor played a part in how well the transition went for the church. Pastors within the age group of 30-40 years old were able to transition the church better than those pastors who were older and younger. This age group presents youthfulness, but also wisdom that can transition the church effectively.

One way in which to prove that the church is transitioning well are by the way the members become involved in the new ministry direction of the church. Zion took longer to transition than Union Branch. Figure 4 shows that many of the Zion member’s involvement either decreased or stayed the same. A few things can attribute to the slow transition process. Figure 1 shows that Zion was very emotional after Dr. White retired. Many may have been still grieving the loss of their pastor. Zion is also an older congregation with members who have been a part of the church for an extensive amount of time. These factors contribute to not wanting to be involved in the new ministry direction of the church. If the church sees a spike in involvement from its membership, it proves that the members are excited about the direction the church is heading and they trust that the new pastor is leading them in the right direction. Union
Branch saw a 74 percent increase. According to Figure 1 majority of Union Branch membership were happy for Dr. White being able to retire. This proves that Union Branch was ready for transition while Zion was trying to hold on to Dr. White or hoped that the new pastor was exactly like him. The more the pastor is able to get the membership involved with the new direction of the church the sooner he or she will be able to transition the church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How has the transition effected your involvement?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union Branch Baptist Church</td>
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</table>

**Figure 4**

**Emerging through Transition**

The attendance of the former pastor can be very conflicting with the transition of the new pastor. Union Branch transition was smooth because Dr. White decided not to visit the church unless he was invited. Despite him having a very close relationship with the members of Union Branch, he decided to leave the church and enjoy retirement at another church. He was pastor emeritus but he did not attend any meetings, he was not there every Sunday, nor did he attempt to instruct the writer on how he should be leading the church. However, Dr. White was a constant attender of Zion Baptist Church. The new pastor of Zion was faced with multiple
challenges in attempting to transition the church. Of the pastors interviewed, 30% of the previous pastors were still involved in the ministry of the church. This research proves that it is better for the previous pastor to find another place of worship and allow the new pastor to lead with no distractions.

**Figure 5**

Vision setting is what will help transition the church. However, one must ensure he or she has the right vision for their ministry context. 20% of the pastors interviewed set vision very quickly. The pastors who set vision quickly pastored younger congregations in age and length of membership. This plays a crucial part in transition because the pastor does not have a large group of individuals attempting to hold the church hostage but individuals who desire to see the church moving in a different direction. Setting vision allows the people to look forward and not backwards. One of the pastors expressed that he was unable to set vision for the church. Each year he would present the vision and the church would vote against it. This pastor was also challenged with the previous pastor still being a part of the congregation. His influence was
limited because many of the members simply wanted to continue in the way of the former pastor. The majority of the pastors set vision within two to three years. This is a good amount of time to wait before implementing the new agenda. By this time the new pastor should have been able to discover the strengths and weaknesses of the church establishing an accurate vision for the ministry context he or she is serving in. Vision setting is extremely important when the new pastor is trying to take the church to new levels of ministry.

The proper vision for a church will set the course on which the church is heading. Vision always refers to a future state, a condition that does not presently exist and never existed before.\textsuperscript{14} It is the responsibility of the pastor to improve the conditions of the ministry context he or she has now inherited. The critical point is that a vision articulates a view of a realistic, creditable, attractive future for the organization, a condition that is better in some important ways than what now exists.\textsuperscript{15} Warren and Burt in their book, \textit{Leaders}, recommended the spiritual leader to use the past, the present, and the suspected future to develop the proper vision for the church. The new pastor must know where the church has been and where they are, before the new pastor can determine where he or she is trying to take the church. Leaders require foresight, so that they can judge how the vision fits into the way the environment of the organization may evolve; hindsight, so that the vision does not violate the traditions and culture of the organization; a worldview, within which to interpret the impact of possible new developments and trends; depth perception, so that the whole picture can be seen in appropriate detail and perspective; peripheral vision, so that the possible responses of competitors and other

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 82.
stakeholders to the new digestion can be comprehended; and a process of revision, so that all visions previously synthesized are constantly reviewed as the environment changes.\(^\text{16}\)

In order for vision to impact the congregation, it must first have a positive impact on the pastor. The pastor must be passionate about the vision God has given him or her for the people. Vision without passion is a picture without possibilities.\(^\text{17}\) It is the vision of what is beyond the routine that heightens the blood and stirs the adrenaline within each of us.\(^\text{18}\) Thom Rainer in his book *Breakout Churches*, suggest that vision is discovered through an intersection of three factors: the passion of the leader; the needs of the community; and the gifts, abilities, talents, and passions of the congregation.\(^\text{19}\) If the pastor understands these factors, he or she will be able to discover the vision for his or her ministry context. Pastor’s outlook improves as they see the bigger picture and recognize that the vision is always worth the pain.\(^\text{20}\) Many pastors may not have a vision to truly articulate to their congregants upon arrival or even after a few years.

Vision sometimes discovers the pastor before the pastor can discover the vision.

Gary McIntosh suggests,

Every successful sports team learns that the worst part of victory is that it is never final. The strategy that succeeded one year will fail the next. Sports dynasties develop only when members of the team are inspired to improve in a new way year after year. It is equally valid that what brought a church to its current level of ministry fruitfulness will not get it to the next level of growth and vitality. Leaders learn quickly that as a church grows and ages, it becomes increasingly difficult to keep it healthy and vibrant. Over time people change, conflicts build, programs peak in effectiveness. Long—term excellence is always the result of continual improvements over time.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 95.
Today churches are faced with various challenges. The pastor is challenged with how to fill churches with mature believers striving to do God’s will. The pastor is challenged with how to empower their children, encourage their seniors, comfort the broken, and communicate hope to the weary. The pastor is challenged with how to provide for the orphans and widows, how do they grow connections with outside sources and other churches, how do they improve their Christian Education Programs enhancing believers to become mature enough to eat meat and get off of milk. The pastor is challenged to build effective spiritual leaders in the church moving in the same direction of holiness and godliness. New pastors are challenged with developing a model for evangelism where they are consistent in reaching the unsaved and the unchurched. The pastor is challenged with reaching this millennial generation who has exited from the church in droves, but it is the new pastor responsibility to develop methods to provide a strip map that would lead them back to the church. The pastor is challenged to bridge the generational gap within the church, where multiple generations can worship together and no one feels left out or looked over. The pastor is challenged with how do they reach their surrounding communities? The pastor is challenged with how do they impact the local schools within their reach, how do they empower single parents, how do they encourage marriages to stay together and help prevent divorce. New pastors are challenged to live out Matthew 25:34-40 (NKJV)

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Pastors have some challenges that they must face with fresh ideas, faith, courage, and a proper vision. If the incoming pastor is going to build on the foundation that has already been
established, he or she must be able to determine, develop, articulate, and implement the correct vision for their ministry context in order to meet the challenges of the current day and not the past.

George Barna states, “Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances.” Barna’s definition of vision consists of eight components:

1. A clear mental image
2. Preferable Change
3. A Future Focus
4. Imparted by God
5. A Chosen Leader
6. Comprehending God
7. Know Thyself
8. Understanding Circumstances

In order for the new pastor to paint a picture of what the future state of the church will be he or she must adhere to these components. Vision for ministry is a reflection of what God wants to accomplish through one to build His Kingdom. Each component focuses on understanding clarity of God’s desire, the character of the pastor and the church’s ability to accomplish God’s will. Vision becomes a bridge. This bridge takes the church from where they are to where God is leading them. Truly understanding the importance of vision will prevent any ministry from trying to do something it has not been called or assigned to do by God. Vision will allow the new pastor to provide a specific, detailed, and precise course in which God has designed the church to go. It

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23 Ibid., 29.
allows a leader to say no to opportunities: it provides direction, empowers people for service, and facilitates productivity. There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared. The vision becomes a call for help from the pastor to the congregants to help grow God’s Kingdom, do God’s Work and serve God’s People. Great visions move people.

![How long did the transition take?](image)

**How long did the transition take?**

![Pie chart showing the distribution of transition times: 0-1 year (20%), 2-4 years (60%), 5-7 years (20%).]

Finally this project proves that pastoral transition takes time. Transition requires effort from the new pastor, former pastor if he or she is alive, and the congregants. The new pastor must possess the patience and persistence needed to transition the church. He or she must understand that there is a grieving process that must take place before the membership can get to the place of accepting a new spiritual leader. The former pastor must understand that they are no

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24 Ibid., 39.
26 Ibid., 107.
longer the pastor of the church. They should provide mentorship to the new pastor and most of all space for the new pastor to lead without the congregants looking at the former pastor for direction. The membership should not focus on the past, but embrace the future of the church. The previous pastor may have meant so much to them, but now God had blessed them with a new spiritual leader. The same respect they gave to the previous pastor must also be given to the new pastor. Accepting change can sometimes be difficult; however, time is the best remedy.

The best course of action for positive transition is to have a plan in place. When a pastor is about to retire he or she should develop an effective plan for transition. In most cases, one or two years should be a sufficient amount of time for a transition team to work together, especially if the successor comes from within the church and is familiar with its culture. Having the successor at the church with the new pastor trying to lead at the same time can be a difficult task. It may be tough on the outgoing pastor but it is for the betterment of the church. The outgoing pastor has given out so much to the church, they have done so much for the church, but now he or she has to watch the new pastor receive what he or she worked so hard for. In his book, “Transition Plan,” Bob Russell stated, “Humor and humility were two essential virtues in making the transition successful.”

The interview of the ten pastors offered some mistakes they made while trying to transition the church after the “legend” had retired or died: selecting the wrong leaders, failing to listen, learn and love the congregation properly, making ministry about the new pastor and not God, fighting with the former pastor, trying to erase what the previous pastor had done, and not honoring him for his great accomplishments. 80 percent of the new pastors stated that moving too fast was the source to not transitioning the church properly. Transition takes time. The

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28 Ibid., 233-234.
congregants must be able to trust the new pastor before he or she begins to make changes. The changes the new pastor makes may have been thought to be groundbreaking when they were first implemented. The new pastor must get an understanding of the church before moving them in a new direction. Finally, during transition the new pastor cannot be intimidated by the legacy of the previous pastor. Just be the pastor God has called him or her to be.
Chapter 5

Conclusion

Many new pastors are faced with various challenges that are unforeseen. Becoming a new pastor of God’s people can be a burden and a blessing. This research project was aimed to help new pastors who enter a similar ministry context as the researcher. Each ministry context has its own dynamics. However, following a “legend,” comes with its particular challenges other pastors may never have to encounter. A new pastor at a church where the previous pastor was voted out or resigned because of moral failure has to focus on healing and restoring trust in the pastor. A new pastor of a church where the previous pastor was great, but left because God assigned him to a new church has to focus on trying to keep the momentum going. However, the new pastor of a church where the previous pastor has served well for over 20 years must focus on transitioning the church to the next level. Within this context, many of the members are still in love with the former pastor. Some of the congregants may even say that the “legend” pastor will always be their pastor despite his or her retirement or death. A new pastor within this context must have patience, persistence, and passion to see God’s church prosper.

The researcher became the pastor of a church that had been established for 148 years and the previous pastor served for 45 years. As a young preacher, he was not prepared for the challenges of transitioning a church with such a great history and a hero as the pastor. He was able to transition this church to new levels within four years. His desire to help new pastors was the driving force for this research. This research project will allow new pastors to see the writer’s mistakes and try to avoid them. However, this research offers the tools and techniques the writer implemented in order to transition his church without losing the church. When leading, one must take people to places they have never been before. Pastoral leadership is not taking congregants
for a walk around the block, but it requires the new pastor to take the church to new levels of ministry.

The new pastor must understand that stress accompanies change. Many of his or her members are reluctant to change even after the new pastor has been their pastor for over several years. The writer was discouraged because he assumed the people would accept change even after he had been the pastor for over three years. Previously, Union Branch had a part-time pastor and it seemed as if the church independently led itself. However, the writer became a full-time pastor and presents a different leadership style. The new pastor must know that it will require a change in the culture, while in the transition process. This transition process may take years before the church conduct a full turnaround to the new pastor. Some pastors suggest that it will take at least seven years before the new pastor gain the trust of the people and become their true pastor. The task for church leaders today is to help the pastor and congregation alike navigate the challenges that arise in the midst of significant changes in leadership style, personality, and vision. Change is something that will continue to happen no matter what. A way to help alleviate some of this stress is to encourage participation. Leaders of change should attempt to involve their people wherever possible as active agents in the program of change, to mobilize a lay army of fully devoted disciples. The Blackabys propose several reasons why people are oppose to change:

- People are reluctant to make personal changes
- People find it difficult to keep pace with change
- People prefer the status quo

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• People naively hope things will get better

• People do not see the need for change

• People believe it is too difficult to mobilize their organization to change

If there is any time leaders must be sensitive to organizational culture, it is when they attempt to initiate change. 3 When the new pastor is trying to move people from where they are to God’s agenda, it becomes a challenging task when people have to change the way they operate in church. Instituting change requires altering peoples' thinking and values, and that is not easily accomplished. 4 When people have been doing things their way for so long and now a newcomer comes and tell them they must change, it becomes a challenge for both parties. Galatians 6:9 “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” This scripture provides hope to the pastor who is faced with various challenges the transition has presented.

Charles Cosgrove offers seven types of conflict. Even though one cannot easily separate types of conflict, identifying each type can help all understand what is going on. 5

Intrapersonal Conflict: Too often pastors fail to recognize the conflict within them. Self-deception is a roadblock to dealing with conflict because pastors cannot see themselves, others, or God’s will clearly. 6 When the new pastor’s vision is blurry due to his or her own limitations, it will cause an extreme disruption within the church.

Interpersonal Conflict: Some congregational conflict is really a personal issue between people, although it may be played out through issues, mission, or ministry. 7 Many people within the congregation present complex personal conflicts that will affect the well-being of the

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3 Blackabys, “Spiritual Leader: Moving People on to God’s Agenda.” 279.
4 Ibid., 280.
6 Ibid., 340-341.
7 Ibid., 350-351.
congregation. Pastors must resist the temptation to be drawn into the anxiety of the conflict; but they can work to set a trustworthy environment for people to deal with their interpersonal conflict, where they feel safe, respected, and heard.  

Conflict over Issues: Beliefs: Upon arriving to Union Branch Baptist Church the writer observed that the church was committed to singing from the hymnbook. This became a conflict because the older members did not enjoy the new age upbeat songs the writer desired the choirs to sing. In order to help manage this conflict instead of five hymns being song each Sunday, the researcher required one each month, an old school song, and a relevant gospel song each Sunday. The variety of songs was able to provide intergenerational connections.

Conflicts over Facts: Truth: Some of the older members of Union Branch Baptist Church hated the thought of allowing individuals to dance in the sanctuary. Many were truly offended when the dance ministry would move the communion table in order to have space to commence dancing to music and offering their praise to God. The truth is the Bible does not specify that dancing is from the devil. This conflict required the older saints to understand the importance of allowing the young Christians to worship God in their own way. Careful dialogue includes not just saying what each believes is true, but in joining perspectives into a more holistic picture so that together all can move forward with greater communal understanding.

Conflict over Values: Worth: values are based on someone’s sense of worth: worth of time, property, money, people, or ones self. This conflict hinders so many congregations; especially those congregations who have been in existence for a long time. Union Branch has been in existence for 148 years. At the time of assuming the pastorate, the researcher was disturbed that the church was still voting new members into the church. This rule was established

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8 Ibid., 355-356.
9 Ibid., 400-401.
10 Ibid., 412.
in the Hiscox Directory for Baptist Churches that was originally written in the mid 1800’s. This practice disturbed the writer because many of the new members were offended because although they decided to join the church, it depended on if the people liked them and not on the mere fact that God loved them. When the leadership was approached about this practice one of the deacons declared, “This church is known for voting people in.” This was his valid reason for continuing this practice. This conflict required patience and informing them on the biblical process of joining the body of Christ.

Conflict over Goals: Mission: This conflict can sometimes be the most difficult to overcome if one has not learned how to connect with the members and the leadership of the church. Upon the writer being called to Union Branch, it was a part-time church. Meeting only on the second, fourth, and fifth Sunday of the month. In order to grow the church, this part-time schedule could not continue. Despite many of the members desiring to leave service the same; it was the goal of the writer to transform the church into a full-time ministry. This was a conflict that took a team effort to overcome. It started with meeting the deacons and seeing how they felt about the goal. Once they agreed it was time to make the change, the writer then had a meeting with the deacons and the trustees. During this meeting, the deacons persuaded the trustees it was time to make the change and it did not have to come from the writer. Finally, the goal was presented to the church; however the presentation was made by the deacons and trustees who have been connected to the church much longer than the writer had. The congregation had a long-standing relationship with the current leaders of the church and the new pastor could not match their relationship. The method of overcoming this conflict is using the right resources and people to present the goal and build excitement behind it before presenting it to the congregation.

Conflicts over Means: Ministry: In pursuing evangelical outreach, a congregation may agree about the mission goal, but fight bitterly about what resources of people and money to
use.¹¹ This can be one of the saddest things that can occur in the church. The fight of how to do what the church is called to do. Every other year, the leadership of the writer’s Union Branch would give out backpacks to needed families. The conflict came when asked to put the cost of the event in the church budget. Many wanted to continue to rely on donations and fundraising, but this was a major church function. The impact on the community from this event was immeasurable. If the church failed to raise the necessary funds or the donors refused to give their normal donations, the church event would have been impossible to complete. Therefore, the writer instructed the church to be responsible for this was a true means of community outreach. Ministry is the ultimate goal of any church and sometimes the church forgets its responsibility.

When it comes to recognizing church conflict the new pastor must continue to pray for the spirit of discernment. Don't be quick to judge, condemn, or disregard conflicts, but observe them, analyze and then develop a strategic approach that would provide a means of improvement. Pastors must be healthy, wise, mature, and spiritually grounded enough to lead in the midst of conflict.¹²

Leaders lead from the front. It is impossible for leaders to blend into the crowd or behind the crowd. Leaders must be out-front as the example and the guide. Sheep have never led shepherds. Pastors have been called to be shepherds of God’s people. And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.¹³ Here, the writer informs he reader that God only places pastors over His people who share his heart. Pastors must lead with the Spirit of God directing their every move. Courageous, “called” leadership requires boldness, confidence, fortitude, stamina, fearlessness, and a spirit of

¹¹ Ibid., 432.
¹² Ibid., 348-349.
¹³ Jeremiah 3:15 New King James Version.
adventure and achievement.\textsuperscript{14} Spiritual leaders must develop the courage to lead despite the words of the naysayers. Leaders who are trying to transition their church will face challenges that will cause them to want to quit. The opponents of the leader want to disrupt the transition process. When the rank and file observes leaders unwilling to challenge those who are trying to undermine them, they assume the proposed changes must not be critical, and they, too, withdraw their support.\textsuperscript{15} Having the support of the majority should outweigh the negativity of a few. Too often, new pastors allow the unconstructiveness of a few to speak louder than the positive words and actions of many. The leader must have the courage to push forward and stay on God’s agenda despite the challenges they may endure.

**Strengths of This Research Project**

This study provides a wealth of knowledge to new pastors who are trying to transition their church within the same ministry context as the writer. This study offers passionate pastoral leaders ten lessons learned that would help them advance a congregation that has lost a great leader. The great contribution of this research is the practical use of its principles. This research has the ability to cross denominations. Many of the research material the author used on pastoral transition only focused on certain denominations, however, this project can be applied within any ministry context contributing to the universal church. This research focuses on the incoming pastor while other material gave its attention to the outgoing pastor or the church.

**Weaknesses of This Research Project**

The role of the pastor consists of so many different facets that the writer regrets only limiting his research to ten lessons. There is so much more that could be included in this project that could help new pastors overcome the challenges of transition. The limited amount of


\textsuperscript{15} Blackabys, “Spiritual Leader: Moving People on to God’s Agenda.” 288.
participation from pastors within this context can pose as potential weakness for the project. In the initial inquires 30 pastors were contacted. However, only ten actually did participate. The writer attempted to contact a variety of churches with various church sizes. However, the pastors of larger congregations never responded to his request for an interview. This was depressing for the writer, because he knows they could have provided more information to help new pastors.

The issuing of the surveys to the churches may also be a potential weakness. Every member within the churches did not get a chance to fill out a survey. The researcher only afforded each church one Sunday to complete the surveys. Regardless, he was able to get a sufficient number back; some other point of views could have helped. Another weakness of this project is that every pastor was so extremely unique and different. Even though each pastor was a successor of a pastor who served well for over 20 years, they all did not serve within the same ministry context. Some pastors led large congregations while others pastored small ones. Some pastors led traditional churches while some pastored contemporary congregations. These differences offer different forms of leadership and means in which the pastor was able to connect with the congregation.

**Theological Reflection**

This research consistently points to God being the one who is able to transform and transition the church to new levels. God is the one who preserved the previous pastor to serve for many years and God will be the one who will give the new pastor the strength to transition the church to the new pastor. The new pastor must always remember that he or she is pastoring God’s people. This is a commitment like none other. Hebrews 13:17 states, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” God holds the pastor accountable for the souls of the people. With this charge God equips the pastor
with the necessary tools to help him or her be successful wherever he places them. This research offers hope to the pastor who is wondering can his church ever change.
Appendix A

Survey to church members

1. Gender: Male/ Female

2. Age:
   a. 18-40
   b. 41-65
   c. 66 and above

3. How long have you been a member of this church?

4. How did you feel when Pastor White retired?

5. What did you expect from the new pastor?

6. What challenges has the church faced since the transition?

7. Describe the new pastor’s relationship with the members of the church.

8. Has your involvement in the congregation increased, deceased or remained the same since the transition?

9. What do you feel is the overall morale of the church since the transition?

10. What has the new pastor done to take the church to the next level in ministry?

11. If you could give the new pastor any words of advice, what would you say?
Appendix B

Questionnaire for Pastors

1. Gender: Male/ Female
2. Age:
3. How long did the previous pastor serve your current congregation?
4. Is the former pastor still alive?
5. Does the former pastor visit your church?
6. How do you honor the former pastor?
7. How was the transition from the former pastor to you?
8. What were some of the challenges you initially faced after being called to this congregation?
9. How did you overcome these challenges?
10. Describe at least one mistake a new pastor in this context should not make.
11. What resources would you recommend to a new pastor in transition?
12. What advice would you give to a new pastor in a similar context as yours?
Appendix C

Questionnaire Pastor White

1. How long did you pastor Union Branch Baptist Church?
2. How long did you pastor Zion Baptist Church?
3. What was unique about Union Branch Baptist Church?
4. What was unique about Zion Baptist Church?
5. What community projects were you involved with that represented the church?
6. What new ministers did you incorporate into the two churches?
7. What leadership style did you use?
8. How did you handle conflict?
9. What challenges were the most difficult?
10. How did you know it was time to retire?
11. What advice did you give the churches to take during the transition of your retirement?
12. How do you feel the members of your previous churches handled the transition?
13. What advice could you give the current pastor of the church?
Bibliography


April 26, 2016

Marcus Allen
IRB Exemption 2484:042616: Ten Essential Lessons Learned When Transitioning from a Long-Term, Tenured Pastor

Dear Marcus,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
(i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and
(ii) any disclosure of the human subjects’ responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects’ financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School