Liberty University School of Divinity

PASTORAL BURNOUT OF AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS:
CREATING HEALTHY SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND BALANCE

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By

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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ABSTRACT

PASTORAL BURNOUT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN PASTORS: CREATING HEALTHY SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND BALANCE

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Pastoral self-care is critical in minimizing the symptoms of burnout in ministry. Caught up in the daily demands of ministry, pastors are under tremendous stress as they try to serve God’s people in multiple roles in ministry. Often, pastors are called upon to be counselors, preachers, project managers, students, social activists, and a moral compass for those they lead. Too often, pastors are expected to perform duties with superhuman perfection, life and ministry can get so crowded with obligations and emergencies that pastor’s maintenance of a healthy lifestyle can become unbalanced or cease to exist.

This research study will complement the literature on pastor burnout, physical and spiritual exhaustion, and ministry resiliency. Research information will be a collection of qualitative and quantitative methods. African American pastors of various ages will be interviewed and surveyed about ministry support systems and balances.

The perspectives of the research participants are essential to understanding the complexities involved in the increasing number of persons living and serving without healthy support systems and balance. This research study goals and purpose is to develop and implement personal self-care plans, and self-care practices, pastors will learn how to support and equip themselves to handle the ongoing demands of life and ministry.

Abstract length: 203 words
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Sunday Worship Attendance
Factors of Burnout
Hours Spent Weekly on Ministry
Annual Income
Thoughts of Leaving the Church
Thoughts of Quitting Ministry
Pressure in Ministry
Solving Pressure in Ministry

Quantitative – Summary of Surveys

Qualitative – Results of Interview Questions

Do you feel hopless and trapped in ministry?
Are you easily irritated and have little patience with people?
Are you pessimistic about the church, people, profession and denomination?
Do you feel that you lack control over your circumstances?
Do you occupy yourself with trivial activites to escape more important responsibilities?
Do you put off making decisions because they seem overwhelming?
Are you just going through the motions (waiting for change, a move, or retirement)?
Do you use alcohol and/or drugs as an escape?
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Self-care and ministry balance are critical in minimizing the symptoms of burnout. Caught up in the daily demands and stresses of ministry, pastors are under tremendous pressure as they try to serve God’s people in multiple roles in ministry. Often, they are called upon to be counselors, preachers, project managers, students, social activists, and a moral compasses for those they lead. Too often pastors are expected to perform duties with superhuman perfection. Life and ministry can get so crowded with obligations and emergencies that pastor's maintenance of a healthy lifestyle can become unbalanced or cease to exist. Too many pastors experience burnout within ministry, because life's priorities are out of balance.

Burnout is a stressful state characterized by physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, chronic fatigue, and lethargy.¹ Burnout is a risk for persons in professions that call for their attention to focus mostly on others. Due to the difficulty of balancing self-care and the care of others, the helper’s ability to remain emotionally invested in his work can cause a negative impact. “Pastors risk burnout because of excessive ministerial demands, which may drain their emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and physical energy reserves and impair their overall effectiveness. Burnout advances across three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment.”²

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Burnout experts predict that everyone has the potential to experience burnout and many people will experience it eventually. The factors of burnout that relate to pastors, as occupational workers, are not simple enough to express in one word. Burnout arises from the complex operation of external and internal factors. Burnout is emotional exhaustion. One of the characteristics of burnout is “burning a candle at both ends.” Ninety percent of minister’s report working between 55 to 75 hours per week and most ministers do not exercise nor take regularly scheduled vacations.³

When it comes to pastoral burnout for the African American pastor, the origin of burnout comes from their perception and awareness of their role. According to Patterson, "Pastors do not feel as though they are permitted to feel emotions like sadness, depression, hurt and anger. These pastors, both men, and women have served as leaders of the community and are perceived as being above struggling with common human issues, mental and emotional stress.”⁴ African-American pastors’ inability to appropriately express their current mental state also contributes to pastoral burnout.

The African American pastor has served his community as a leading figure throughout slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and today. Too often pastors are expected to perform duties with superhuman perfection. Life and ministry can get so crowded with obligations and emergencies that pastor's maintenance of a healthy lifestyle can become unbalanced or cease to

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³ Barna Research Group, *Focus on the family*, Campus Crusade for Christ, Francis A. Schaeffer Institute of Church Leadership Development http://www.churchleadership.org

⁴ Bernice Suzette Patterson, "Hurting Leaders: The Lived Experiences of African-American Clergy and Their Views, Attitudes, and Barriers to Help-Seeking," (Dissertations, Western Michigan University, 2013) 207.
exist. Too many pastors experience burnout within ministry, having life's priorities out of balance.

Patterson suggests, "Another problem is the long work hours to achieve the expected results. Many times, African-American pastors will not delegate their authority because the congregation expects that he/she is a full time paid staff. It is crucial to study and research these leaders to provide preventative and curative measures to help pastors become more effective as pastors." Many pastors start out in ministry with high energy, vision, and high expectations, feeling like they can conquer almost everything. While their vision of God may change, their energy level is connected to several different influences that are either positive or negative variables. These variables, if not properly handled, can determine whether a pastor survives in ministry. Positive attributes are identified by high levels of energy, determination, purpose, and confidence. If positive attributes are not guarded and preserved, they can lead to adverse experiences such as feelings of insecurity, isolation, and the need for validation from others.

Most importantly, pastors forget that “pastors are people too.” They were created “flesh and blood” like all humanity. The superhero complex has become a disillusionment; with many pastors believing that they "live on an island," isolated from everyone else. However, God’s divine design was never intended for us to be alone. The demands of the ministry and life can be overwhelming for many reasons, but, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NKJV).

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5 Bernice Suzette Patterson, "Hurting Leaders: The Lived Experiences of African-American Clergy and Their Views, Attitudes, and Barriers to Help-Seeking," (Dissertations, Western Michighan University, 2013), 212
The demands of pastoral ministry often take their toll in every aspect of an individual’s life: physical, emotional, and spiritual. There are physical demands. When pastors are overwhelmed with worry and stress, the neglect of their health can lead to more significant health problems. Individuals who neglect their health run the high risk of having a stroke, heart attack or even cancer. Many pastors work without limits. Unfortunately, in many cases, there is no one there to monitor, protect, and be an accountability partner for pastors.

Gary Thomas’ *Every Body Matters: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*, clearly explains the harmony between the believer’s body and soul and lays a great theological foundation for healthy and balanced leaders in ministry. By incorporating scripture, Thomas carefully strengthens his argument on the importance of strengthening our bodies and souls. Our physical bodies are the temples of God’s spirit. “For most of our lives, we have emphasized growing our souls, not always realizing that lack of physical discipline can undercut and even erode spiritual growth.”

True spiritual stewardship is not just over everything God has blessed us with materially, but it is also over our physical bodies. Thomas strongly suggests that Christians must also recognize the importance of how our physical lives reflect the condition of our true spirituality. “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.”

There are emotional demands. Peter Scazzero, the author of *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, paints an excellent portrait of a spiritual leader facing burnout. He suggests, “The

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7 2 Timothy 2:21 (NKJV)
emotionally unhealthy leader is someone who operates in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit, lacking emotional maturity and a ‘being with God’ sufficient to sustain his ‘doing for God.’ Unhealthy leaders’ emotional deficits reveal their lack of awareness of personal feelings, weaknesses, and limitations. Being unhealthy impacts a person’s present reality.

The leader, among emotional deficits, lack the ability and skill to understand the feelings and perspectives of those he is leading. There are spiritual demands. Spiritual deficits occur when pastors spend all their time helping others develop and strengthen their relationships with God and in turn, neglect their own relationship with God. The strains and demands of ministry make it nearly impossible to establish a regular rhythmic routine as a leader. This type of leadership is the equivalent of leading on empty or operating with a low battery, never getting a chance to be fully charged.

Those who do not take care of themselves fail to understand how much God values them. They fail to accept His rest and His love for them, instead martyring themselves on the altar of pleasing others. When individuals are burned out and experiencing compassion fatigue, they sacrifice sleep, neglect the nourishment of their bodies, and never guard their schedules. Whether it is a lack of self-care or an insistence on independence, burnout and compassion fatigue develop from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the character of God and His expectations for his people.

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Avoiding burnout is connected to our overall spiritual well-being. The better we feel spiritually, the less likely we are to experience compassion fatigue and burnout. When we are faithful and have an authentic relationship with Jesus, we are less likely to push past the boundaries God has set for us. God equips us for the ministry which He has ordained for our lives. When God continually and freshly fills our spirit, it is then impossible for servants to dry up and burn out.

This mixed-methods employed research will examine the complementary phenomena of pastoral burnout. With purposeful planning and great boundaries, a pastor can create healthy support systems and develop a lifestyle that remains balanced and decreases the chance of experiencing compassion fatigue and burnout. The writer, having served eight years in pastoral ministry in the African-American church has personally experienced stress, unrealistic self-expectations, and many other variables that caused pastoral burn-out. The writer has experienced stressors that has produced anxiety and physical discomfort. Without a healthy ministry support system and balanced plan, it is difficult to manage a healthy ministry and lifestyle in this demanding profession. Without the proper support systems and life balances, pastors tend to turn to destructive behaviors or continue to serve ineffectively in ministry.

**Statement of Limitations**

This research will be limited in the following ways: Firstly, the research will not examine pastoral burnout for all African-American pastors, but rather will focus on a select group of African-American in Central and Tidewater, Virginia. This project will not attempt to answer the following questions: What is the unique burnout African-American pastor compared to other American pastors in the United States? Are African Americans more burned out than average
American pastors? Answering the stated question is far beyond the limit of the study of this thesis project.

Secondly, this study will not address pastors of all denominations. This study will only examine African American Baptist pastors who are not employed outside of ministry.

Thirdly, this project will provide an anonymous survey and interview approach, which hinders long-term examination and evaluations of pastoral burnout. However, lack of lengthy observation and examinations will not limit the efficiency of its principles.

**Biblical/Theological Basis**

Throughout the Scriptures, many chosen vessels of God have dealt with burnout. Leaders from the Old and New Testament experienced burnout and unbalanced ministry. The Scriptures are full of great examples: the seven chosen to serve, Moses, Paul, and Elijah.

**Seven Chosen to Serve**

In Acts 6:1-7, the Apostles faced some of the same dilemmas that pastors face in today's ministry. In the book of Acts, the early church was growing, opposition and criticism were increasing, their time was stretched, and the leaders were beginning to become overwhelmed. A solution was found using the churches current prayer life and spiritual formation. The Apostles implemented a management model that spread out the workload with equipped followers of Jesus Christ.

The management model established by the Apostles recruited and trained mature Christians called deacons. If more pastors remember this biblical model, pastors would be healthier and stronger, as would their families and the Church. Even with several biblical models, pastors still need to learn how to delegate and train lay leaders to share the workload. As pastors, they must become the primary trainer and equipper for church ministry.
Moses

Moses is a good example of pastors in ministry who struggle with delegating tasks to others. Moses almost burned out while trying to fulfill his calling leading God’s people out of Egypt. Moses’ perception was that he was doing God's will by judging and hearing the people's troubles in the Nation of Israel. However, Moses’ father-in-law, Jethro, rightly recognized judging the people was not a job for one man to handle alone. Jethro saw that this could not go on indefinitely. His own experience as a Midianite leader may have involved him in regular judging among the Midianites, and it is evident to him that Moses had overcommitted his time to his judicial role.¹⁰

Jethro in his wisdom understood that Moses would eventually burn out and the people would be left unsatisfied and murmuring. To avoid burnout, Moses had to accept the reality of pastoral leadership; that not every need of the people is meant to be filled and handled by their leader. God charged Moses with leadership over Israel. God did not charge Moses with performing every duty. Jethro advised Moses to delegate a task to trustworthy men of Israel. In delegating task among trustworthy men, the people of Israel was provided justice, other people could do God’s will, and Moses was able to take care of himself.

Paul

The great missionary Apostle Paul, while in ministry confessed his experience of ministry burnout and even experienced moments when he almost lost all hope:

“For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life (2 Corinthians 1:8 NKJV).”

Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness—(2 Corinthians 11:23-27 NKJV).

Second Corinthians is an intensely personal letter. In it, the Apostle Paul shares his innerfeelings in an attempt to help his readers understand principles on which ministry must be based.\textsuperscript{11} The apostle Paul while on his missionary journeys experienced many pains and hardships serving God. During his ministry, many conspired against him because of his unique conversion and total commitment to preaching to the gospel of Jesus Christ. There were those who would never forget the memory of Paul persecuting the church in its early years. However, Paul had his focus on spreading the gospel to the Gentiles. Dealing with many stressful situations, made ministry difficult for the Apostle Paul. However, he could persevere and finish

the course. Paul reported having undergone a time of great despair, increasing his sense of
dependence on God.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Elijah}

Elijah is an example of loneliness and isolation. In 1 Kings 19:3-4, Elijah fled alone. For
whatever reason—fatigue, lack of faith, or a sense of resignation at the prospect of never having
peace—Elijah flees.\textsuperscript{13} In three short verses, the writer has changed the flow of the story. Victory
seems to be transformed into defeat, the brave prophet into a cowering refugee.\textsuperscript{14} Elijah’s
victory, however, turned into fear and depression.\textsuperscript{15}

For many pastors in ministry, loneliness causes depression and downheartedness which
often leads to burnout. Elijah had many variables that contributed to his loneliness. Elijah was
faced with Jezebel’s threats and facing the feeling of being left alone by Israel. Elijah said: “I
have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your
covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and
they seek to take my life.” (I Kings 19:10, NKJV). Mournfully, Elijah reacts by feeling an
overwhelming sense of loneliness. Alone in a cave; the great prophet of God fretted into self-pity
instead of demonstrating his trust in God.

\textbf{Statement of Methodology}

The methodology of this project will be based on the results of research, surveys, and
interviews of pastors in the African-American Baptist Church (the author's denomination). This

\textsuperscript{12} H.L. Willmington, \textit{Willmington’s Bible handbook} (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House
Publishers, 1997), 691.
\textsuperscript{13} R.P. House, \textit{1, 2 Kings Vol. 8} (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 222
\textsuperscript{14} R.P. House, \textit{1, 2 Kings Vol. 8} (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 222.
\textsuperscript{15} K. A. Mathews, \textit{The Historical Books}. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible
research will proceed to explain the points of argument as follows: In chapter two burnout will be defined, the origins of burnout will be examined, and the African-American Church, explored. This chapter will discover the influences that lead to burnout in African-American pastors.

Chapter three will examine the data collected through research and surveys of African-American pastors in Baptist churches throughout Central and Tidewater Virginia. Collected data from full-time pastors will determine factors that threaten ministry balance and healthy support systems.

Chapter four will present recommendations and provide practical approaches on how to prevent and heal from burnout. This chapter will also suggest general principles of overcoming burnout, provide biblical principles for overcoming burnout, and practical approaches for overcoming burnout.

Finally, chapter five will provide a conclusion, along with practical ministry implications and several useful suggestions for African-American pastors in the Baptist denomination.

**Review of Literature**

**Books**

Herbert Freudenberger is the first to publish an article. In his book *Burnout: The High Cost of High Achievement*, Freudenberger described burnout as more than stress; it is the total exhaustion of resources.\(^\text{16}\) Burnout is a depletion of self and emptiness within causing individuals to experience difficulties operating in mind, body, and soul.\(^\text{17}\)

In *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing*, Wayne Cordeiro shares his life's experiences of building a great ministry and experiencing personal depletion and complete


\(^{17}\) Ibid.
mental exhaustion. This book is efficient and functional for those in pastoral ministry and presents a fresh, honest, open confession and dialogue about ministry burnout. Most importantly, Cordeiro shares excellent ministry insights on how to get healthy, recover from burnout, and prevent future burnout.

William H. Willimon’s book, *Calling and Character*, address ethical behavior of the minister. He gives great insight and practical help on preventing moral failure in ministry and maintaining the proper fitness required to do ministry. Willimon points out the tremendous ethical danger of the clergy is to lose energy to do ministry. Willimon states the minister is in danger of losing consciousness and forgetting they are call to Christ and His church.¹⁸

John Stott’s book, *The Living Church: Convictions of a Lifelong Pastor*, gives pastors a general overview of pastoral ministry. Stott presents practical application and significant values of the early church that is relevant for pastoral ministry of today.¹⁹ His practical steps for pastors to establish a ministry mission are born out of the Act 2 model: teaching, fellowship, worship, and evangelism.²⁰

John Ortberg’s *The Me I Want to Be: Becoming God’s Best Version of You* offers excellent spiritual direction on finding your true identity. Ortberg's intentions are obvious, God's plans are for his children to become the best version of you. "The most important task of your life is not what you do, but who you become. There is a me you want to be”²¹ However, Ortberg does a marvelous job of establishing a foundation and giving practical principles on how to

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²⁰ Ibid.
transform your experience and become whom God has ordained you to be. "You are not your handiwork; your life is not your project. Your life is God’s project."22

In The Pastor’s Handbook, John Bisagno provides ministers with practical tools to use in pastoral ministry. According to Bisagno, “the minister’s role and responsibility is leading the church.”23 Throughout the book, Bisagno outlines critical principles to manage a healthy ministry.

Peter Scazzero, The Emotionally Healthy Leader, paints an excellent portrait of an emotionally unhealthy leader reality. The writer wastes no time defining an emotional unhealthy leader. Scazzero suggest, "The emotionally unhealthy leader is someone who operates in a continuous state of emotional and spiritual deficit, lacking emotional maturity and a ‘being with God sufficient to sustain their ‘doing for God.’"24 Scazzero spends two sections of this book presenting several core tasks that are practical for developing emotionally healthy leaders. To be an emotionally healthy leader, the leader must take inventory of himself and do some soul searching by dealing with his hurt, history, and vulnerabilities of life to establish a stable spiritual foundation.

Kirk Jones’ Rest in the Storm offers excellent self-care strategies for clergy facing burnout. He provides clergy with practical biblical guidance for facing stress in ministry. Jones provides first-hand accounts and testimonies of those who have experienced burnout personally.

Gary Thomas’ Every Body Matters is an inspiring, soul-stirring and holistic book about the believer's body. Thomas clearly and explicitly explains the harmony between the body and

22 Ibid.
soul. He spends this entire book touching on subject matter that the church has been silent on for years. Thomas gives a good theological premise on health and wellness. “For most of our lives, we have emphasized growing our souls, not always realizing that lack of physical discipline can undercut and even erode spiritual growth.” True spiritual stewardship does not just involve what God has blessed us with, but it is also over our physical bodies.

In Larry Crabb’s, *Connecting: Healing for Ourselves and Our Relationships*, He encourages struggling pastors to reconnect with accountability partners. This principle is based on God's design for believers to live in faith communities. It is through faith communities that healing can occur through relationships.

Donald Capps *The Depleted Self: Sin in a Narcissistic Age* deals with the reformulation of the theology of sin. Capps calls the reader's attention to take a close view of sin. He suggests that sin is an oblique view of the cross that doesn't just conflate sin with guilt, but takes seriously the tragic element of sin that is a shame, the shame of narcissism. Capps book details the formation of the "self," and how the individual experiences shame, and react by becoming defensive, or turns to isolation.

In Richard A. Swenson’s *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, he writes from a medical doctor’s perspective who is also a believer in God. Swenson uses the term “margin” to explain what people are missing in their out...
of control lives. Swenson defines margin as, “having breath left at the top of the staircase, money left at the end of the month, and sanity left at the end of adolescence.”

Fred Lehr’s book, Clergy Burnout explains how everyone has experienced burnout in his or her life at one time or another. Lehr encourages the minister on the importance of regaining balance and establishing healthy boundaries. When ministers can find balance and healthy boundaries, they can recover power and purpose.

In Pastors at Greater Risk: Real Help for Pastors from Pastors Who Have Been There, written by H. B. London, Jr., and Neil B. Wiseman contains three parts that address pastoral burnout. London and Wiseman address the risks in the pastor's ministry, his family, and his personal life. The authors highlight how congregational expectations can lead to pastoral burnout. Congregational expectations may be a primary reason why many churches motionless—the pastors are overwhelmed with trivia and have no time left for what matters most.

Christina Maslach and Michael P. Leiter’s book, The Truth about Burnout argues that the best response in dealing with burnout, not treatment, but prevention strategies. Burnout is a reflection of a deteriorating relationship between an individual and their work. When burnout is counteracted with positive energy and emotions, personal pain is replaced again with passion and purpose.

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28 J. Fred Lehr, Clergy Burnout: Recovering from the 70-hour Work Week and Other Self-Defeating Practices (Minneapolis: Fortress, Press, 2006), 10
29 Ibid.
Frank Minirth’s book, *How to Beat Burnout* introduces valuable views concerning burnout of pastors. He has suggested four key factors which incite pastoral burnout in ministry: unfulfilled expectations, hostile emotions, workaholic syndrome, and sermon failure and developing incompetent feeling towards God. Minirth’s overall message is to encourage men and women in ministry to establish more realistic expectations when realistic expectations are established; there is a less chance of burnout.

David Hansen’s book, *The Art of Pastoring: Ministry without all the Answers*, provides insights and assures pastors that ministry can be challenging, but ministry can be fulfilled by God working through a humble servant. Henson enlightens the pastors that it is okay not to have all the answers when it comes to leading God's people.

Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima’s *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures* examines the tension that existed in the lives of leaders who experience significant failures: personal insecurities, feelings of inferiority, and the need for parental approval of other people to become successful. The authors suggest potential failures begin, "in the inner urges, compulsions, and dysfunctions of the personality that often go unexamined or remain unknown until an emotional explosion is experienced."\(^{32}\)

Roy M. Oswald’s book, *Clergy Self-care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* is a very practical guide which contributes to the handling pastoral burnout. Oswald’s book is challenging and convicting. He gives a holistic approach to handling burnout from personal devotion to physical wellness.

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Ronald Richardson's *Becoming a Healthier Pastor* explores the significance of having a well-balanced life. He highlights many variables that sabotage ministry balance; it is essential for ministers to have family and ministry balance. Richardson states, "calmer churches usually have calmer leaders."33

Andrew Billingsley’s *Mighty like a river: The Black Church and Social Reform*, highlights the African American commitment to the church, and how the church is a multifaceted institution in the black community. The African American Church historically has been viewed as a "multifaceted religious, social, economic, educational, cultural, political institution with a broad range of social structures and social functions"34

In C. F. Stewart’s *Black Spirituality and Black Consciousness: Soul Force, Culture, and Freedom in the African-American Experience* captures the black struggle, and how blacks used their struggle as a creative force for their spirituality and positive change.

W.E.B. DuBois’ *The Philadelphia Negro* defines the function of the African American church in its community. This is mostly because of what W.E.B. DuBois (1895) believed. DuBois believed the African American church had six specific functions. The first function is to raise the annual budget; the second is to keep and increase its members; the third is to create social interaction and intercourse; the fourth is to establish moral standards; the fifth is to promote general intelligence to the masses; and the sixth function of the African American church is to create social betterment.35

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E. Lincoln and H. Mamiya’s *The Black Church in the African American experience* details the significant role the pastor plays in the church and community. The African American community not only calls a pastor, but they call a community leader.

**Journal Articles**

Patrick J. McDevitt’s *Ministerial burnout: Motivation and Renewal for Mission* examines Roman Catholic priests who are at high risk for burnout and other emotional problems. These problems stem from aging, role confusion, lack of support, changes in occupational focus, and ideological questions.\(^\text{36}\) McDevitt provides practical tools for pastors and religious leaders to implement when faced with ministry burnout. This article provides recommendations for seminaries and priests' programs of ongoing formation in addressing the issues of burnout and healthy support systems.

Diane Chandler’s article deals with pastor’s who risk burnout because of excessive daily demands in ministry. These demands may drain them emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and physical energy reserves and impair their overall effectiveness.\(^\text{37}\) Chandler suggests that burnout advances across three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment.\(^\text{38}\) The devastating outcomes of pastoral burnout were examined through a survey of 270 pastors.

In Elizabeth Jackson-Jordan’s article “Summary of Clergy Burnout and Resilience: A Review of the Literature,” she describes clergy burnout. This description consists of quality of relational skills, interactions outside the congregation, the establishment of peer and mentor

\(^\text{38}\) Ibid.
relationships, expectations, and the ability to set healthy emotional boundaries. In this article, Jordan recommends that faith groups support clergy who are dealing with burnout. The goal of this article is to help pastors develop ministry resilience by developing relational and interactional skills.

Benjamin R. Doolittle’s article, “Burnout and Coping Among Parish-Based Clergy,” explores the relationship between burnout, coping strategies and spiritual attitudes of parish-based religious leaders in the United Methodist Church. Data collected in Doolittle’s article suggested that clergy with higher spirituality scores correlated with more significant personal accomplishment. However, it also suggested higher emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in the clergy. The article will assist the author in providing preventative and restorative measures for burned-out pastors in the African-American Baptist Church.

The writer's goal of this thesis project is to understand the complexities and nuances involved in the increasing number of African-American pastors living and serving without healthy support systems and balance in ministry. This project will also identify coping strategies that can be used to increase resiliency as well as develop and implement healthy support systems and balance practice that will support pastors in ministry. Through developing and implementing personal self-care plans, and working on self-care practices, pastors will learn how to support and equip themselves to handle the ongoing demands of life and ministry.

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Dorine Brand’s article *The African American Church: A Change Agent for Health* highlights the pastor and African American church role in society. The church has birthed many institutions in the back community.

**Scriptures**

*1 Kings 19:3-4* “And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” These verses illustrate how quickly pastors can face despair and depression following great victory in ministry.

*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 of constant change. The pastor must understand that they cannot control the season, but they can control their productivity.

*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.” These verses are foundational to follow God, pastor must trust in God for everything and allow Him to guide their lives.
"Jeremiah 3:15 “And I will give you shepherds according to My heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.” When pastors get discouraged, they must remember that God gives pastors as gifts to His church.

"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 verse helps the pastor to understand that God is in control, and He has a plan for their life.

"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 verses are encouraging to pastors who are overwhelm. Prayer must be the lifeline of all pastors in ministry.

"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 to remain faithful who is faced with various challenges in ministry.

"Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” These verses reminds the pastor of a resting place when they become weary in ministry.

"Matthew 6:31-34 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own
trouble.” This passage encourages pastors to seek God; when they seek God, Christ will cover all their needs.

*Exodus 18:17-23* “So Moses’ father-in-law said to him, “The thing that you do is not good. Both you and these people who are with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing is too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be that every great matter they shall bring to you, but every small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.” This passage is a reminder that pastor must acknowledge that need help, and discern when it is time to stop before they burnout.

*Isaiah 40:28–31* “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the Lord Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.” This passage reminds the pastor of God’s all-sufficient and all-knowing power to sustain us in ministry.
Psalm 120:1 “In my distress I cried to the Lord, And He heard me.” This verse gives hope and instruction to pastors in distress to cry out unto the Lord.

Psalm 121:1-8 “I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel Shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, Nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in From this time forth, and even forevermore.” This passage encourages pastors to seek God in times of need.

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.” This verse encourages pastors to remain faithful in the midst of life ups and downs, God is still in control.”

Lamentations 3:21-23 “This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.” These verses provide great hope for pastors to reflect on God’s faithful love in the midst of hard times.
CHAPTER TWO

OVERALL UNDERSTANDING OF PASTORAL BURNOUT

Definition of Burnout

Finding an accurate description of burnout is impossible, many factors contribute to this phenomenon. Merriam-Webster defines burnout as: “the condition of someone who has become very physically and emotionally tired after doing a difficult job for a long time.”

Burnout is primarily a term derived from the world of machine-driven systems. It means the burning up of an electronic wire or semiconductor by the oversupply of electricity. In aeronautics, the term is used in many cases where the operation of a machine or engine is stopped by the innervation of fuel.

Psychologist Herbert Freudenberger, who is known for creating the term burnout compared the stress of a person to a mechanical system under stress:

Whenever the expectation level is dramatically opposed to reality, and the person persists in trying to reach that expectation, trouble is on the way. Deep inside, friction is building up, the inevitable result of which will be a depletion of the individual’s resources, and an attrition of his vitality, energy, and ability to function.

Freudenberger also used the term “burnout” to explain the effects of stress and high standards experienced by people working in “helping” professions. Doctors and nurses are examples of professionals make sacrifices for others. Those working in “helping” professions often end up being “burned out” exhaustion and neglecting self-care. Currently, the term is not

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2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
only used for these helping professions, or for the dark side of self-sacrifice; it seems burnout can affect anyone, from stressed-out achievers and celebrities who overworked.⁵

**Origins of Burnout**

Stress and burnout are not the same, even though they look similar.⁶ According to Shinhwan, "Burnout is emotional fatigue, in that human soul get weaker. Exhaustion, indifference and reduced personal competency are the prevalent elements of burnout. Especially, the helping professions like the clergy are vulnerable. Their identities stand shattered, and compassion gets eroded as they involve themselves in activities beyond their capacities."⁷ People working in help professions experienced job burnout. Job burnout is a delayed response to extreme emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job.⁸ Burnout is a syndrome of disengagement from one’s work that involves exhaustion, hopelessness, lack of enthusiasm, irritability, and reduced self-esteem.⁹ The term syndrome indicates the systematic pattern of symptoms that commonly distinguish a disorder or disease. Burnout is not documented as a disorder in the DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition).¹⁰

According to one of the first more extensive characterizations by Maslach and Jackson, burnout is the result of chronic stress (at the workplace) which has not been successfully dealt with. It is characterized by exhaustion and depersonalization (negativism/cynicism) and is found predominantly in caring and social professions (e.g. social workers, teachers, nurses, doctors,

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⁵ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
⁹ Ibid.
dentists).\textsuperscript{11} Burnout is the index of the dislocation between what people are and what they have to do. It represents an erosion of values, dignity, spirit, and will - an erosion of the human soul. It is a malady that spreads gradually and continuously over time, putting people into a downward spiral from which it is hard to recover.\textsuperscript{12} Burnout has been classified as a multifarious psychological syndrome comprised of three dimensions: (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) reduced personal accomplishments.\textsuperscript{13}

According to Borritz, Kristensen, and Christensen, they have asserted that one of Maslach’s burnout components, depersonalization, is not a symptom of burnout per se, but rather a coping strategy that individuals use when suffering from burnout.\textsuperscript{14} However, they have expounded upon Maslach by dividing burnout into three categories, each with a separate focus and definition: personal burnout, client burnout, and work burnout.\textsuperscript{15} Burnout has frequently been observed among many in community service professions. These professions consist of: teachers, counselors, doctors, nurses, and clergy. Affected individuals suffer both personally and professionally.\textsuperscript{16}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{11}C. Maslach, & S. Jackson. \textit{The Measurement of Experienced Burnout} Journal Occupational Behavior 198; 2:99-113
\bibitem{15}Ibid.
\bibitem{16}Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
According to Matt Periman, many pastors are concerned with performance and productivity. However, Periman suggests, "productivity is not just about getting more things done, it is about getting the right things done –the things that count, make a difference, and move the world forward." The origin of burnout in ministry is stress because it is focused on the intangible spirituality of people within a secularized society. Consequently, the clergy is at risk of burnout. Burnout occurs, when individuals rely on their internal orientation to the demands of ministry (where ministers depend on internal sources of authority and coping, such as spirituality and competence) is associated with low burnout in cross-sectional studies of ministers.

Stress causes distress in one’s life. Consequently, distress is a secondary occurrence produced by stress. Therefore, stress becomes the trigger of burnout! According to Frank Minirth, chronic excessive stress cause of burnout, and if there is not an appropriate countermeasure, it will lead to sickly melancholia. According to Han Selye, a famous expert on stress, classified stress as two kinds: “distress” which brings psychological damage due to the repetition of extreme stress, and “eustress” which produces emotions such as happiness, feeling of achievement or satisfaction.

According to Edward Rosenbluh, stress has become the catchword of our society. It is blamed for everything, from crime to disease. In reality, stress is merely a demand placed on the

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18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
22 Ibid.15-16, 19.
23 Ibid. 18
body. It is part of life. The exercise, which is necessary for health, is a stress. Thinking, problem-solving, laughing, walking are all stresses. But, we do not consider them dangerous. Stress is self-limiting. That is to say—We will always get ourselves out of stress.\(^{24}\) From childhood, people learn how to rise to life’s challenges and, commonly, they enjoy the successes of life. However, when trying situations arise faster than an individual can recuperate or respond, people become victims of stress.\(^{25}\)

General Adaptation Syndrome consists of three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion.

1) Alarm stage: the point when an individual recognizes danger, although they are not aware of what the present danger is. During this stage, the person has not yet searched their memory banks for what it appears to be. They have just become aware of the danger.\(^{26}\) During the alarm stage, individuals experience physical symptoms such as a headache, slight fever, fatigued condition, losing of appetite, feeling of helplessness, muscular pain and arthritis. The psychological symptoms are vague anxiety, irritation, the decline of resisting the power of the mind and body, the decrease of concentration power, and insomnia.\(^{27}\) If stress continues in the alarm stage without being treated appropriately, a person will quickly transitions from the alarm stage to resistance.

2) Resistance stage. The secretion of adrenal cortical stimulus hormones and steroid hormones from the pituitary gland try to relive the response of stress.\(^{28}\) During this stage, individuals resisting power against stress increases and symptoms from the alarm stage of stress

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\(^{24}\) Edward Rosenbluh, "Preventing Intervener Burnout." (Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations 1, no.1, 2001), 121.  
\(^{25}\) Ibid.122.  
\(^{26}\) Ibid.  
\(^{28}\) Ibid. 21.
disappear. In the resisting stage, people may not get sick easily because of the active immunity system. However, if stress is not appropriately handled, the ingredient content of adrenaline and norepinephrine in blood increases and brings to the heart acceleration, anxiety, nervousness, and tension; or it leads to psychological chronic anxiety or neurosis.  

During the resistance stage, the nervous system prepares the body to react and combat stress. If stress levels continue to climax, it develops finally into the final stage of exhaustion.

3) Exhaustion stage, also referred to as “the escape stage” or “the period of falling illness”, is when the body breaks down from severe exertion. Stress causes a physical illness because the secretion of hormones from the pituitary gland and adrenal gland is not adequate. Again, individuals see symptoms of early alarm stage. If severe stress continues, the outcome people will experience disease or even death. If it develops to the stage of exhaustion, it may bring disease in the body organs like the stomach, heart or skin or it may bring disease like schizophrenia.

According to Pan Shinhwan, clergy's stressors include the following factors: They include bio-ecological factors, vocational factors, psychological factors, and spiritual factors.” First, there are the bio-ecological factors related to a poor diet including too much caffeine, refined white sugar, processed flour, salt etc, and poor exercise habits. Second, vocational factors include career uncertainty; role ambiguity (a lack of clearly-defined and mutually-agreed ministry functions); role conflict (between church expectations and personal or family needs); role overload (too many real or imagined expectations); lack of opportunities to 'derole' and be yourself, for a change; loneliness (95% of Australian pastors do not have a spiritual director); time-management frustrations - and many more. Third, psychological factors relate principally to the great life-change stressors - from the most stressful (such as the loss of a spouse), through divorce, death of a close family member, personal injury or illness, all the way to getting ready for Christmas or being handed a speeding fine! Last, spiritual causes of stress may include temptations of all kinds (sexual, despair if your church isn't growing, jealousy of

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30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
the success of others, anxiety over financial problems, anger and any other way the devil can get at us). Even prayer can be stressful according to one study.\textsuperscript{32}

### Factors of Burnout

#### Personality Factors

When pastors’ lives become unbalanced and their spiritual growth plateaus, the effects can be staggering as stress can affect a pastor’s ability to fulfill their everyday duties, their ability to maintain healthy relationships, and their overall personal well-being.\textsuperscript{33} A person’s character is a prominent factor in burnout. Alarcon, Eschleman, and Bowling present a meta-analysis investigating the relationship between people's personality and burnout. Their meta-analysis studied analyzed beyond the notable five personalities. This study includes self-esteem, general self-efficacy, hardiness, internal locus of control, optimism, positive affectivity, negative affectivity, and proactive personality.\textsuperscript{34} Stephen Kisslinger suggests, “burnout is not caused solely by stress or too many responsibilities, but other factors add to burnout, including lifestyle and certain personality traits.”\textsuperscript{35} How we manage our leisure time and how we view the world around us can influence burnout in individual lives. Kissinger lists the following personality traits as potential factors that cause burnout:

- The need to be in control; reluctance to delegate to others
- High-achieving, Type A personality
- Perfectionistic tendencies; nothing is ever good enough

\textsuperscript{33} Lance Witt, Replenish (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 18-19
• Pessimistic view of yourself and the world

Workaholic Personality

The workaholic personality value their individual worth of base on productivity. This is known as the Martha Complex. The Martha complex is a controlling personality type that is obsessed with perfection. These types of people are reluctant to delegate their workload to others. These people often bring their work home, and work while on vacations. The Minirth-Meier Clinic reported a shocking statistic that 90 percent of doctors and 75 percent of pastors examined there were obsessed with an expansive misconception. Workaholics work day and night to satisfy the expectations of others because they achieve above and beyond expectations, they experience excessive fatigue.

Heroism Personality

The workaholic brings on more stress by being connected to heroism. This personality type is known as the messiah complex. People who have this personality firmly believer, “I can do everything better than anybody else” or “I must be the one to do it”. The messiah complex is a personality in which the individual believes to be or predestined to become, the savior of their particular event, group, or a period. In the ministry, many pastors have experienced burnout; believing they should be all things to everyone they lead. Working as a savior may also heighten the vulnerability of a person to compassion fatigue, defined by Figley as the stress resulting from

36 Ibid.
38 Ibid. 37.
40 Ibid.
helping or desiring to help others who have experienced trauma or suffering. Unfortunately, this type of thinking is dysfunctional and abnormal. Most pastors struggle with heroism; believing that they should work as a surrogate messiah until the coming of the true Messiah.

Low Self-esteem

According to Hong Lee, individuals with high self-esteem manage stress more appropriately than those with low self-esteem. People can keep peace with others when they can keep peace with themselves; personal relations can be good when they are good in relations with themselves. According to Jackson Hester, “helping professions often attract individuals whose childhoods were consumed with trying to satisfy the needs and meet high expectations of parents, but whose own emotional needs were not met.” Adults who work in helping professions repeat this behavior pattern as adults; gaining their self-esteem and self-worth from the praise and expectations from others. As adults, they repeat this behavior pattern, gaining their sense of self-esteem and self-worth from fulfilling the needs of others. Jackson further suggests, adult misconduct toward others and compassion fatigue may seem almost paradoxical, but both can develop from constant self-esteem needs that must be relentlessly replenished, if this matter is not handled appropriately, it leads to stress and burnout.

44 Man Hong Lee, Burnout Syndrome of Pastor, Cause and Countermeasure, Monthly Pastoral Ministry (June, 1997), 385.
47 Ibid.
A person dependency upon the admiration of others may underlie one's inability to accept interpersonal criticism. Randy Garner provides alarming statistics in Interpersonal Criticism and the Clergy, Journal of Pastoral Care and Counseling. Garner finding states, in a focus group of 22 clergy members, criticism was almost invariably taken negatively.48 Participants from the focus group described criticism as a “negative evaluation,” a “rebuke,” “akin to fault-finding; it’s telling someone they don’t measure up,” “usually a negative assault; often by someone without all the facts,” and a “personal attack.”49 One participant summarized their collective opinion by declaring “Criticism is a term that is always negative. There is no such thing as positive criticism.” Criticism was viewed as “a real blow to the ego” and “an assault to our competence,” which “can be demoralizing.”50 From this group study, the predominant perception suggests that criticism is unfair, adverse, and it incites a range of negative emotions. These emotions consist of anger, guilt, and frustration.51

Job-Related Factors

Burnout occurs when job demands exceed job resources.52 Schaufeli and Bakker’s Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) model was created to measure the effects of job resources and demands.53 To test the JD-R model, Schaufeli and Bakker used structural equation modeling to analyze data, as predicted, engagement and burnout were negatively associated and preceded by

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49 Ibid., 5.
50 Ibid., 6.
52 Ibid. 34.
different factors. Burnout was mainly predicted by job demands, with some effect from the absence of job resources, while engagement was predicted entirely by the available job resources.\textsuperscript{54} William. H. Willimon declares that the work of the church is endless.\textsuperscript{55} In many instances, people who work secular jobs come home after a day of work and wind down. However, the job of the pastor is ongoing. The pastor is accessible for by the congregation on a daily and around the clock basis. There is no end to the work of the pastor; there are continuous worship services, funerals, weddings, visitations (absentee members, hospital patients, sick and shut in-home visits and counseling), training, administrations and various other meetings.\textsuperscript{56} This continuous excessive job-related activity causes many pastors to overwork and exhaust all their energy.

The work of the pastor is not only an endless task but is also repetitive.\textsuperscript{57} The daily demands of the pastor begin with making preparations for various services in every week. Pastors throughout the year make preparations for various feast services, annual holidays, weddings, and funerals. According to Strong, “Pastors who cannot give up their work even after they become bored due to the repetition of the same work every day, every week and every year, usually burnout and become less effective.”\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{54} Wilmar B. Schaufeli, and Arnold B. Bakker. “\textit{Job Demands, Job Resources, and Their Relationships with Burnout and Engagement: A Multi-Sample Study}.” Journal of Organizational Behavior 25, no. 3 2004: 303.
\textsuperscript{57} Mark Short, \textit{Time Management for Minister}. (Park, Doo Heon tran. Seoul: Togijangi Publisher, 1994), 32-34.
According to Matt Periman, “The core principle of effectiveness is to know what’s important and put it first. Don’t prioritize your schedule, schedule your priorities.” This is essential to overcoming burnout and creating healthy ministry support and balance. Pastors can manage how they respond to job-related stress and burdens by managing their workloads. When maintaining the proper time management, pastors can function successfully. However, poor time management can result in failure. When pastors work in chaos and extreme pressure, they become unclear or overly demanding by job expectations.

Relational Factors

Caught up in the daily demands, stresses and congregational expectations, pastors are under tremendous pressure as they try to serve God and His people in multiple roles in ministry. Congregations place ceaseless expectations on the pastor. These expectations consist of: managing a good family, an excellent preacher, a visionary for the church financial affairs of church, a counselor, community activist, and visiting the sick. The pastor carries a heavy load of responsibility and stewardship. There is not a pastor who can fulfill endless expectations of a congregation and community and have enough energy to do so effectively. Pastors who understand the relational factors of burnout are often spend a significant amount of time developing a "persona". Pastors developing a persona serve two roles: it displays their best

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62 As a psychological term invented by Carl Jung, it usually denotes the "role," "face," "features".
abilities effectively, and it hides their deficiencies. Pastors often receive criticism when they do not live up to congregational expectations.

G. Lloyd Rediger has defined several common expectations for both pastors and parishioners; which are clearly self-centered in both instances and give suggestions of why pastors and parishioners seem to be on a difference page early in a pastor's tenure:

The Congregation's Expectations: Be a good preacher—preach the Word but don't make us uncomfortable; Be a good teacher—teach us and our children what we want to learn; Be there when we need you—crises, death, special events; Don't do things that embarrass us; Be a CEO, a therapist, a computer specialist, a community leader, a negotiator, a problem-solver, a fund-raiser, and keep our church looking nice and operating well. The Pastor's Expectations: All of the above, except for wanting to preach, teach, call, and lead in ways that I think they need, without making them angry at me; An adequate financial package, workable equipment, and a compatible administrative assistant; Parishioners' support of my programs, and if there is conflict within the pastor be helpful in effective ways; Respect and happiness for my spouse and family here.”

Pastor Sun Joo Kil, who was respected as a great Korean pastor, left the following records:

If the pastor teaches only the Bible, members say that he is stubborn. If he speaks a lot of illustrations, they say that the preaching is like a comic chat. If he delivers the preaching theologically, they say that he is not spiritual. If he introduces a theory, they say that he is so pedantic. If he preaches sermons at random, they say that he is ignorant. If he is merciful, they say that he is an excessively good natured person. If he is strict, they say that he is an oppressor. If he manages his work well, they say that he is a tactician. If he is dull in fellowship, they say that he is a blockhead. If he speaks of ancient history, they say that he is out-of-date. If he speaks of modern history, they say that he is vulgarized. If he delivers a sermon with a loud voice, they say that he is not respectable. If he delivers the preaching with a low voice, they say that he is singing a lullaby. If he does not discuss, they say that he is a dictator. If the church becomes noisy by discussing, they say that he is incompetent. If he is cool-headed, they say that he has no love. If he manages the matter perfectly, they say that he has no backbone. If he is young, they say that he is so rash. If he is too old, they say that he becomes useless.

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65 Dong Sup Jung, "Dealing with the Stress of Ministry," 253.
According to Shinhwan, “Clergy are likely to be dominated by the institutional culture, increasing the potential for burnout. They are often put on a pedestal by others and by themselves. In reality, however, many of these expectations just can't be met.”66 When clergy try to satisfy so hard that they may become too goal-oriented, they are likely to become perfectionistic and over conscientious, to develop one side of their ministry disproportionately, or maybe to identify so closely with the expectations.67

**Measuring Burnout**

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) is one of the most popular instrument for assessing burnout. On the rationale that some of the MBI items are not suitably worded for the pastoral vocation, Francis, Wulff, and Robbins, rephrased some of the items and, afterward, further adapted and refined the MBI for work with clergy.68 However, they established an instrument based on the notion of balance. Francis, Wulff, and Robbins conceptualized negative affect as emotional exhaustion and positive affect as ministry satisfaction.69 These constructs were operationalized into two, eleven-item scales: The Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM) and Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS). Together, these scales form the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI).70

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67 Ruth Luban, *Keeping the Fire: From Burnout to Balance.* (Laguna Beach, California: UK Press, 1994) Retrieved February 8, 2018
Signs and Symptoms of Burnout

According to Ruth Luban, “Symptoms of burnout as warning signs or red flags which indicate that something is wrong that needs to be addressed. If one pays attention to these early warning signs, one can prevent a major breakdown. If one ignores them, one will eventually burn out.” “Burnout is a gradual process that occurs over an extended period of time. It doesn’t happen overnight, but it can creep up on you if you’re not paying attention to the warning signals. The signs and symptoms of burnout are subtle at first, but they get worse and worse as time goes on.”

Herbert Freudenberger and Gail North have defined burnout in the twelve following steps:

1. The pressure to prove oneself

People start out will working with great intentions and determination. However, the yearning to demonstrate themselves in the workplace turns into duress. This phase is characterized by drive and meticulousness.

2. At work but inflexible

People exert a lot of energy trying to impress others or attempt to be a part of a group that is not appropriate for them. This creates extraordinary individual expectations that people struggle to meet. To meet these expectations, people concentrate solely on their individual job and take on an unusual amount of work. Therefore, people become preoccupied with doing everything themselves to show that they are exceptional.

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71 Ruth Luban, *Keeping the Fire: From Burnout to Balance.* (Laguna Beach, California: UK Press, 1994) Retrieved February 8, 2018
73 Ibid.
3. Overlooking their needs

When needs are overlooked, a person becomes consumed with their work; with such obsessive behavior, an individual only has time for self and no one else. A person can become so consume with themselves, they start to overlook their basic needs and relationships they need to survive. Common needs and relationships are: friends and family, eating and sleeping are prioritized as secondary.74

4. Displacement of conflicts

An individual is aware of a problem, but they to deal with the source of their problem appropriately.75 Struggling to deal with their problem appropriately can be dangerous. This is when the individual notices their first physical symptoms.76

5. Revision of values

Freudenberger states that there is a change in perception and values. During this time people become indifferent and emotionally honest.77

6. Denial of emerging problems

Freudenberger further explains, “People may become intolerant and dislike being social. They may be seen as aggressive and sarcastic. Problems may be blamed on time pressure and all the work that they have to do.”78 When one is in denial of their problems; routine and physical grievances are evident.

7. Withdrawal

74 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid.
Freudenberger states that “minimal social contact turns into isolation.” Alcohol or a control substance may be used for self-medication as a release from obsessive addictions. These people often have a feeling of existence without confidence or direction.

8. Obvious behavioral changes

According to Freudenberger, "Coworkers, family, friends, and others in their immediate social circles cannot overlook the behavioral changes in these people." However, additional workloads may be seen as a problem, but individual is in a constant state of denial try to avoid it.

9. Depersonalization

Freudenberger says, “It is possible that they no longer see themselves or others as valuable. They no longer perceived their own needs.” When depersonalization takes place; they see themselves as worthless.

10. Inner emptiness

When there is inner emptiness, Freudenberger explains, “They feel empty inside and may exaggerate activities such as overeating or sex to overcome these feelings.” Individual sees themselves as unhappy, hopeless and fatigued.

11. Depression

When symptoms of depression are evident, Freudenberger explains, “Burnout may include depression. In that case, the person is exhausted, hopeless, indifferent, and believes that life has no meaning.”

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
83 Ibid
84 Ibid.
12. Burnout syndrome

Finally, when one develops burnout syndrome; Freudenberger explains that one of the many signs is, “They collapse physically and emotionally and need immediate medical attention. In extreme cases, suicidal ideation may occur, with it being viewed as an escape from their situation. Only a few people will actually commit suicide.”\(^85\) During burnout a person maybe prone to physical disease, mental and emotional collapse.

**The African-American Church and Pastor**

Characteristics of the African American Church

Dwayne K. Pickett, in his *Pastoral and Staff Leadership Training on the Growth of The South African American Church*, wrote:

The African American Church (the "Church" or the "Black Church") stands today as the focal point of the black community in the south as it has for more than a century. When blacks suffered the oppression of a systematically segregated society and of voting requirements intent on sustaining that oppression, the Church provided a place of hope and refuge otherwise absent in the Jim Crow south. The Church became, in fact, one of the first forces for positive change within the then "Negro" society. The escape from oppression that the church provided served as a source of empowerment within the black community.\(^86\)

According to Andrew Billingsley, “The African American Church is a trusted, multifaceted institution that uses culturally-specific programming and has a capability of reaching hard-to-reach populations unattainable to the mainstream.”\(^87\) The African American Church historically has been viewed as a "multifaceted religious, social, economic, educational, cultural, political institution with a broad range of social structures and social functions."\(^88\) According to

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\(^{85}\) Ibid.


\(^{88}\) Ibid.
Dorine Brand, "The African American Church has been an incubator of individuals with similar interests, morals, and values, therefore providing a defined community of a supportive network." The church is the place where African American received assistances when no other help was available. Serving as the only source of assistance to the needs of its community; the Black Church gave “birth to new institutions such as schools, banks, insurance companies and low-income housing; it also provided an academy and an arena for political activities” C. F. Stewart states, "Out of the suffering and chaos the African American church, the Black church became not only a refuge and hospitality center for the oppressed but the creative and cultural life center that empowered Black people to translate that suffering into creative acts of positive change."

In the twenty-first century, despite significant cultural changes, the African American church remains as the only Black institution that continues to be formed and developed by African Americans. This is mostly because of what W.E.B. Du Bois (1895) believed. Du Bois believed the African American church had six specific functions. The first function is to raise the annual budget; the second is to keep and increase its members; the third is to create social interaction and intercourse; the fourth is to establish moral standards; the fifth is to promote

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general intelligence to the masses; and the sixth function of the African American church is to create social betterment. 

Characteristics of the African American Pastor

African American pastors are pillar of the Black Church. Often, African Americans choose their spiritual leaders as resources not only for the church but the community. The role of the African American pastor can be defined in six roles:

1. The pastor is a director. The pastor is the leader of the congregation; therefore, the pastor is expected to direct the members of the church to develop their organization and programs and execute them with proficiency.

2. The pastor is an organizer. According to L. Williamson, pastors must have the administrative skills necessary for setting up organizations or, rather, for guiding the congregation in the processes of shaping and re-shaping. Pastors must have the candid ability to understand personal relationships and use them constructively.

3. The pastor is a counselor. Williamson states, “The pastor has caring functions to complete in relation to the needs arising out of the roles of the officers and leaders and to other personal needs of the congregation which are discovered as they work with him in the church’s program.”

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97 Ibid.
4. The pastor is a teacher. The expected role of the pastor is to develop the congregation through their leadership abilities; this is done by the pastors teaching.98 “There is a learning-by-doing process in which the pastor gives the workers instructions and guidance in their roles. The pastor may teach the theological significance and religious relevance of the work which the church member is doing.”99

5. The pastor is an orator/preacher. The expected role of the African American pastor is to have a passionate arousing orator.100 Pastors preaching is expected to speak truth to power. The pastor must preach the Gospel that others may see Jesus as a truth relevant to humanity’s need to rise.101

6. The pastor is a recruiter.

It is necessary for the African American pastor to take the lead in finding and securing the acceptance of people to fill the many places of responsibility in the church. He or She must match people and positions with abilities, and not because of likes and dislikes, or because of the extra five dollars slipped into his hands or the favor rendered to him/her on some occasions. The African American pastor must find those within the congregation who are developing, or may be developed for useful places of service.102

Burnout in African American Pastors

Pastoral burnout is experienced in many ways. This experience can affect pastors’ minds, bodies, and souls. Burnout can affect a cohesive part of an individual. The challenge in pastoring is remaining emotionally healthy. According to Strong, "African American pastors are ill-

100 Ibid.13.
prepared in the matter of emotional and mental health. Some pastors are not prepared to deal realistically with the emotional demands of ministry."¹⁰³ According to Strong, “Pastoral burnout is not only ‘individual’ issues, but also more ‘systemic’ issues within diverse systems. Therefore, to understand more accurately the dynamics of stress and burnout among African American pastors, one must consider the systems in which they live, such as family, church, community and American culture.”¹⁰⁴ Pastors who have strong support systems based upon sound theology, disciplines, management training, insurance systems and outplacement services have a better chance of producing strong, effective ministries, as compared to unhealthy leaders producing unhealthy, ineffective leadership.¹⁰⁵ According to Strong, “Pastors, especially African American pastors, have difficulty asking for help from others when they are physically, relationally, emotionally or spiritually burned out.”¹⁰⁶

This chapter defined the overall understanding of burnout, and the African American Church, and discovered the influences that lead to burnout in African American pastors. Chapter three will examine the data collected through research and surveys of African-American pastors in Baptist churches in Central and Tidewater Virginia. Collected data from full-time pastors will determine factors that threaten ministry balance and healthy support systems.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 63.
CHAPTER THREE
UNDERSTANDING BURNOUT IN AFRICAN AMERICAN PASTORS IN CENTRAL AND TIDEWATER VIRGINIA

The previous two chapters discussed the overall understanding of pastoral burnout, particularly in the context of African American churches and pastors. With the research literature as background, this chapter will analyze statistical information from a survey and interview question on burnout in African American pastors in Central and Tidewater, Virginia by analyzing the results of the survey and interview questions.

Without a healthy ministry support system and balanced plan, it is difficult to manage a healthy ministry and lifestyle in this demanding profession. Without the proper support systems and life balances, pastors tend to turn to destructive behaviors or continue to serve ineffectively in ministry. The lifestyles of pastors make them susceptible to burnout because of the high expectations placed on them in ministry. The literature review offers extensive evidence demonstrating a correlation between pastor’s lifestyles and burnout. The overview of the interview and survey findings are presented in tables highlighting frequencies and percentages.

Description of Sample and Procedures

Sample

Participants in the survey included male African American pastors from Central and Tidewater, Virginia, who work full-time in the Baptist denomination.

Procedures

The results from the surveys was obtained by asking permission from African American male pastors to conduct this research. After obtaining approval, surveys were mailed that included a cover letter, consent form and burnout survey and questionnaire on March 1, 2018.
surveys and questionnaires were sent to pastors, and 10 participants (100%) completed the
survey and questionnaire with usable data for the research.

In this research two survey methods (survey and questionnaire) resulted in a total
participant pool of 10 participants from whom responses were received, yielding a 100%
response and participation rate. It is the notion of this research that the participants completed the
provided survey and questionnaire truthfully and to the best of their knowledge of their
individual context.

Quantitative – Results of Survey

Age

Table 1, below, displays the frequency and percentage for each category respondents’
age. The findings indicate that, of the total respondents 10 pastors, 3 pastors (30%) were under
35, and 2 (20%) was between the ages of 36-40, and 2 (20%) between the ages of 41-45. This
research also contains, 1 (10%) were 46-55, while 0 (0%) were between the ages of 51-55. Only
1 (10%) was between the ages of 56-60, and 1 (10%) were between the ages 61-65. According to
the result, a majority of the pastors in Central and Tidewater Virginia (30%) are in their early
thirties.

Table 1: Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30-35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years in Ministry

Table 2 shows the length of time pastors in the Central and Tidewater Virginia spent in ministry of from under 5 years to over 30 years. Pastors who have served less than 5 years, and 6-10 have a frequency have a low frequency of 10%. On the other hand, the survey results also indicated that a total of 3 (30) pastors have been in ministry between 11-15 years. Pastors who have served between 16-20, and 21-25 have frequency of 2 (20%). Interestingly, not one of the respondents has had ministry experience between 26-30 years in the African American context. One (10%) respondent had over 30 years of ministry experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sunday Worship Attendance

Figure 3 presents a description of the attendance at Sunday morning worship service. The findings indicate that 20% of the participants ‘churches have between 51-100 members present on Sunday. These findings show that a majority of churches in central and tidewater area (70%) have congregations range between 101-200 present on Sunday. Only 1 of the respondents (10%) is pastoring a church with an attendance ranging between 301-500.
Factors of Burnout

Figure 4 illustrates factors threatening African American pastors. Sixty percent of participants indicated that frustration was a leading factor threatening their ministry. Fifty percent of respondents experience extreme fatigue, increase of worrying and impatience, and stagnation. Interestingly, Ten percent of pastors felt a sense of alienation, decrease of appetite, and economic difficulties. The finding showed that 10% of pastors felt threatened by the rebuke of believers, too frequent preaching, and ministry infringing in their private lives. Twenty percent of pastors experience a loss of interest about work, unrealistic expectation of their spouse, and excessive business. Forty percent of participants denoted conflict and considering leaving their churches. Thirty percent of the pastors surveyed, experience difficulty sleeping and weariness.
Table 5 shows the frequencies for the hours spent weekly on ministry. Two respondents reported working under 20 hours a week on ministry. Only one pastor reported working between 21-30 hours per week. Interestingly, one pastor works between 61-70 hours weekly on ministry. According to these results, a majority of pastors work weekly range between 31-60 hours in the tidewater and central Virginia. Conversely, none of the pastors surveyed work over 70 hours per week in ministry. Working excessive hours can contribute to stress and burnout in ministry.
Table 5: Hours Spent Weekly on Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-60</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61-70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 70</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Annual Income

Figure 6 illustrates the level of annual income for pastors. The findings indicate that one of respondents has an annual income of under $20,000; and two pastors have an income between $20,001-$30,000. Only two pastors (20%) among the participants stated that their annual income was between $40,001-$50,000, and none had an income of $30,001-$40,000. Three pastors (30%) had an income of $50,001-$70,000, and none had an income over 100,000. Pastors salary is generally based upon the church membership. Whenever the numbers of members increase; pastors salaries tend to increase.
Thoughts of Leaving the Church

Table 7 show the frequency of pastors who have thought of leaving their current church. More than half the pastors (60%) said that they have sometimes thought of leaving the church, while three pastors (30%) have thought of it very often. Only one pastor has never thought about leaving the church. According to the survey results, no one reported that they were ready move from their current ministry.

Table 7: Thoughts of Leaving the Church

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have never thought of it</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have thought of it sometimes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have thought of it very often</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to move right now</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thoughts of Quitting Ministry

Table 8 show the frequency of pastors who have thought of about quitting ministry. Half of the pastors surveyed (50%) said that they have sometimes thought about quitting ministry. While four pastors (40%) have never thought about quitting ministry. Only one pastor has thought of quitting ministry very often. According to the survey results, no one reported that they think about quitting ministry every day.

Table 8: Thoughts of Quitting Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pressure in Ministry

Table 9 displays the feeling of pressure which pastors experience in ministry. 30% of pastors felt the pressure of ministry is much higher than expected; 3 pastors (30%) felt that the pressure of ministry was higher than expected; 4 pastors (40%) felt the pressure is the same as expected. No one stated pressure in ministry was lower or much lower than expected.
Table 9: Pressure in Ministry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency (f)</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Much higher than expected</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher than expected</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same as expected</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower than expected</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Much lower than expected</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solving Pressure in Ministry

Figure 10 indicates how pastors handle and cope with their individual pressure in ministry. 80% of pastors surveyed use Bible reading and prayer, dialogue with colleagues, and listening to music as means of coping with ministry pressure. 60% of pastors use exercise and sleeping as away to escape the stress of ministry and to resolve ministry pressure. 40% of pastors surveyed likes to shop to solve ministry pressure; and 30% of the pastors surveyed use traveling, meditation, and recharging as an outlet to solve their individual ministry pressure. 20% of pastors surveyed that they use eating and singing to cope with ministry pressure. 10% of respondent to the survey use chattering and visiting a prayer mountain as means of escape and rejuvenation.
Quantitative – Summary of Survey

The statistical significance of this study illustrates the variables that contribute to pastoral burnout in African American pastors. Many of the findings from this study are discussed in the review of the literature on pastoral burnout, but there are little to no relative studies which provide these findings as it relates to African Americans who pastor. Chapter two mentioned the many factors that contributes to pastoral burnout. These factors are understood to be a result of: pastors’ age, tenure, time, income, and ministerial pressure.

The results of this study show different levels of stress within the various pastoral roles that leads to burnout. According to the survey respondents, self-care and ministry balance are critical in minimizing the symptoms of burnout in ministry. Pastors who are caught up in the daily demands and stresses of life, are under unbelievable pressures to juggle their personal life and ministry. The demands of ministry, if not properly balanced often take toll in every aspect of an individual’s life: physical, emotional, and spiritual. The statistical information provided
explains the effects of ministry physical demands. When pastors are overwhelmed, they are vulnerable to make unhealthy choices. The feeling of being overwhelmed and stressed can lead to neglect other significant health problems. Many pastors work without limits. Unfortunately, most pastors do not have some to monitor and hold them accountable in finding balance and practicing self-care.

**Qualitative – Results of Interview Questions**

Do you feel hopeless and trapped in ministry?

According to the interview data collected, half (50%) of the pastors interviewed stated they don’t feel trapped in ministry. However, the other fifty percent stated “yes” and “sometimes” they feel trapped in ministry. Pastors who feel trapped in ministry stated because of conflict and great expectations for success has caused them to frequently think about leaving ministry. One pastor stated, “Many pastors working in ministry wish they could leave, it is very common. I know because I often contemplate leaving, I have reached the point where I wanted to leave my church, but I didn’t know how to leave.”

Other pastors stated they became disillusioned with the administrative side of ministry. One pastor stated, “Seminary trained me with good theology and ideology, but when started pastoring, my church was really looking for an entrepreneur, a pastor who could grow the congregation like a successful business.” The pastoral model most seminaries and Bible colleges teach; train pastors and congregations to embrace and creates fabricated and unmaintainable expectancies. In the process of implementing these false expectations, everyone in the process gets hurt. Then the people get frustrated, eventually the pastor gets burnout and resign, and this process continues to cycle for years.
A pastor who answered “no” to feeling trapped in ministry stated, “A personal assurance of your divine calling and giftedness for ministry should validate your response to the question. I believe if God has placed me in this place with the tools to do his will, then I should be confidence in my context. I plan to finish out the race of ministry because I am convinced God placed me here. An old preacher told me this years ago, ‘If you are not tapped for ministry, then you certainly will trap.’”

Are you easily irritated and have little patience with people?

According to the interview results, a majority of pastors (50%) are easily irritated and have little patience with people. One pastor stated, "I get easily irritated sometimes depending on who the person is and the expectations I have set for them. My biggest irritation comes from leaders in ministry who do not have a servant leader spirit." Another pastor answered, "I love doing ministry work. My problem is the people I pastor is lock into tradition. This has been the biggest challenge for me in pastoring a well-established African American Baptist church."

Another pastor stated, "Conflict has been a cause of my irritability and impatience. Conflict is not the problem, but it is how conflict is settled in the church. I have become irritable and impatience over the years and I often feel burnout. I pastor a family church, so conflict is always magnified to another level."

One pastor stated "I become irritable and impatient because I tend to measure my success in ministry by immediate results. When we try to achieve success on our own, we become burnout out. Over the years I have learned that certain seeds will bring forth fruit in its own time." One pastor stated, "The Great Commission demands exponential growth of Christ’s church. I have become impatient and irritated because of Baptist traditions and rituals. The traditional church has been guilty for years by keeping people and their resources in, while the
world is struggling on the outside. When this occurs, traditions get in the way of effectiveness and chokes the life out of the church."

Interestingly, the interview results indicate 4 out of the 10 pastors interviewed are not easily irritated and have patience with people. One pastor stated, "My temperament of dealing with people developed in my early years. I learned early in ministry that people are still growing and needs time to develop." One pastor stated, “I am patience because I understand that the church belongs to God, and since the church belongs to God, I need to have the same patience God has with me.

Are you pessimistic about the church, people, profession and denomination?

According to the interview question, 8 out of 10 pastors felt the opposite of pessimism when it comes to ministry. One pastor stated, "The calling to pastor has inspired and enabled me to identify my hallmark purposes for life. My primary design is to be in a functionary relationship with Jesus Christ. My functionary relationship will promote spiritual growth, maturity, and favor with God and those God has placed me over to lead."

Another pastor shared, “Striving for personal growth and spiritual maturity as a Christian is a process whereby a person grows into a mature relationship with Jesus Christ. It is through this relationship with Him; we have the pleasure of enjoying a vibrant, vital, organic relationship, and the by-product of this relationship especially for those called is having confidence rather than pessimism.” Another pastor stated, “God does not want his children feeling pessimistic and living up to the expectations of man. Pastors often experience guilt, failures, burdens, and shame of someone’s else’s expectations. When we live according to the expectations of man, we suppress our desires and dreams. The good news is man demands perfection and excellence from us, but God demands obedience to his will.”
Interestingly, 1 out of 10 pastors interviewed stated yes and no when it comes to being pessimistic about ministry. The pastor stated, “Ultimately, I believe that the Lord is still in charge and has everything under control, but people do not seem as committed to the church like they use to be. People see the Baptist church as an option.” This pastor further noted, “Being a Baptist, I am concerned because many young people are gravitating towards other denominations because they are not as strict and bound by traditional as Baptist churches.”

Out of all the pastors interviewed, one pastor stated he felt pessimistic towards the church, people, profession, and denomination. He stated, “Looking in the mirror, I often see a fictitious superhero. Trying to juggle a career, home, family, personal life, and ministry—I have always aimed for flawlessness and perfection base on the demands of family and faith. I have experienced moments of pessimism because I have experienced burnout.”

Do you feel that you lack control over your circumstances?

Overwhelming, 90% of the pastors interviewed stated they feel in control of their circumstances. One pastor stated, “Right now things are going well; my people want to be pastored after being without a pastor for almost three years. So they are following as I lead, so I feel like I am in control of things right now.” Another pastor stated, “I have been blessed to pastor people who understand God’s leadership model for the church. I know pastors in my community who are struggling because in many ministries people are not respecting the pulpit anymore.”

Interestingly, one pastor stated sometimes he feels that he lacks control over his circumstances. This pastor stated, “In my church we have had several storms. During these stormy moments, it has felt like my whole life was out of control. It was only because of God’s grace that I survived those storms.” This pastor went on to explain, "My sense of control over
what I do is limited, and I don’t have a lot of control over what is going on daily. I am learning how to let go and delegate some power and task to people who can help carry the load."

Do you occupy yourself with trivial activities to escape more important responsibilities?

According to the interview questions, 60% of pastors do not occupy themselves with trivial activities to escape important responsibilities. One pastor stated, "I have learned many lessons early in ministry; it is important that you take care of your business and responsibilities, and then engage in trivial activities." Another pastor suggested, "A lack of accountability will cause you to engage in trivial activities. When you engage in trivial activities, you neglect your purpose to do God's will."

However, 3 out of 10 pastors stated that they engage in trivial activities as a means of escape of important responsibilities. All the pastors who engaged in trivial activities all stated that not only does trivial activities interfere with their productivity and progress, but also procrastination. One pastor stated, “I allow my hobbies and procrastination interfere with my responsibilities. At times important things need to be done, but in order to be more effective I have to take breaks. It seems that waiting to get things done at the last moment works for me.” One pastor interviewed stated, “Sometimes I use trivial activities to get away from the busyness of ministry.”

Do you put off making decisions because they seem overwhelming?

According to the interview participants, 40% of the pastors interviewed put off making decisions because of the overwhelming effects of ministry. According to the interview participants, 40% of the pastors interviewed put off making decisions because of the overwhelming effects of ministry. One pastor who is part of this statistical group stated, "Without a balanced life and ministry, making simple decisions can be tough. I think maturing
and learning how to handle stress comes only from experience in ministry.” 30 % of pastors surveyed said they do not put off decisions making because they feel overwhelmed. A pastor stated, “I have been under tremendous stress in ministry, but my stress levels have not affected my decision-making process.”

However, 3 out of 10 pastors interviewed felt overwhelmed sometimes when it came to making decisions. One pastor stated, “It really depends on what type of decision is on the table for me. When we were trying to decide on plans for renovations and building, that was a very stressful period for me in ministry.” Another pastor stated, “I felt overwhelmed when I was dealing with scandal and major conflict in my congregation. I had to make so decision that was very difficult.” According to the data collected from the interview, 7 out of 10 pastors feel some type of overwhelming feelings when it comes to making decisions. Another pastor stated, “When we are not able to transform our lives spiritually, we become sometimes out of touch with our bodies, feelings and emotions. Looking back over my life, I find it difficult in many occasions to express just what I was feeling. If we are not careful, we begin react in a negative way to our circumstances and the we love and lead.”

Are you just going through the motions (waiting for change, a move, or retirement)?

Interestingly, all the pastors interviewed are not just going through the motions, but they all are waiting on a change. One pastor stated, “I am not waiting on retirement, but I am waiting on a change. I have sowed many seeds into my pastorate, church, and community. I just trying not to get weary in well doing. I know that change is coming soon. Another pastor stated, “I am trying to make a difference as long as I can; however, I desire a change.” 2 out of 3 pastors interviewed stated, “Waiting on God to make a change or shift in pastoral minister takes a lot of
patience.” One pastor stated, “I believe the biblical definition of patience is one’s ability to endure without complaining. Now and then I find myself complaining waiting for a change.”

Do you use alcohol and/or drugs as an escape?

Approximately 50% of the pastors interviewed do not use alcohol or drugs as a means of escape of ministry. Interestingly, 50 % of the pastors interviewed all stated they only use alcohol as an escape; no pastor reported using drugs as an escape. One pastor stated, "the world we frequently hear on the news about drug and alcohol addiction affecting almost every class of society. No one particular person is immune from this scourge. However, when it comes to addiction for clergy, the issue seems taboo. I started years ago drinking to escape, and almost became an alcoholic. Thank God for a loving wife"

One pastor stated, "Pastors are like people everywhere, they sometimes find themselves captive, and going through all of the usual emotional and physical experiences of anger, denial, depression, and rationalization. Over my tenure as pastor, I have used alcohol as an escape mechanism, but what makes pastors situation unique is often the fact of our public character and responsibilities." According to the information collected from the interviews, pastors like any other Christian struggle with their "fight with the flesh" but with also struggle to understand their humanity. In their quest to be "Godlike," many pastors are too fearful of being too human. Therefore, they may become subtle, self-protective or even doubtful about their behavior.

Approximately how much time do you spend in devotion daily?

One respondent to the interview questions stated, “When it comes to devotion time I spend about three hours. Jesus himself withdrew from ministering to crowds so that he could pray alone. Paul made time to pray for churches near and far.” Two respondents stated they spend approximately twenty minutes daily in devotion. Three pastors interviewed spends at least
thirty minutes in devotion daily. Interestingly, 4 out of 10 pastors interviewed spends one hour in daily devotion.

One pastor stated, “Daily devotion is necessary, we are fighting against spiritual forces opposing us and our work. Living life as a Christian is a battle, and no battle is won inertly.” Another pastor noted, “If we don’t spiritually gear up for each day of our lives the enemy will have a spiritual advantage against us. A pastor must be spiritually fit and discipline to be effective in spiritual warfare. A pastor must set examples for the flocks God has blessed them to lead.”

Pastors daily devotions remind us to seek Christ before seeking ministry. A consistent discipline in devotion keeps pastor’s motives in the right order and humble. Serving Christ in the Gospel ministry can bring great joy and great burdens. Pastors who daily commune with God in the Word and worship is far more likely to weather the storms of ministry and to give God all the glory for sustaining him. According to John Ortberg, "We must identify and understand that which threatens our ability to flourish, and only sin can keep us from becoming the person God wants us to become”

One pastor described daily devotion to building a wall, painting a masterpiece, and earning a diploma. He stated, "Brick by brick a wall is built. Class after class a degree is earned, and stroke upon stroke of a paint brush a masterpiece is created. Often times, pastor’s devotions may seem ordinary, but God is making something extraordinary in the process. We can't afford to short-change God.” Several pastors interviewed stressed the importance of reading books on a consistent basis during their devotion time. One pastor stated, "I believe we must include

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1 John, Ortberg, The Me I Want To Be: Becoming God's Best Version of You (Michigan: Zondervan, 2010), 145
devotional reading in our weekly schedule and not just books of a doctrinal nature. I used to read whatever I was preaching for that week or month. However, during my devotional reading, I choose authors who are skilled at bringing Scriptures to light and help me to grow spiritually."

Another pastor stressed the importance of using devotion as a time of worship. "If we are reading material only on what we are teaching and preaching then, we may begin to mistake our theological knowledge for spiritual growth and start approaching our devotional time with God as academic study. But by introducing different spiritual materials into our reading, we are then reminded continuously of what is at stake, and we will begin to approach our calling as Christian first with greater reverence for God and spend quality time with Him." Another pastor stated, “To me, breakfast is the most important meal of the day. I can’t start my day off effectively without eating a good breakfast. Too many pastors spiritually miss breakfast. This the most critical meal we tend to miss daily. Spiritually, pastors should consume a spiritual breakfast on in God’s Word and prayer.”

From this study, it should be concluded that our personal lives and affections will empower us to better Christians and pastors to others through our teaching, preaching, and counseling ministries. Pastors become familiar with our hearts, and the hearts of others. Personal devotion is significant because, as we look at Scripture, we will not look at Scripture just as a source for our theological foundation, but as God's living words of life to embraced, believed, and enjoyed. The more time pastors spend in devotion, God’s Word reveals God’s will for their lives. Sadly, too many pastors complain about their ministry context but are unaware of God's will with a closed bible right beside them. The Psalmist reminds us in Psalm 119, “God's word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
How much time do you desire to spend in devotion daily?

All the pastors interviewed have a desire to spend more time daily in their devotion. One pastor desired to spend at least four hours daily. Two pastors have a desire to spend at least one hour a day in devotions. Interestingly, one pastor has a desire to spend less time in his daily devotion. Another pastor has a desire to spend at least 2-3 hours daily. 50% of the pastors interviewed have a desire to spend at least two hours daily in devotion. One pastor stated, “The time I spend in devotion daily with God has increased as I mature in ministry. As I grow in Christ, I understand the necessity of a more intimate relationship with my Creator. Pastors who spend more time in devotion will understand God's gift of his Word. Our pathways will be straighter, and our decisions will be firm concerning the body of Christ. We need to prioritize our devotional lives and “practice what we preach.”

Qualitative–Summary of Interview Questions Results

The results from the interviews illustrates the variables that contribute to pastoral burnout in African American pastors. Many of the findings from the interviews are discussed in the review of the literature on pastoral burnout. The responses from the interview shows how differently pastors respond to ministry stressors. The qualitative data collected show the vulnerabilities African American pastors face in ministry, and when individuals are burned out, they neglect the proper rest, abandonment the nourishment of their bodies, and never guard their schedules. Whether it is a lack of self-care or an the “messiah complex,” burnout stems from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the character of God and His expectations for his people.

This examine the data collected through research and surveys of African-American pastors in Baptist churches in Central and Tidewater Virginia. Collected data from full-time
pastors determined factors that threaten ministry balance and healthy support systems. Chapter four will make recommendations and provide practical approaches on how to prevent and heal from burnout. It will suggest general principles of overcoming burnout, provide biblical principles for overcoming burnout, and practical approaches for overcoming burnout. Finally, this chapter will provide a conclusion, along with practical ministry implications and several useful suggestions for African-American pastors in the Baptist denomination.
CHAPTER FOUR
CREATING HEALTHY SUPPORT SYSTEMS AND BALANCE

“Thou hast turned my mourning into dancing; Thou has loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness; that my soul may sing praise to Thee and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give thanks to Thee forever.” Psalm 30:11-12

It is evident from Psalm 30 that David bounced back from burnout. The Lord immersed the fires of burnout in David’s life. However, David submitted himself to God’s restoring process. In doing so, he was delivered from burnout and despair. In David’s rescue, came a change of his perspective about life priorities and faith. He suddenly realized that he was the captain of his ship and the master of his soul. However, David with this new founded perspective, he evaluated his former attitudes and rediscovered the power of being in a relationship with God. To be preventive, pastors must acknowledge and trust God in the restoring process. Living in burnout is detrimental to one’s health and well-being is left unchecked.

When it comes to seeking the appropriate treatment for a disease, the cure and healing process begins with an acknowledgment of the symptoms. Pastors must understand that burnout should never be seen as a sign of failure in ministry. Many pastors have discovered that sometimes, burnout is God’s plan for their lives. Often, burnout is the only way God can get someone attention. The writer personally has seen burnout as an essential protective system, and a warning indicating that life is spiraling out of control. However, one should not fear the cure of burnout, but instead, experience the process of resilience.

As discussed in chapter three, the conventional approaches to manage with burnout used by African American pastors in pastors central and Tidewater Virginia include meditation, exercise, Bible reading and prayer dialogue with others, study for renewing, listening to hymns,
and so on. This chapter will bring to light practical and biblical ideologies used for overcoming burnout, as well as practical approaches at the individual, church, and denominational level. Now, this chapter will bring to the surface the general and biblical principles of overcoming burnout, and practical approaches to prevent burnout in ministry. The journey out of burnout may take a while. However, the transformation will happen as pastors takes steps back to recovery.

**Practical Principles for Creating Healthy Support System and Balance**

In Wayne Cordeiro’s *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your passion*, shares seven lessons hard learned from leading on empty:

1) **Do Not Overproduce.** “When the clock runs out, then I say, come back tomorrow, and I’ll have more.”

Cordeiro encourages leaders in ministry not to tie themselves to imaginary, unrelenting cycles to produce more, make more, or attempt to outdo past results. Don’t kill yourself by over producing or doing anything without the equality that God and His people deserve. Pastors must leave time to recharge, and establish some boundaries to restrict unhealthy activity. “The only one who can do that in your life is you! It is not a board decision or your response to a spouse’s complaints. It has to be you!”

2) **Steward Your Energy.** “I have to invest my burst of energy more intentionally.”

According to Cordeiro, “How and where I invest my energy may be the most important decision I will make on any given day. If I’m not careful and judicious, my energy stores will be squandered on e-mail and useless activities.” Cordeiro defines seven pockets of energy daily:

- **Daily Devotion.** The first and best part of a day is to sit at Jesus' feet. Journal thoughts using the acrostic SOAP. (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer), gaining a gem of wisdom that the Holy Spirit provides for the day.
- **Message preparation.** Do a little preparation each day. Pastor cannot put off sermon preparation until Saturday. Pastors must be intentional invest energy towards sermon preparation daily.

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2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid. 118.

5 Ibid. 119.

6 Ibid.
• The next three pockets of energy are given towards the ministry of pastoring and leading. Daily, pastors should ask themselves these seven questions:

  • What areas of my life and ministry could most benefit from an infusion of my energy?
  • What areas will be catalytic and advance the kingdom?
  • What groups of people do I need to energize and inspire?
  • What growth areas require my involvement?
  • Which aspect of ministry by my involvement will result in growth and fruitfulness?
  • What is it around my context that needs a burst of my energy to release it or unclog it?
  • Where am I going to assign my pockets of energy that will in fact take the ministry to a new level?  

• Marriage and family. “In a relay race, the baton isn’t transferred when the lead runner is staggering and exhausted. He is at the top of his stride when he reaches the other runner in the box. Your family is the other runner in the box. They need you at full stride.” Many pastors make time for their families when they are at the lowest point of their stride, when stumbling in exhaustion.

• Energy for me. “Steward your energy well, and in seasons of dismay, you will still have enough of a reservoir to lead.” If pastors do not steward their energy, a few years and a few pounds later you will realize that you borrowed all the available pockets of energy you had invested. When this happens, pastors will throw leftover bones at God, and neglect their bodies, and souls.

3) Rest Well, My Friend. “We are never more vulnerable to depression than when we are totally fatigued or overtired.” One of the very first steps in reversing depression and regaining a sense of resilience is rest. Increase your rest until you begin to feel some semblance of renewal, even if it begins with small doses.

4) Exercise Your Way to Recovery. If you are burned out, you may feel constant exhaustion. Exercise is important for both your physical and mental health.

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7 Ibid. 120.
8 Wayne Cordeiro, Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion. (Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN. 2009), 120.
9 Ibid. 121.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. 122.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid. 130.
5) Eating Your Way To A Good Life. Good dietary changes can bring about chemical and physiological changes, these changes can improve pastor’s mood and mental outlook.

- Eat foods that are high in nutrients. Nutrients in foods support the body’s repair, growth, and wellness.

- Fill your plate with delicious antioxidants. During burnout, studies have shown that the brain is at risk. Antioxidants such as beta-carotene and vitamins C and E keeps the brain healthy.

- The calming effect of smart carbs. Carbohydrates are linked to mood-boosting brain chemicals. Adding a moderate amount of foods with carbohydrates created less anxiety and the calming effect.

- Eat protein-rich foods to boost alertness. This boost helps with alertness and concentration.

6) Recharge daily. Solomon wrote, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23). Only God can release vital energies from the deep within the human spirit, there He evaluates, renews, and recharges.”

7) Fight For Your Family. “Someone once said that the darkest part of any lighthouse is always at its base. The same can be said of our families.” A pastor can shine a radiant light out to the horizons, warning others about treacherous waters ahead, while their own unmaintained plumbing floods the home.

In order to put practical principles of burnout into play, pastors must make some internal and external changes in the way they live and think. A section of the book *The Desert Fathers* offers a strategy utilized by a man of great faith named Abbot Paul. He was a monk who lived in the desert and performed one extreme act every year. Abbot would burn down his house every year as a way of fight off despondency.

“So when the abbot Paul, revered among the Fathers, was living in that vast desert of Porphyrio secure of his daily bread from the date palms and his small garden…when his cave would be filled with the work of a whole year, he would set fire to it, and burn each year the work so carefully wrought: and…let it be done for the sole purging of the heart, the steadying of thought, perseverance in the cell, and the conquest and final overthrow of accidie itself.”

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14 Wayne Cordeiro, *Leading on Empty: Refilling Your Tank and Renewing Your Passion.* (Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN. 2009), 135.
15 Ibid. 139.
When pastors experience despondency in ministry, they don’t realize it until it is too late. Torching and changing your physical environment is a way to reshape and rework a path out of dependency. Regularly keeping things fresh is a practical way to overcome burnout. Soren Kierkegaard is someone who understood human nature. In his work *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard outlines how embracing limitations can increase concentration and boredom. Embracing limitations allow pastors to have a fresh mental focus.

“Here at once you have the principal of limitation, the only saving principle in the world. The more you limit yourself, the more fertile you become in invention. A prisoner in solitary confinement for life becomes very inventive, and a spider may furnish him with much entertainment. One need only hark back to one’s schooldays, when aesthetic considerations were ignored in the choice of one’s instructors, who were consequently very tiresome: how fertile in invention did not one prove to be!

How entertaining to catch a fly and hold it imprisoned and under a nut shell, watching it run around the shell; what pleasure, from cutting a hole in the desk, putting a fly in it, and then peeking at it through a piece of paper! How entertaining sometimes to listen to the monotonous drip of water from the roof! How close an observer does not one become under such circumstances, when not the least noise nor movement escapes one’s attention! Here we have extreme application of the method which seeks to achieve results intensively, not extensively.”

Embracing limits enables pastors to affirm proper self-care in burnout. This is one of the great challenges for pastors who serve faithfully. As Parker Palmer says, “Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer to others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give it the care it requires, we do so not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.”

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In many cases of pastoral burnout is a result of giving what pastors do not possess. Henri Nouwen summarizes this challenge for many pastors:

No two lives are the same. We often compare our lives with those of others, trying to decide whether we are better or worse off, but such comparisons do not help us much. We have to live our life, not someone else’s. We have to hold our own cup. We have to dare to say: “this is my life, the life that is given to me, and it is this life that I have to live, as well as I can. My life is unique. Nobody else will ever live it. I have my own history, my own family, my own body, my own character, my own friends, my own way of thinking, speaking, and acting – yes, I have my own life to live. No one else has the same challenge. I am alone, because I am unique. Many people can help me live my life, but after all is said and done, I have to make my own choices about how to live.”

Embracing limitations encourages pastors to ask the question, am I being faithful over the talents and weaknesses God has given me? However, spiritual maturity for pastors is when they are able to embrace and live joyfully within their God-given limits. The majority of people resent their limitations within themselves and others. The pressures of life cause individuals to expect far more from others and themselves, often leading to frustration and burnout.

In Blaise Pascal book Pensees, Pascal highlights one thing very few pastors discover until it’s too late. While dealing with the burden of the call and stressors in ministry, pastors must take preventive action to keep their attention diverted from despair and not fall into burnout. Pascal shared a preventive principle:

I have often said that the sole cause of man’s unhappiness is that he does not know how to stay quietly in his room. The only good thing for men therefore is to be diverted from thinking of what they are, either by some occupation which takes their mind off it, or by some novel and agreeable passion which keeps them busy, like gambling, hunting, some absorbing show, in short by what is called diversion. All our life passes in this way; we seek rest by struggling against certain obstacles, and once they are overcome, rest proves intolerable because of the boredom it produces. We must get away from it and crave excitement.

He must create some target for his passions and then arouse his desire, anger, fear, for this object he has created, just like children taking fright at a face they have daubed themselves. However sad a man may be, if you can persuade him to take up some

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diversion he will be happy while it lasts, and however happy a man may be, if he lacks diversion and has no absorbing passion or entertainment to keep boredom away, he will soon be depressed and unhappy. Without diversion there is no joy; with diversion there is no sadness.  

**Biblical Principles for Creating Healthy Support System and Balance**

Several places in the Bible deal with the themes of burnout. Even great leaders of the Old and New Testament experienced the crisis of stress and difficulty in their ministry. Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28–30).

The primary solution for those currently experiencing burnout is to find refreshment in Jesus Christ. For those who are experiencing a high level of burnout and compassion fatigue, this refreshment may include obtaining medical support and drastically altering their life activities. Others may find refreshment through seeing a counselor. Reading encouraging scriptures, such as Romans 8, John 15, or Psalm 139, can be very life-giving. Even the simplest things like finding a hobby can help. These hobbies can consist of: cooking, going for a walk, journaling, playing with the kids, or watching a funny show. Finding a hobby can be restorative for those struggling with burnout.

Elijah illustrates the importance of relying on God in 1 Kings 19:1-8:

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.” And when he saw that, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die, and said, “It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!” Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, “Arise and eat.” Then he looked, and there by his

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head was a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again. And the angel of the Lord came back the second time, and touched him, and said, “Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you.” So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

Pastors need knowledge of their limited human outlook on life; this enables them to view God’s marvelous viewpoint and purpose for their lives. With a new perspective of God, pastors are able to rely totally on God. According to Charles Swindoll, God did not rebuke, shame or blame Elijah, but God provided physical rest and nourishment that he needed. God said, “Take it easy, my son. Relax!”

According to the Scriptures, Jesus did not perform any miracles during the first thirty years of his life. He solemnly embraced the limits given to him by the father. After His baptism, Jesus was lead into the wilderness by God for a time of tempting by Satan. Jesus faced early in his earthly ministry with the temptation of exceeding the limits God had placed on Him.

Throughout Jesus earthly ministry, He did not heal every sick person during his time nor deliver every demonized person. Jesus did not build a great church in Capernaum when the people begged Him to remain in that city (Mark 1:29-45). Interestingly, Jesus refused to let certain people follow him whom He delivered. Jesus prayed all night but only chose only twelve disciples to be him (Luke 6:12-17). Jesus prayed at the end of his earthly ministry, “I have completed the work you have given me to do.” (John 17:4). Why do pastors always feel like there is too little time and too much to do? Why does the life of the pastor have so little margin or flexibility? Why do pastors never feel "completed" or "finished" meeting needs? No matter

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how much time a pastor spends in prayer, devotion, attend seminars about prioritizes ministry and time management effectively.

The problem is, most pastors do not understand the powerful principles of limits and expectation. Limits placed a gracious gift given from God. Without proper knowledge of how boundaries and limits apply to pastor serving Christ, burnout will continue to spread like an epidemic. Jesus illustrates the power of knowing the limits and expectations that are given by God.

**Personal Principles for Creating Healthy Support System and Balance**

A tree with shallow roots may still seem healthy on the outside, but it is incapable of supplying adequate water and nutrients for long-term survival for the entire tree. According to Scazzero, "This becomes a significant problem when our ministries and organizations grow larger and faster than the depth of our roots can sustain. In many cases, the root systems of our spiritual lives are inadequate."

Burnout in pastoral ministry often occurs because of poor conditions or circumstances rather than bad people. Pastors should never be ashamed of experiencing burnout, and they should never consider burnout as evidence of ministry failure. Many pastors feel inadequate and depressed because they believer burnout is evidence of failure. Pastors should recognize that they are people, and people are finite. Pastors often ignore their humanity and neglect their physical wellness.

According to Cordeiro section on painting your preferred future, “Commitments to a preferred future do not come randomly. They are intentionally established at times when you are thinking clearly and are close to God.” Making a voluntary commitment will set the trajectory
for a healthy future in pastoral ministry. Pastors should write down their relationship priorities.

There are several tools that have been identified to help pastors prioritize their time.

Cordeiro suggests individuals should answer these questions:

- How do I want to be seen in 10 years?
- What do I want to be good at or know for?
- What kind of personality do you want to have?
- What do you want your family to look like?

The writers at Pastoral Care Inc. indicated that many pastors have their priorities out of balance, attempting to place the church above their families or even their relationships with God. This agency identified critical areas that clergy must protect to overcome the stressors associated with ministry occupations:

- Reserved family time—regarding time with family with definite boundaries that respect church appointments, calls, or demands.
  - Privacy – If possible, handle all church business at the church, rather than working at home. Even if the pastor lives in the parsonage, there should be clear expectations and limitations set. Too often, congregations and other people have unrealistic expectations of not only pastors but also their spouses. Pastors should determine expectations right away and make them fair for both sides of the equation.
  - Building friendships—Most pastors understand the importance of setting boundaries on friendships within the ministry; however, an alarming number of ministers (70%), state they have no accountable friends with whom they can share life’s problems.
  - Help—While pastors are fantastic at providing and recommending professional help for families in need, they rarely seek it for their own families. Church leadership and pastoral care teams should make this a priority for their pastoral staff.

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24 Ibid.
According to Strong, the spouses of pastors are the real and honest eyes and ears of the pastors. Burns, Chapman and Guthrie call it the “strategic role.” “We don’t mean the functions a spouse may perform in the congregation. Rather, we mean the role spouses have in sustaining their pastor-partners in the work of ministry.” If pastors and spouses maintain healthy support systems and ministry balance, the result will be a healthy home and church. Charles Swindoll wrote, “The pastor’s first line of human accountability is his wife. God offers divine answerability and wives provide human accountability.” Pastors need to invite their spouses to give an account of their communication, beliefs, and attitude. It is essential for pastors to be willing and prepared to share with their spouses the issues that are in their lives.

Problematically, many African American pastors infrequently share with their spouses when they are physically exhausted and emotionally drained in their ministries. Even though some pastors are active and prosperous in pastoral ministry, problems and stress at home can contribute to burnout. Therefore, it is required that pastors strive to sustain a happy relationship with their spouses and family.

Burns, Chapman and Guthrie suggested that “Pastors are not the only ones who have a special need for trustworthy relationships. Ministry spouses need confidants as well.” It is vital that couples advance and pursue partnership in a confidential relationship. Burns, Chapman and

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Guthrie said it best: “The well-being of the church and of the pastors themselves is contingent on growing, a nurturing relationship with their spouses and children.” There are only a few things that support and strengthen a pastor more than their relationships with their spouse.

**Pastoral Ministry Principles For Creating Healthy Support System and Balance**

Frank Minirth offer seven practical principles for overcoming burnout in pastoral ministry.  

- Use time wisely
- Keeping priorities straight
- Keeping relax time
- Assurance that one indwells in Christ
- Watch perfectionism thinking
- Discovering the true meaning of life
- If truly suicidal, make arrangements for hospitalization

Dong Sup Jung suggest seven practical principles for overcoming burnout in pastoral ministry.  

- Pastor’s should know he’s not God, but a feeble man.
- Take adequate diet, rest, and exercise
- Confirm the gifts and taste of oneself
- Practice to change the viewpoint
- Have frequent solitary time only for oneself
- Develop the humor skills
- Enjoy the satisfied sexual life

Archibald D. Hart suggest nine practical principles for overcoming burnout in pastoral ministry.  

1. Effective rest  
2. Regular life  
3. Taking adequate rest and sleeping  
4. Coping with flexibility

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31 Frank Minirth, *How to Beat Burnout.* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986), 143
5. Kindness  
6. Managing the anger well  
7. Beware of disrupting  
8. Moderation in all things  
9. Revamp your ministry plan and schedule

**Implementing Healthy Support Systems and Ministry Balance**

Eugene Peterson paraphrased Proverbs 21:5 as “careful planning puts you ahead in the long run; hurry and scurry puts you further behind.”[^34] The following recommendations are offered to develop and implement healthy support systems and ministry balance for pastors.

Prevention of burnout and is as simple as the ABC: awareness, balance, and connections.

**Awareness**

Awareness is gaining knowledge and understanding of contributing stressors that increase vulnerability to burnout. In becoming whom God has purposed pastors to be, pastors must realize that importance of being aware of their holistic wellness. To be used for God’s glory, pastors must not only be healthy spiritually but also physically. “By God’s design, we are a people with souls who desperately yearn for intimacy with God—people whose souls reside in bodies that can hinder or help this pursuit.”[^35]

Often, we are not able to transform our lives, because we are sometimes out of touch with our bodies, feelings, and emotions. If not careful, we begin reacting to life’s circumstances and the people around us in a negative way.

In becoming a healthy pastor, awareness is critical. Individuals must face their shadows. According to Scazzero, “Your shadow is the accumulation of untamed emotions, less-than-pure motives, and thoughts that, while largely unconscious, strongly influence and shape your

behaviors. It is the damaged but mostly hidden version of who you are.”

Shadows are manifested in individuals’ conduct and decisions. Our shadows are who we really are. Sczazero offers two different perspectives in which shadows can be viewed. The first perspective says we are sinners. The other perspective says we are new creations in Christ. “To have a healthy perspective on the shadow, we must have to hold both together in a healthy tension.”

Awareness is the key for pastors to stay healthy. The first step to becoming aware is to do a self-assessment to evaluate the emotionally and spiritually status of an individual. Within the church body, pastors are the sole caregivers, and no one is designated to be a caregiver for them when he or she is in need. Peter Sczazero makes a clear point; emotionally healthy leaders are not created overnight. “Learning to be an emotionally healthy leader takes time.”

“Slow motions are better than no motions.” This is the challenge daily. However, the rewards (weight loss, energy, clarity of mind, spiritual depth) may be evident after a time of consistency and awareness one’s wellbeing. To be a healthy pastor, individuals must take inventory of themselves and do some soul searching by dealing with their hurt, history, and vulnerabilities of life to establish a solid healthy spiritual foundation. After taking self-inventory, then pastors must take inventory of their outer life and examine their decision making as spiritual leaders.

Pastors must lower their stress level and increase their contentment quotient through intentional changes to their current lifestyles and routines. Pastors can determine what it will take

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37 Ibid. 60
38 Ibid. 43.
to arrive at a better balance between work life and personal life—and then do it. Pastors can institute new approaches and necessary changes in their day-to-day routine; consistently sticking to them will lead to a less stressful, more balanced life overall. Pastors can pick and choose among such proven stress reducers as deep breathing and relaxation techniques, anger management, cultural and recreational diversions, supportive interpersonal relationships and large doses of good, old-fashioned laughter. Pastors can also engage in better known formal relaxing techniques such as breathing, meditation, biofeedback, contemplative prayer, and yoga.

Balance

Finding ministry balance is an immense subject, spanning areas of mind, body, and spirit that no one author or researcher has managed to confront. Not only must pastors have awareness, but there must be a balance. Ministry balance entails an individual’s ability to establish priorities and put things into the proper perspective and guard what comes in and out of their life. Ministry balance requires identifying each of life's major areas: God, family, personal needs, ministry. It is wise for pastors to find balance in volunteer and charitable events, friendship, social life, recreation activities, exercise, and find time to attend and engage in some personal rewarding activities. There's nothing particularly complex about the fact that the human body needs rest. While the amount of sleep needed for maximum daily functions can differ from person to person, the average adult needs an average of eight hours of sleep to perform their job during the day.

God never created our bodies to operate on all cylinders, we were created with the need for rest daily and when we are deprived of rest, it takes an emotional toll on our day to day performance. Once pastors are fatigued and restless, they are likely to be less patient and more

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40 Ibid. 88.
irritable around those whom they love and lead. The profession of pastors requires an adequate time of rest and relaxation. When the portions of pastor’s lives get out of balance, many recreations and rewarding activities end up short-changed. When too much attention is given to other areas of one’s life, they often forget that there is price to pay, in terms of our own well-being and the well-being of any other people who are part of the equation.\(^{41}\)

Sabbath and sabbaticals are very helpful in remaining balanced during ministry. They are among the optional extras that can provide the extra margin. Sabbath and sabbaticals are designed help pastors restore and maintain a state of emotional well-being. With the proper ministry balance, pastors can recharge and reflect with time away from people.

Getting away may be hard for those with an extrovert personality. However, when it comes to taking a Sabbath, there is no substitute for taking time out for rest and solitude. Pastors can be rejuvenated and restored by enjoying deep and warm intimate moments with God. Practicing a Sabbath in will help pastors guard their devotion and rest. “God’s Sabbath rhythm reflects the rhythm that undergirds all of creation. The problem with too many leaders is that we allow our work to trespass on every other area of life, disrupting the balanced rhythm of work and rest God created for our good.”\(^{42}\)

The origin of Sabbath and sabbatical trace back to the Old Testament. God illustrates sabbath In the book of Genesis that on the seventh day, with the work of creation finished, God rested. "So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation" (Genesis 2:1-2). Later, the Israelites were commanded

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\(^{42}\) Scanzero, Scanzero The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. 2015) 145.
through God's words to Moses, to follow God's example in their own lives. It would be imperative for all pastors to reflect on this commandment and to consider committing to a Sabbath in their own weekly lives.

Scheduling a Sabbath and a sabbatical will establish a time of rest and respite. Committing to a personal Sabbath does not have to be scheduled for a weekend or a particular day, the principle is pastors should be committed to carving out space in their personal calendar to rest, recharge, and reflect. Sabbath time can be spent doing a range of personal desires such as prayer, reading, writing, traveling, or listening to music. The list of possible activities that pastors can engage in is endless. Sabbath time is not time taken away from work, but, it is time needed to allow one to work more fruitfully during the rest of the week.

Sabbaticals take the concept of Sabbath and extend it out to a more extended time period. Sabbaticals consist of a month, six months, or up to a year. “For those pastors who can negotiate the time for a sabbatical (or who were able to get it included in their initial contract), an extended period of time away from the daily job can restore flagging spirits, avoid burnout, and renew the enthusiasm for ministry as well as provide an opportunity for intellectual and spiritual growth.”

Sabbaticals may be planned, and are usually undertaken with a specific project or planned activity in mind. Additional self-care benefits, however, are found in the indirect, intangible consequences of sabbatical time: personal renewal and refreshment, restoration of balance, a clearer picture of priorities—what is important and what less so, on the larger scale of life.

Failure to maintain a balanced life is frequently a self-care issue for many pastors. If loss of personal balance was an existing issue before starting a sabbatical, Schaper offers several

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44 Ibid.
practical disciplines that can help in its restoration: worship, pray, complicate and observe. Based on own personal experiences, Donna suggests that it can be useful to open yourself up spiritually and emotionally as part of your sabbatical practices: let God speaks to you in worship at a time and place in which you do not have to prepare or lead the service; re-establish your prayer life; simplify your daily schedule and allow room in it for spontaneity; and pay more significant attention to the things and the people that are important to you.\(^\text{45}\) It is worth noting that these practices would be equally useful outside of the sabbatical setting, as pastors struggle to maintain a healthy balance between the multiple parts of their personal and professional lives.

Too often in ministry, pastors get caught up in the secular rhythm and neglect the sacred rhythm of God. Ministry leaders who engage in a good Sabbath routine weekly can be rewarding. This observance will allow leaders to stop, rest, delight, and contemplate God. Healthy leaders must not neglect four significant tasks: planning and decision making, culture and team building, power and wise boundaries, and ending and new beginnings. Integrating our inner life with these our outer life task will bring fresh life into leadership.\(^\text{46}\) Taking care of ourselves by a consistent balance in ministry gives a stable base from which to serve others. Therefore, pastors must be consistent and focus on the hope of the future reward of being balanced. Pastor’s must build positive momentum towards breaking old patterns and creating new patterns.

Many pastors, while attempting to stop bad habits only succeed for a short period of time. However, positive momentum will begin to build as the new behaviors are no longer struggles,

\(^{45}\) Ibid. 15

but habits on auto-pilot. If pastors do not guard their new habits, they can quickly revert to old ways. Replacing struggles with positive alternatives must be a priority. Pastors should always be prepared with an alternative activity, food or approach; which will help make winning the battle towards physical and spiritual transformation easier. Positive and healthy habits will nurture the pastor’s soul. Fortifying the soul consists of spiritual discipline, studying God’s word, reading, and spending time with Christ.

Maintaining a private life encourages pastors to keep more precise interpersonal boundaries. Since pastors meet many needs outside of their ministry context, pastors are less likely to live vicariously through the lives of those they serve and possibly overstep moral lines in the process. Pastors are also less likely to become emotionally connected by alliances, conflicts, and emotional dynamics generally within the church because pastors can step back and seek support and perspective elsewhere.

The pastor who lives a balanced life and having private time will allow them to have a more profound sense of his own identity, which means that he can bring a more integrated approach to leadership. Just as pastors need a sense of identity to enter an intimate relationship fully, so we need an authentic self to be in genuine partnership with a church or ministry.

Having the proper ministry balance can free us up to enjoy the present moment and bring a sense of joy, renewal, and grace to our ministry rather than one of duty and resentment. We might recall that after Jesus emphasized the importance of abiding in God’s love at his last meal with his disciples, he explained, “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete” (John 15:11). Developing the proper ministry balance involves sustaining yourself at work, and developing principles of practice. These principles of practice are guidelines of personal integrity that articulate the parameters of the pastors own
personal values. Pastors should be committed to living and work within these principles. Self-care requires a conscious, deliberate implementation of well-being strategies. Both recovery and restoration invite pastors to look at what we have and what we need to create a plan to access our resources.

In ministry, there's always more work that pastors could be doing, but that does not mean they should be doing it. Ministry balance involves knowing when to work and when to stop working because many pastors are overly concerned with doing every possible thing that is pleasing to their congregational members. However, in trying to please everybody, many pastors neglect their spouses and families. In many instances, the family feels ignored and may be wondering about the continuing deterioration of families and marriages. In many situations like this, children of pastors grow up being resentful.

Connections

Not only must pastors have awareness, and balance, but lastly, pastors must make good connections. Making healthy connections and establishing positive relationships to talk out or through stressful situations. Healthy connections can range from coworkers, therapist, clergy, friends, family, or even supervisors. Establishing this good connection is building a positive support system that supports and does not fuel stress. “Pets accept whatever affection you are able to give them without asking for more—Pets are basically invulnerable to ‘provider burnout’—Blood pressure and heart rate decrease when interacting with animals.”47

Without a healthy support system and a good ministry balanced plan, it is difficult to manage a healthy ministry and lifestyle in this demanding profession and remain active in

pastoral ministry. Without the proper support systems and life balances, pastors tend to turn to destructive behaviors or continue to serve ineffectively in ministry. Further research is vital to understand the complexities involved in the increasing number of persons living and serving without healthy support systems and balance. Through developing and implementing personal self-care plans, and working on self-care practices, pastors will learn how to support and equip themselves to handle the ongoing demands of life and ministry.

A critical factor in maintaining emotional and spiritual wellness is establishing a good support system that a pastor can rely on. Pastor’s support system should be an essential and ongoing part of their life, not something implemented or plan at a time for help through a crisis. It may include family members, friends, colleagues from other churches or faith traditions, or other members of a group that has been organized for the explicit purpose of providing mutual support to its participants. Pastor's network may include some people affiliated with their ministry with whom they have developed close relationships over time, but that situation should be approached with the utmost care.

It is possible to lead churches, governments, or administration teams by relying only on individual gifts and talents. Pastors too can serve their local congregations on their own strength. However, Christ is our only strength. Leading in our strength is only temporary. Pastors should be committed to growing personally as a Christian and a healthy spiritual leader who solely relies on the power of God’s grace.

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God’s desire is for us to walk with Christ intimately and to be an emotionally healthy leader. Too often we lead by human default, and never lead by God’s divine design for our lives. Living by default instead of by God’s divine design may cause us to live our lives filled with frustration. Once discovering our spiritual identity, God is then able to release His Holy Spirit into our lives by daily renewing our minds and spirit.

Being spiritual, allows us to be a conduit for God’s Holy Spirit to work through us and establish productive relationships with those we come in contact with daily in our lives. "Jesus does not come to rearrange the outside of our life the way we want. He comes to rearrange the inside of our life the way God wants."⁴⁹ Living outside of God’s divine design, we tend to go through life with a feeling of being displeased and uninspired. Living by default is not God’s plan for our lives, but by divine design, were able to handle life’s seasons knowing the power of God. This knowledge of God's design and purpose will enable us to be a competent witness for the kingdom. Having this understanding and knowledge, we can live through pleasant and unpleasant seasons with passion and purpose for God’s will.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

This thesis project examined the complementary phenomena of pastoral burnout. Many pastors face many challenges in ministry. This research project was designed to develop an awareness of the numerous challenges of African American pastors in a similar ministry context as the writer and to create a healthy support system and ministry balance. This project is aimed to encourage pastors to develop a personal strategy, increase competency, and facilitate personal growth in ministry despite challenges.

Strengths of This Research Project

This study provides a wealth of knowledge to African American pastors in full-time ministry within the same context as the researcher. This study provides practical principles for pastors to establish healthly support systems and ministry balance. This research on burnout has the potential to cross racial and denominational lines. Many of the materials identified by the author focused on the African American Baptist church. However, this project can be applied within any ministry context contributing to the universal church.

Weaknesses of This Research Project

There is so much more information that could be included in this research project that could help pastors overcoming burnout in ministry. The limited participation from the pastors within this context poses a potential weakness for this project. Only ten pastors participated in this project.

This thesis project was limited in the following ways: First, this project did not examine pastoral burnout for all African-American pastors. It only focused on a select group of African-American in Central and Tidewater, Virginia. This project was not an attempt to answer the
following questions: What is the unique burnout African-American pastor compared to other American pastors in the United States? Are African Americans more burned out than average American pastors? Answering the stated question is far beyond the limit of the study of this thesis project.

Second, this study did not address pastors of all denominations. This study only examined African American Baptist pastors who have no other employment outside of their ministry context.

Third, this project provides anonymous survey and interview approach, which hinders long-term examination and evaluations of pastoral burnout. However, lack of lengthy observation and examinations will not limit the efficiency of its principles.

**Theological Reflection**

Throughout the Scriptures, many chosen vessels of God have dealt with burnout. Leaders from the Old and New Testament experienced burnout and unbalanced ministry. The Scriptures are full of great examples: the seven chosen to serve, Moses, Paul, and Elijah. This research consistently points to God as the only solution for pastoral burnout. God’s remedy for burnout is for the pastor to find rest in Him. In 1 Kings 19:5-8, God had Elijah to eat, then sleep, then eat again and sleep some more. The most spiritual thing that a pastor can do is get some rest. It is startling how much a good night’s rest will do for a pastor. Without the necessary rest, weariness, stress, and fatigue invite depression that leads to burnout.

God has anatomically designed us as whole beings in which the physical, emotional, relational and spiritual proportions are deeply intertwined. In order to care for ourselves spiritually without physical or emotional care is to fail God and to fail ourselves. Conversely, in order to care for ourselves physically or relationally without the spiritual and emotional care is
also to fail our God and ourselves. Preventing burnout demands us to live a life of establishing healthy support systems and ministry balance.

**Writer’s Recommendations**

The writer’s personal experience with burnout was a catalyst for the development of this research. Stress is a reality, especially in ministry where congregations equate unrealistic acts to mammoth acts of faith. The writer has felt various pressures to produce outside of the traditional work of a pastor. These pressures in the writer’s ministry context stemmed from overseeing church renovation project, planning for a building expansion project, increasing offerings, and mediating individual members conflict within the ministry. Working internally and externally in ministry without the proper balance and self-care; ministry becomes draining, and goals become unattainable.

The work of the ministry is difficult to assess. Pastors struggle with how to determine how successful ministry is or has been. The ongoing struggle is the unrealistic expectations of self and the congregation. The writer, has served eight years in pastoral ministry in the African-American church. The writer has experienced stress, unrealistic self-expectations, and many other variables that have been mention in previous chapters that caused pastoral burnout. The writer has experienced stressors that lead to burnout.

During that season of burnout, the writer was on medication for anxiety and high blood pressure. However, after establishing healthy support systems and ministry balance, the writer is no longer taking medication for anxiety, or experiencing physical discomfort. The writer has passionately communicated; without a healthy ministry support system and balanced plan, it is difficult to manage a healthy ministry and lifestyle in this demanding profession. Without the
proper support systems and life balances, pastors tend to turn to destructive behaviors or continue to serve ineffectively in ministry.

Based on the outcomes of this study on burnout among African American pastors, the writer suggests the following recommendations for African American pastors coping with burnout:

Make Better Choices

Making better choices includes nutritional intake, exercise, and relaxation methods. Poor decision-making leads to a state of exhaustion both physically and spiritually that leads to burnout. When pastors become depressed, hopeless, and helpless; they make unhealthy decisions. Pastors intentional about better decision making. Eugene Peterson advised that the pastor must learn how to be an “unbusy pastor.”¹ A pastor becomes “unbusy” by making better decisions, such as time their scheduling wisely, making a realistic to-do-list, and prioritizing their lists so pastors can be good stewards and maximize their time.

Pastors must not become so busy that their prayer life and devotion time cease to exist, and forget they are spiritual beings. A nonexistent prayer life and devotion is the only way a pastor can disconnect himself from God’s fruitfulness and power. Instead of starting a day off anxious and stressed, start the day off in devotion and prayer.

Consequently, when pastors learn how to make better choices, it is not only an act of saving energy and time, but also an act of decreasing the chances of experiencing pastoral burnout. Too often, pastors forget the importance of their physical and mental health. Often,

pastor’s health and diet are neglected. Serving in ministry there are a lot of things that pastors cannot control, so the things they can control is their physically and mental health.

This researcher experienced neglecting personal and physical health, early on in ministry. Being enrolled in seminary, not sleeping, working long hours, and parenting two toddlers, exercising on a consistent basis was not not a priority. Sadly, eating had become a significant priority. A combination of such variables, led to this researcher experiencing significant weight gain. Finally, after many health challenges, the writer began a significant commitment to becoming healthier, physically. Exercise has provided the writer an opportunity to not only become healthier, but also grow spiritually. During exercise, writers uses this time daily to listen to gospel, sermons, and other devotional materials. The writer started walking daily and made a commitment to eat healthier meals and snacks.

According to the Scripture, on multiple occasions, we are called to care for our bodies. A pastor must be strategic and intentional about caring for their physical health. For the researcher, personally, this means dedicating time for physical exercise in the gym. However, for others, may mean taking walks. The writer has personally discovered that moderate activity for 30 minutes a day can improve overall health. Moreover, it is clear that the Scriptures not only calls us to believe but also to live with care for ourselves. The writer understood the importance of daily praying for discipline and determination in order to become healthier for the advancement of God’s kingdom.

Engaging in physical activity on a regular basis produces many positive effects. The writer has felt better overall, experienced more energy, and genuinely felt less stressed daily. By exercising and pursuing a healthy lifestyle, pastors will be physically equipped to balance ministry and family. Pastors who exercise are less likely to get sick and carry less stress.
Exercising is beneficial for the call to ministry, because pastors fells the burden of the call and others.

Create and Maintain a Social Support System

When creating and maintaining a social support system everyone needs someone. Loneliness and isolation are universal problems for pastors. Jesus did not create the Christian to survive and serve in isolation, but Christ founded the church community for believers to support each other. The writer recommends finding friends within and on the outside of the ministry to create a social support system. People seem to associate with others who share a common interest. By engaging in personal inventory, pastors can find the areas in their life where a social support system can highlight unrealistic expectations in their lives.

Charles Chandler offered eight benefits of a pastor’s developing a social support group: (1) in-depth fellowship, (2) a sense of belonging, (3) a fresh perspective, (4) leadership confidence (5) a venue for emotional expression, (6) healthy affirmation and confrontation, (7) a reduction of pastoral competition, and (8) encouraging longer pastoral tenures. The lack of a functioning support systems contributes to lack of affirmation, accountability, and encouragement. However, effective social support systems provide individuals who can decrease the possibility of burnout.

When overcoming burnout, sometime pastors need professional help. During the writer’s season of burnout, the writer went to a professional counselor and had a circle of friends who showed a support during that season. It is detrimental to have a great support system but refuse to

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be open and transparent. The writer recommends every pastor to see a therapist at least once a month. Pastors need someone who can listen while they dump all the stuff that they are carrying in their minds and hearts. If pastors decide to dump their emotions and struggles to the wrong person, it can cause damage to their reputations and ministry, because the average person does not allow their pastor or minister to be human.

Engage in Meaningful Tasks

When engaging in meaningful tasks, pastors must find something outside of the church and become a part of it. The writer discovered when engaging in nothing, the only thing to focus on is the pain. Distraction can be a positive tool used to get a mind thinking about engaging in the meaningful task. Pastors too often fail to create and keep proper boundaries. One of the hardest words for a pastor to say is “no.” Not being able to discern when to say no can be dangerous because many pastors perceive themselves as the Savior, and they do not trust anyone else to get the job done. However, these false narratives keep pastors entangled in seasons of burnout. Pastors must understand they need downtime outside of ministry, and space away from always being in a position to be counted on to get the job done.

Pastors with the proper self-image of themselves can say no. This proper perspective foretells the pastor’s awareness of himself being a human partner with God. Pastors are human, and they are not adequately created to meet every need. However, one must keep a sense of value in God and his image within themselves, and not in the weight of their achievements and accolades. One’s ability to say no comes with an awareness of the need to overcome personal insecurity and a sincere desire can free us from the bondage of always saying “yes.”

A person’s mind becomes vulnerable when fatigued. However, breaks are necessary. The writer recommends pastors to find moments of escape in order to rejuvenate and reinvigorate
their minds. Taking breaks do not necessarily mean changing one’s geographic location, but it is merely turning off the lights in the office, listening to soft music, and meditating on God’s goodness. In addition to taking breaks, pastors should always have hobbies. Nothing refreshes mental alertness more than a constant pursuit of new hobbies.

**Know Your Limits**

In many of the African American context, the pastor feels it is easier to complete the work himself, rather than relying on others to complete or assist. However, the pastor must know his limits and willingly relinquish some of their control. By acknowledging their limits, pastors can delegate task and assignments to others. Releasing control and delegating to others can be beneficial for pastor’s stress levels. Pastors who will delegate responsibilities can find a balance to counter burnout.

However, not being unaware of limitations, pastors can quickly adapt to repetitious schedules and work longer and longer to meet the demands of ministry. In many instances, pastors rarely meet their demands. In knowing limitations and finding balance, pastors must work smarter, rather than longer and harder. With proper planning and scheduling, pastors find the necessary balance in order to be active and productive in ministry.

The call to pastor by its nature is about giving ourselves to meet the spiritual needs of others. In pastoring people, there is a constant emptying of oneself. The danger comes when the pastor reservoir runs dry, and there is nothing left to give. When this happens, pastors become spiritually lethargic and exhausted. When spiritual lethargic and exhausted, pastors struggle because their cognitive function slows down. This leads to a sense of helplessness and hopelessness. When feeling this way, pastors sense nothing is working, and the single most draining task is how to manage their stress.
According to Hands and Fehr, “Pastors, who have one full day off per week, a month’s paid vacation and seven paid holidays per year, have less time off than parishioners. Parishioners working full time usually get two days off each week, two weeks paid vacation and seven paid holidays; they have 121 days off compared to the pastor, who has only 79 days off in a year. That is a difference of 42 days!” Pastors must find time to review their calling. Reviewing the call often becomes a motivation for ministry. It is easy for a pastor to lose their passion for ministry and become complacent. Their lives will become a grind instead of a calling for God’s glory. When a pastor is continuously in tune with their call, they realize the call is not a job to please man, but to please God.

Final Thought

Burnout can be a traumatic and disheartening experience for pastors. On the other hand, it can also be the commencement of greater knowledge and understanding as it relates to keeping a balanced life. Yes, burnout is not a glorious experience, but with the proper ministry balance and support system, burnout can be very beneficial in the context of a unique pastoral ministry. Many pastors struggle through life and ministry carry the burden of giving their time and energy while ignoring the reality of replenishment. Without proper replenishment, pastors physical, emotional and spiritual battery will drain. Consequently, it is imperative to remember that the maintaining a proper ministry balance and healthy support system provides the required renewal and allow us to return to our work refreshed.

Pastors need to understand themselves more fully. This understanding consists of their personality, gifts, limitations, strengths, and weaknesses. When they are more knowledgeable

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and aware, they can begin to concentrate on working within their limitations and strengths. Knowing who you are, and your limitations will significantly limit the amount of stress and exhaustion in ministry.
Appendix A

Survey on Pastoral Burnout

This survey questionnaire is for the study “Pastoral Burnout of African-American Pastors: Creating Healthy Support Systems and Balance,” a project thesis for a doctorate in ministry. This project thesis may establish healthy support systems and balance that will protect African American pastors from unhealthy lifestyles and burnout.

1. Sex? □ Male

2. Age? □ 30-35 years □ 36-40 years □ 41-45 years □ 46-50 years □ 51-55 years □ 56-60 years □ 61-65 years

3. Educational Level? (Check all that apply) □ Bible School □ College □ Theological Seminary □ Graduate School □ Your present degree __________________

4. Number of years in the ministry? □ under 5 years □ 5-10 years □ 11-15 years □ 16-20 years □ 21-25 years □ 26-30 years □ over 31 years

5. How many congregation members participate in the Sunday worship service at your church? □ under 30 □ 31-50 □ 51-100 □ 101-200 □ 201-300 □ 301-500 □ 501-1000 □ over 1000

6. Which of the below factors have threatened your ministry? (Please check all relevant items.) □ extreme fatigue □ weariness □ skepticism □ loss of identity □ increasing worries and impatience □ frequent illness □ stagnation □ suicide urge □ sense of alienation □ conflict □ difficulty of sleep □ loss of interest about work □ instability of emotion □ frustration □ feeling of helplessness □ loss of ministry vision □ rebuke of believers □ decrease of appetite □ loss of passion □ considering leaving the church □ unrealistic expectation of spouse □ loss of self-respect □ too frequent preaching □ excessive business □ deviation of children □ infringement on private life □ comparison with a colleague □ lack of intellectual ability □ economic difficulty □ difficulty in controlling emotions □ others __________________

7. How many hours do you work in a week? □ under 20 hours □ 21-30 hours □ 31-40 hours □ 41-50 hours □ 51-60 hours □ 61-70 hours □ over 70 hours

8. How many times do you deliver a sermon in a week? □ 1 time □ 2-4 times □ 5-7 times □ 8-10 times □ 11-13 times □ over 14 times

9. Which is your annual income from your church? (Including salary, expenses for ministry activity, traveling expenses, annuity & insurance and other income) □ under $20,000
$20,001-$30,000 □ $30,001-$40,000 □ $40,001-$50,000 □ $50,001-$70,000 □ $70,001-$100,000 □ over $100,000

10. How do you think your income compares with the incomes of other pastors? □ much higher □ a little higher □ same □ a little lower □ much lower

11. What type of job does your spouse have? □ full-time job □ part-time job □ none

12. How often do you have one day a week off from your church ministry job? □ regularly □ often □ almost never

13. Do you think that you have enough time with your family? □ yes □ no

14. Do you have regular vacation each year? □ yes □ no □ often

If you do, how long is your annual vacation? ________ days

15. How well does your church understand the problems of the pastor and his/her family? □ very much □ a little □ none

16. Have you ever thought to move to another ministry place by leaving the church? □ I have never thought of it □ I have thought of it sometimes □ I have thought of it very often □ I want to move right now

17. Have you ever felt an impulse to quit your ministry to escape from the crisis of ministry? □ never □ sometimes □ very often □ everyday

18. How much are you pressed in your ministry? □ much higher than expected □ higher than expected □ same as expected □ lower than expected □ much lower than expected

19. How much is your spouse pressed in your ministry? □ much higher than expected □ higher than expected □ same as expected □ lower than expected □ much lower than expected

20. How much are your children pressed in your ministry? □ much higher than expected □ higher than expected □ same as expected □ lower than expected □ much lower than expected

21. Have you ever experienced stress-related illness? □ yes □ no

22. How do you solve the pressure in your ministry? (Check all that apply) □ Bible reading and prayer □ dialogue with colleagues □ traveling □ visiting the prayer mountain □ meditation
☐ singing a song ☐ listening to music ☐ exercise ☐ shopping ☐ sleeping ☐ recharging
☐ eating food ☐ chattering
☐ others ______________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Interview Questions: Pastoral Burnout

These interview questions are for the study “Pastoral Burnout of African-American Pastors: Creating Healthy Support Systems and Balance,” a project thesis for a doctorate in ministry. This project thesis is going to establish healthy support systems and balance that will protect African American pastors from unhealthy lifestyles and burnout.

1. Do you feel hopeless and trapped in ministry?
2. Are you constantly tired?
3. Are you bored with your duties, co-workers and church members?
4. Are you easily irritated and have little patience with people?
5. Are you pessimistic about the church, people, profession and denomination?
6. Do you want to change your daily routine, yet you feel threatened by change?
7. Do you feel that you lack control over my circumstances?
8. Do you have difficulty concentrating on specific tasks?
9. Do you feel withdrawn, because working with problems, solving seems futile?
10. Do you occupy yourself with trivial activities to escape more important responsibilities?
11. Do you feel restless and have difficulty relaxing or sleeping?
12. Do you doubt that I really make a difference to my church members, co-workers, friends and family?
13. Have you lost my professional and personal confidence?
14. Do you put off making decisions because they seem overwhelming?
15. Are you just going through the motions—waiting for change, move or retirement?
16. Have you lost a sense of purpose or enthusiasm about ministry?
17. Do you use alcohol and drugs as an escape?
18. How do you feel about your personal relationship with Christ?
19. Approximately how much time do spend in devotion daily?
20. How much time do you desire to spend in devotion daily?
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February 21, 2018

William E. Johnson, III

Dear William E. Johnson, III,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

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

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